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BJP's 'Sankalp Patra' is the golden roadmap for India's future: CM

In the next term, India will emerge as third economic power

Party's manifesto is faith on the country's democracy and road-map of India's bright future



CM Sai was speaking while expressing his views on the party's election manifesto released by PM Narendra Modi and dedicated to the people of the nation. Addressing a press conference at party's head office in Kushabhau Thakre premises, CM Sai said that today is most auspicious day, as there are festivals being celebrated right from West Bengal to Tamil Nadu in different forms. At some places it is New Year and at others it is Baisakhi festival. CM said that today is the sixth day of Goddess Durga puja under Navratri festival and it is the day of Goddess Katyayani and the way the PM Modi said that Goddess Katyayani holds Lotus in both Her hands and what can be more aus-

picious than this. Sai said that it is on this auspicious occasion, there is the 134th birth anniversary of founder of the India's Constitution Baba Saheb Dr BR Ambedkar and it is on this day that BJP has released its election manifesto in the form of 'Modi-ki-Guarantee'. In reality, this manifesto is faith on the India's democracy and road-map of restoration of faith of people and bright future of India. Sai said that it is an honour for him that the national leadership provided him an opportunity to work as a member in preparing of this election manifesto.

CM Sai discussing about the party's earlier manifesto said that the party's manifesto is one such vi-

sion document on which the people just do not believe so easily. But what the party has done in last ten years and it has proven that it implement each and every single word mentioned in the manifesto.

Speaking about the 'BJP's manifesto Modi-ki-Guarantee 2024' as released by PM Modi, CM Sai said that this manifesto is based upon 24 points and with total 76 pages it is the election manifesto of developing a bright future of India after 75 yrs of Independence. In this out of 24 pills, 10 are social and 14 are economic pillars. The way the party has proved through 'Modi-ki-Guarantee' and what Modiji has done in last 10 yrs, is a new chapter of restoring of faith and con-

fidence of people towards the party. It is a reflection of expectations of youth for the young Indians. In the last 10 yrs, 25 cr people have come out of the below poverty line. The senior citizens above 70 yrs have got benefitted from Ayushman Bharat Yojana. Apart from 4 cr 'pucca' houses have been constructed and 3 cr more are to be constructed. The party has ensured supply of LPG cylinders at affordable rates and now there are plans to take Gas pipelines directly to homes. There will be work to make electricity bills of crores to zero and then works will be done to generate revenue from power generation from domestic consumers as well. Under PM Surya Yojana, now the people will not get electricity, but they will generate it and sell it, he added. On this occasion BJP senior leaders, party's LS candidate from Raipur LS seat Brijmohan Agrawal, BJP State media in-charge Amit Chimmani, co-in-charge Anurag Agrawal, spokesmen Amit Sahu, Nalinesh Thokane and others were present.



With barricading done in-between the uncovered road divider, the people are still not resorting to taking that extra step to cross the divider and instead are coming from inside the railing put, putting their life at risk.

Three youths killed in a road accident

Bemetara, Apr 14: Three youths, including two brothers riding a motorcycle, died tragically in a road accident last night. Two real brothers, Komal Sahu (21 years) and Mukesh Sahu (22 years) and their friend Ravi Yadav died in the accident near National Highway NH 30 village Matka. All three youths were residents of village Arjuni. According to the infor-

mation received from the police, the three youths had gone to their friend's wedding on a motorcycle. While returning to their village they met with an accident near village Matka. As soon as information about the accident was received, there was mourning in the village. City Kotwali team reached the spot and started investigation. Post-mortem of the three deceased is underway.

BSP declares candidates on three seats of Ch'garh

Raipur, Apr 14: Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) has announced candidates for three Lok Sabha seats of Chhattisgarh. Sanjay Ekka has been declared candidate from Surguja seat whereas Kujur has been fielded in Raigarh seat and Ashwani Rajak in Bilaspur seat.

BJP's Sankalp Patra is Modi's photo album: Cong

Raipur, Apr 14:

Describing BJP's 'Sankalp Patra' (manifesto) as Modi's photo album Congress said that photographs had been posted with different world leaders in different poses in it. Addressing a press conference at party's state office here on Sunday Congress national spokesperson and state media in-charge Radhika Kheda said that there was nothing in BJP's 'jumla paper'. Coming to Chhattisgarh, another

web of lies has been created, she said. Radhika Kheda said that even today 'Mahadev App was running under the patronage of the Prime Minister and the Home Minister. 'What is the compulsion of BJP that Mahadev App is still running? BJP always says that Bhupesh Baghel had sworn for liquor prohibition with Ganga water in his hand. We challenge that on the occasion of Navratri, with Gangajal in hand, show the video in which Congress had made

this promise', she said. The national spokesperson of Congress said that hunger, unemployment and inflation were at their peak in the country. 'People are suffering. The people of Chhattisgarh have understood that their mistake is a lotus flower'. Radhika Kheda said that Constitution was in danger today. Congress communication department head Sushil Anand Shukla and spokespersons were present in the press conference.

Central Chronicle News

Raipur, Apr 14: Deputy Chief Minister Arun Sao said that BJP released its 'Sankalp Patra' for self-reliant India. 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Prayas' is the manifesto of making the country prosperous and a strong and developed India, he said, while talking to the reporters at his residence here today. BJP government will work for a developed India and will make the lives

of common people happy, he said. According to Sao 'Sankalp Patra' will bring change in every class and make the life of common people accessible besides strengthening country's economy. Modi ji has won the trust of the people of the country in ten years and people's life has been made easier, he said, adding that public will definitely bless and Modi ji will become Prime Minister for the third time.

Congress is scared and nervous of PM Modi, he said. He alleged that Congress leaders were making indecent statements against Modi as they knew very well that they would not be able to compete with Modi. This time Congress will face humiliating defeat. Sao said that Congress did injustice to the country for 70 years. According to him a glimpse of Muslim League is visible in the

manifesto of Congress. On the indecent statement of Congress leader Kanhaiya Kumar, Sao said that the leaders of 'Tukde Tukde' gang were engaged in breaking the country into pieces. These people are not able to tolerate the poor PM and they are speaking the language of Pakistanis and Naxalite, he said, adding that their mentality and thinking have become visible to the world. The public will

answer this, he added. He said that BJP will empower and strengthen women with 'Lakhpati Didi' and will make women's lives easier. BJP and Modi have zero tolerance policy on corruption, said Sao, adding that action has been taken against corruption. According to him corruption was a major obstacle to development. Modi government is continuously taking action and this will continue further also, he said.

India will become self-reliant and developed with BJP's Sankalp Patra: Sao

Rally of fire brigade vehicles held on Fire Service Day



Raipur, Apr 14: A rally of fire brigade vehicles was taken out in the capital Raipur on Sunday on the occasion of Fire Service Day. DIG LP Verma said that in the coming days, fire stations will be established in Naya Raipur and Urla. An awareness march program was started from Tikrapara police station of Raipur today. Fire department officials dispatched fire tenders from Tikrapara police station to the city and also gave safety messages to the general public regarding the causes of fire. On April 14, 1944, a cargo ship named

Fortsticken, which was loaded with cotton bales, explosive materials and war equipment, suddenly caught fire at the Mumbai port. Mumbai fire brigade personnel were continuously trying to extinguish the fire. While extinguishing the fire, there was a massive explosion due to the presence of explosive material in the ship and in this fire, 66 fire-fighters of the fire brigade were martyred after coming under the fire. Fire Service Day is observed every year on 14 April in the memory of these brave fire fighters.

One nabbed in an abduction and murder case

Youth first abducted from Raipur, killed in Dharshiwa and burnt in Bilaspur region

Raipur, Apr 14:



April 11 that Shoaib Khan (18), has left for some place from 6:30 pm and has not come back since then. On this the case was taken into investigation filing missing report. On carrying out investigation it turned out to be suspicious and mysterious matter and senior officials were informed about it. A police team was formed under leadership of TI Kabir Nagar thana TI

Ravindra Kumar Jha (IPS) and both mother and brother of Shoaib were called and they informed that Shoaib left with his friend Chandrashekhar Sahu. Sahu was taken into arrest on April 12 and on serious interrogation he revealed that the deceased was having bad intention with his wife and used to trouble her a lot and so he along with one of his friend Mukesh Yadav decided to teach him a hard lesson and murder him. So with a plan, both he and Mukesh called Shoaib on phone and abducted him and made him drink liquor heavily in Dharshiwa and tried to strangulate him. He started suffocating and on seeing this, his friend stabbed him with a wheel screw

driver hitting him in the eyes. After this Mukesh Yadav decided to take the body to Bihar and since they were not having money, they decided to burn the body passing two-three districts. So both picked up petrol in a petrol can mid-way and covered the body with a sheet-cover in a pick-up Van and passing from Bilaspur by-pass, burnt the body below the culvert of 'Gajar Nullah', in Tendubhata jungle and ran away. The police nabbed one of the accused under section 364, 365, 302 and 201 and 120 B of IPC and took him into arrest for further interrogation. The other accused MK Yadav is still absconding and the police has started his search in Madhubani of Bihar.

Dy CM Sao worships Maa Bamleshwari



Wishes for happiness, prosperity of Chhattisgarh

Dongargarh, Apr 14:

Deputy Chief Minister Arun Sao along with his wife reached Dongargarh on Sunday, the sixth day of 'Chaitra Navratri' and of-

fered prayers at 'Maa Bamleshwari' temple besides wishing for the happiness and prosperity of Chhattisgarh. He also had an auspicious sight of 'Manokamna Jyoti Kalash'. Earlier, on reaching Dongargarh, BJP workers welcomed him. In Rajnandgaon also, BJP workers welcomed him with full garlands.

BR Ambedkar's 133rd birth anniversary celebrated at NIT Raipur

Raipur, Apr 14:

The National Institute of Technology (An Institute of National Importance) Raipur, reverberated with patriotic fervor and intellectual vigor as it celebrated the 133rd Birth Anniversary of Bharat Ratna Babasaheb Dr. B. R. Ambedkar. The commemorative event, held on 14th April 2024, was a testament to the enduring legacy of the visionary leader and the values he espoused. The inauguration of the event was marked by an inspiring speech delivered by Prof. Harendra Bikrol, who set the tone for the day's proceedings. The program commenced with the soul-stirring rendition of the National Song, "Vande Mataram," followed by the



dignitaries paying homage to Babasaheb by lighting candles and offering garlands on his photograph. One of the highlights of the event was the collective reading of the Preamble by all attendees, symbolizing a reaffirmation of the principles enshrined in the Constitution, a document dear to Dr. Ambedkar's heart. A poignant documentary shedding light on the life and contributions of Ambedkar Saheb was also screened, providing in-

sights into his remarkable journey. The absence of Director Prof. N.V. Ramanna Rao was compensated by the reading of his message by Prof. N.D. Londhe. Prof. A.B. Soni, Director In-Charge, delivered a stirring Presidential Address, underscoring the relevance of Babasaheb's teachings in women's empowerment and his relevance in today's context. Dr. Baidyanath Bagh introduced the Chief Guest reading his bio-data and

elaborating on his achievements to the audience. The event also witnessed an Invited Address by the Chief Guest, Shri Ratan Lal Dangi, IPS, IG of Police, Raipur, Chhattisgarh. His motivational words resonated with the faculties, staff members, and students present, urging them to strive for excellence and offering valuable insights on life management. The Chief Guest Dangi enlightened the audience with the teachings and challenges faced by Dr. Bhim Rao Ambedkar. He elaborated on the contribution of Babasaheb towards women's empowerment and also suggested to read Dr. Ambedkar deeply to know and follow him. He said, "After knowing him and his contribution towards the



nation and society, a person will start worshipping him." Dr. Suraj Kumar Mukti expressed gratitude through a heartfelt vote of thanks, acknowledging the contributions of all those involved in organizing the event. The program culminated with a rendition of

the national anthem, "Jana Gana Mana," stirring emotions of patriotism and pride. Among the distinguished guests present were Registrar Prof. P.Y. Dhekne, Dean of Academic Affairs Prof. Shirish Verma, Dean of Faculty Welfare Prof. D. Sanyal, and Prof. G.D.

Ramtekkar, whose presence added further significance to the occasion. The successful execution of the program was lauded by the Chief Guest, Director, and the enthusiastic audience, affirming its importance in commemorating the ideals and princi-

ples championed by Babasaheb Dr. B. R. Ambedkar. The organizing committee, led by Prof. H. Bikrol, Prof. N.D. Londhe, Dr. Suraj Kumar Mukti, Dr. Baidyanath Bag, Dr. D.C. Jhariya, Dr. Sanjay Kumar, Dr. Nisha Netam, Dr. C. Jatoth, Dr. Shriti Nagdeve, Shri Teman Thakur, Shri A.K. Dongare, Shri Samud Goyal and others, received accolades for their meticulous planning and execution, ensuring a memorable and impactful event. As the echoes of celebration fade away, the spirit of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar continues to inspire and guide generations toward a more equitable and just society, echoing his timeless message of liberty, equality, and fraternity.



BRIEF



PM Modi with Congress leader Sonia Gandhi during Ambedkar Jayanti celebrations, at Parliament in New Delhi, Sunday.

Suspend

New Delhi: Air India on Sunday decided to temporarily suspend flights to Tel Aviv amid escalating tensions between Israel and Iran. An official said the direct flights between Delhi and Tel Aviv will be suspended for now.

Shot dead

New Delhi: Amir Sarfaraz Tamba, an accused in the murder of Indian death row prisoner in Pakistan Sarabjit Singh and a close associate of Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) terror outfit founder Hafiz Sayeed, was killed by unidentified gunmen in Lahore on Sunday, official sources said. Tamba was attacked by motorcycle-borne assailants in the Islampura area of Lahore in Pakistan and was rushed in critical condition to a hospital where he succumbed to his injuries, the sources said.

Support

Thiruvananthapuram: National award-winning actress and classical danseuse Shobana on Sunday extended support to BJP Lok Sabha candidate Rajeev Chandrasekhar and wished the union minister all the best in the upcoming polls. While addressing a joint press conference here, the actress said it was a special wish for her this time as she came to support Chandrasekhar.

Wall collapses

Thane: A worker and a labour contractor were killed and another person was injured after a wall collapsed during repairs to a house in Maharashtra's Thane district on Sunday, an official said. The incident took place at Bhayander East, on the outskirts of Mumbai, around 11 am, the official said.

Booked

Mumbai: A 24-year-old drug addict was allegedly stabbed to death by his 50-year-old mother in Oshiwara area of Mumbai on Saturday when she tried to stop him from stealing valuables from their home, police said. Police have registered a case of murder following the incident which occurred in the afternoon. No arrest has been made so far, an official said.

Report

Tirupati: A team of Engineers from Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) visited Ayodhya upon the Ram temple trust's invitation and provided technical advice to them on crowd management. A press release from the TTD said a meeting was held between the TTD Executive Officer A V Dharma Reddy and organisers of the trust.

Weather

High 36 Low 25

'Reservations are here to stay'

Will implement UCC in Modi's third term

Khairagarh, Apr 14:

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Sunday said the BJP will never allow reservations to end and nor will it let Congress do so.

Speaking on the BJP's 'sankalp patra' (manifesto) released earlier in the day, he said when Narendra Modi becomes prime minister for the third time, Uniform Civil Code will be implemented and 'One Nation One Election' will be introduced.

Addressing a rally in Khairagarh in Chhattisgarh, Shah asked people to give Modi a third term as prime minister so that the menace of Naxalism can be eliminated in the state in the next three years.

"Today is the birth anniversary of Babasaheb Ambedkar. The entire nation is remembering him for his work towards upliftment of Dalits, Adivasis,



Amit Shah

backwards and the poor. On this day, people work to take the spirit of the Constitution drafted by him to the grassroots but even on such a day the Congress is busy spreading lies," Shah said.

Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge is claiming the Constitution will be changed if Modi becomes prime minister again and that party's functionaries allege BJP will end reservations after coming to power, Shah said. "I want to make it clear that till BJP is in politics, we will not let anything hap-

pen to reservations. We will not allow Congress to end it either. They (Congress) have been doing the business of lies," the Union Home minister asserted. Prime Minister Modi has strengthened the country and safeguarded it from terrorism, Shah said, adding the NDA government in its 10-year rule had eliminated Naxalism.

Modi had ended Maoist violence in his 10-year rule but the tail remains in Chhattisgarh, Shah said in Khairagarh, which is part of Rajnandgaon Lok Sabha seat, where BJP's Santosh Pandey is up against former Congress chief minister Bhupesh Baghel.

"During the previous Congress government under Bhupesh Baghel, the fight against Naxalism slowed down in Chhattisgarh. After the BJP came to power, (in the 2023 state assembly polls), Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai and Deputy Chief Minister Vijay Sharma (who also holds the Home portfolio) intensified the

fight against the menace," he said.

"More than 54 Naxalites have been neutralised, more than 150 have been arrested and more than 250 have surrendered (after the formation of Sai government). Within 10 years, PM Modi ended Naxalism from the entire country. However, only its tail is left in Chhattisgarh. Give Modi a third term and I assure you we will end Naxalism in three years," he said.

Targeting former CM Baghel, Shah said the country was witness to several scams committed by the Congress but none of them had been named after a god, a reference to the multi-crore Mahadev betting app scam that is being probed by agencies.

"The 2G scam, Commonwealth games scam, submarine scam and many more scams were committed by Congress but none of these had names related to god. Baghel did not spare the name of Mahadev and committed a scam of Rs 508 crore," Shah said.

Six buses catch fire

New Delhi, Apr 14 (PTI):

Six buses parked at a private school in Delhi's Dwarka area caught fire on Sunday, officials of the Delhi Fire Services said. The blaze, which broke out in two busses, later spread to four more and two room in the ground floor of the school building, they said. A call regarding blaze at R D Rajpal Public School in Dwarka sector-9 was received at 2.53 pm, they said.

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PM unveils BJP manifesto for LS polls

Special focus on poor, youth, farmers, women

New Delhi, Apr 14 (PTI):

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday released the BJP's Lok Sabha manifesto which has a special focus on the poor, youth, farmers and women, and asserted that the need for a stable government with full majority was necessary when the world was passing through uncertain times.



PM Modi releases the BJP's election manifesto 'Sankalp Patra' at the party headquarters, in New Delhi, Sunday.

The prime minister handed over the copies of the manifesto to representatives of the four broad groups -- Gareeb, Yuva, Annadata and Nari Shakti (GYAN) -- who are

beneficiaries of government schemes.

"In the last 10 years, BJP has implemented every aspect of its manifesto as a guarantee. BJP has restored the sanctity of the manifesto," Modi said at the release of the manifesto. "The need for a stable majority government increases at a time when the world is passing through uncertain times," the prime minister said, referring to the several conflicts the world was grappling with.

Three minor siblings charred to death

As house catches fire

Ambikapur, Apr 14:

Three minor siblings were charred to death after a fire broke out in a thatched house in Chhattisgarh's Surguja district, police said on Sunday.

The incident took place late Saturday night in Barima village under Kamleshwarpur police station limits when the children's mother went to a neighbour's house after lighting a mud stove, a police official said.

The woman, Sudhni Bai, lit the stove at around 9 pm and went to the neighbour's house to look for her another elder



Remains of the house which caught fire.

daughter, he said.

She returned at around 3 am and found the entire house gutted, the official said in a statement.

After being alerted, a police team reached the spot.

Prima facie, the stove flames seem to have led to the fire in the house, the police said, adding that further investigation is underway. The deceased

About the incident

The incident took place late Saturday night in Barima village under Kamleshwarpur police station limits when the children's mother went to a neighbour's house after lighting a mud stove. She returned at around 3 am and found the entire house gutted. Prima facie, the stove flames seem to have led to the fire in the house. Three minor siblings inside the house were charred to death.

have been identified as Kumari Gulabi (8), her sister Sushma (4) and brother Ram Prasad (2), the official said.

Army successfully conducts field trials

Of anti-tank guided missile system

New Delhi, Apr 14 (PTI):

The Indian Army has successfully carried out field trials of indigenously-developed man-portable anti-tank guided missile (MPATGM) weapon system, paving way for its induction into the force's armoury.

The weapon system has been designed and developed by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), officials said.

The overall system con-

sisted of the MPATGM, launchers, target acquisition device and a fire control unit.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh has complimented the DRDO and the Indian Army for the successful trials of the system, terming it as an important step towards achieving self-reliance in advanced technology-based defence system development.

The MPATG weapon system has been field evaluated in different flight configurations several times with an objective of proving the technology with high superiority, the defence ministry said.

AP CM injured in pelting of stones

During Vijayawada roadshow

Vijayawada, Apr 13 (PTI):

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy was injured in a pelting of stones on Saturday by some people during the YSRCP president's election campaign here, his office said.

The chief minister suffered a small cut on the left side of his temple during his "'Memanta Siddham' (We are all ready)" campaign bus tour.

"A stone struck the chief minister while he was acknowledging the crowd as part of his bus tour at Vivekananda School Centre in Singh Nagar,



Vijayawada," a statement from the Chief Minister's Office (CMO) said.

He has been taken to Vijayawada Government Hospital following doctor's advice, it said.

Woman killed, man injured in tusker attack

Raigarh, Apr 14:

A 56-year-old woman was killed and a man was injured in an elephant attack in Raigarh district on Sunday, an official said.

The incident took place at around 7:30 am near Jhingol village in Tamnar range when people were collecting 'mahua' fruits, Raigarh Division Forest Officer Stylo Mandavi said.

"A wild elephant arrived there and trampled Kalavati Rathiya to death. A man identified as Ramlal Rathiya (35) sustained injuries in the attack and has been hospitalised. The kin of the deceased were given instant

relief of Rs 25,000, while full compensation will be released after completion of formalities," Mandavi said.

"A herd of five elephants is roaming in Tamnar area and local villagers have been alerted. Forest personnel are monitoring the movement of the herd," the official added.

Districts like Surguja, Raigarh, Korba, Surajpur, Mahasamund, Dhamtari, Gariaband, Balod, Balrampur and Kanker routinely witness elephant attacks. As per the forest department, around 250 people have been killed in elephant attacks in the state in the last three years.

'Will sit on fast from June 5 if Maratha community does not get quota benefits'

Mumbai, Apr 14 (PTI):

Maratha activist Manoj Jarange on Sunday said he would undertake a fast from June 5, a day after Lok Sabha results are announced, if the Maharashtra government fails to give the community reservation benefits.

He was speaking to reporters after paying tribute to Babasaheb Ambedkar on the latter's 133rd birth anniversary.

Jarange slammed Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis and said police continues to register cases against Maratha quota agitators across the state even for incidents that took place four



Maratha activist Manoj Jarange Patil pays tribute to BR Ambedkar on his birth anniversary, in Mumbai, Sunday.

months ago. Fadnavis handles the home portfolio in the Eknath Shinde government. "If the government fails to give reservation benefits to the Maratha community, I will sit on

CM assures support...

Mumbai, Apr 14 (PTI):

Two motorbike-borne unidentified persons opened fire outside Bollywood superstar Salman Khan's house here early Sunday morning leading the police to enhance security around his residence and launch a search for the accused, an official said. The two persons fired four rounds outside the Galaxy Apartments in Mumbai's Bandra area, where the actor resides, at around 5 am and fled from the spot, the police official said. Security outside Khan's residence was stepped up and the police were collecting footage of the CCTV cameras in-

Firing outside Salman Khan's home in Mumbai

Security stepped up

Mumbai, Apr 14 (PTI):

Two motorbike-borne unidentified persons opened fire outside Bollywood superstar Salman Khan in the wake of firing outside his residence and assured support saying the state government would not allow anybody to take the law into their hands.

Speaking to reporters at Chaityabhoomi in suburban Dadar after paying respects to B R Ambedkar on the occasion of his birth anniversary, Shinde also said the firing incident was very unfortunate. "I spoke with the Mumbai police commissioner and actor Salman Khan and offered him our support. The firing incident is very unfortunate. I assure people that this government will not tolerate anybody trying to take the law into their hands," the chief minister said.

stalled near his house to identify the persons, he said. Local police, crime branch personnel and a team of forensic experts reached the spot to collect evidence and started a probe into the incident, the official said.

There was no official word from the police or Khan's family on whether the actor was present in the house at the time of the incident.

In March last year, an e-mail threatening Khan was received at his office following which the Mumbai Police registered an FIR against gangsters Lawrence Bishnoi and Goldy Brar and another person under Indian Penal Code sections 120-B (criminal conspiracy), 506-II

(criminal intimidation) and 34 (common intention).

The FIR was based on a complaint lodged with Bandra Police by one Prashant Gunjalkar, who according to police frequently visited the Bandra-based residence of Khan and ran an artist management company.

The e-mail stated that Khan must have seen an interview given to a news channel by Lawrence Bishnoi, and if not, he should see it. Addressing Gunjalkar, it said if Khan wants to close the matter, he should talk face-to-face with Goldy bhai, adding "there is still time but agli bar, jhatka dekhne ko milega" (you'll see something shocking next time), police earlier said.

India for de-escalation as Iran attacks Israel

New Delhi, Apr 14 (PTI):

Hours after Iran launched dozens of drones and missiles at Israel in a retaliatory attack, India on Sunday said it is concerned over escalating hostilities between the two sides that threaten regional peace and security.

Iran carried out the attack on Israel in response to a suspected Israeli strike on its consulate in Damascus on April 1 in which seven Iranian Revolutionary Guards personnel, including two generals, were killed.

In its reaction, India called for immediate de-escalation of the situation and return to the path of diplomacy. New Delhi said

its embassies in the region are in close touch with the Indian community in the region. "We are seriously concerned at the escalation of hostilities between Israel and Iran which threatens the peace and security in the region," the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said. "We call for immediate de-escalation, exercise of restraint, stepping back from violence and return to the path of diplomacy," it said. The MEA said India is closely monitoring the evolving situation in West Asia. "We are closely monitoring the evolving situation. Our Embassies in the region are in close touch with Indian community," it said in a statement.

Transport Deptt conducts surprise checking of school buses

151 school buses of 13 educational institutions inspected
Defects found in 11 buses; Rs 8500 fine imposed

Bhilai, Apr 14:

After the tragic bus accident of Kumhari, the Collector Richa Prakash Chaudhary gave instructions to the Transport Department and Traffic Police to conduct surprise inspection of school buses to ensure safe transportation of school students. Acting on the instructions, Regional Transport Officer SL Lakra and DSP (Traffic) Satish Thakur jointly conducted surprise checking of school buses at Police Ground Sector 06. 151 buses being used for transporting students of 13 schools of the district were checked. The objective of the vehicle checking camp was to ensure safe transportation of students. During the inspection camp, all the vehicles were registered for the inspection and thereafter, the documents of the school buses were checked by the Transport Department. They examined the vehicle registration, permit, fitness, insurance, PUC, road tax, driver's license etc. After this, the mechanical fitness of the vehicles was checked, which includes head light, brake light, parking light, indicator light, back light, meter, position of steering, condition of tyre, clutch, accelerator, position of seat, position of horn, wiper, front and rear reflectors etc. It needs to be mentioned here that as per the Supreme Court guidelines, the school buses should have GPS, CCTV camera, speed governor, horn, emergency window, school name, telephone number, driver's mobile number, first aid box, fire extinguisher, etc.



After inspection, the transport department issued challan against 11 school buses. Three buses were found without speed governor, 05 without fire extinguisher, 01 without wiper, 01 without indicator and 01 without camera. They recovered Rs 8500 fine from these vehicles. The schools were asked to rectify the defects and get the vehicles rechecked.

Vishnu Thakur, Transport Inspector, gave detailed information to the drivers about traffic signals, cautioned them not to be negligent while driving, etc. The Conductors were asked not to stand at the door and safely pick and drop the school children. They were advised not to consume any

intoxicant. Transport Inspectors Vishnu Thakur, Aruna Sahu, Transport Sub Inspector Shashikant Banchor, Jamil Chauhan, Hitesh Rao, Mahendra, Kamlesh Chandel, Lokesh Patil, Satendra Soni from Transport Department were present. Mechanical checking was done by KB Nage Inspector Traffic Zone Civic Centre, Sushil Pandey, Assistant Sub Inspector, Constable Tilak Sahu, Anupam Shukla, Rakesh Sahu and Ghanaram Nishad.

'Century Voting' cricket match for voting awareness

Bhilai, Apr 14:

District Administration Durg organized 'Century Voting' friendly cricket match to make citizens aware about the importance of voting. This match was played at Padmanabhpur Mini Stadium. The objective of this one-day cricket tournament was to sensitize the people of Durg about the importance of voting, especially in the upcoming Lok Sabha elections and appeal to vote on 7th May in Durg Lok Sabha constituency.

The match was played between Collector XI and Citizen XI teams. Citizen XI won the toss and elected to bat first. They scored 156 runs for the loss of five wickets in 15 overs. Chasing the target of 157 runs, Collector XI won this exciting contest by 1 wicket with one ball to spare. The match witnessed a total of three half-centuries and one hat-trick.

IG (Durg Range) RG Garg displayed all-round performance in this match. He played an innings of 51 runs with the help of boundaries and also took one wicket in three overs with a good



economy rate. On behalf of Citizens XI, Dr Aneesh and Dr Nitin Vaidya scored half-centuries in this match. On behalf of Citizen XI, UNICEF District Coordinator Shashank Sharma took four catches along with that of IG Garg. The last five balls were very interesting. Collector XI lost three wickets in this over. In the fifth ball, Uttam Dhruv collected the last one run for victory.

It was the administration's efforts to engage the community in voting awareness programs during the upcoming phase of Lok Sabha elections. Combining sports with civic duty, the district administration aims to inspire more participation in the voting process.

On behalf of Collector XI, Divisional

Commissioner Satyanarayan Rathore, IG RG Garg, SP Durg Jitendra Shukla, Additional Collector Arvind Ekka and District Deputy Election Officer Shri Bajrang Dubey, CEO District Panchayat Ashwini Dewangan, SDM Durg Mukesh Raote, Commissioner Durg Municipal Corporation Lokesh Chandrakar, SDM Patan Deepak Mukund, Deputy Collector Harivansh Miri, Deputy Collector Lavkesh Dhruv, Deputy Collector Mahesh Rajput, Deputy Collector Uttam Dhruv and other officials participated. In the Citizen XI team, distinguished citizens of the district participated under the leadership of senior journalist Rajendra Thakur.

Four ruffians held for attacking cops

Bhilai, Apr 14:

Police arrested four ruffians who vandalised the Emergency Response Vehicle of Dial 112 and assaulted and looted a police man at knife point.

ASP Sukhmandan Rathore informed that around 08:15 hrs on April 13, Dial 112 had received information regarding some suspicious boys, who were disassembling a bike in Amleshwar. The nearest ERV responded and Constable Pritam Singh Harivansh and driver Rupendra Yadav reached the spot near a cardboard factory in Amleshwar. The suspects tried to escape after spotting the cops. Constable Pritam managed to get hold of a suspect Pawan Nishad, a resident of Bajrangpara Amleshwar. Meanwhile, other boys returned back and attacked

the cops with a bat and knife. They looted a wrist watch from the constable, ransacked the ERV and escaped. Police interrogated the accused Pawan Nishad after which other accused were identified and arrested.

Police arrested the accused Khilesh Das Manikpuri (20) son of Sohag Das Manikpuri a resident of Durga Nagar, Amleshwar; Pawan Nishad (20) son of Chhotu Nishad a resident of Bajrangpara, Amleshwar; Manish Sahu (19) son of Om Prakash a resident of Durga Nagar Amleshwar, and Rupendra Sahu (23) son of Late Chandra Kumar Sahu a resident of Bajrangpara, Amleshwar. They were booked under the provisions mentioned in Section 294, 332, 506, 353, 394, 186, 427 of IPC and sections 25, 27 of Arms Act.

Online cricket betting racket busted; three held



Bhilai, Apr 14:

Police arrested three youths on charges of operating an online cricket betting racket. They were conducting this illegal activity through the 'Cricket Life Guru' App. They sold the link of this app through Instagram. The accused were nabbed red

handed while accepting bets during the match between Rajasthan Royals and Kings 11 Punjab.

Betting records worth crores were found in the mobile phones of the accused. Three Android mobile phones and Rs 20000 cash were seized from the possession of the accused.

ASP Sukhmandan

Rathore informed that in view of the ongoing IPL season, police had activated its network of informers to crack down on the people involved in illegal betting. In this sequel, police received a tip off regarding a suspect Chiranjeevi Bhatthi, who was providing the links of some mobile application

in Padmanabhpur area. Police nabbed the suspect and found betting records in his mobile phone. The Cricket Live Guru App was running on his mobile phone and betting was being conducted on the match between Rajasthan Royals and Kings 11 Punjab. During interrogation, he disclosed the names of the people who were behind this racket. Later, two other people involved in this racket were arrested.

The accused are identified as Manish Legwani (32) son of Paras Ram Legwani a resident of Anvati Vihar, Raipur; Mrityunjay Chandrakar (33) son of Late Togan Lal Chandrakar a resident of Adarsh Nagar Durg and Chiranjeevi Bhatthi (29) son of Deepak Bhatthi, a resident of Padmanabhpur.

SUV rams into truck; one killed

Bhilai, Apr 14:

A speeding SUV crashed into a truck in the wee hours of Sunday. A lady was killed while the SUV driver was fatally injured in the mishap. The incident occurred around 05:00 hrs on the bridge of River Sheonath at Pulgaon.

According to information, Sector 1 Bhilai resident Prashant Pandey (30) and a girl Meena Singh (28) were travelling from Rajnandgaon to Durg in the Hyundai Creta SUV. Around 05:00 hrs, their SUV collided with a truck coming from the opposite direction. Prashant and Meena suffered fatal injuries in this head-on collision. On information, a police team reached the spot



and the injured were shifted to a hospital. Meena Singh succumbed to her injuries while Prashant is recuperating in the hospital. His condition was stated to be critical. Police seized the vehicles and an FIR has been lodged against the truck driver.

BSP Collective pays tributes to Dr BR Ambedkar

Bhilai, Apr 14:

The Industrial Relations Department of SAIL-Bhilai Steel Plant, in association with the Contract Labor Cell and BSP SC/ST Employees Association, observed the Ambedkar Jayanti Programme at BSP-Higher Secondary School, Sector-6 on April 14, 2024. Anirban Dasgupta, Director I/c (SAIL-BSP) was the Chief Guest on the occasion. Dasgupta paid rich tributes to the eminent jurist, economist, social reformer, political leader, and the Architect of the Indian Constitution Bharat Ratna Dr Bhimrao Ambedkar on his Birth Anniversary. 'Naya Savera' Souvenir of BSP SC/ST Employees Association was released by the Dignitaries and Guests, on this occasion.

Samir Swarup, ED (Rowghat), Pawan Kumar, ED (P&A), BK Giri, ED (Mines), JY Sapkal, CGM



(Town Administration & CSR), Sandeep Mathur, CGM (Personnel), NK Banchhor, President (OA & SEFI), JN Thakur, GM (Pers-IR&CLC), Komal Prasad, President (BSP SC/ST Employees Association), and Vijay Kumar Ratre, Gen Sec (BSP SC/ST Employees Association) were present on this occasion along with Union Representatives, other Senior Officials, BSP-IR&CLC personnel, members of the Education Department, members of the BSP SC/ST Employees Association, students and Bhilai Citizens in large numbers.

The Ambedkar Jayanti

Programme started with the lighting of ceremonial lamp and garlanding of the Portrait of Dr BR Ambedkar by the Chief Guest and dignitaries. At the outset of the programme, BSP-School students, Samiksha Jha from BSP-SSS-X, and Shanaya Das from BSP-SSS-VII gave speeches in Hindi and English on the life and contributions of Dr BR Ambedkar.

Pawan Kumar, ED (P&A), in his address, stated that we often view Dr BR Ambedkar as a Dalit Leader, but Baba Saheb was a great visionary and social reformer who envisioned a society with everyone having equal rights irrespective of caste, creed and gender. Bharat Ratna Dr BR Ambedkar also contributed immensely to the education and property rights of women. We need to stay Educated, Organized, and United, to work for the development

of the society. Pawan Kumar said.

BK Giri, ED (Mines) stated that Bharat Ratna Dr Bhimrao Ambedkar's contribution to Indian society is unforgettable, it is due to him that we have the Constitution of India. Especially for the younger generation, who are the future of this country, we must teach them to come out of the discrimination based on caste, creed, and gender, and view every individual as a human being, Giri added.

Meritorious SC/ST Students including Namrata Mohe, Prerna Taramji, Namita, Ekta Dhruv and Meghraj Taramji were felicitated on this occasion. Dr Uday Dhabarde, ACO (M&HS) was felicitated for his film on the life of Dr BR Ambedkar, and the 'Ambedkar Award' was conferred to JN Thakur, GM (Pers-IR&CLC) on this occasion.

Komal Prasad,

President (BSP SC/ST Employees Association) stated that today we are celebrating the 133rd Birth Anniversary of Baba Saheb, and I am thankful to BSP management for their constant support and guidance to the Association. Vijay Kumar Ratre, Gen Sec (BSP SC/ST Employees Association) highlighted the achievements of the BSP SC/ST Employees Association and stated about the cooperation received from Bhilai Steel Plant.

At the outset Sandeep Mathur, CGM (Personnel) in his welcome address paid tributes to Dr Ambedkar by reiterating his contributions to the Indian Society.

The Ambedkar Jayanti Programme was completed by Supriyo Sen, from the SC&CA Department, while Sant Kumar Keshkar, GM (Instrumentation) proposed the Vote of Thanks.

National Fire Services Day observed at Bhilai Steel Plant

Bhilai, Apr 14:

The National Fire Services Day was observed by the Fire Services Department of SAIL-Bhilai Steel Plant, at the Central Fire Station, on April 14, 2024. Anirban Dasgupta, Director I/c (SAIL-BSP) was the Chief Guest on the occasion. Dasgupta paid tributes at Shaheed Smarak to the firemen who laid down their lives while protecting the life and property in the fire incident in the Mumbai Dockyard on April 14, 1944, along with all Firemen who lost their lives during their service earlier. The theme for National Fire Services Day 2024 is "Ensure Fire Safety, Contribute towards Nation Building".

S Mukhopadhyay, ED (Projects), AK Chakraborty ED (MM), Dr Ashok Kumar Panda, ED (F&A), Samir Swarup, ED (Rowghat), Pawan Kumar, ED (P&A), BK Giri, ED (Mines), Tapas Dasgupta, Acting ED (Works), were present on this occasion as Special Guests, along with CGM I/c's, CGMs, GMs, NK Banchhor, President (OA & SEFI), Parvinder Singh, Gen Sec (OA), Union Representatives, other Senior Officials, Plant personnel, family members of Fire Service personnel, and Bhilai Citizens in large numbers.

Anirban Dasgupta, Director I/c (BSP) in his address stated that special emphasis needs to be paid to the sensitive areas of the Plant which are vulnerable to fire incidents. Not only the employees of the Fire Services Department but also every individual working in the Plant



must have adequate training in fire prevention and handling the basic fire safety appliances. We should work diligently towards prevention of the outbreak of fire by ensuring systematic management and housekeeping of the workplace. Along with production, ensuring fire safety judiciously is an equally important task at the Plant's departments, Anirban Dasgupta said.

Tapas Dasgupta, Acting ED (Works) elaborated on the significance of fire safety in industries and all walks of life. We must sensitize people towards Fire safety and recognize the efforts of the Firemen who serve to save us round the clock, he said.

At the outset Vineet Pal Singh Dhama, Dy CFO (Fire Services) accorded Chief Guest Anirban Dasgupta, Director I/c (SAIL-BSP) an Inspection of the Parade. Two minutes of silence was observed for remembering the sacrifice of Firemen who lost their lives earlier. An Oath was taken by Firemen followed by a Guard of Honour to the Chief Guest.

PR Bhalla, CGM (Safety & Fire Services) gave the Welcome Address on this occasion, while BKMahapatra, Chief

Fire Officer presented the Annual report and enumerated the details of efforts taken to prevent accidents.

Chief Guest Anirban Dasgupta, Director I/c (SAIL-BSP), and respective Executive Directors present felicitated the firemen for their exemplary services and gave away prizes to winners of different competitions. Kishan Lal Dhurve and Sunil Kumar Singh, Firemen were declared the Best Firemen of the Year, while the MWRM Department of Plant was awarded the Best Fire Safety Awareness of the Year Award on this occasion.

Informative and interesting fire safety demonstrations including a Ladder drill, First aid firefighting demo, Electrical safety, Public Functions or Party fire, Cable tunnel, Coaching Classes Building fire, EV Charging Station fire, High expansion foam, and other firefighting demonstrations were displayed, which the audience watched enthusiastically.

Sarika Gahane, Fire Station Officer, and Pramod Rathore, Fireman cum Fire Engine Driver compered the programme while Sanjay B. Dhawas, Dy CFO (Fire Services) proposed the Vote of Thanks.

Classifieds

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Babasaheb made constitution of the country: Qureshi

Bhilai, Apr 14:

Former minister of Chhattisgarh state Badruddin Qureshi celebrated the occasion of the 133rd birth anniversary Babasaheb Dr Bhimrao Ambedkar at the statue near the Power House Overbridge. Sunil Kumar Ramteke, Samayal Sahu, Arun Singh were also present. Those present garlanded the life-size statue of Bhimrao Ambedkar.



the one who made constitution of India to run the country smoothly and this

Constitution gives equal rights to the people of every class and caste. Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar played an important role in the establishment of the Reserve Bank of India. On April 02, 1990 Dr Bhimrao Ambedkar was awarded Bharat Ratna posthumously.

Naeem Baig, Didar Bhai, Kannarao, Merik Singh, Tahir Bhai, Mubarak Bhai, Madhukar, Prakash, Venkatraman, Rajarao, Raju, Mahesh Pandit Bablu were present in the program.

Bike rally organized to make voters aware

Women form human chain in Arang, students encouraged on the way

Central Chronicle News

Raipur, Apr 14: Amid singing of "Jabo Sangi Matdaan Kare Bar" SVEEP bike rally was taken out from the Collectorate this morning to make the voters of Raipur Lok Sabha aware of their voting rights. After reaching Arang the rally returned to the Collectorate via Abhanpur. SVEEP Express was running ahead of it. About a thousand bike and scooter riders participated in the rally which was also joined by Expenditure Observers Ranvijay, Aasthanand Pathak and Additional Chief Electoral Officer Nilesh Kshirsagar Collector Dr Gaurav Singh.



Observers Pathak, Ranvijay, Nilesh Kshirsagar. Besides, SVEEP Express also accompanied the entire rally which started at around quarter to nine in the morning, and covered the distance of around 100 kilometers in around two and a half hours.

During this period, it passed through Nagar Panchayat and 24 villages connected to the highway through the capital and appealed to the voters there

to participate in voting as much as possible.

This rally followed its course through Telibandha of the capital through village Jora, Serikhedhi, Mandir-Hasaud, Chhatauna, Nawagaon, Umaria, Gujra, Lakhauli, Rashni, Baihar, Arang, Odka, Bhilai, Charoda, Tamasivni, Torla, Kathia, Thanaud, Sunderkera, Abhanpur, Jhanki, Kendri, Bendri, Bhatgaon, Mana and Temri. All the riders run-

ning in the rally were wearing helmets and SVEEP T-shirts in which the words 'Festival of Elections and Pride of the Country' were written.

Posters and photographs related to voter awareness were put up all around the Sweep Express, folk artists were riding in it. Apart from officers and employees, common citizens also participated enthusiastically in the bike rally carrying placards related to voter awareness.

We got our rights from the sacrifice of our freedom fighters: Pathak

"We all are fortunate to have the right to vote. To get this right, our ancestors and freedom fighters have fought many battles and carried out movements, only then we have got the right to vote. We all should use it actively", Observer Pathak said. He appealed to the people to come out of their homes on 7th May and exercise their franchise. Addressing the people, Additional Chief Electoral Officer in Arang, Nilesh Kshirsagar said that the appeal being made by Raipur district administration to the voters to vote more and more through bike rally was commendable. The Collector said on this occasion that the purpose of organizing such a rally at this time was to motivate maximum voting.

Jawans cast their vote at the Postal Ballot Facility Center

**● In Vidyajyoti School****Central Chronicle News**

Jagdalpur, Apr 14: Under the Lok Sabha Elections 2024, Postal Ballot Facility Center will be established at Vidyajyoti School for the employees of various de-

partments and police department personnel and officers doing duty on the polling day in Bastar, Chitrakote, Jagdalpur and partially Narayanpur assembly constituencies of Bastar district.

It is situated in the ground floor of Block 03. In this facility today on Sunday, the police depart-

ment personnel exercised their franchise through postal ballot. Postal Ballot Facility Center has been established in Vidyajyoti School for the employees of various departments, the employees are exercising their franchise through postal ballot every day as per their convenience.

Seminar on 'Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita' held

Central Chronicle News

Raipur, Apr 14: National Institute of Technology (NIT) organized an awareness seminar on "Dissemination of New Criminal Laws (BNS)" on the occasion of the 134th birth anniversary celebration of Dr BR Ambedkar.

Director of the Institute Dr. NV Ramana Rao eloquently discussed the evolution of criminal legislation, shedding light on recent reforms and the transition away from outdated British-era laws. He commended the government's proactive stance in revising the legal framework, emphasizing the necessity of aligning statutes with

contemporary societal needs. Dr. Rao's insightful remarks underscored the significance of adapting laws to reflect the dynamic nature of modern society, heralding a positive shift towards a more equitable and just legal system. Dr. Bhoopendra Karwande delved into the intricacies of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), shedding light on the paradigm shifts introduced by the new criminal laws. He candidly discussed the challenges inherent in the im-



plementation of these progressive statutes, acknowledging the complexities that arise during their execution. Furthermore, he underscored the paramount importance of upholding fundamental rights such as the right to freedom of person and human rights within the framework of these laws. Dr. Bhatt insights resonated with the audience, highlighting the enduring relevance of Ambedkar's legacy in shaping educational paradigms.

As part of the occasion,

a speech competition was held on the theme "The Greatness of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar", showcasing participants' reflections on the visionary leader's contributions. Ayush Mishra emerged victorious, claiming the top position with his insightful portrayal of Ambedkar's enduring legacy. Ansh Shrivastava secured the second position with his compelling discourse, while Manthan Ajit Ghodeswar's articulate presentation earned him the third prize. The competition not only celebrated Dr. Ambedkar's ideals, but also demonstrated the participants' appreciation for his monumental impact on society.

BJP candidate's wife seeks support by doing public relations

● In Karpavand market**Central Chronicle News**

Jagdalpur, Apr 14: Voting for Bastar Lok Sabha seat will be held on April 19. With only a few days left for voting, the election campaign is being seen in full swing. In the same sequence, in the meeting of BJP officials in Karpavand Mandal Pujaripara on Saturday, 25 workers of Garenga Panchayat joined BJP in front of Champa Kश्यap, wife of Bastar Lok Sabha BJP candidate



Mahesh Kश्यap. Champa Kश्यap welcomed them with garlands and BJP's stole. After this, all the BJP officials and workers visited Karpavand Haat market together and interacted with the public and sought support for BJP

candidate Mahesh Kश्यap. During this time, BJP officials also interacted with the public in Karpavand Haat market and sought blessings from the public to make BJP candidate Mahesh Kश्यap victori-

ous with huge margin by pressing the button on the Lotus flower print. During this, Mahesh Kश्यap's wife Smt. Chapa Kश्यap, Jitendra Panigrahi, Narayan Bisai, Parish Besra, Somsai Kश्यap, youth leader Neelabar Sethia, Sakuntala Kश्यap, Chameli Jiram, Satyabhavana Kश्यap, Navina Das, Damru Nag, Shobharam Bharti, Lakshmu Netam, Lokendra Nisad, Arjun Pandey, Ganesh Baghel, Narayan Yadav, Ashok Thakur, Sudraram Baghel, hundreds of other officials and workers were present.

Vaccination centre inaugurated at NTPC Lara

**Central Chronicle News**

Lara, Apr 14: Akhilesh Singh, HOP (Lara) inaugurated the vaccination centre at NTPC Lara hospital on 12th April 2024. This service will be functional in association with CHC, Pussore. With inauguration of this facility small

children will be benefited at large. For this service earlier they had to travel out side of Maitree Nagar township. The vaccination team will visit NTPC Lara on 2nd Friday of each month and vaccinate the small children as per National Immunization

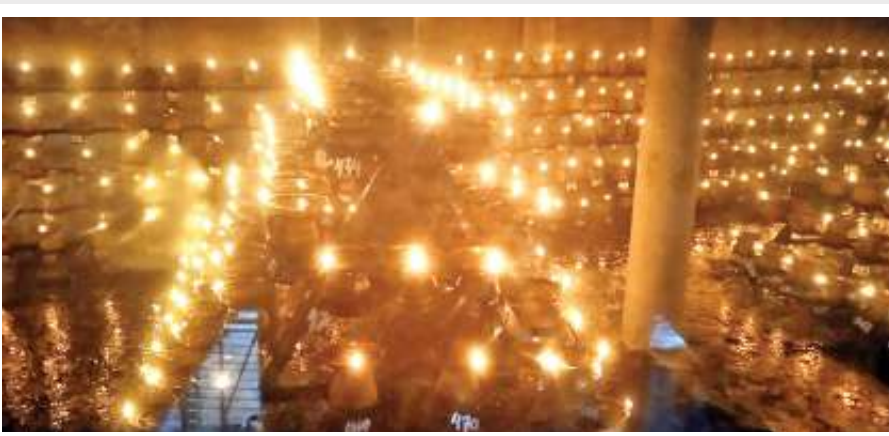
Schedule. On this occasion Smt Sangeeta Singh, President (Prerita Mahila Samiti), all GMS, Smt KP Tayde, CMO (Lara), representatives of union and association, doctor and paramedical staff of NTPC Lara and CHC Pussore were present.

Mahamaya temple witnessing surge in devotees

Glorious festivities as Adishakti Maa Mahamaya bedecked in special adornments on Panchami Tithi**Central Chronicle News**

Rajim, Apr 14: The sacred atmosphere of Kamal Kshetra reverberated with spiritual fervour and joyous celebrations as devotees gathered to honour Adishakti Maa Mahamaya on the auspicious occasion of Panchami Tithi. The revered temple of the Mother Goddess became a hub of devotion and festivity, adorned with special embellishments to mark the occasion.

The two-day celebration of Panchami Tithi commenced with devout worshippers observing fasts and offering prayers to the divine Mother Goddess. Coconut and chunari adorned the altar as symbols of reverence and devotion, while songs dedicated to Mata Seva filled the air, performed by dedicated service groups.



Devotees from far and wide thronged the temple precincts, offering coconuts and seeking the divine blessings of Mata Mahamaya. The traditional practice of offering Kalash at the Janwara plant further enriched the sacred rituals, culminating in a heartfelt homage to Goddess Shitala in the village. In the religious

city of Rajim, adorned with numerous temples dedicated to various deities, the festivities unfolded with grandeur and devotion. Singers from Jai Ma Sheetala Seva Samiti and local artists enchanted the audience with soul-stirring service songs, praising the glory of the Mother Goddess. The significance of Panchami

Tithi in the nine-day Navratri festival was highlighted through the rendition of Shringaar songs, captivating the hearts of devotees and eliciting joyous dances in celebration of divine grace and blessings. Amidst the festivities, the famous Mahamaya temple witnessed a surge in devotees, with the entire religious

city resounding with the echoes of devotion and chants in honor of the divine Mother. Vendor Valmiki Dhivar shared insights into the tradition of offering lotus flowers, symbolizing reverence for Lord Rajivlochan, enriching the spiritual ambiance of Kamal Kshetra. The melodic strains of Mandar, Dholak, and Changdi musical instruments added to the enchantment of the service songs, drawing devotees closer to the divine presence of Mata Mahamaya. Dedicated sevaks like Panda Yashwant Sonkar and Ganpat Patel expressed their commitment to serving the Mother Goddess through offerings and meditation, embodying the spirit of devotion and celebration during the auspicious Navratri festival.

Syahimudi High School students shine in voting awareness quiz

Central Chronicle News

Korba, Apr 13: In an inspiring display of civic engagement, students from Government High School Syahimuri in District Panchayat Katghora showcased their knowledge and commitment to democracy in a quiz competition centered on voting awareness. Organized under the guidance of Collector and District Election Officer Ajit Vasant, the event aimed to educate and empower the youth ahead of the Lok Sabha Elections 2024.



With fervor and enthusiasm, students from diverse backgrounds actively participated in various activities, including street corner meetings, dramas, rallies, and slogan-writing competitions, all geared towards promoting a cul-

ture of informed voting. The culmination of these efforts saw the inception of a general knowledge quiz, focusing on the importance of voting rights and responsibilities. In an impressive display of intellect and awareness, Piyush Manjhwari and Ganesh

emerged as the champions of the quiz competition, while Garima Mahant and Lakshmi Chauhan secured second place, followed by Aarti Manjhwari and Mandakini in third. The winners were honored with certificates, recognizing their dedication to civic education. Beyond the confines of the competition, students from Government High School, Lad, adorned their surroundings with vibrant voter awareness rangolis, spreading the message of 100% voter participation. Meanwhile, NSS students took to the walls of Gram Panchayat Lafa and Gram Panchayat Nagoi, using slogans to instill the importance of voting in the community. The event not only celebrated academic excellence but also served as a testament to the power of youth engagement in shaping the future of democracy. Through knowledge and action, these young minds are paving the way for a more informed and participatory society, ensuring that every voice is heard at the ballot box.

Vikrant claims 7 wickets to ensure Dhamtari victory

Raipur, Apr 14: Dhamtari defeated Dantewada by an innings and 50 runs in the Under 19 Plate Group Inter District Cricket Tournament being organized under the aegis of Chhattisgarh State Cricket Sangh (CSCS) here on Saturday. Batting first, Dhamtari scored 253 runs in first innings with the help of half centuries scored by Ashutosh Kश्यap (56 runs) and Lakshya Goswami (54 runs). In reply, the Dantewada team were bundled out for just 69 runs forcing a follow on. Vikrant Kश्यap claimed 4 wickets for Dhamtari whereas Shashan Sagar also claimed two wickets each for the team. Forced into follow on, the Dantewada team were bundled out for 134 runs in second innings. Veer Venkat Durgesh scored maximum 64 runs for the team whereas Vikrant again claimed 3 wicket for his team to ensure victory by an innings. In another match, played between Raipur and Janjgir-Champa at Rajnandgaon, the remaining play could not take place due to rain forcing both the team to settle with 1 point each.

District judge empowers community with legal awareness

● Judge Satyendra Sahu advocates for rights protection
● Legal experts stress importance of legal aid

Central Chronicle News

Korba, Apr 14: An enlightening legal awareness camp held at Anubhav Bhawan Balco Nagar Korba saw District Judge Satyendra Kumar Sahu championing the cause of informing women and senior citizens about their legal rights. Addressing the gathering, Judge Sahu emphasized the critical role of law in safeguarding individual rights and ensuring societal harmony. Sahu highlighted the importance of responsible behavior, urging the community to prioritize legal compliance in mat-

ters such as underage driving and marriage. He emphasized the necessity of driving licenses, vehicle insurance, and registration to prevent legal complications in case of accidents. Speaking on the legislative process, Judge Sahu underscored the meticulous consideration given to protecting individual rights in lawmaking forums like the Assembly and Parliament. He stressed the imperative of upholding law and order to preserve the rights of all citizens, from birth to death. In her address, Mrs. Garima Sharma, First Additional District and Sessions Judge Korba, shed light on the collaborative efforts of legal services authorities in providing aid to marginalized sections of society. She highlighted the role of ini-

tiatives like the National Lok Adalat in resolving court cases through conciliation agreements, particularly benefiting the weaker sections. Addressing women specifically, Sharma emphasized the importance of addressing physical abuse and seeking legal recourse when necessary. She reminded attendees of their right to receive a free copy of the FIR while reporting incidents to the authorities. The event witnessed the presence of esteemed legal experts and members of the community, including Paralegal Volunteers, Senior Advocates, and representatives from welfare committees and corporate social responsibility initiatives, underscoring a collective commitment to promoting legal awareness and access to justice for all.

Defeat Congress in all 11 LS seats including Bastar: Sai

Congress seems to be clearly losing, so they making unsavory comments

Bijapur, Apr 14:

Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai addressed a massive victory resolution rally in Bijapur of Bastar region. On this occasion, state president Kiran Singh Deo, cabinet minister Kedar Kashyap, former minister Mahesh Gada as well as BJP's Bastar Lok Sabha candidate Mahesh Kashyap and other senior BJP leaders, office bearers and a large number of party workers were present.

Addressing the huge crowd gathered from every nook and corner of Bijapur, Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai said that today the Congress is slowly heading towards its end and the Congmen themselves are engaged in finishing the Congress party. In the last 5 years, the Congress indulged in corruption and atrocities



on the public that people have ousted them from power. He said PM Modi's guarantee has now become the public's trust. Whatever PM Modi promises, he fulfils it. He has taken the country out of the feeling of despair, corruption, nepotism and insecurity and put it on a new high of hope, prosperity and development. To see Bastar-Bijapur keeping pace with Delhi on India's development map, we need to make Mahesh Kashyap and BJP win with huge margins - this is the appeal I have come with among you all today.

BJP State President Kiran Singh Deo said that we know the possibilities

of development and know both the pace and depth of development. What we have shown in the last 10 years, the Congress could not do even in many decades. To develop Bastar, to develop the Bijapur area, we need to drive away the anti-development Congress far from power and make the BJP win with a huge majority - this is my resolute request to all of you.

Minister Kedar Kashyap said that for many decades, considering the tribals as just backwards, a vote bank, the Congress has deceived them and has now made a person its candidate who himself is accused of corruption, conspiracy to



murder his own leaders, supporting Naxalism. The Congress is leaving no stone unturned to defeat itself and out of fear of defeat, they have become so maddened that they are even threatening to kill the Prime Minister. The people of Bastar are ready to teach them a lesson.

BJP candidate Mahesh Kashyap said that the life of the forest dwellers of Bastar has always passed amid difficult circumstances. They have always seen the suffering and pain of society. But the Bharatiya Janata Party and the respected Prime Minister, by giving a ticket to a son of a poor family like me, have shown that the BJP's eyes are on the

village, society and party's interest, on party's development, on whoever is engaged in service of society through the party, and sooner or later they definitely get a big opportunity. With all your blessings, I will reach the biggest temple of democracy and become the voice of the common people of Bastar. Along with the respected Modi ji, I will work for the development of Bastar and would keep pace with Vishnu Deo Sai, he said.

The former Chief Minister of the state, Dr. Raman Singh, has done commendable work for the development of the state and for the development of Bijapur. The road we come from is his con-

tribution. We should express our gratitude to the former Prime Minister, the revered Atal Bihari Vajpayee, for the Pradhan Mantri Sadak Yojana. Prime Minister Modi has further expanded this scheme. We should ask the Congress what was the picture of India before 2013 and what is it now? Today, there is an atmosphere of positivity, happiness about development in every section - this is all due to the respected Modi ji.

Minister Mahesh Gada said that for the last five years, the Congress government of Chhattisgarh and the Congress MP from Bastar have done everything to make Bastar worse, but for the development of Bastar, Modi ji has continued the work of providing housing, roads, electricity, railways and fair prices for forest produce. Now is the time to run Bastar on the double engine speed. I have come to appeal to all of you to fulfill the BJP's target of crossing 400 by making Mahesh Kashyap win.

Rural campaign rally by Brijmohan Agarwal



Agrawal engages with villagers, honours freedom fighter

Kharora, Apr 14:

Continuing his outreach efforts, Brijmohan Agarwal, the BJP candidate for the Raipur Lok Sabha seat and Chhattisgarh's Education, Culture, and Tourism Minister, embarked on a rural election campaign in Gram Panchayat Mura under the Dharsiwa assembly constituency.

Upon his arrival, Agrawal commenced the campaign by paying homage to the revered freedom fighter Pt. Lakhani Lal Mishra, garlanding his statue as a mark of respect. In a gesture of solidarity, retired IAS officer and BJP leader Ganesh Shankar Mishra urged the

villagers to support Agrawal's candidacy, emphasizing the importance of securing victory by a significant margin.

Seeking blessings for the prosperity of Chhattisgarh and a resounding victory in the upcoming Lok Sabha elections, Agrawal offered prayers at the Kuldevi Maa Mahamaya temple of the Mishra family. Addressing the assembled villagers, he reiterated the BJP's ambitious target of surpassing 400 seats and urged voters to cast their ballots in favor of the Lotus symbol. The event saw the presence of notable figures including current Raipur MP Sunil Soni, BJP working committee member Vidhan Mishra, and local BJP leaders, alongside hundreds of enthusiastic villagers from Mura.

Convenient centers facilitate postal voting access

Khairagarh, Apr 14:

In a move aimed at facilitating the democratic participation of officers, employees, and essential service category voters, the district administration, under the directives of Collector and District Election Officer Chandrakant Verma, has established four dedicated centers for voting via postal ballot for the upcoming Lok Sabha elections 2024.

To accommodate the diverse schedules of those on election duty, convenience centers have been set up at Kendriya Vidyalaya Khairagarh and Adarsh Government Girls Higher Secondary School on April 14th and 15th, as well as at

State Warehouse Pipariya on April 25th. These centers will operate from 9 am to 5 pm, ensuring accessibility for voters.

Similarly, arrangements have been made for police personnel, home guards, forest department security personnel, drivers, cleaners, FST, SST team members, and other employees stationed in the district. From April 19th to April 21st, a dedicated room in the inward and outward branch of the collector complex will serve as a voting center from 9 am to 5 pm. Additionally, voters can cast their postal ballots until 11:00 pm, ensuring flexibility for those with demanding work schedules.

Three nabbed with 8 stolen mobile phones

Dhantari, Apr 14:

The Dhantari Kotwali police nabbed three persons with stolen 8 mobile phones worth thousands. One Avinash Tekam was talking on his mobile keeping it atop the petrol tank of his bike standing opposite Shriram Hospital on April 10 at 8:30 in the night and all of sudden unknown thieves snatched it and ran away. On interrogation the police found three persons selling stolen mobile phones near Amedkar Chowk in Dhantari and nabbed all three. 4 stolen mobile phones were seized from Gajendra; 3 from Sanjay Gora and 1 from Gajendra Bandhe. The police has filed a case under section 379, 34 of IPC and taken all three into arrest.

EC harnesses technology for inclusive democracy

- Tech revolutionizes voter engagement
- Mobile Apps simplify access to election information

Fingeshwar, Apr 14:

Embracing the digital age, Lok Sabha elections have become more accessible and streamlined for voters, thanks to innovative mobile applications. Leveraging information technology, the Election Commission of India is revolutionizing the electoral process, aiming for greater inclusivity and transparency.

Arpita Pathak, the Returning Officer and SDM of Fingeshwar-



Rajim sub-division, highlighted the pivotal role of technology in enhancing voter participation and engagement. Recognizing the importance of citizen awareness and vigilance in strengthening democracy, Pathak underscored the Commission's commitment to leveraging new technologies for the benefit of all voters.

Mobile apps developed by the Election Commission have emerged as powerful tools, facilitating easy access to election-related information and services. These apps have not only increased voter participation but also enhanced convenience throughout the electoral journey.

The Voter Helpline App serves as a comprehensive tool, enabling voters to locate their assembly, polling booth, and voter list number by simply entering their EPIC number. For those unaware of their EPIC number, the app facilitates searching the voter list by providing personal details. Additionally, voters with registered mo-

bile numbers can download their e-EPIC directly from the app, while others can apply for necessary corrections to obtain it. Furthermore, the app facilitates requests for addition, deletion, transfer, or amendment of voter details. Users can also access information about candidates, view their submitted affidavits, and receive official updates on election results and lodge complaints regarding election-related violations.

In tandem with the Voter Helpline App, the cVIGIL app empowers citizens to report instances of Model Code of Conduct violations directly to the Election Commission. By enabling users to submit

photographs, videos, or audios of alleged violations, the app facilitates swift action against infractions such as illegal distribution of money or gifts, provocative speeches, unauthorized campaigning activities, and other breaches. Furthermore, the Saksham Mobile App aims to address the concerns of disabled voters by providing a dedicated platform for resolving their election-related challenges. Through the Saksham App, the Election Commission endeavors to streamline services and ensure inclusivity for all voters, reaffirming its commitment to a fair and transparent electoral process.

Professor falls victim to online scam

Mungeli, Apr 14:

A college professor became the victim of an online scam, losing Rs 68,970 in the fraudulent transaction. Raj Dewangan, an assistant professor at Sonkar College and a resident of Gandhi Ward, reported the incident to the police, prompting them to register a case under section 420 and initiate an investigation.

On March 17, Raj Dewangan encountered a troubling ordeal while attempting to purchase Campus North Plus running shoes through the Amazon app. Despite initially paying Rs 1196 for the product, a payment failure prompted him to make an additional payment of the same amount at 4:32 pm. Subsequently, Dewangan sought assis-



tance by searching for Amazon's customer care number on Google, where he found a number (917001720848) and made a call to inquire about the transaction. However, the purported customer care

representative instructed Dewangan to download the AvvalDesk App for further assistance.

Trusting the instructions provided, Dewangan downloaded the app and engaged with

the individual through AvvalDesk. Unfortunately, unbeknownst to Dewangan, the fraudster took advantage of the situation by hacking into his phone and initiating a screen

share option. Through this nefarious act, the scammer transferred a total of Rs 68,970 from Dewangan's SBI Mungeli account via Phone Pay. The transactions occurred at 5:22 pm and 5:24 pm, resulting in the fraudulent loss of Rs 61,458 and Rs 7,512 respectively.

Upon discovering the fraudulent activity, Dewangan took swift action by contacting the cybercrime helpline number 1930 to report the incident, initiating the necessary steps to address the situation and seek justice for the fraudulent acts perpetrated against him.

The applicant lodged a complaint about the incident at the City Kotwali police station. On which the police have registered a case under section 420 and are investigating.

DSP Traffic extends helping hand

Dhantari, Apr 14:

Giving an example of humanity, the DSP Traffic sent an injured in an accident near Arjuni Chowk to hospital for treatment at 9:00 in the night. Traffic DSP Manishankar Chandra during daily patrolling found a person in injured state getting hit from debris of a road divider near Arjuni Chowk and he immediately sent him to District Hospital Dhantari for treatment. To ensure that the accident is not repeated, he got the debris removed with the help of people nearby and gave an example of alert citizen and dedicated policeman. Traffic police also made an appeal to all the citizens not to leave injured persons in some accident and take them to nearest hospital or clinic or call 108 Ambulance for help.

Show cause notice issued to absent officers-employees in training

Mungeli, Apr 14:

In a proactive step to ensure the integrity of the electoral process, show cause notices have been issued to 41 officers and employees who were absent during the first phase of training for polling parties ahead of Lok Sabha elections 2024.

Under the guidance of Collector and District Election Officer Rahul Dev, the training aimed to equip officers and employees with the necessary skills to conduct elections in a transparent and peaceful manner. However, the absence of 41 individuals during the training sessions prompted the district administration's serious concern among election authorities.

Deputy District Election Officer Maneka Pradhan confirmed the issuance of

show cause notices to the absentees, emphasizing the importance of their attendance in compliance with electoral guidelines. The training sessions, conducted from April 2 to 4 and April 6, were held at Swami Atmanand English Medium School in the district headquarters and Government Higher Secondary School in Gram Panchayat Karhi.

Pradhan further highlighted that failure to provide a satisfactory response to the notices would result in appropriate action as prescribed by the Election Commission. This proactive approach underscores the district administration's commitment to upholding standards of accountability and ensuring the smooth conduct of free and fair elections.

Mungeli district sends nine players to prestigious Chess event

Mungeli, Apr 14:

The excitement of competitive chess reaches new heights as the Age 17 Boys-Girls State Level FIDE Rating Chess Championship kicks off in Durg from April 12 to 14. Proudly representing Mungeli district, a total of nine skilled players have earned the opportunity to showcase their talent on this esteemed platform.

In the girls' category, participants include Sanjeevani Kurre, Soumya Singh Rajput, and Ankita Ghritalhare, while the boys' contingent comprises Piyush Sahu, Rudra Shukla, Nagendra Tandon, Praveen Kumar Kashyap, Yash Sharma, and Anshul Sharma. Their

selection is a testament to their outstanding performance in district-level competitions, earning them well-deserved recognition.

Under the guidance of coach Omprakash Vande, with support from managers Kamat Prasad Kurre and Suryakant Sharma, these young athletes are prepared to demonstrate their strategic prowess and determination. Their journey is also buoyed by the unwavering encouragement and support from local officials, including District Chess Association Chairman Vijay Verma, President Subodh Kumar Singh, and Vice President Ashish Mishra, along with other esteemed members.

BJP's promises are mere rhetoric, just like Modi's guarantees: Sitakka

- Every poor woman will get Rs 1 lakh per year if Congress forms govt at the Centre
- Kawasi Lakhma addressed the rally in Madded over mobile phone

Bijapur, Apr 14:

On Friday, Telangana Government's Minister for Panchayat and Rural Development and Women & Child Development, Dasari Anusuriya (Sitakka) was on a one-day election tour of the Bhopalpatnam area. During this, she addressed public meetings in Naronapalli and Dammur villages of



Bhopalpatnam and while seeking votes for the Congress party and its Bastar Lok Sabha candidate Kawasi Lakhma, she said 'Kawasi Lakhma' is the voice of Bastar. She appealed to voters to elect the 'voice of Bastar' Kawasi Lakhma with a huge mandate to take Bastar's voice to Delhi. Minister Dasari

Anusuriya (Sitakka) said that if the Congress government is formed at the Centre, the Congress party guarantees to give Rs 1 lakh per year to every poor woman in the country. She further said that after the Congress government is formed, 30 lakh vacant government posts at the Centre will be filled and loans of farmers

across the country will be waived off. In her address, Minister Anusuriya said that ever since the Modi government came to power in the country, inflation has peaked with prices of petrol, diesel, domestic gas and food items skyrocketing. The common man is suffering from inflation and GST. The Modi government

has not given any relief to the people in the last ten years, instead the Modi government and BJP have worked to hand over the country's industries to their capitalist friends Adani and Ambani. Therefore, it is necessary to uproot such a government. Sitakka further said that there is no guarantee of Modi's guaran-

tees, promises like giving two crore jobs to the youth every year and depositing 15 lakh rupees in everyone's account are mere rhetoric, just like Modi's guarantees.

Kawasi Lakhma addressed the public meeting in Madded over mobile phone and sought votes for the Congress party and himself.

Iran's attack on Israel raises fears of a wider war

The unprecedented attack by Iran on Israel early Sunday ratcheted up regional tensions, confirming long-held fears about the Israel-Hamas war spiraling into a broader conflagration. But Iran, Israel, the United States and Hamas also walked away with some gains.

● **But all sides have also scored gains**

Tel Aviv (Israel), Apr 14 (AP):

Israel's response could restore faith in its military

As more than 300 drones and missiles headed toward Israel in the early hours of Sunday, the country was able to successfully put to the test its aerial defense array, which, along with help from allies, blocked 99 per cent of the projectiles and prevented any major damage.

By contrast, Israel's military had suffered a bruising defeat at the hands of a far less equipped enemy when Hamas stormed from Gaza into Israel on October 7. That was a major blow to Israel's image as a regional military powerhouse and shattered any sense of invincibility. The response to

Iran shows off its might

Iran vowed repeatedly that it would respond to an apparent Israeli strike on an Iranian diplomatic compound in Damascus on April 1 that killed two generals. Sunday's assault allowed Iran to show to its citizens that it won't stand by when its assets are attacked and that it was serious when it threatened revenge. With its strike, Iran

was able to exhibit its fierce firepower, instill fear in some Israelis and disrupt the lives of many through school cancellations. But with little damage actually caused in Israel, Iran might hope that any response will be measured. Several hours after it launched the drones and missiles, Iran said the operation was over.

Iran's attack could be what restores faith in the country's military, even as its forces are bogged down in Gaza, more than six months after Israel declared war on Hamas there.

Israel has also boasted about the coalition of forces that helped it repel the Iranian assault. It's a much-needed show of support at a time when Israel is at its most isolated be-

cause of concerns surrounding its conduct during the war against Hamas, including a worsening humanitarian crisis and a staggering death toll in Gaza.

Hamas may benefit from Iran's direct involvement

Hamas, which is backed by Iran, welcomed the strike on Israel. Since launching its October 7 attack,

The United States stood by Israel

The US was a key player in repelling the assault, demonstrating to its allies around the world the power and reliability of American support.

Now, as Israel mulls how and whether to re-

spond, that alliance will be put to the test, with the Biden administration seeking to exert its leverage on Israel and prevent it from carrying out a response that might worsen the conflict.

Hamas had hoped that regional partners might come to its assistance and drag Israel into a broader war. While some have done — including the Iranian-backed Hezbollah in Lebanon and Yemen's Houthis — Iran had not directly entered the fray until Sunday.

Hamas could hope that the attack is the first salvo in deeper Iranian engagement in the war in Gaza. It also could hope

that violence in the West Bank, where an Israeli teen was killed and settlers rampaged in Palestinian towns, continues to heat up.

At the very least, Iran's attack may have emboldened Hamas to dig in its heels in current negotiations over a cease-fire, hoping the increased military pressure on Israel might lead it to accept the militant group's harder-line terms for a deal.

ISRAELI MILITARY NAVAL SHIP PATROLS



A surfer waits for wave while an Israeli military naval ship patrols the Mediterranean sea off the coast of Hadera, Israel, Sunday, April 14, 2024.

Singapore condemns Iranian attack on Israel

● **SIA-Scout not flying over Iranian airspace**

Singapore, Apr 14 (PTI):

Singapore on Sunday condemned the aerial attacks on Israel by Iran, saying it could exacerbate tensions and further destabilise an already tense region. Iran launched dozens of missiles and drones from its territory toward Israel in an unprecedented five-hour strike in response to an attack on its diplomatic premises in the Syrian capital Damascus on April 1. "These escalating attacks exacerbate tensions and further destabilise an already tense region," the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said here.

"Singapore remains deeply concerned about the volatile situation in the Middle East, and the continuing danger of the

war in Gaza triggering a wider regional conflagration," said the statement. Singapore calls on all parties to exercise maximum restraint and avoid escalatory actions.

Referring to the ongoing war in Gaza, which broke out on October 7, 2023, following Hamas' attack on Israel, the ministry said: "The focus should be on securing an immediate humanitarian ceasefire; the immediate and unconditional release of hostages; and the immediate, safe and unhindered delivery of humanitarian assistance to affected civilians throughout Gaza."

The Gaza war was sparked by Palestinian militant group Hamas' attack on Israel, which saw 1,200 people killed and 253 taken hostage, according to Israel. About 130 are still reportedly being held hostage in Gaza.

SHAKIRA, BIZARRAP



Shakira performs with Bizarrap during the first weekend of the Coachella Valley Music and Arts Festival at Empire Polo Club on Friday, April 12, 2024, in Indio, Calif.

Commit to presidential debates during 2024 campaign

● **News organisations' urge to Biden, Trump**

New York, Apr 14 (AP):

Twelve news organisations on Sunday urged presumptive presidential nominees Joe Biden and Donald Trump to agree to debates, saying they were a "rich tradition" that have been part of every general election campaign since 1976.

While Trump, who did not participate in debates for the Republican nomination, has indicated a willingness to take on his 2020 rival, the Democratic president has not committed to debating him again.

Although invitations have not been formally issued, the news organisations said it was not too early for each campaign to say publicly that it will participate in the three

presidential and one vice presidential forums set by the nonpartisan Commission on Presidential Debates.

"If there is one thing Americans can agree on during this polarised time, it is that the stakes of this election are exceptionally high," the organisations said in a joint statement. "Amidst that backdrop, there is simply no substitute for the candidates debating with each other, and before the American people, their visions for the future of our nation."

ABC, CBS, CNN, Fox, PBS, NBC, NPR and The Associated Press all signed on to the letter.

Biden and Trump debated twice in 2020. A third debate was cancelled after Trump, then president, tested positive for COVID-19 and would not debate remotely.

Asked on March 8

whether he would commit to a debate with Trump, Biden said, "it depends on his behaviour." The president was visibly miffed by his opponent in the free-wheeling first 2020 debate, at one point saying, "will you shut up?"

Trump campaign managers Susie Wiles and Chris LaCivita said in a letter this past week that "we have already indicated President Trump is willing to debate anytime, any place and anywhere — and the time to start these debates is now."

They cited the seven 1858 Illinois Senate debates between Abraham Lincoln and Stephen Douglas, saying "certainly today's America deserves as much." The Republican National Committee voted in 2022 to no longer participate in forums sponsored by the Commission on Presidential Debates.

Winter session of Nepal's Parliament prorogued

Kathmandu, Apr 14 (PTI):

Nepal Parliament Speaker Devyaj Ghimire on Sunday announced that the current session of the House

of Representatives will be prorogued from midnight, amidst a tussle between the ruling coalition and the opposition over several issues. Ghimire announced this during Sunday's Parliament session, reading out a letter from President Ramchandra Paudel to this effect.

During the meeting, he

informed lawmakers about the work carried out by the House of Representatives — the Parliament's lower house — in the current session that started on January 16. The council of ministers on Friday decided to recommend the President to end the winter session of the federal parliament with effect from Sunday midnight. The decision to end the Parliament session follows a series of obstructions lately due to disputes between the ruling and opposition parties.

Germany's Scholz arrives in China on a visit marked by trade tensions and Ukraine conflict

Beijing, Apr 14 (AP):

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz arrived in China on Sunday on a visit focused on the increasingly tense economic relationship between the sides and differences over Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Scholz's first destination was the industrial hub of Chongqing, where he and his delegation of ministers and business leaders were to visit a partially German-funded company and other sites in the vast city, which is a production base for

China's auto and other industries.

Scholz is also scheduled to visit the financial hub of Shanghai during his three-day visit, before travelling to the capital, Beijing, to meet with Chinese leader Xi Jinping and Premier Li Qiang.

German companies such as BMW and Volkswagen are highly reliant on the Chinese market, but Beijing's support for Russia creates frictions with the West.

Germany's economy has benefited from

China's demand for investment and manufactured items from cars to chemicals, but those ties have frayed amid increasing competition from Chinese companies and tightened regulations. Political interference has also been blamed for a sharp drop in foreign investment.

German companies have argued they face unfair market barriers in China and the government has pushed for a policy of "de-risking" to reduce reliance on the Chinese market and suppliers.

State Bank of Pakistan repays USD 1bn in Eurobonds

Karachi, Apr 14 (PTI):

The State Bank of Pakistan has repaid USD 1 billion in Eurobonds as the cash-strapped country prepares for a new long-term bailout from the IMF to help manage its external financing needs and economic recovery, a media report said here on Sunday.

Pakistan's central bank announced that it met the dollar bond payment on Friday for the 10-year bond launched in 2014 maturing this month. Ahead of the April 15-20 meetings of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank in

Washington DC, Pakistan government has decided to formally approach the IMF for a medium-term Extended Fund Facility (EFF) with the possibility of augmenting through climate finance. The Eurobonds repayment comes amid Asian Development Bank's (ADB) apprehension that Pakistan's economic outlook remains uncertain.

"The SBP has successfully executed the repayment of USD 1 billion Pakistan's International Bond on April 12, 2024 (principal plus interest). The payment was made to the agent bank for onward distribution to the bond-

holders," the Bank said in a statement on Saturday. This bond has rallied by 84 per cent so far this year, The News International said on Sunday quoting the Bank statement.

"In response to growing worries, the country's assets came under pressure last year when its foreign exchange reserves dropped below USD 3 billion in February 2023 due to the delayed IMF programme. This stoked concerns about a possible bond payment default," it said, adding that the country managed to secure a USD 3 billion IMF standby arrangement last summer.

42ND HONG KONG FILM AWARDS



The cast and crew from the movie Time Still Turns The Pages pose for photos during the red carpet for the 42nd Hong Kong Film Awards in Hong Kong, Sunday, April 14, 2024.

India gifts 101 vehicles to various organisations in Nepal

Kathmandu, Apr 14 (PTI):

India on Sunday donated 35 ambulances and 66 school buses to various organisations across Nepal, enhancing the local infrastructure in the health and education sectors. Indian Ambassador to Nepal Naveen Srivastava handed over the vehicles to the Nepalese officials in the presence of Finance Minister Barshaman Pun at a ceremony.

Out of 101 vehicles, two ambulances were handed over on location in the earthquake-affected Jajarkot and West Rukum districts by the representative of the Embassy of

India in the presence of district officials and local residents, a statement from the Indian Embassy here said.

"This donation, part of a longstanding initiative coinciding with India's national celebrations, underscores the deep-rooted partnership between India and Nepal, aimed at fostering development and strengthening bilateral relations through improved access to essential services," the statement said.

Finance Minister Pun, in his remarks, appreciated India's various ongoing developmental projects in Nepal and ex-

pressed that these will strengthen people-to-people connectivity and bilateral relations between the two countries. Since 1994, India has gifted 1,009 ambulances and 300 school

buses across Nepal, including those gifted on Sunday. The ambulances and school buses are gifted on the occasion of Independence Day and Republic Day.

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CENTRAL Chronicle

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Opinion Echoes

Voter Priorities and Political Narratives

The recent pre-poll survey by the Centre for Study of Developing Societies (CSDS) has shed light on the focal concerns dominating the minds of voters as the Lok Sabha elections approach. Unemployment and rising prices have emerged as pivotal issues, captivating the attention of both citizens and political pundits alike. However, it would be imprudent to hastily generalize that these concerns hold equal sway across all states. Indeed, the intricate tapestry of voter decision-making is woven with threads of diverse perceptions on myriad issues and interpretations of development paradigms. Political strategists, both within ruling establishments and opposition factions, deftly weave new narratives and promises to sway public opinion in the run-up to elections, reshaping the electoral landscape. The contours of employment have undergone a significant transformation in the wake of the neo-liberal economy and globalization. Traditional notions of secure, long-term employment have yielded to a dynamic ecosystem where skill-based opportunities proliferate, transcending the confines of conventional sectors. The burgeoning gig economy, characterized by freelance and project-based work, has ushered in a new era of employment dynamics, particularly resonating with the aspirations of the youth. Moreover, flagship government initiatives aimed at bolstering infrastructure and social welfare programs have engendered employment avenues, especially in rural hinterlands. The engagement of daily wage and seasonal workers in diverse projects underscores the nuanced nature of employment patterns, challenging the binary classification of employment and unemployment. Amidst contrasting narratives, statistical data presents a nuanced perspective on employment trends. While government statistics indicate a rising trend in the worker population ratio, the CSDS survey underscores prevalent sentiments of job insecurity among a significant segment of the populace. This dichotomy underscores the complexity of the issue and cautions against dismissing unemployment as a non-issue, especially in the electoral arena. For political stakeholders, navigating the terrain of electoral discourse demands a nuanced understanding of regional dynamics and emotive triggers. In regions like the northeast, issues of identity and geopolitics often overshadow conventional concerns like unemployment and price rise, shaping voter perceptions and priorities. The specter of rising prices looms large on the electoral horizon, particularly resonating with the middle class grappling with inflationary pressures. Government interventions, though offering temporary respite through cash payouts and subsidized essentials, are perceived as inadequate in stemming the tide of escalating prices. As the electoral juggernaut gathers momentum, political actors must navigate the labyrinthine terrain of voter sentiments with acumen and astuteness. Acknowledging the multifaceted nature of voter priorities and the evolving contours of employment and inflation is imperative for crafting resonant political narratives and securing electoral fortunes.

AI in Education

Opportunities and Challenges

Dr. Krishna Kumar vepakomma



Artificial Intelligence (AI) is rapidly reshaping education, presenting both opportunities and challenges for educators and learners worldwide. AI presents educators with the chance to improve their teaching methods by providing personalized learning experiences and streamlining administrative tasks.

With the help of AI-powered tools, teachers can customize lessons according to each student's requirements, offer prompt feedback, and simplify administrative duties. Moreover, AI assistants empower students to obtain comprehensive support and information, promoting independent learning and problem-solving abilities beyond conventional classroom hours. Educating students about AI is essential for fostering digital literacy and critical thinking abilities. A fundamental grasp of AI systems allows students to interact with technology in a responsible, ethical, and secure manner. Integrating AI education into the curriculum empowers educators to equip students with the knowledge and skills needed to navigate the digital realm confidently. This approach enables students to become informed users and innovators in the field of AI technology. India's leading position in the global education sector is highlighted by its seamless integration of AI, which is transforming traditional teaching methodologies into personalized learning experiences. With an extensive network of higher education institutions, India showcases remarkable potential in shaping the future of education. As AI continues to advance, it holds the potential to enhance educational outcomes for students globally by combining the strengths of technology and educators. Yet, the AI gap remains a challenge, threatening to widen the disparity between privileged and underprivileged learners even further. As AI becomes integral to education, ethical concerns about transparency, fairness, and accountability heighten. Educators must manage the dual goals of leveraging AI for better learning outcomes while preserving academic integrity and ensuring equitable access. Clear guidelines and promoting responsible AI use can make education innovative and ethical. Artificial Intelligence stands ready to transform education, presenting unparalleled prospects for personalized learning, improved teaching methodologies, and global cooperation. However, harnessing AI's full potential in education requires a united effort to address ethical challenges, bridge the AI gap, and empower learners to navigate the digital age with integrity. Embracing AI as a catalyst for change in education can pave the way for a future where every student has the opportunity to thrive and make meaningful contributions to a better world.

Professor & Principal (Retd.) & Newspaper Columnist

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

COCA LEAVES HARVESTING



Farmers from the Yungas region harvest coca leaves near Trinidad Pampa, a coca-producing area in Bolivia.

Smart Digital Strategies Can Enhance SME's Future Rediness



SUNIL GOYAL



Digitalization plays an instrumental role for small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs), with a positive impact on economic growth. Access and readiness for emerging tech (or the 'Fourth Industrial Revolution') requires overcoming digital challenges, bucking the trend towards low tech adoption and mitigating talent gaps. Embracing technology would help SMEs lower barriers to entry, attract talent and gain productivity and efficiency. SMEs play a vital role in the global economy, contributing up to 70% to employment and GDP. However, 67% of SMEs and mid-sized businesses are fighting for survival. This is partly because SMEs face intense short-term business pressures, limited expertise and resource constraints, which hinder their technology adoption. Over 85% of organizations recognise increased adoption of new technologies and expanding digital access as key drivers of transformation. Digital infrastructure has been identified as a significant driver of long-term financial growth and adaptive capacity for SMEs.

Staying up-to-date with these trends is crucial for SMEs to remain competitive in the evolving digital landscape. While this may involve a significant upfront cost in the medium to long term, investments in digitalisation can enable SMEs to gain valuable

insights from their data, increase the efficiency of their operations, make cost savings, improve competitiveness and create greater opportunities for scalability and growth potential.

Despite their economic significance, SMEs have experienced a decline in their contribution to GDP. SMEs acknowledge the importance of keeping up with technological and innovation demands: approximately 25% of SMEs cite this as a top challenge. Additionally, 64% of SMEs find it challenging to effectively use the data from their systems and 74% struggle to maximise the value of their company's data investments. New service-based models offer companies access to and use of various technologies, infrastructure or software as services, without the need to purchase and manage the underlying technologies themselves. These models can offer more cost-effective options and allow SMEs to take advantage of access to new technologies by paying a fee or subscription for the use of these services.

However, SMEs still face barriers, such as limited financial and human resources, inadequate access to essential infrastructure and the absence of long-term vision and strategies regarding data management, privacy protection and cybersecurity. Additionally, the recently published

Data Unleashed: Empowering SMEs for Innovation and Success report finds that SMEs face obstacles and constraints around their lack of data policies and clarity on specific roles and responsibilities, extracting value from data, limited IT infrastructure and accessing global markets. Multistakeholder collaboration enables SMEs to overcome these barriers and build networks with other sectors to access skills and new technologies, share best practices, navigate the regulatory environment for data management, both domestically and internationally, and ensure their data policies are compliant with industry standards. Additionally, partnerships with technology providers and educational institutions could inject valuable and cost-effective tools and capability building. Cross-sector collaboration is essential, as SMEs play a critical role as partners and intermediaries within any supply chain.

The latest Future of Jobs report, which surveyed 803 companies across 27 industries and 45 global economies on job trends, states that digital platforms and apps are the technologies most likely to be adopted by the organizations surveyed and 86% of companies expect to incorporate them into their operations in the next five years. Moreover, the digital transition of SMEs speeds up productivity growth and bridges inequalities among people, firms and locations, as well as reducing human resources, saving time and improving the overall quality of outputs. E-commerce and digital trade are expected to be adopted by 75% of businesses, providing SMEs with new avenues for growth and market access. The incorporation of technology in trade brings opportunities and challenges for small companies. Understanding and leveraging these advancements can enhance efficiency, expand market reach and foster growth for SMEs. As

the Fourth Industrial Revolution progresses, certain job roles will decline while others, such as AI and machine learning specialists, data analysts/scientists and digital transformation specialists, will grow in demand. This will increase the need for upskilling and reskilling programmes to prepare the workforce to work with these technologies, as well as close the potential skills gap, due to the increased demand for technology-skilled labour.

Policy-makers and business leaders should work together to increase talent availability by providing sufficient funding for reskilling and upskilling, improve school systems (shown to attract skilled talent by a greater fraction of SMEs), change immigration laws on foreign talent, as well as provide flexibility on hiring practices and setting wages through taxes and other incentives. These policies will fill in the skills gap, create new talent and provide SMEs with the opportunity to play a bigger part in the Fourth Industrial Revolution. By recognising the importance of digitalisation, investing in appropriate infrastructure and fostering a culture of innovation, SMEs can position themselves to thrive. By providing access to cutting-edge technologies, fostering collaboration and offering support for innovation, the Government can empower thousands of SMEs to welcome digital transformation and thrive in the modern business landscape. Embracing smart digital strategies, sustainability practices and talent development can enhance SMEs' future readiness and ensure their survival in an increasingly competitive environment.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Mary Kom Steps Down

Chungneijang Mary Kom Hmangte, renowned as Mary Kom, relinquishes her role as India's chef-de-mission for the 2024 Paris Olympics. The six-time world champion boxer, adorned with accolades like Padma Bhushan, Arjuna Award, Padma Shri, and Rajiv Gandhi Khe Ratna Award, cites personal reasons for her decision. Expressing regret, the 41-year-old emphasizes her commitment to serving her country but finds herself unable to fulfill the prestigious responsibility. Indian Olympic Association President, Pilavullakandi Thekkeparambil Usha, acknowledges and respects Kom's choice, assuring her of continual support. As speculations arise, her abrupt resignation prompts introspection into her circumstances. Meanwhile, there is anticipation for a suitable successor to be swiftly identified to fill her role for the Paris Olympics.

Bidyut Kumar Chatterjee, Faridabad

Festive Eid

Eid-ul-Fitr, symbolizing the end of Ramadan, fills India with jubilation on April 11. Mumbai alone witnesses over five lakh Muslims adorning their best attire, flocking to 800-plus mosques for special Eid congregational prayers, expressing gratitude. Post-prayer, embraces and warm wishes of 'Eid Mubarak' echo joyously. This festival concludes a month of rigorous fasting from dawn till dusk, even abstaining from water. Following the Eid prayers, festivities commence as families, friends, neighbors, and communities indulge in the delectable 'sheerkorma,' a sweet confection of milk, vermicelli, and dry fruits, symbolizing togetherness and celebration.

Muhammad Salim, Mumbai

Climate Concerns

With temperatures fluctuating between extremes, our region experiences scorching heat reaching 42 degrees followed by sudden downpours. These erratic climate patterns highlight the pressing need for action against climate change. It's crucial for citizens to prioritize sustainable practices and advocate for environmental policies. Neglecting this responsibility risks worsening the impacts of rising temperatures. Government intervention is vital to mitigate these effects in Raipur and other districts, ensuring the well-being of its residents. Immediate action is imperative to protect our city.

MK Nair, Raipur

Glamorizing Vigilantism

Pop culture and movies are culpable for glorifying extrajudicial killings, fostering a culture where such encounters are celebrated, particularly in states like Uttar Pradesh. The lengthy and arduous legal process, coupled with the significant resources required for criminal conviction, disheartens many. This reluctance to expend funds on criminal confinement prompts authorities and police to resort to vigilantism, bypassing due process. The romanticized notion of swift justice perpetuated by media influences public perception, undermining the rule of law. It's imperative to address this dangerous trend and uphold the principles of justice and accountability in society.

Shiv Kumar Mishra, Raipur

Chaitra Navratri is a wonderful confluence of spirituality and science



Rajender Kumar Sharma
Sr. Columnist, Dehradun,
Uttarakhand

In this scientific age, it has been proved on the basis of facts that Hindu religious beliefs are completely based on scientific basis. Therefore, they are placed in the category of eternal and Sanatan. The rituals and fasting done in Navratri to get the blessings of nine forms of Maa Durga are completely based on scientific grounds.

Navratras cannot be considered mere superstition and figment of

imagination. Fasting is recognized as a method of treatment in naturopathy. Two Navratris in every year have special significance. One Navratri comes at the junction of the end of autumn and the beginning of summer, which concludes with Ramnavami. These are called Chaitra Navratri. The other Navratri is celebrated at the junction of the end of summer and the beginning of autumn, which concludes with Ramnavami and Dussehra. These are called Sharadiya (winter) Navratri.

Both the Navratris are related to the change of seasons. Microbiologists believe that during the transition period of seasons, the growth of disease causing microorganisms (bacteria and viruses) increases rapidly and during this period, there is high risk of infection by microorganisms in food items, etc. Such contaminated food invites diseases. If at this time we control our senses, follow purity, sanctity and fast as much as possible for a few days, then undoubtedly our body can remain healthy and disease free.

The second important scientific reason is the arrival of new grains in the house. Mainly Rabi and Kharif two main crops are grown in our

country. Therefore, two Navratris are important - Chaitra Navratri and Sharadiya Navratri. Around Navratri, the crop of new grains is ready for harvesting after ripening. New grains are more caloric at this time due to the heat of the earth. Consumption of such grains is not considered good from the health point of view. It is not easy to digest this energy rich grain. Therefore, by fasting for nine days, the gastric fire is made more intense. So that the digestive system could be strengthened.

The ninth day of Navratri is a symbol of power. The human body is a natural unit made up of five elements. These five elements are also the storehouses of power. Water contains kinetic energy, fire contains thermal energy, sky contains literal energy, air contains kinetic energy and soil contains a part of geological energy. This mass of energy keeps revolving between the producer and the consumer in nature. The energy-matter theory (energy = amount of matter × velocity of light) propounded by the famous physicist Einstein shows that energy and matter can neither be created nor destroyed, but they can be con-

verted from one form to another. Energy or matter exists eternally without decaying.

Navratri is a celebration of worship and veneration of women power. Woman is considered as the mother of the universe in our scriptures. The three qualities of nature, Satva, Raja and Tam are born from the activities of the three forms of Adi Shakti, Gyan Shakti, Iccha Shakti and Kriya Shakti. Woman is the birth-giver of the entire biological universe. The one because of whom the universe comes into existence, has been accepted by our sages as Nari Shakti. Woman is the center point of our social fabric. Comparative analysis of man's power of woman power is unacceptable. The mistake of considering woman as a part of the population should not be made, because she is the birth-giver of man as well as woman. Addressing woman as "Maa" is the epitome of womanhood. With the increase in age, woman starts worrying about her husband with affection just like her child. She takes care of him as her own child.

Why are Navratris only nine in number? This is also a question

worth pondering over whose answer lies in science. Studies show that Bhaav, Rasa, Bhakti, gems, grains, colours, treasures - all are nine. Thus the number nine has scientific and spiritual significance. The earth is like a circle and the complete circle is 360 degrees and the semicircle is 180 degrees. There are 27 Nakshatras, each has four phases, so the total phases are 108. All are multiples of 9. Therefore the tradition of celebrating Navratri for nine days has been propounded by our sages after studying the universe.

Nine forms of female power: Shailputri, Brahmacharini, Chandraghanta, Kushmanda, Skandamata, Katyayani, Kalratri, Mahagauri, Siddhidatri, who are worshipped during Navratri to invoke that natural power. Who gives birth to the creation, nurtures it and when the time comes, can also destroy it so that the creation can always remain dynamic and active. Let us imbibe the scientific basis of Navratri, accept the existence of the energy pool of woman power from our soul element and always give respect and honour to every form of woman, be it daughter, wife, mother or sister.

BRIEF

New GM



Chennai: Hospitality service provider The Westin Chennai Velachery on Saturday said it has roped in Deepraj Mukherjee as its general manager. Prior to the new role, he was serving Le Meridien Kochi as its general manager, a press release said. Mukherjee, an alumnus of the Institute of Hotel Management, Goa began his career at Goa Marriott as a manager in training and later gained experience in the food and beverages section.

Leasing

Kolkata: On the streets of Kolkata and surrounding areas, e-rickshaws, popularly known as 'toto', are set to be powered by lithium-ion batteries with the rolling out of a battery leasing model, officials said on Sunday. Neuron Energy, a lithium-ion battery maker, has joined hands with Urja Mobility to spearhead the leasing model which has so far been heard only in the business-to-business EV sector, they said.

'Social' outlets

New Delhi: Impresario Entertainment and Hospitality, which operates the restaurant Chain 'Social', is looking to add 10 to 15 new brand outlets annually, especially in tier-2 cities, as part of its expansion plan, said its founder and MD Riyaz Amlani. The company, which also operates restaurant brands like Smoke House Deli and Mocha, remains bullish and optimistic about its growth in India, led by various factors, such as demographic dividend and increasing appetite for premium experiences.

Route Mobile

New Delhi: Enterprise messaging firm Route Mobile's public shareholders have tendered shares worth about Rs 2,500 crore at current price for the company's on-going open offer, according to a regulatory filing. The open offer has been triggered with Belgium-based Proximus Group, through its subsidiary, initially acquiring a 57.56 per cent stake in enterprise messaging firm Route Mobile for Rs 5,922.4 crore in an all-cash deal.

Glenmark

New Delhi: Glenmark Pharmaceuticals is recalling 6,528 bottles of a medication used to treat high blood pressure in the American market due to failed dissolution specifications, the US health regulator said. The US-based arm of the Mumbai-headquartered drug firm is recalling the affected lot of Diltiazem Hydrochloride extended-release capsules, the US Food and Drug Administration said in its latest Enforcement Report.

LIC sees 59% jump in value of investments in Adani stocks

New Delhi, Apr 14 (PTI):

LIC, the state-owned insurance behemoth, has seen a 59 per cent rise in value of its investments in Adani group companies in 2023-24 fiscal year after the conglomerate made a smart recovery since being hammered by a damning short seller report.

The value of LIC's investment in seven Adani group companies has soared from Rs 38,471 crore as on March 31, 2023 to Rs 61,210 crore on March 31, 2024, registering an increase of Rs 22,738 crore, according to stock exchange data.

Last year, the insurance giant faced intense scrutiny over its decision to invest in the Adani group amidst a political slugfest after allegations of stock manipulation fu-



elled by Hindenburg report.

Adani group denied any wrong doing.

Adani Group's stocks, which at lowest point took a beating of about USD 150 billion, have staged a remarkable comeback, fuelled by robust profit growth across its diverse businesses.

Facing political pressure, LIC strategically reduced its exposure to two of the group's flagship companies -- Adani Ports & SEZ and Adani Enterprises -- only to witness their shares surge by an impressive 83 per

cent and 68.4 per cent, respectively.

Despite trimming its ownership, LIC investments saw a 59 per cent surge in value in FY24, according to stock exchange data. While the domestic investor faced pressure, overseas investors wasted no time seizing the opportunity, with heavyweights like the Qatar Investment Authority, Abu Dhabi based IHC, French giant TotalEnergies, and US based GQG Investment, collectively pouring close to Rs 45,000 crore into Adani stocks.

Automobile exports from India dip 5.5 %

New Delhi, Apr 14 (PTI): Automobile exports from India declined 5.5 per cent in FY24 due to the monetary crisis in various overseas markets, according to the latest data shared by industry body SIAM.

Overall exports stood at 45,00,492 units in the last fiscal compared to 47,61,299 units in FY23.

Commenting on the drop in overseas shipments last fiscal, SIAM President Vinod Aggarwal said the situation remains volatile in various overseas markets.

"Some of the countries, where we are very strong with commercial vehicle and two-wheeler exports, have been facing foreign exchange-related issues," he noted.

The last fiscal saw a sizeable drop in commercial vehicle, two-wheeler and three-wheeler shipments, although passenger vehicles grew marginally.

DoT to seek Trai's view on satcom spectrum allocation, licensing process

New Delhi, Apr 14 (PTI):

The Department of Telecommunications (DoT) is expected to approach Trai this month to seek the regulator's views on method and pricing for allocation of spectrum and scope of licences to be issued for satcom services, according to sources. The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (Trai) had floated a consultation paper on "Assignment of Spectrum for Space-based Communication Services" on April 6, 2023 but returned the reference back to DoT after announcement of new Telecommunication Act.

"DoT will seek views of Trai on pricing and methodology to allocate spectrum for space based communication services. It may also look to fine-tune existing licences to bring in full clarity on the



kind of services that satcom companies with administratively allocated spectrum can provide," a source, who did not wish to be named, told PTI.

Satcom or satellite communication technology enables service providers to ensure internet connectivity in remote areas or difficult terrain. Bharti Group-backed OneWeb and Reliance Group Jio

Satcom have been issued GMPCS (satellite telephony) and VSAT licence for the services.

Elon Musk-owned Starlink has also applied for the permit to start satcom services in India.

With constellation of 4,000 low earth orbit (LEO) satellites, Starlink dominates satcom space. OneWeb has over 600 LEO satellites.

WTicabs plans to induct 1,000 EVs in its fleet this fiscal

New Delhi, Apr 14 (PTI):

Wise Travel India Ltd, a B2B transport solutions provider, plans to add 1,000 electric vehicles to its fleet this year as part of its overall sustainable mobility drive, according to its founder and CEO Ashok Vashist.

The company is expanding in India's tier II cities like Chandigarh, Jaipur, Coimbatore and Indore, and looking to have an international presence in Saudi Arabia and far east countries.

"This year, our main target is on sustainability, where we are inducting vehicles, which are electric and bio-CNG... We already have more than 300 cars, which are electric. This year, we will be inducting more than 1,000 electric cars and electric

buses," Vashist told PTI. The company, which operates under the WTicabs brand, has also third-party and individual-owned vehicles in its fleet. For electric vehicles, he said most of these would be primarily company-owned.

When asked about investment for the same, he said, "Somewhere around Rs 50 crore will be made on these vehicles, and there is a combination of debt and equity, which will happen".

For the EV initiative, he said at some of the large hubs like in Bengaluru and Delhi, the company will install solar panels to generate electricity, supply it to the grid and take it back to make charging from renewable and sustainable sources possible.

NMDC celebrates the 133rd birth anniv of Dr BR Ambedkar

Hyderabad, Apr 14:

India's Largest Iron Ore Producer, NMDC paid tribute to Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, Father of Indian Constitution and celebrated the 133rd birth anniversary today at its Head Office and projects across the country. Amitava Mukherjee, CMD (Addl. Charge) along with

Shri Dilip Kumar Mohanty, Director (Production) and (Personnel Addl. Charge), Vinay Kumar, Director (Technical) and B. Vishwanath, CVO led the employees in offering their respect to one of the Founding Fathers of the Republic of India.

The event was organized by NMDC HO SC/ST Association. B. Hanumantha Rao (President) and

B. Pavan Kumar (General Secretary) from the NMDC SC/ST Employees Welfare



Association along with Executive Members and employees were present. The function commenced with dignitaries putting a garland on the portrait of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, followed by a prayer in his memory.

On the occasion, Amitava Mukherjee said, "On the 133rd Ambedkar Jayanti today, we are here to honour his legacy and the lasting impact that he has on the nation and its people. I take a deep sense of pride in our sustainable business practices, skill develop-

ment initiatives, and community engagement programs that make a tangible difference to the lives of the underserved people."

Celebrating Ambedkar Jayanti, NMDC hosted a cultural programme at its Corporate Office, Hyderabad and distributed school bags to children.

Drawing inspiration from his life, we at NMDC embrace his teachings and are devoted to building an India that is equally prosperous for all Indians, an India that Dr. Ambedkar dreamed of and strived for.

Godrej Locks eyes 50 % market share

Bets big on new cheaper products, price cuts of existing ones

Mumbai, Apr 14 (PTI):

Locks and security solutions company Godrej Locks has said it aims to increase market share from 30 per cent to 50 per cent in three years, riding on a new range of affordable products and reduced prices of existing ones.

Shyam Motwani, business head for Godrej Locks and architectural and systems, said the company's newly-launched products are over 50 per cent affordable than the existing locks, while efforts have been undertaken to make the existing locks cheaper by 7-8 per cent.

The company will rely on new affordable range and price cuts in the existing locks to achieve the objective of having the dominant market share in around three years,



Motwani told PTI. The target is to grab 50 per cent market in the segment from the current 30 per cent, Motwani said, adding that the company sees a massive opportunity for its products in the tier-2,3, 4 cities and towns.

He further said the newly-launched locks have been designed and developed in-house, keeping in mind the needs and aspi-

rations of "rurban" (rural-urban) population without compromising on the products' effectiveness.

Founded in 1897, the company which has become a household name for its reliable products is looking at deepening its distribution in smaller cities. Motwani said the "rurban" areas account for just over a fifth of the company's revenues at present,

while the larger chunk comes from top eight cities of India. The company's reach is limited to over 340 towns in tier-2, 3 and 4 cities, and plans are afoot to double it to over 700 towns or having a presence in every district, he said. The company, a part of Godrej and Boyce, is profitable and has registered a turnover of Rs 1,200 crore in FY24, he said, adding that it has doubled in the last three years. When asked about the capital expenditure needed for expansion efforts, Motwani did not give any specific figure but said that investment efforts are a continuing aspect for the business. Investments by the company, which has a manufacturing unit in Goa, are focused towards automation efforts as well as design of new models.

'Current high interest rates is right time to invest in a pension product'

Mumbai, Apr 14 (PTI):

Several market experts are of the view that interest rates in India will decline over the next few months from the current levels of approx. 7% giving customers an opportunity to now lock-in their investment in an annuity product at the current interest rate.

So how does investing in an annuity product now benefit customers?

Pension or annuity products which are only offered by life insurance companies provide a guaranteed regular lifelong income.

The rate of interest is locked-in at the time of purchase. Retirees prefer a steady income not affected by interest rate movements, annuity or pension



products are the best option, which offer regular income enabling them to be financially independent.

Since the interest rate is expected to fall going forward, customers buying an annuity product will be able to lock-in their investment at the current interest rate.

Let's take the example of Prajapati, who initially invested his savings of Rs. 1 crore in deposits at 8% interest, earning him Rs. 67,000 monthly, which supported a comfortable lifestyle. However, when he tried to renew his deposits after a few years the interest rate dropped to

6%, his monthly income reduced to Rs. 50,000, affecting his standard of living.

Let's see what would have happened if Prajapati had invested his money in an annuity product. Assuming the interest rate of 7%, he will receive approx. Rs. 58,000 per month for the rest of his life. This will remain constant irrespective of the any movement in interest rates.

The ICICI Pru Guaranteed Pension Plan Flexi stands out among annuity products as it helps customers build a retirement fund by making systematic investments.

India adds record 18 GW renewable energy capacity

In FY24

New Delhi, Apr 14 (PTI):

India has added a record renewable energy capacity of 18.48 GW in 2023-24, which is over 21 per cent higher than 15.27 GW a year ago, according to the latest data of the Ministry of New & Renewable Energy.

However, industry experts said there is a need to add at least 50 GW of renewable energy capacity annually for the next six years to meet the ambitious target of 500 GW of renewables by 2030.

According to the data, India's installed renewable energy capacity is 143.64 GW as of March 31, 2024, excluding 47 GW of large hydropower capaci-

ty (each plant is more than 25 GW or above).

They pointed out that renewable energy capacity stood at around 190 GW, including large hydro projects, and therefore, India needs to add 310 GW in the next six years or at an average of 50 GW per annum.

Union Power and Renewable Energy Minister RK Singh, in a recent interview with PTI, said, "You see, my installed capacity of RE is about 190 GW, I have 103 GW under construction, that makes it 290 GW. I have 72 GW under bids, so I am already at about 360 GW. I will reach it (target of renewable energy capacity of 500 GW by 2030) before time as I reach all my targets".

'Share of affordable homes, priced up to Rs 45 lakh'

Shrinks to 22 pc in Jan-Mar

New Delhi, Apr 14 (PTI):

Share of affordable homes -- priced up to Rs 45 lakh each -- in total housing sales more than halved to 22 per cent during January-March across top eight cities amid strong demand for luxury flats, according to PropTiger.

Share of affordable homes in total housing sales stood at 48 per cent in the January-March period of 2023 calendar year.

Housing brokerage firm PropTiger.com data showed that housing sales grew by 41 per cent to 1,20,640 units during January-March 2024 across top eight cities from 85,840 units in the corresponding period of the previous year. In the total sales of 1,20,640 units dur-

ing January-March, the share of homes, priced less than Rs 25 lakh each, was 5 per cent.

In the same period last year, the share of this low-cost housing category in total sales was 15 per cent.

The share of homes, priced Rs 25-45 lakh each, was 17 per cent during January-March 2024 as against 23 per cent share in the corresponding period of the previous year.

"There has been a remarkable shift post the pandemic towards high-end properties," PropTiger said in its quarterly report 'Real Insight Residential January-March 2024'.

The share of properties priced Rs 1 crore and above has increased to a significant 37 per cent in the first quarter of 2024,

significantly higher than 24 per cent in the same period of 2023, the consultant observed.

As per the data, the share of homes, priced Rs 45-75 lakh, in total sales remained flat at 26 per cent during the period under review.

The share of homes, costing Rs 75 lakh-1 crore each, in the total sales increased to 15 per cent in January-March this year from 12 per cent share in the year-ago period.

The top eight cities are Ahmedabad, Bengaluru, Chennai, Delhi-NCR, Hyderabad, Kolkata, Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR) and Pune. Delhi-NCR includes Ghaziabad, Faridabad, Greater Noida, Noida and Gurugram.

'Commercial AC market has significant growth potential'

New Delhi, Apr 14 (PTI):

Commercial air-conditioning (AC) market holds "significant promise" and is witnessing growth, driven by rapid urbanisation, infrastructural development and growing emphasis on comfort in commercial spaces, said Sunil Vachani, president of electronics and appliances manufacturers' body CEAMA.

The commercial HVAC (Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning) segment is witnessing a shift with its wide array of applications, with infrastructure growth including offices, retail spaces, health-care facilities, hospitality establishments, and educational institutions, said the president of

Consumer Electronics and Appliances Manufacturers Association (CEAMA).

Moreover, factors such as increasing awareness of indoor air quality, sustainability mandates, and the integration of IoT (internet of things) and building automation systems are also reshaping the commercial HVAC landscape, offering avenues for innovation and market expansion, he said.

"In terms of growth potential, the commercial HVAC segment holds significant promise, with opportunities for both traditional HVAC systems and emerging technologies like variable refrigerant flow (VRF) systems and chilled beams," Vachani told PTI.

Country has emerged as a world power under Modi: Sai

Modi's guarantee means guarantee of fulfillment: Saroj Pandey

Gaurela-Pendra-Marwahi, Apr 14:

In a spirited rally held in the heart of Gaurela Pendra Marwahi, Chhattisgarh's Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai ignited the crowd with a resounding endorsement of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's transformative leadership. Against the picturesque backdrop of village Andi, Sai passionately extolled Modi's vision for a prosperous and empowered India, declaring the nation's ascension as a global force under his stewardship.

Amidst cheers and applause, Sai underscored the monumental strides made by the country over the past decade, particularly in uplifting the marginalized segments of society. Emphasizing Modi's unwavering commitment to the welfare of the poor,



Sai urges support for Pandey

Vishnu Deo Sai rallied support for Lok Sabha candidate Saroj Pandey from Korba, expressing confidence in BJP's victory across all 11 parliamentary seats in the state. He highlighted allegations against former Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel in the Mahadev betting case and criticized Congress's Rs 1 lakh promise. Taking a swipe at Rahul Gandhi, Sai remarked on the apparent dismay among Congress members witnessing Modi's work. The event witnessed the presence of numerous BJP leaders, workers, and constituents from Marwahi Assembly.

tribals, farmers, women, and youth. Sai hailed the Prime Minister's initiatives as catalysts for empowerment and progress. Addressing a mammoth gathering in support of the BJP candidate

Congress members join BJP

In a significant development, Marwahi District President Pratap Singh Maravi of Congress, along with hundreds of district members, Sarpanches, and public representatives, joined the BJP. The event, graced by Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai and National Vice President Saroj Pandey, saw Maravi and others being warmly welcomed into the party fold with BJP gamchhas.

Saroj Pandey for the Korba Lok Sabha seat, Sai delivered a scathing critique of the erstwhile Congress regime, accusing it of plundering both the nation and Chhattisgarh. With conviction, he rallied for Modi's re-election, asserting that the Prime Minister's leadership had

not only elevated India's global standing but also quelled external threats, including Pakistan's belligerence.

Echoing Sai's sentiments, Saroj Pandey lauded Modi's historic accomplishments, from the long-awaited construction of the Ram temple to the bold abrogation of Article 370 in Kashmir, heralding a new era of economic strength and unity for the nation.

The event, graced by esteemed dignitaries including GPM district in-charge minister Shyam Bihari Jaiswal and MLA Pranav Marpacchi, served as a vibrant testament to the unwavering support for Modi's transformative agenda. As the rally reverberated with enthusiasm, attendees voiced their fervent endorsement of the BJP's vision for a prosperous and empowered India.

Outcry over road safety sparks community action

Dongargaon, Apr 14:

In a display of unified concern, aggrieved residents took to the streets, blocking the state highway in Dongargaon to demand urgent action on road safety. Frustrations have been mounting against the road contractor amid a surge in accidents attributed to negligence in construction.

Calls for road widening initially stemmed from a desire to enhance transportation for pedestrians and city dwellers. However, since the commencement of construction, the situation has deteriorated, with residents facing dust, potholes, and an alarming rise in accidents. A recent spate of 11 accidents within 15 minutes on a Friday evening propelled citizens into action, leading to the blockade of the state highway.

Voices of concern resonated as residents, many of whom had been victims of accidents, rallied for swift and comprehensive measures to ensure road



safety. Councilor Siddhik Badgujar's compassionate gesture of providing water and snacks to stranded schoolchildren underscored the community's solidarity.

Efforts to address the crisis saw Naib Tehsildar Siddiqui engaging with citizens, facilitating dialogue with higher officials and summoning representatives from the contractor and Public Works Department (PWD). Amid assurances from PWD SDO Harshad Sahu regarding enhanced safety measures, including the installation of lights, indicator radium, and prompt asphalt repairs, tensions gradually eased.

As the SDO of the Public Works Department, I've ensured that the contractor is fully aware of the urgency of the situation. I've personally directed them to identify problem areas and implement necessary measures promptly. This includes the installation of lights, radium, and indicators to enhance safety, alongside the imminent commencement of asphalt work. Continuous warnings have been issued to the contractor, emphasizing the imperative of swift and effective action to address road hazards.

Harshad Sahu, SDO PWD

Kanhaiya Agarwal leads advocacy drive for Bhupesh Baghel



Rajnandgaon, Apr 14:

Kanhaiya Agarwal, General Secretary of the State Congress Committee and prominent business leader, embarked on an extensive outreach campaign in support of former Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel, the Congress candidate for the Rajnandgaon Lok Sabha seat. Venturing into key commercial hubs such as Gudakhu Line, Kamathi Line, Bharat

Mata Chowk, Halwai Line, and Gaushala Market, Agarwal engaged with traders to advocate for Baghel's candidacy and discuss pertinent issues affecting the business community. During his interactions, Agarwal provided insights into government schemes and deliberated on decisions taken in the traders' interest during Baghel's tenure over the past five years. Addressing concerns surrounding GST, Agarwal acknowl-

edged the widespread apprehension among traders regarding notices and enforcement actions. He underscored the significance of translating this discontent into electoral support, emphasizing the pivotal role of traders' votes in the upcoming elections.

Accompanied by dedicated Congress members including former councilor Jitendra Sharma, Ashok Shivhare, Manoj Pal, Sharad Gupta, Narendra Shukla, and Sanjay, Agarwal's outreach efforts aimed to foster dialogue and solidarity within the business community.

The collective engagement underscored the significance of informed decision-making and active participation in shaping the electoral landscape.

Kurud police launch investigation into HDFC bank complaints

Kurud, Apr 14:

Four new cases of bank fraud uncovered

Responding promptly to the grievances raised by victims against HDFC Bank, Kurud police have initiated a thorough investigation. Under the leadership of Kurud police station in-charge Arun Sahu, discussions were held on Saturday to address the complaints lodged against HDFC Bank. Subsequently, instructions were issued to the investigating officers Ishwar Sakar and Rajesh Chandrakar to include all victim applications in the investigation process.

In a significant development, four new cases of bank fraud have surfaced, shedding light on fraudulent activities amounting to several crores of rupees in HDFC Kurud. Among these cases, a notable instance involves the fraudulent withdrawal of Rs 33

lakh orchestrated by branch manager Shrikant Tinetti and his associate Tejendra Sahu. The first case revolves around the unauthorized withdrawal of Rs 8 lakh from the account of Chhannul Ansari, a resident of Gram Panchayat Chharmudiya. Similarly, Nakulnath Banafar, an employee at Sanghvi Foods Limited of Bagod Food Park, fell victim to embezzlement amounting to Rs 5 lakh 51 thousand.

Further exacerbating the situation are the distressing accounts of two brothers, Devkant and Novakant Sahu from Novakant Khurd, Kurud Development Block. The brothers were approached by HDFC Bank's branch manager, Shrikant Tinetti,



and Tejendra Sahu, who purportedly promised higher returns by investing their Fixed Deposit Receipt (FDR) in the Mutual Investment Scheme (MIS). However, during their visit to the shop, where the brothers operated their business, a significant amount of money mysteriously vanished from their account. Consequently, the brothers have been compelled to frequent the bank daily in pursuit of funds, particularly to support their aspiration of constructing a

Farmers struggle without funds

Farmers dreams have been shattered as their funds were siphoned off by Shrikant Tinetti and his associate Tejendra Sahu. For some, savings earmarked for their daughters' weddings have vanished, leaving fathers heartbroken. Others who intended to build permanent homes now find themselves homeless after dismantling their temporary shelters, with no resources to rebuild. The fi-

nancial strain has even halted agricultural activities, jeopardizing the livelihoods of farmers and instilling fear of impending losses.

Exhausted from endless visits to the bank, the aggrieved accountholders pin their hopes for justice on the police and administration. Among the complainants are Nand Kumar Sahu, Dihulal Sahu, Ravindra Kumar Sahu, Bhupendra Kumar, Mukesh Kumar, Mahesh Kumar Sahu, Hira Lal Sahu, Mohan Yadav, Virendra Yadav, Chhannu Kumar Sahu, Devkant Sahu, Novkant Sahu, Nakulnath Banafar, Adheen Ram Sahu, and others. Throughout the afternoon until late evening, families of the victims diligently lodged their complaints at the Kurud police station, seeking recourse for their grievances.

Divine celebration at Mata Mahamaya temple delights devotees

Anwari, Apr 14:

The air was filled with anticipation and devotion today as devotees flocked to the revered Mahamaya temple in Anwari to celebrate the fifth day of Chaitra Navratri. The temple, adorned with festivity and fervour, welcomed worshippers eager to pay homage to the divine Mother Goddess.

Today marked the auspicious occasion dedicated to Shri Skandamata, the fifth form of Shri Durga and the mother of Shri Skanda (Kumar Kartikeya). Devotees believe that worshipping Shri



Skandamata brings forth blessings and spiritual elevation, leading to the awakening of the Vishuddha Chakra and inner peace.

The temple resonated with chants, bhajans, and

kirtans, filling the atmosphere with divine energy as devotees expressed their reverence through devotional songs and prayers. Mata Mahamaya, adorned with lotus flowers and seated gracefully on

her lion mount, radiated benevolence and grace, captivating the hearts of all who sought her blessings. In a gesture of reverence and celebration, special adornment was bestowed upon the divine Mother Goddess today, enhancing the divine ambiance of the temple and adding to the joyous festivities of Chaitra Navratri.

Devotees from far and wide gathered to partake in the sacred rituals and seek the blessings of Mata Mahamaya, experiencing moments of spiritual bliss and divine connection amidst the celebration of faith and devotion.

Temple shines in Navratri cleanliness drive

Pandariya, Apr 14:

In a testament to community spirit and dedication to cleanliness, a vibrant campaign was launched at Gaurakapa, a revered village within the Dullapur market of the Pandariya development block. As Navratri festivities adorned the air with spirituality, the temple precincts resonated with the hum of Swachh Bharat Mission volunteers and local public representatives, fervently engaged in a cleanliness crusade.

Amidst the jubilant celebrations, scores of volunteers dedicated hours to meticulously cleanse the temple surroundings,



underscoring the profound importance of sanitation in sacred spaces. Panchu Ram Tandon, Pawan Tiwari, and Naresh Banjare, coordinators of the development block, expressed their unwavering com-

mitment to the cleanliness cause, citing directives from senior departmental officials.

The selection of Gaurakapa temple as the focal point of the campaign stemmed from its significance as a spiritual

epicenter, drawing thousands of devotees during Navratri. Chief Mahant of the Temple Trust, Vivek Giri Goswami, extolled the virtues of cleanliness, likening it to the sanctity of bodily hygiene. He emphasized that just as individuals maintain personal cleanliness, temples, schools, and public spaces deserve equal care and attention.

The communal endeavor received robust support from local leaders such as Sarpanch representatives Thanu Ram Sahu, Vikas Tiwari, Jiya Ram Dhruv, and Bedu Bharti, along with enthusiastic participation from neighboring communities.

Viplav Sahu highlights BJP's alleged farmer neglect



Khairagarh, Apr 14:

District Panchayat Chairman Viplav Sahu, while addressing voters during an election campaign in villages Sankara and Deori, vehemently criticized the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi,

alleging a decade-long track record of neglect towards farmers. Sahu asserted that BJP's policies have consistently worked against the interests of farmers, with a slew of anti-farmer decisions over the past 10 years. Drawing a sharp contrast, Sahu praised the Congress government under the leader-

ship of Bhupesh Baghel in Chhattisgarh, highlighting proactive measures such as loan waivers, farmer-friendly policies, and setting a record-high paddy procurement price of Rs 2500 per quintal. In contrast, he lambasted the BJP for allegedly forcing farmers to sell their produce at lower prices.

Sahu condemned the Modi government's handling of the COVID-19 pandemic, accusing it of imposing a lockdown and passing three controversial agricultural laws without adequate consultation with stakeholders. He accused the government of favoring capitalist interests over farmers' welfare, leading to their economic exploitation.

Moreover, Sahu criticized the Modi government's failure to fulfill election promises, including doubling farmers' income by 2022 and repealing the contentious agricultural laws. He expressed solidarity with farmers protesting at the borders of Delhi, condemning the government's heavy-handed tactics to suppress their voices.

MLA Sahu's rural outreach focuses on female voters

Fingeshwar, Apr 14:

In the heart of rural constituencies, MLA Rohit Sahu's campaign for BJP candidate Roop Kumari Choudhary in the Lok Sabha elections is intensifying, with a strategic focus on engaging women voters. Recognizing the pivotal role of female voters, Sahu is actively courting their support, acknowledging their reliability and influence in shaping electoral outcomes.

Venturing into Gram Panchayats Koundkera and Shyamnagar of the Fingeshwar development block, Sahu, along with District Panchayat member Chandrashekhar Sahu, engaged with beneficiaries of the Mahtari Vandan Yojana. This grassroots interaction not



only celebrated the scheme's implementation but also served as a platform to solicit public support for the BJP. Addressing gatherings from 21 villages in Kondakera and Shyamnagar, Sahu emphasized the Modi government's commitment to women's empowerment,

citing landmark initiatives such as the passage of the Nari Shakti Vandan Act and the provision of 33 percent reservation in legislative bodies. He underscored the transformative impact of schemes like Mahtari Vandan Yojana, which provides direct monthly transfers to mothers' bank accounts,

bolstering economic progress.

Joining the chorus of support, District Panchayat member Chandrashekhar Sahu hailed women's increasing participation in national development efforts. He lauded the Modi government's proactive stance on women's empowerment, exemplified by initiatives like Mahtari Vandan Yojana.

Mandal President Kamal Sinha echoed the sentiment, highlighting the Modi government's multifaceted efforts to uplift women across various sectors. From household amenities to financial assistance under schemes like Mahtari Vandan Yojana, women's progress remains a priority for the BJP.

Gukesh beats Vidit Gujrathi to regain joint lead

**Toronto, Apr 14 (PTI):**

India's D Gukesh bounced back with a finely crafted game to outwit compatriot Vidit Gujrathi and regain his joint lead with Ian Nepomniachtchi of Russia after the eighth round of the Candidates chess tournament here.

On a day when R Praggnanandhaa played out a draw with Firouza Alireza of France, Hikaru Nakamura sealed his supremacy in the all-American duel against Fabiano Caruana to come back in to reckoning for top honours.

Overnight sole leader Nepomniachtchi faltered in the early stages to allow tail ender Nijat Abasov to get away with an easy

draw in the other game of the eight-player double round-robin event.

With six rounds still to come, Gukesh and Nepomniachtchi have 5 points apiece and they are followed by Nakamura and Praggnanandhaa on 4.5 points each.

Caruana is now sole fifth on four points. Gujrathi on 3.5 comes in next ahead of Alireza on three points, while Abasov is still at the rear of the tables on 2.5 points.

Gukesh had his task cut out and went for a rare variation wherein he surprised Gujrathi as early as on move four. Gujrathi sank into a long thought and ended up losing around twenty minutes on the clock.

RCB desperate for bowling redemption against SRH

Bengaluru, Apr 14 (PTI):

Royal Challengers Bangalore's (RCB) quest for an elusive victory in the IPL has turned into a desperate search for bowling excellence as they prepare to face Sunrisers Hyderabad (SRH) on Monday.

Despite boasting a roster of renowned players and elite coaches, RCB finds themselves languishing at the bottom of the standings with just one win from six matches. Their struggles can be primarily attributed to the ineffectiveness of their bowling unit.

Throughout the tournament, RCB's bowlers have displayed a lack of adaptability and innovation, often resorting to predictable tactics against aggressive batsmen. Their inability to contain opposition batsmen was glaringly evident in their recent match against Mumbai Indians, where they conceded a mammoth total despite posting a compet-



Faf du Plessis' performance crucial for RCB's redemption.

itive score. Now, as they gear up to face SRH, RCB must address their bowling woes to stand a

chance against a formidable batting lineup. Led by Heinrich Klaassen, Abhishek Sharma, and Travis Head, SRH's batting arsenal poses a significant threat, with each player capable of dismantling the opposition's bowling attack.

While SRH's bowling unit has also shown vulnerabilities, particularly in the spin department, skipper Pat Cummins has emerged as a reliable wicket-taker and economical bowler for the team. The addition of T Natarajan has further strengthened SRH's bowling lineup, providing them with much-needed control and variation.

With the match set to take place at the Chinnaswamy Stadium, known for its batting-friendly pitch, RCB will look to capitalize on any weaknesses in SRH's bowling attack. However, the inconsistent form of key player Glenn Maxwell remains a concern for the team.

Sporting pressure is to continue to play the way I'm playing: Head

**Bengaluru, Apr 14 (PTI):**

Travis Head raised his career graph a few notches up in 2023 but the Australian batter understands that staying at that level is a challenging task, and the first step for him in that journey is the upcoming T20 World Cup.

Head's hundreds in two of the biggest cricketing occasions last year – the WTC final and the 50-over World Cup summit clash – were Australia's guiding force against India. But the 30-year-old now wants to be at his best-prepared self for the World Cup through the Indian Premier League experience. "I've come a long way as a player. I guess own-

ing a little bit of the style I want to play and the way I have played overseas too, I've been able to tick a few boxes. Now, the pressure is to continue to play the way I am playing," Head told PTI in an interview. "I think in all formats, I need to make sure that I go back to what simplifies everything, which is my technique and my blueprint," he added. Head showed his adaptive skills while playing for Sunrisers Hyderabad in the ongoing IPL. Coming in as an opener, Head made 133 runs from five matches while striking at 177, giving SRH early momentum and also underscoring his readiness for a hectic T20 role for his country.

Lionel Messi shines as Inter Miami triumphs



Inter Miami's Argentine forward #10 Lionel Messi (C) controls the ball during the MLS football match between Sporting Kansas City and Inter Miami CF at the Arrowhead Stadium in Kansas City, Missouri.

Kansas City, Apr 14 (AP):

Lionel Messi scored his fifth goal and added an assist and Luis Suárez tapped in the winner in the 71st minute as Inter Miami CF defeated Sporting Kansas City 3-2 in front of the third-largest crowd in MLS history. After a defensive mis-

take by KC, Suárez converted Diego Gómez's crossing pass inside the 6-yard box for the lead. It was Suárez's sixth of the season.

Many of the 72,610 who filled Arrowhead Stadium to see Messi weren't disappointed as he delivered deft passes to create scoring chances. With Inter

Miami CF (4-2-3) trailing 1-0 in the 18th minute, Messi assisted on Gomez's first-touch right-footer in the middle of the box to tie it.

Messi's left-footed blast from the top of the penalty arc pushed Miami in front 2-1 in the 51st minute. It was his fourth straight MLS game with a goal.

Messi had an excellent chance in the 27th minute on a left-footer from 12 yards, but it was smothered by Kansas City's Tim Melia. Messi's free kick in the 41st minute from 25 yards barely missed wide right. Erik Thommy opened the scoring for Sporting KC (2-2-4) in the sixth minute on a 16-yard strike. He scored again in the 58th minute on a rebound off Daniel Sallo's corner kick to tie it at 2. Thommy's goals were his second and third of the season — and first since opening day. The crowd was 20,000 larger than the previous Sporting KC record set in 2010 during a friendly against Manchester United.

You can never take it for granted: Sanju Samson

Mullanpur, Apr 14 (PTI):

Rajasthan Royals on Saturday surged ahead after their fifth win in six games this IPL but skipper Sanju Samson said he doesn't want to get ambitious as past experiences have taught him to never take things for granted.

RR survived some tense moments before getting past a fighting Punjab Kings by three wickets to consolidate their position at the top of the points table.

"You can never take it for granted. Last game, we did some really good things but ended up losing. Tonight, we made more mistakes and won. Cricket is a funny game, so you have to put your head down and just focus on the process," he said at the post-match presentation here.

Despite chasing 148, Rajasthan made heavy weather of the target before crossing the line in the second last ball of the match, and Samson admitted they were tensed.



"We all were (tensed). Games against Punjab in the last few overs, I don't know what it is, they are always close. It was a very funny game," he said.

It was Shimron Hetmyer, who earned RR the win with a 10-ball 27 not out.

"He has been doing it for years and years. He has confidence about his skills. Rovman and Hettie, having them, was good."

Dhawan out for at least 'seven to 10 days': Bangar

Mullanpur, Apr 14 (PTI):

Punjab Kings skipper Shikhar Dhawan could be out for at least seven to 10 days due to a shoulder injury, the team's head of cricket development Sanjay Bangar indicated after the narrow loss to Rajasthan Royals.

D h a w a n missed the game against Royals on Saturday night. Sam Curran led the side in his absence.

"He's having a shoulder injury, so he is likely to be out for at least a couple of days, I would say. Having an experienced opener, somebody like Shikhar, who has experience of playing on such wickets, becomes extremely crucial (for the team)."

"We have to wait and see how he responds to the treatment. At the moment, it seems that he could be out of action for at least seven-ten days," said Bangar in the post match press conference.



Jitesh Sharma was team's representative at the captains' meet at the start of the season as Dhawan, who was down with fever, stayed back in Mullanpur. Considering that, Curran walking out for the toss was surprising but Bangar clarified that they were always clear

about the Englisman's role in the side.

"No, no, he (Jitesh) wasn't the designated vice-captain. The impression could have been because he attended the captains' seminar at the start of the IPL."

"But the thought was always that ... because Sam has led the team in the previous year as well; he was late to arrive from UK and he wanted to have a few (training) sessions, that's the reason we couldn't send him to Chennai. Hence Jitesh was sent, because the directive was that a player has to attend."

"It wasn't the case that Jitesh was the stand-in captain. We were very clear in our mind that if at all there had to be an opening, Sam Curran will be taking over and do the job as the captain," said the former India batting coach. Both Dhawan and Jonny Bairstow have not been able to provide flying starts to the team which has contributed to its inconsistent run in the tournament.

Mitchell Marsh returns to Australia to treat hamstring tear

New Delhi, Apr 14 (PTI):

Delhi Capitals have suffered a major setback as their Australian all-rounder Mitchell Marsh has returned home to undergo treatment for a tear in his right hamstring.

Marsh, who is set to be named Australia's captain for the T20 World Cup in June, was recalled after consultations with the Delhi team management, according to



ESPNCricinfo.

However, a final call on his availability for the remainder of the season is yet to be taken.

Marsh last played against Kolkata Knight

Riders on April 3 and missed their previous two outings against Mumbai Indians and Lucknow Super Giants.

Marsh's top-score this season has only been 23 versus Rajasthan Royals, which DC won by 12 runs. He got out for a duck in their 106-run defeat against KKR. Marsh has been on a roll across formats for the Kangaroos, leading to him winning the Allan Border Medal for

the most outstanding male Australian cricketer of the year. Since January 2023, the 32-year-old has scored 1,954 international runs in 38 outings at an average of 50.10, including three centuries, besides also taking 10 wickets. Other than Marsh, DC are also concerned with veteran Aussie opener David Warner's availability for their Wednesday's away fixture against Gujarat Titans.

Asian Ch'ship: Radhika settles for silver, Shivaneer gets bronze

Bishkek, Apr 14 (PTI):

Radhika settled for a silver, her second at the senior Asian Championships, while Shivaneer Pavar won a bronze medal here on Saturday as top of podium finish continued to elude Indian wrestlers in the tournament. Radhika, who won a silver at the U23 Asian Championships last year and finished second at the senior Asian Championships in 2022, put up a dominant show in her weight category. She won the first bout by technical superiority against Kazakhstan's Albina Kairgeldinova and then pinned Kyrgyzstan's Gulnura Tashtanbekova.

Tsitsipas beats Sinner to reach Monte Carlo Masters final

Monaco, Apr 14 (AP):

Stefanos Tsitsipas stayed on course for a third Monte Carlo Masters title after beating a tiring Jannik Sinner 6-4, 3-6, 6-4 in the semi-finals on Saturday, handing the Australian Open champion only his second defeat of the season.

The 12th-seeded Greek plays the winner of a later semifinal between top seed Novak Djokovic and No. 8 Casper Ruud, a two-time French Open runner-up.

Sinner, who already has three titles this year, looked in control in the deciding set when he led 4-3 with a service game to follow. But,



he called for a medical timeout during the changeover and a trainer

massaged his right knee and thigh.

Although a smiling Sinner shared a joke with the trainer, things got more serious in the next game when Tsitsipas broke his serve on the fifth attempt to level the score.

Sinner limped a little at the end of the next game and clutched the hamstring area at the back of his left leg, then had both legs massaged. His movement was restricted in the ensuing game, and Tsitsipas clinched victory on his first match point when Sinner's backhand from the back of the court went long as he struggled for balance.

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'LS elections as good as rigged'

Ranchi, Apr 14 (PTI):

Development economist Jean Dreze said the Indian democracy is currently navigating a crisis that is not only limited to the "recent wave of authoritarianism" but also suppression of opposition voices by the ruling BJP.

He said the upcoming Lok Sabha elections under the present circumstances are as good as rigged.

In an exclusive interview with PTI, Dreze said five years ago, Arundhati Roy had described the 2019 elections as a race between a Ferrari and a few bicycles. "The metaphor is still valid. Today, thanks to the Supreme Court, we know that the Ferrari is fuelled



Development economist Jean Dreze in Ranchi.

by the corporate sector. Meanwhile, the bicycles, symbolising the main opposition parties in the state such as Jharkhand Mukti Morcha, Rashtriya Janata Dal, and the

Jharkhand chief minister Soren finds himself behind the bars, Lalu Prasad has faced intermittent periods of incarceration, and Rahul Gandhi narrowly avoided a similar fate in addition to Congress' accounts being frozen.

Any politician who presents a danger to the BJP is at risk of harassment. In these circumstances, the elections are as good as rigged," the Belgium-born economist added.

Asked if the BJP is certain to sweep the elections in the mineral-rich state, the development economist said many people in Jharkhand have good reasons to be unhappy with the saffron party.

VOTING AWARENESS CAMPAIGN



Young women with their faces and hands painted to aware people to vote pose for photographs ahead of the Lok Sabha elections, in Amritsar, Sunday.

No takers for erstwhile royals in UP this LS election

Lucknow, Apr 14 (PTI):

Political parties appear to show little interest in fielding erstwhile royals of Uttar Pradesh in this Lok Sabha election in seats where they earlier held sway.

Former MPs Sanjay Singh, scion of the erstwhile Amethi princely state, Rajkumari Ratna Singh of Kalakankar, Kunwar Akshay Pratap Singh 'Gopal Ji' of Jamo (Amethi) and Begum Noor Bano of Rampur are missing from the electoral scene, as are former MLA Aridaman Singh of Bhadwar (Agra) and Nour Bano's son Nawab Kazim Ali.

Social activist and political analyst Kaushal

Kumar Shahi told PTI that several former kings and princes took to politics after the merger of their states.

"But in this election, some former kings and princes have not got a chance to contest... the glory of their forts (area of influence) is fading," he said.

Former Union minister Sanjay Singh, who left the Congress and joined the BJP, is not in the fray this time. An aide said, "We were hoping that Maharaj (Sanjay Singh) would be made a candidate by the BJP from Sultanpur, but Maneka Gandhi has been declared the candidate from there again."

Sanjay Singh, a former Rajya Sabha member, won

the Amethi seat on a BJP ticket in 1998 and the Sultanpur seat as a Congress candidate in 2009. He lost to Maneka Gandhi in Sultanpur in the 2019 Lok Sabha election.

The possibility of Ratna Singh contesting from Pratapgarh as the BJP candidate is over as the party has fielded sitting MP Sangam Lal Gupta. Ratna Singh switched to the BJP from the Congress in 2019. She represented Pratapgarh as a Congress MP in 1996, 1999 and 2009.

Kunwar Akshay Pratap Singh alias 'Gopal ji' won the Lok Sabha elections from Pratapgarh on a Samajwadi Party (SP) ticket in 2004.

Cong's problems need remedying

Kolkata, Apr 14 (PTI):

Noting that the Opposition in India has lost much of its power due to disunity, Nobel laureate Amartya Sen said the Congress has many organisational problems that need remedying.

In an interview with PTI, Sen said that a caste census might be an exercise to consider, but India needs greater empowerment for the underprivileged through better education, healthcare, and gender equity.

The noted economist said he is "enormously proud" to be a citizen of a democratic country like India, but there is a need to "work

harder to enhance the nation's democratic nature".

Sen said the opposition bloc INDIA failed to gain much traction, with its important allies such as JD(U) and RLD walking out. When asked what the Opposition lacks in taking on the BJP, he said, "The Opposition in India lost a lot of its power due to its disunity. Unity would have given it much more strength." "Congress has many organisational problems that need remedying. The party's great past should inspire it," he said.

Sen was also critical of the BJP-led NDA government over its economic policies. He claimed that widespread illiteracy and extraordinary gender inequality make it difficult for the poor in India to progress. "India's ruling



Amartya Sen

classes tend to look after the interests of the rich. Widespread illiteracy, commonly shared ill health, and extraordinary gender inequality make it difficult for the Indian poor to progress," he said.

Moody's Analytics on Friday projected India's economy to expand by 6.1 per cent in 2024, lower than the 7.7 per cent growth wit-

nessed in 2023.

When asked about the Opposition's claim that the BJP might change the Constitution if it returns to power, Sen said changing the country's Constitution would not serve any purpose except aligning it with the government's "single-religion focus". "Changing the Indian Constitution may align it more with the government's class priority and its single-religion focus, but it will not benefit the common people of India," he said.

Speaking on the Opposition making the caste census an important poll issue, Sen said India needs more empowerment for its underprivileged.

"A caste census may be a good exercise to consider, but what India needs most is greater empowerment for

the underprivileged through better education, healthcare, and gender equity," he said. Congress leader Rahul Gandhi has said that the party will conduct a countrywide caste census if voted to power. The Mahagathbandhan government, of which JD(U), RJD and Congress and Left parties were a part, implemented a caste census in Bihar last year.

On whether the BJP would be able to weather alleged dissatisfaction about economic performance by consolidating the majority Hindus with the construction of Ayodhya Ram Mandir and implementation of the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, the 90-year-old professor said such an idea would betray the country's secular roots and multicultural nature.

Unemployment, better infra dominate poll battle in Trichy

Tiruchirappalli, Apr 14 (PTI):

Behind its image of an alluring urbane landscape surrounded by farmlands, Tiruchirappalli has its own cup of woes.

Rising unemployment, farmers' difficulty in stepping up exports, and the issue of acquiring land for the airport project are among the numerous issues that dominate the election this April 19 in Tiruchirappalli, a major hub connecting the southern districts, and even the delta districts.

The perennial Cauvery water crisis and lack of export prospects loom large on the face of farmers. And summer is invariably the time when the Cauvery river water level dwindles.

According to N Selvam, a farmer from Tiruchirappalli, ryots and even small entrepreneurs find it difficult to obtain export licences owing to the tedious procedures in-

cluding furnishing a plant quarantine certificate for exporting the vegetables.

"The quarantine certificate must mention the pesticides and chemical fertilisers used. This would not be possible as many farmers utilised pesticides and chemical fertilisers," he said with concern.

He further said that securing international standard certification, export packing techniques, labelling, food processing machinery besides food licences were complicated.

AIADMK candidate Karupiah has assured to increase the cashew exports from Gandharvakottai and also address the farmers' concerns if he was elected.

He is banking mostly on his party's image and performance in introducing pro-farmer initiatives especially on linking of rivers, desilting and maintaining water bodies and protecting the state's rights over Cauvery water

row with Karnataka.

"I will take steps to implement the Gundar Cauvery river linking project and take steps to remove the hurdles in acquiring land for the airport project," he told PTI.

"Unemployment is the major issue in the district as jobs in the PSUs such as the BHEL and Ordinance Factory have drastically reduced over the years," claimed Durai Vaiko, the MDMK candidate and son of party chief Vaiko, who is making a debut in electoral politics.

The seat was ceded by Congress to MDMK during the seat-sharing negotiation agreement with the DMK paving the way for the MDMK to contest again from this constituency after nearly two decades. The party's senior L Ganesan had won from the constituency in 2004. "About 23,000 people used to work at BHEL before Prime Minister Narendra Modi came to

power a decade ago. But now only 7,000 people are working there," said Durai. Similarly, the number of employees declined to 4,000 from 17,000 10 years ago, at the Golden Rock Railway Workshop in Ponnmalai, he pointed out.

And of them, those from Tamil Nadu account for about 1,500, he added.

The Ponnmalai or Golden Rock workshop is among the three such ones serving the Indian Railway's southern region.

"This is just a sample. Not only Tiruchirappalli, but also in other places in the country the situation is similar at all the central PSUs," Durai claimed.

Things would change in Tiruchirappalli and the rest of India only if the INDIA alliance captured power, he said.

Senthilnathan, the AMMK candidate is contesting from here in alliance with the BJP and he has assured to promote IT industries and make

Tiruchirappalli a model constituency.

Seeman's NTK candidate "Jallikattu" Rajesh is also in the fray in the constituency that has six assembly segments including Tiruchirappalli East, Tiruchirappalli West, S r i r a n g a m , T i r u v e r u m b u r , Pudukkottai and Gandharvakottai.

The MDMK is comfortably placed as it enjoys the support of the DMK, Congress and the left parties. State Ministers K N Nehru and Anbil Mahesh Poyyamozi, determined to ensure a victory to Durai, join him in campaigning trail explaining the achievements of the DMK government. Vaiko too hectically campaigns for his son in the constituency.

This seat has been giving a mixed bag of surprises in allowing the DMK to win only in the 1980 election when the party's N Selvaraj emerged the winner.

Alappuzha, Apr 15 (PTI):

The Lok Sabha polls in Alappuzha, often referred to as the "Venice of the East," gained attention as the Congress nominated its general secretary (organisation) K C Venugopal to contest against A M Ariff, the sitting MP from the ruling CPI(M), and the BJP's dynamic leader Sobha Surendran.

Like its famous boat racing events, where victory is determined by the pulling powers of the participants, the constituency has a history of swinging in favour of both the CPI(M)-led LDF and the Congress-led UDF, often making it difficult to predict election outcomes.

The land of coir, backwaters, beaches, and marine products, the constituency also comprises places that played a significant role in major progressive movements in Kerala.

Trying his luck in the constituency that he repre-

sented in 2009 and 2014, Venugopal is seeking votes, highlighting the alleged failures of the Narendra Modi-led NDA government in addressing the people's problems.

"You can see the enthusiasm from the voters. I have no doubts about a win," the Congress leader told PTI as he was walking towards his open vehicle for the campaign.

Venugopal, a Rajya Sabha MP from Rajasthan, faces allegations from the CPI(M) that he will "donate" a seat to the BJP if elected from Alappuzha, which he firmly denies, emphasising the main fight against the BJP-led NDA.

"I have already answered that question. No one should have any doubt that our main fight is against the BJP-led NDA," he said.

Responding to criticisms against Rahul Gandhi contesting in Kerala, Wayanad, Venugopal de-

fends his leader, stating it's not an issue as Rahul is the sitting MP, and it's not a new constituency.

Alappuzha stood firmly with the LDF through A M Arif in the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, making it a significant stronghold amidst the UDF's sweep. So, the Congress camp is not taking this fight lightly. The speech of Venugopal mostly referred to issues faced by fishermen, what the Congress has done for them so far, and what more they will be doing.

Arif, with his unique campaigning style, connects with locals, expressing confidence in his victory. Arif grew up in the ranks of CPI(M) in Alappuzha, where he started off as a student activist with the SFI.

"I am hundred and one per cent sure about my win. I have no issues with K C Venugopal fighting here. But Rahul should not have contested in Kerala," Arif told PTI.

BENGLISH NEW YEAR



People take part in a procession to celebrate Bengali New Year, 'Poila Baishakh', in Kolkata, Sunday.

Two tiny polling stations to be set up in T'gana for 10 voters each

Hyderabad, Apr 14 (PTI):

In a bid to demonstrate the importance given to every single vote and accessibility, the Election Commission is setting up two smallest auxiliary polling stations in Telangana's remote tribal areas which will likely witness only 10 voters each exercising their franchise in the upcoming Lok Sabha elections.

In order to ensure that the voters who earlier were forced to trek rugged terrains close to 20 km to cast their votes are spared of the difficulty, officials said the two polling stations will be set up in as many different Lok Sabha segments in the state. Each station will be manned by six election officials, including a volunteer and security person-

nel. Under Achampet assembly constituency of Nagarkurnool Parliamentary segment, an auxiliary polling station will be set up in a private building in Mallapur 'penta' for 10 voters, which would help them save a 20-km trek for casting vote.

Similarly, another auxiliary polling station will be at an Anganwadi centre in Budidigattu in Devarakonda assembly segment under Nalgonda Parliamentary constituency, which too has 10 voters. They earlier had to travel eight km to vote, EC and district administration officials said.

Overall, 10 smallest polling stations will be set up in Telangana under Nagarkurnool, Nalgonda and Mahabubabad Parliamentary segments

which have electors numbering between 10 to 26, belonging to STs-Chenchu, Lambadi and Koya tribes, who earlier had to travel a distance ranging from 3 km to 20 km.

Seven of the smallest 10 polling stations in the state have been set up in Nagarkurnool District, they said, adding, a polling booth has been created at forest base camp in Sangadigundala for 22 voters, who earlier used to trek 16 km to exercise their franchise. Another polling booth has been set up in a hut in Geesandi for 23 voters, who earlier travelled 12 km to vote.

The voters comprise different families. In Achampet assembly constituency of Nagarkurnool district, there are certain

Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTG) -- 'Chenchu' families living in deep forest in small groups, Nagarkurnool Collector and District Electoral officer P Udaykumar said.

These habitations (penta) consist of anywhere between 2-40 huts far away from mainstream villages and do not have civic amenities like roads. They stay 20-40 km deep inside the forest and due to various limitations earlier, only one polling station used to be established inside the forest for all these habitations forcing them to travel upto 20-30 km for casting vote, he said.

"Each habitation is somewhere between 10-15 km away from each other deep inside the forest. At

some places the voters had to start in the morning to reach the polling station and after voting in the afternoon they will come back to their own place probably by late evening/night. That was the scenario earlier."