'Russia's invasion of Ukraine threatens global security'

Tensions rise in Australia after a bishop and priest injured

Indebted to Ambedkar's **Constitution: Modi in Bihar**

Exercise to ferry polling personnel in helicopters begins



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DIPHU. KARBI ANGLONG. WEDNESDAY. APRIL 17, 2024 PAGES 12

Shah attacks Kharge for questioning **MODI-FIED GUWAHATI** 'relevance' of Kashmir for other states

Prime Minister Narendra Modi waves to the crowd during a roadshow on GS Road in Guwahati on Tuesday. HT Photo

'PM has given 'guarantee' to introduce UCC in country'

KOTDWAR, April 16: Prime Minister Narendra Modi has given a "guarantee" to bring uniform civil code in the country on the same lines as Uttarakhand, Union home minister Amit Shah said on

Addressing an election rally here, Shah also attacked Mallikarjun Kharge for questioning the "relevance" of Kashmir for other states, saying the Congress president is not aware of sacrifices made by the soldiers of Garhwal to save Kashmir.

Shah said right from the inception of Bharatiya Jana Sangh, its leaders had made a promise that there would be no law based on religion in this country and that there would be a uniform civil code (UCC).

"For the first time in the country, Uttarakhand chief minister Pushkar Dhami has introduced UCC in the state. Modi has given a guarantee in our 'Sankalp Patra' (manifesto) to introduce UCC in the whole country on the same Garhwal candidate Anil Baluni

lines," the BJP leader said.

He also attacked Kharge for questioning the "relevance" of Kashmir for other states.

"Congress national president Kharge says what the people of Uttarakhand and Rajasthan have to do with Kashmir. Kharge does not know that the soldiers of Garhwal shed maximum blood to save Kashmir," Shah said at the rally while campaigning for BJP's Pauri

At a rally in Rajasthan recently, Kharge had raised questions over mention of Article 370 abrogation by BJP leaders in their rallies. "Are bhai, yahan ke logon se kya wasta hai (what has it got to do with the people here)," Kharge had said.

Shah said during the Congressled UPA, anyone would come from Pakistan and return after setting off explosions but after Narendra Modi took (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Biswa Sarma on Tuesday claimed that an "insignificant" number of rhinos at the Kaziranga National

ing campaigns.

people gathered (in Vadra's roadshow). It was not significant. Who will come to see Privanka Gandhi? People will rather visit Kaziranga and watch tigers, rhinos, and time spent there will be more useful,"

he said. The senior BJP leader was speaking to reporters on the sidelines of an election campaign at Majuli.

"What's the benefit of seeing the Gandhi family? They look fit for the Amul campaign, so they are Amul babies. It's more beneficial to watch rhinos at Kaziranga than having a glimpse of Amul babies," Sarma added.

Leading a two-km long huge roadshow in support of Congress candidate Gaurav Gogoi earlier in the day, Vadra said the daily wages of tea garden workers will be hiked if the opposition INDIA bloc wins the upcoming Lok Sabha elections.

Training organised for LS polls personnel

HT Correspondent TEZPUR, April 16: As the count-

down to the 1st Phase of Poll for the General Election to Lok Sabha 2024 draws near, with 11-Sonitpur HPC also set to go to polls on April 19, 2024, the office of the district election officer, Sonitpur, organised a comprehensive group training session for polling personnel engaged in the Parliamentary Elec-

The extensive training program unfolded across two venues, namely Tezpur H S Government School and Tezpur College. Over 5000 polling personnel gathered on Tuesday to receive vital training on their roles and responsibilities in the electoral process. They also had the opportunity to address any queries (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

ULFA-I claims responsibility for attack on Assam Rifles

HT Correspondent TINSUKIA, April 16: The United Liberation Front of Asom-Independent (ULFA-I) has claimed responsibility for the attack on an Assam Rifles vehicle carrying a patrol team in Namdang are of

Margherita on Tuesday. In a statement sent to several media outlets, Rumel Axom, a selfproclaimed captain of ULFA-I, alleged that several vehicles of the 13th Assam Rifles were damaged.

injuries in the attack and was air-

am when militants fired on the Assam Rifles vehicles as they traveled from Changlang, Arunachal Pradesh, to Margherita. "Militant groups (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Watching rhinos more beneficial: Himanta on Priyanka's roadshow

MAJULI, April 16: Hours after Vadra led a roadshow in Assam's Jorhat, chief minister Himanta people attended it and watching Park would be "more beneficial".

He also said that members of the Gandhi family are fit for advertis-

"I heard around 2,000-3,000

Asked (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Not correct to take steps that can overlap energises BJP campaign in legal process: EC on probe against politicians

NEW DELHI, April 16: Amid the Opposition charge of being targeted by central probe agencies in the poll season, the Election Commission on Tuesday said it is committed to protecting level playing field but asserted that it is not correct to take any step that can over-

that had implemented Article 371A

of the Constitution which protects

the Naga culture, customary law

and practices, and ownership of

land and property, "but the BJP

wants to change the Constitution".

constitutional ethos of the country,

including pluralism, diversity and

secularism, were under attack from

the BJP and RSS and it was the re-

sponsibility of everyone to rise to-

gether and prevent the society from

"The BJP, along with its multi-

ple allies, is propagating a culture

of hated and division in the country

by attacking (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

being divided.

The Congress MP alleged that

lap the legal and judicial process. Several political parties from the INDIA bloc had approached the poll panel seeking its intervention in the alleged misuse of probe agencies by the government to target their leaders over graft.

Following the arrest of Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal by the Enforcement Directorate in a money laundering case linked to the alleged excise scam, the opposition parties had mounted renewed attack on the government for its alleged bid to silence their leaders ahead of parliamentary elections.

was guided by constitutional wisdom when presented with "live sitinvolving political uations" persons which have been under active consideration and orders of the courts based on criminal investiga-

"While the Commission remained unwaveringly committed to protection of level playing field and campaign entitlement of political parties and candidates, it has not found it correct to take any step that could overlap or overrun the legal judicial process," it said.

The poll panel said though it is not obliged to do so, it has put in public domain, for the first time, its enforcement of the Model Code of Conduct (MCC) during first month of its operation, along with details of action taken.

The EC said its move will help

In a statement, the EC said it address and stop "misgivings and insinuations" coming from certain quarters, "however small or limited"

During the one-month period of the model code, 16 delegations from seven political parties met the commission to lodge their complaints on alleged violations of poll code and related matters. Many delegations met its chief electoral officers at the state level.

Nearly 200 complaints have been filed by various political parties and candidates at the level of EC and across states. Of these, action has been taken in 169 cases, it pointed out

The total number of complaints received from the BJP were 51, out of which action has been taken in 38 cases. Similarly, 59 complaints were lodged by the Congress, with action taken (CONTD. ON PAGE-2) and multiple soldiers were seriously injured. According to sources, Hawladar Om Prakash sustained two bullet

lifted to the Dinjan army hospital. The incident occurred around 8

'The commercial hubs are Dibrugarh and Tinsukia mainly due to easier connectivity'

After NHs, major bridges, connectivity focus in Åssam's Lakhimpur shifts to peripheral routes

NORTH LAKHIMPUR, April **16:** For the people of Lakhimpur, separated from the rest of Assam by the mighty Brahmaputra and with several other major tributaries crisscrossing through the part that lies on the downstream of Arunachal Pradesh, roads and bridges have long remained major demands before the governments.

While it took over 20 years for completion of the rail-cum-road Bogibeel bridge over the Brahmaputra, the people are more optimistic regarding the bridges under construction at present, especially at Ghunashuti over Subansiri and Kharkati-Fatasuti over Ranganadi, which locals claim will further accelerate economic development of the entire northern bank of the



The current BJP-led regime has that define a crucial part of the also focussed on improving wateridentity of Lakhimpur ways simultaneously, exploring the

"Earlier, election issues used to

focus on providing basic connectivity to our parts with the rest of the state. But this has changed now with the Dhola-Sadiya and Bogibeel bridges opened over the last few years," Pranjal Dutta, a local businessman, said.

"Now, the government is focussing on providing intra-district connectivity as well as to neighbouring districts through multiple points," he added.

Local youth Prince Konwar cited the example of Ghunashuti-Lakhimpur bridge over the Subansiri, which the people have been demanding since the 1950s.

"It takes 10-11 hours to travel to Sivasagar now, but once this bridge is completed by next year or so, it will be a (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

"Bahut Jhoothi Party", accusing both of failing to deliver to the peo-He accused the BJP and RSS of attacking the country's pluralism

Expenditure observer HOJAI: To assess the progress of the electoral process in No. 10 Kaziranga Lok Sabha constituency, election expenditure observer Sri Laxman Singh Gurjar (IRS) arrived in Hojai on Monday. He visited the district commissioner's office at Sankardev Nagar and convened a meeting with additional district commissioner Bani Inam Chaddab, Hojai district treasury authority officer, and other officials overseeing the

HTBRIEFS

JAGIROAD: In a bid to curb the

circulation of illegal funds that

could potentially influence the in-

tegrity of the Lok Sabha Election-

2024, Flying Squad 01 of 52 Jagiroad (SC) LAC confiscated

₹ 1,00,000.00 from Sabur Uddin

Mandal, son of Sultan Ali Man-

dal, at Bhuragaon Natun Bazar on

April 15th, at 10:45 A.M. in Jag-

ibhakatgaon under the jurisdiction

of Jagiroad Police Station. This

action aligns with the guidelines

set forth by the Election Commis-

sion of India (ECI), which man-

dates the seizure of any cash

exceeding ₹ 50,000.00 found in

vehicles transporting candidates,

their agents, party workers, elec-

tion materials, or any items such

as drugs, liquor, arms, or gift

items valued at more than

₹ 10,000.00 that may be used to influence voters. This information

was conveyed in a press release.

Flying squad

election procedures. **BJP** members

MARGHERITA: Under the proficient guidance of Assam Jatiyo Parishad Central Committee secretary Sanjay Kumar Deb, more than 300 individuals, active members, and supporters of the BJP, made the transition to Assam Jatiyo Parishad on Tuesday in various rural areas within the 83 no. Margherita Constituency of Tinsukia district. Sanjay Kumar Deb highlighted that since the commencement of the election campaign, an average of 200 to 300 BJP members have been affiliating with Assam Jatiyo Parishad daily, signaling a growing desire for change among the populace. Furthermore, Deb emphasised the significance of the indigenous Assamese people, Tea Tribes, and Adivasi voters in the upcoming elections under the 13th Dibrugarh Lok Sabha constituency.

Congress-led INDIA bloc will resolve Naga peace talks if voted to power: Surjewala and diverse cultures by undermin-He said that it was the Congress

KOHIMA, April 16: Senior Congress leader Randeep Singh Surjewala on Tuesday asserted that the INDIA bloc led by the grand old party will resolve the decades-old Naga peace talks if voted to power

at the Centre. Addressing an election rally in Dimapur in support of party nominee S Supongmeren Jamir for the lone Lok Sabha seat in Nagaland, the AICC general secretary dubbed the ruling NDPP as "no direction propaganda party" and the BJP as

"If voted to power, the Congress-led INDIA bloc will resolve the Naga peace talks. The Framework Agreement was signed in 2015 but nothing has happened in the last nine years. Nobody has seen the contents of the agreement. The Framework Agreement is nothing but Modi's jumla," he al-

ing the Constitution.

"It was the Congress under

Rajiv Gandhi that signed accords in Assam, Mizoram and Punjab. If the people of Nagaland send Jamir to Parliament, the Congress will resolve the Naga issue to people's

CEM Tuliram Ronghang 6 - Diphu (ST) constituency



HT Bureau DIPHU, April 16: Intensifying the campaign for BJP candidate Amarsing Tisso from the 6 -Diphu (ST) Parliamentary Constituency, in the ensuing second phase of the Parliamentary election in Assam on April 26, chief executive member (CEM) of KAAC and star campaigner Tuliram Rong-

Autonomous Council (MAC) constituency on Tuesday. Ronghang, wooing voters, said that peace prevailing in Karbi Ang-

hang attended an election rally

"With the signing of a peace agreement with six armed groups, normalcy has returned. As peace has prevailed, development has not stagnated and is progressing rapidly. Projects such as the District Hospital in Hamren, a 100-bedded hospital in Bokajan town, and Government Law College in Diphu are currently underway," he stated.

Assuring development for the voters of Howraghat, the CEM announced that under the Asom Mala government-sponsored scheme, an amount of ₹ 922 crore will be allocated for the improve-

held at Bhelaguri playground under the Howraghat Member of ment of (CONTD. ON PAGE-2) long has accelerated development.

Karbi Anglong bans alcohol sales from 17 to 19 April in wake of LS polls

DIPHU, April 16: The district commissioner of Karbi Anglong has imposed a ban on the sale of alcohol in the bordering districts of Assam (Karbi Anglong) and Nagaland ahead of the General Election 2024.

"In view of the General Election 2024 for the Parliamentary Constituencies in the State of Nagaland, to be held in the first phase, the Governor of Assam hereby prohibits the possession of any intoxicants by any individual or group of individuals. There is a total ban on the sale of liquor, and distribution of spirituous, fermented, or intoxicating liquors or similar substances at any hotel, eating house, tavern, shop, or any

other public or private place within the adjoining bordering districts of Assam and Nagaland," an official statement read

It further said that this prohibition is effective for a period of 48 hours, ending with the conclusion of polling on April 19, 2024, starting from 4:00 pm on April 17, 2024

"Additionally, it extends to the day of vote counting, which is scheduled for June 4, 2024. The period including any re-polling, if required, is also declared as a DRY DAY until the counting process is completed. During this time, all bonded warehouses, IMFL retail "OFF" / "ON" shops, (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

India's unemployment rate to decline 97 basis points by 2028: ORF Report

India's gross domestic product (GDP) size is estimated at just under USD 4 trillion in 2024

NEW DELHI, April 16: India's cline by as much as 97 basis points by 2028 as the country's economy hits the USD 5 trillion mark, fuelling a rise in employment, a new report said on Tuesday.

Unemployment rate -- the percentage of people in the labour force who are without jobs -- is projected to fall from 4.47 per cent in 2024 to 3.68 per cent in 2028, the India Employment Outlook 2030 report by thinktank Observer Research Foundation (ORF) said.

"India's job market is experiencing a transformation as the country has become the world's fastest growing large economy in the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic," the report said.

The country's young population, whose median age is 28.4 years, holds a key to fuelling economic

"With a GDP growth rate of 7.8 per cent, India could potentially achieve its target of becoming a USD 5-trillion economy by 2026-27, with such growth being underpinned by strong private consumption and public investment," it said.

India's gross domestic product (GDP) size is estimated at just under USD 4 trillion in 2024. An ORF press statement said the country's 600-million-plus population of people aged 18-35 years regard as aspirational, as these sectors could act as engines of growth in the years ahead.

"The report forecasts that as India approaches its USD 5 trillion goal, overall employment could rise 22 per cent, while unemployment could decline by 97 basis points by 2028," the statement

The service sector in particular is set to witness significant job creation with each unit rise in services output expected to contribute to a substantial 0.12 per cent increase in employment.

The report singles out ten especially high-opportunity sub-sectors These include digital services, financial services, and services related to health, hospitality, consumer retail, e-commerce, and renewable energy. Other areas

startup ecosystems The burgeoning service sector also offers encouraging avenues for women's employment. Hence, investing in women's skilling, financial inclusion, and entrepreneurship needs to be prioritised further, argues the report.

poised for rapid growth are global

capability centres, and MSME and

"The projections for India's manufacturing sector are less optimistic. In spite of the US' growing imports from India, India's competitive cost structures and labour resources, and the government's push for manufacturing through flagship schemes such as Make in

P Series 5G embodies power and innovation. Sporting

bold and avant-garde designs, these smartphones

promise to captivate users with their striking aesthet-

ics. The realme P1 5G boasts the formidable Medi-

aTek Dimensity 7050 5G Chipset, a vibrant 120Hz

AMOLED Display, 45W SUPERVOOC Charging,

and an impressive 5000mAh Battery. On the other

hand, the realme P1 Pro 5G features a cutting-edge 50

MP Sony LYT-600 Camera with OIS, a stunning 120Hz Curved Vision Display, 45W SUPERVOOC

charge, a massive 5000mAh battery, and the Qual-

Expressing enthusiasm about the launch, a

spokesperson from realme stated, "We are excited to

introduce the realme P Series 5G, a smartphone lineup

that will redefine performance benchmarks in the in-

dustry. With the realme P Series 5G, we are introduc-

ing state-of-the-art technology and advanced features

that will set new standards in the mid-range segment.

Additionally, we are thrilled to unveil the realme Pad

2 in its Wi-Fi variant and the realme T110 buds along-

side the new P Series. We believe that these smart-

phones and AIOT products will further strengthen our

position as a brand that pioneers innovation and sets

nds. We are aiming to achieve the milestone of 50

comm Snapdragon 6 Gen 1 5G Chipset.

India, employment in the sector appears to have declined.

Technological advances and increased automation continue to cast doubts upon the country's ability to absorb its expanding workforce," the statement said.

In this context, transitioning towards industrial value chains associated with the service sector could help rejuvenate employment.

Nilanjan Ghosh, a director at ORF and one of the authors of the report said, "Policymakers and public sector schemes could partner more closely with other stakeholders to identify employability and skilling gaps. The next step would be to upgrade curricula and skills to make India's talent pool more industry ready."

Ghosh added that nurturing entrepreneurship would be crucial for improved next-gen employment. "A new class of entrepreneurs could stimulate job creation, expand India's startup ecosystem, spur innovation, and promote youth participation. But we also need to ensure that the workplaces of the future are gender-sensitive and inclusive," he said.

The report concludes that a multistakeholder approach towards employment generation and enhancement could help realise India's vision of a digitally empowered, skilled, innovative, and self-reliant economy. (PTI)

gifts that matter

brant colours of spring explode across Northeast as families are celebrating Bihu and the Hindu New Year with joy and fervour. But what gifts can truly embody the spirit of this auspicious occasion? Look no further, as here is a list of gift ideas to make this Bihu

panies like Max Bupa.

Invest in the future of your loved ones by contributing towards their education expenses, whether it be through book vouchers or contributions towards their college fund.

ment with Airtel Xstream Play, a one-stop entertainment hub offering diverse content from partners like Eros Now and Manorama

Simplify life with Airtel Black, an all-in-one solution for home internet. DTH, and mobile needs. bundled into a single bill for added convenience.

laxation with a spa day, offering reinvenating treatments to de-stress and start the New Year feeling refreshed.

Above all, cherish the most precious gift of quality time together by scheduling family activities such as game nights, movie marathons, or simply engaging in heartfelt conversations.

Celebrate Bihu by expressing

Celebrate Bihu with realme unveils exciting new products on Flipkart HT Bureau GUWAHATI, April 16: The vi-

extra special for your family.

Sweeten the celebrations with a traditional sweets box, featuring delights like Pitha or Laru, to add a touch of sweetness to the festivi-

Provide your family with peace of mind by gifting them a family insurance policy, offering comprehensive health coverage from com-

Unleash a world of entertain-

Indulge your loved ones in re-

your love and care through these thoughtful gifts, ensuring a memorable and joyous occasion for all, a

Player of Performance and Display," the new realme Series this year." IT STOCKS DRAG Markets slump for third day on fears of escalating tensions in Middle East

ant and the realme T110 buds. Touted as the "Best" million sales on Flipkart with the launch of the new P

benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty continued to slump on Tuesday dragged down by heavy selling in IT stocks amid weak global trends and fears of escalating tensions in the Middle East. Outflow of foreign fund also dented investors' sentiment

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, April 16: realme, recognized as India's

most reliable smartphone service provider, has an-

nounced the highly anticipated launch of its latest

realme P Series 5G smartphones - the realme P1 Pro

5G and realme P1 5G. These cutting-edge devices are

poised to revolutionize the mid-range smartphone

market with their exceptional performance, user ex-

perience, and exclusive availability on Flipkart for In-

dian consumers. Accompanying the P Series, realme

will also introduce the realme Pad 2 in its Wi-Fi vari-

Continuing its downtrend for the third day running, the 30-share BSE Sensex tanked 456.10 points or 0.62 per cent to settle at ITC, Power Grid and Reliance In-72,943.68. During the day, it dustries were the gainers.

cent to 72,685.03. The NSE Nifty declined 124.60 points or 0.56 per cent to finish at 22,147.90.

From the Sensex basket, Infosys, IndusInd Bank, Bajaj Finserv, Wipro, HCL Technologies, Bajaj Finance, Tech Mahindra, Tata Consultancy Services, and Larsen & Toubro were the major laggards. Titan Company, Hindustan Unilever, HDFC Bank, Maruti,

tained its consolidation trend for the third consecutive day, amid apprehensions regarding geopolitical tensions and drop in the probability of a rate cut in the short-term. Heightened concerns arose following stronger-thananticipated US retail sales, amplifying the assumption that the US Federal Reserve might delay rate cuts, leading to a notable uptick in the dollar index and US bond vields. (PTI)

Gold, silver prices hit fresh peaks on strong global cues Amid escalating tensions in Middle East

NEW DELHI, April 16: Extending gains for the

second day in a row, gold and silver prices hit fresh all-time high levels on Tuesday, tracking strong trends in the international markets amid fears of escalating tensions in the Middle East. According to HDFC Securities, gold prices zoomed ₹ 700 to hit its lifetime high of ₹ 73,750

per 10 grams in the national capital on Tuesday. It had closed at ₹ 73,050 per 10 grams on Monday. Similarly, silver price jumped ₹ 800 to hit a

record high of ₹ 86,500 per kg. "Spot gold prices (24 carats) in the Delhi markets are trading at a new record high of ₹ 73,750 per 10 grams, up by ₹ 700, taking positive cues from overseas markets." Saumil

Securities, said. In the global markets, spot gold at Comex was trading at USD 2,370 per ounce, up by USD 15 from the previous close.

Gandhi, Senior Analyst, Commodities at HDFC

Gold rose as demand for the haven asset grew amid fears of escalating tensions in the Middle East following Iran's unprecedented attack on Israel last week.

Investors' attention turned towards a potential counter strike that is likely to increase the risk



of starting a full-blown war between the two countries, which spiked the safe haven premium in bullion prices, Gandhi said.

Silver was also quoting higher at USD 28.40 per ounce. In the previous close, it had finished at USD 28.25 per ounce

Further, investors will look forward to the US Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell's speech on Tuesday, following higher-than-expected inflation data last week, which will further provide more insights on the monetary policy out-

However, elevated US Treasury yields and firm dollar will limit the upside in the precious metal prices and keep the metal volatile, Praveen Singh – Associate VP, Fundamental Currencies and Commodities at Sharekhan by BNP Paribas, said.

Meanwhile, in futures trade on the MCX, the most traded June contract of gold was trading at ₹ 72,626 per 10 grams, up by ₹ 349 or 0.48 per cent. During the day, it hit an intra-day high of ₹ 72,927 per 10 grams

Further, the August delivery contract of the precious metal was trading at ₹ 72,800 per 10 However, May contract of silver was trading

lower by ₹ 314 or 0.37 per cent to ₹ 83,537 per kg on the Multi Commodity Exchange (MCX). "MCX Gold surged, while Comex gold reached USD 2,370 per ounce with overnight

"Looking ahead, sentiment remains bullish for gold as long as geopolitical tensions persist and escalate," Jateen Trivedi, VP Research Analyst - Commodity and Currency at LKP Securities, said. (PTI)

Contd. from Page 1...

'PM has given 'guarantee' to

over, Pakistan got a fitting retaliation for its dastardly attacks in Uri and Pulwama through surgical and air strikes which eliminated terrorists on their turf.

He also accused the Congress of using "abusive words" against former chief of defence staff (CDS) Bipin Rawat, saying the opposition party's culture allowed it to insult a brave warrior like him. Shah also dismissed Kharge's claim that a third term for Modi as prime minister would end reservation in the country.

"Kharge says reservation would go away if Modi becomes PM for a third time. Modi ji is the biggest supporter of reservation. We would neither withdraw reservation nor let anyone do it," the Union home minister said. Drawing a comparison between 10 years of the Congress-led UPA and BJP-led NDA governments at the Centre, he said the Congress government gave ₹ 53,000 crore to Uttarakhand in 10 years, whereas the Modi government gave ₹ 1,66,000 crore to the state in 10 years.

Giving details, he mentioned that ₹ 82,000 crore was given for infrastructure, ₹ 31,000 crore for roads, ₹ 50,000 crore for railways and ₹ 100 crore given for airports. Shah said to stop migration from the hill state and promote tourism, Modi built the Chardham all-weather road project at a cost of ₹ 12,000 crore.

"Dehradun-Delhi Economic Corridor is being built at a cost of ₹8,000 crore. Thirty highways have been inaugurated at a cost of ₹ 500 crore and border villages are being developed under the 'Vibrant Village' scheme," he added. Shah said the Congress could not abrogate Article 370 in Kashmir for 70 years but Modi put an end to it forever in 2019. He also reminded the public that the Congress had opposed the formation of Uttarakhand and said late Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee created it and now Prime Minister Modi is shaping it.

He asked the public to strengthen the hands of Prime Minister Modi by ensuring the victory of Baluni for a developed Uttarakhand. He claimed that 14,000 Congress leaders have joined the BJP in Uttarakhand in the last three months. Congress general secretary K C Venugopal is asking his party workers to induct BJP leaders in the Congress, Shah said, adding that Venugopal is not aware of the ground situation.

"Congress leaders are competing with each other to join BJP...if we start taking in each one of them, the Congress will be left with nothing but the party office," he said.

Shah said every vote to the BJP would steer Modi to a third term as prime minister to take India to new heights of development. "A developed India also means a developed Uttarakhand. Modi ji has already said the decade belongs to Uttarakhand," he said. Shah said "tomorrow is Ram Navami" and Ram Lalla in Ayodhya will celebrate his birthday for the first time in 500 years in his temple, not in a tent.

"Tomorrow, Ram devotees across the country will have tears of joy in their eyes," he said. (PTI) Congress-led INDIA bloc will resolve

the diversity and cultures of Indians. The Constitution is the repository of diversity, pluralism and secularism for the Congress but it is under attack by the BJP. India's leaders have laid down their lives so that each one of us can live in this land freely in a cohesive manner," he said. He claimed that there are two models in the country at present. "The BJP-Modi model is to dictate, impose, force, intimidate, while the Congress model is of compassion, love, dialogue, listening and finding solutions," he asserted.

Attacking the ruling NDPP-BJP alliance in the state, he said that in the 2023 Nagaland Assembly polls, they gave the slogan "election for solution" but today, the NDPP stands for "no direction propaganda party" while

BJP is "Bahut Jhoothi Party" "They both don't have any direction and are unable to deliver to the masses. People of Nagaland and India

will not allow them to continue to play with the state and country," he said. Surjewala claimed that NDPP-BJP candidate Chumben Murry wouldn't be in a position to raise voice on issues concerning Nagaland, such as Citizenship (Amendment) Act, Uniform Civil Code of cancellation of Free Movement Regime with Myanmar. Jamir said his rival candidate Chumben Murry "is very good as a person but he is an ally of RSS and BJP, which is very bad". (PTI)

Watching rhinos more beneficial:

about Gogoi's poll prospects, Sarma said, "Some people want to say that Gaurav Gogoi was an active parliamentarian. I challenge anyone who can show me a single word spoken by him for the Kaliabor constituency. Has he spoken a single word for Jorhat, Majuli?" Gogoi is a sitting Congress MP from Kaliabor constituency, which was rechristened as Kaziranga after delimitation last year. This time, he is contesting from Jorhat and looking for a third consecutive term in Lok Sabha.

"We don't need an active parliamentarian to shout 'Rahul Gandhi zindabad'. We need a parliamentarian who can speak for Assam's problems. Gaurav is a spokesperson of the Gandhi family. He has not spoken a single word for the people of Assam," Sarma said. The chief minister said that he gets inspiration if someone speaks for Assam inside Parliament since that helps expediting any pending work.

"He (Gogoi) only speaks about Manipur in Parliament. Is he a son-in-law or grandchild of Manipur? Why does he speak about Manipur day and night? And some people here are enthused that he spoke a lot in Parliament. Assam remained backward for such statements," the CM asserted. (PTI)

Training organised for LS polls

or uncertainties they had regarding their tasks. District Commissioner cum district election officer of Sonitpur and returning officer of 11-Sonitpur HPC, Deba Kumar Mishra, personally visited both training venues to interact with the trainees. Mishra actively participated in sharing valuable insights and knowledge about the entire election process, enriching the training experience for all attendees.

CEM Tuliram Ronghang energises

roads from Howraghat Tiniali to Hamren town. Notably, Howraghat town will be equipped with four lanes with dividers, and an open stage will be constructed. The CEM mentioned that several families did not receive housing under PMAY due to difficulties in conducting geo-tech assessments, but after the election, the process will resume to ensure every household receives it.

He also highlighted the Assam government's initiative to provide a loan amount of Rs 2 lakh to unemployed educated youths for setting up businesses. The government will repay Rs 1 lakh, while the remaining Rs 1 lakh will need to be repaid to the bank within five years. Such a scheme aims to support local youths. The election rally was attended by deputy chairman of KAAC, Ajit Kumar Dey; MLA Dorsing Ronghang; BJP candidate Amarsing Tisso; and president of EKADC, Roland Killing.

Earlier, the CEM attended an election rally held at Bakulia under the Langfer MAC constituency.

Meanwhile, the Congress, with the theme 'Save the Constitution and Democracy of India', campaigned at Balipathar for INDI Alliance MP Candidate Joyram Engleng. Congress MP Candidate Joyram Engleng criticized the BJP, stating that if the Narendra Modi-led coalition

wins the general election, the Constitution of India and Sixth Schedule will be altered. He expressed concerns that GST will be increased to affect the poor, emphasizing the necessity to defeat the BJP.

Not correct to take steps that can

in 51 cases. Complaints received from other parties were 90, out of which action has been taken in 80 cases, the EC added. The poll code came into force on March 16 with the announcement of the Lok Sabha election schedule. With a month completed since the model code came into effect, the EC said it is "broadly satisfied" with the

compliance of the code by political parties. The campaign by various parties and candidates has remained "largely clutter free", it added. At the same time, the commission said it has decided to keep under strict watch some disturbing trends and

to keep special track of certain deviant candidates, leaders, and practices more than ever before. The EC also underlined that while enforcing the model code, it has been guided by its mandated responsibility. legal premises, institutional wisdom, equality, and transparency in dealings and irrespective of status and influence of persons concerned and irrespective of political affiliations.

The poll panel also asserted that all political parties have been treated at par and time given to all even at short notice and their grievances heard patiently. It listed out various complaints made by the Congress, BJP and AAP on which it took action, including lodging of FIRs against leaders and issuing censures to them for poll code violations.

The EC also highlighted that it took a firm stand on upholding dignity and honour of women by issuing notices to leaders of parties who made derogatory and offensive remarks against women.

It held party presidents accountable for leaders and campaigners making disrespectful and derogatory com-

ULFA-I claims responsibility for easily infiltrate Indian territory through Arunachal Pradesh to carry out subversive activities. Arunachal

Pradesh shares an international boundary with Myanmar and China. Militant groups take advantage of the rough terrain to enter India," a police official said. "We cannot currently determine which militant group carried out the attack. After a thorough investigation,

we will be able to identify the group responsible for the assault on the Assam Rifles vehicle," the official added.

Karbi Anglong bans alcohol sales

including Club ON, Hotel ON, Star Hotels, Country Spirit Shops, and other establishments selling or serving liquor, will remain closed," the order read further. Individuals storing alcohol will be subject to restrictions, and the enforcement of regulations regarding the

storage of liquor in unlicensed premises will be strictly enforced, it said. "Any violations of this order will be addressed according to the relevant provisions of the Assam Excise Act and Rules, and action will be taken against offenders immediately," the order concluded.

After NHs, major bridges, connectivity

matter of about an hour to reach there," he said. The bridge at Kharkati over Ranganadi is another such crucial development, which will turn North Lakhimpur town into a hub of economic activities in the region,

"At present, the commercial hubs are Dibrugarh and Tinsukia mainly due to easier connectivity. But when these two bridges, along with a few others, are completed, the economic activities will shift towards here. The fact that we share a long border with Arunachal Pradesh will also further boost trade." he claimed.

in Lakhimpur-Dhemaji inter-district border within a one-kilometre radius has brought much relief to the local "This area is along the Lakhimpur-Dhemaji district and people would be under flood waters for most of the year. The construction of roads and these three bridges after a scientific study has proved to be a boon for

In case of intra-district connectivity, Dutta said three bridges over the Jiadhol, Kumotia and Samorajan rivers

them." he claimed. Abhijit Sonowal, who is the district chairman for the implementation of a central government project for tribal welfare, said these improvements in connectivity has made life easier for the general people. (PTI)

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 17, 2024

Page 3 APRIL 17_Normal Pages 4/16/2024 9:39 PM Page 1

4 people killed as car hits tree in Dhubri

DHUBRI, April 16: Four persons, including a woman, were killed as their car hit a tree in the Dhubri district on Tuesday, police said.

The driver of the speeding vehicle lost control and hit the tree on National Highway 17 in Gauripur.

All four persons in the car died on the spot, police said.

The deceased driver was identified as Sahil Ahmed and the other two passengers as Shahid Khandekar and Nur Amin. The identity of the woman is yet to be ascertained, they said.

The vehicle was on the way to Dhubri town from Bongaigaon district.

The bodies were sent for post-mortem examination to the Dhubri Medical College and Hospital, police said. (PTI)

Plight of tea garden workers becomes poll issues in Dibrugarh again

Dibrugarh constituency stands out with highest concentration of tea gardens with workers accounting for 30 % of total 16.50 lakh voters

DIBRUGARH, April 16: The two leaves and a bud, plucked by tea garden workers, may have made Assam's tea industry globally renowned, but the lack of their facilities comes to the fore only during elections with cacophony of promises by politicians to address their plight.

Nestled amidst verdant greenery, the Dibrugarh constituency stands out with the highest concentration of tea gardens in the region with estate workers accounting for 30 per cent of the total 16.50 lakh voters.

The Congress enjoyed the unstinted support of this major vote bloc since Independence till 2014 when the BJP wrested the seat for the first time and retained it five years later.

Serving as a microcosm, it vividly portrays the challenges faced by tea garden workers.

The constituency, comprising two districts of Dibrugarh and Tinsukia, has a total of 301 big estates and 51,063 small tea gardens.

Wages, health, education and land documents (pattas) are the major issues of tea garden workers of the constituency.

Union Minister and BJP candidate Sarbananda Sonowal's campaign has mandatory stops at tea gardens where he shakes a leg with 'jhumur' dancers of the tea tribe and plays their traditional drum before he starts highlighting the party's contribution to improve the life of estate workers. "During the tenures of Himanta Biswa Sarma and

as chief ministers, we have made all-out efforts to solve the long-standing problems of garden workers who were neglected by the Congress during their 60 years of misrule," Sonowal told PTI.

Tea garden workers speak "favourably of the BJP because the party has significantly contributed to their economic betterment, advocated social justice, and facilitated a path to a more dignified life", he claimed. "Conversely, the Congress has historically treated

them merely as a vote bank without adequately addressing their needs," Sonowal alleged.

Opposition candidate Lurinjyoti Gogoi told PTI that Assam is globally known for its tea industry, but the

condition of its workers is pathetic.

"BJP had made many promises for tea garden workers, including ₹ 350 as wage, land pattas of their houses, health and education facilities but all remain unfulfilled," the Assam Jatiya Parishad (AJP) presi-

There is a strong resentment against the BJP among the tea garden community in the entire Dibrugarh constituency, he claimed.

The third candidate in the fray, Aam Aadmi Party's (AAP) Manoj Dhanowar, belongs to the tea tribe community. He claimed that the condition of garden workers here is the "worst in the country and so-called facilities provided by the BJP government have not reached all sections'

"In Kerala and Tamil Nadu, the workers are paid ₹ 450 per day, but in Assam, BJP is not even paying the promised Rs 350 and workers are getting a mere ₹ 250," he claimed

Gogoi said the BJP's neglect of the community is evident from the fact that the sitting MP and Union Minister Rameswar Teli, who also belongs to the tea tribe community, was denied a ticket from the seat this

Countering his allegation, Assam minister and Tinsukia MLA Sanjay Kishan, who also belongs to the community, told PTI that the "opposition has no issue and are trying to divert people from the development work that the BJP has initiated" in the state, particularly for tea garden workers.

"In Assam, there are 35 assembly constituencies where tea garden voters play a pivotal role, but it is not possible that in each, people from the community will be given tickets to contest," he added.

Health is also a major concern in tea gardens with at least one or two tuberculosis patients in most families and the outbreak of gastro-enteritis is common in these estates, CPI-ML leader Subhas Sen, who works with workers, told PTI.

"There are no well-equipped hospitals in tea gardens. There are no permanent doctors and even if there is, they cater to at least 5 to 10 tea gardens, working on a part-time basis," he said.

The dropout rate among the children of workers is also very high with almost 95 per cent of them not sitting for the matriculation exams, Sen added.

Tea garden worker Durgamani Keot said her daughters have dropped out of school but they "don't want

to pluck leaves like me" Keot said she has received most of the government schemes, like free rice and gas connections, but has

vet to get land pattas Another worker Kuli Tanti said though she had applied for all government schemes entitled to, she is yet

to get the benefits but hopes to get it once the elections

The Dibrugarh constituency will go to polls on

Ishwari Deka of Tezpur clears UPSC



HT Correspondent

TEZPUR, April 16: Earnming laurels for the district of Sonitpur, Ishwari Deka from Tezpur has cracked the UPSC examinations securing all India ranking 320, the results of which were released on Tuesday.

Ishwari is the daughter of former viceprincipal of the Rangapara College, Ranendra Mohan Deka and Bharati Das, retired principal of Tezpur Government Girls' Multipurpose Higher Secondary School. She resides with her family at Chitralekha Nagar in Tezpur.

Ishgwari passed her HSLC final examination from the Saint Joseph Convent High School in Tezpur with 89 per cent marks and the HS final examination with 97.75 marks from the Kendriya Vidyalaya. After graduating from the Saint Stephens College in New Delhi she pursued her post graduation in English from the Delhi University. She had also appeared in the Assam Finance Service Examination, in which she secured the third position.

Unfolding the secret behind her success Ishwari Deka said that she had nurtured a dream, to crack t6he civil service examinations since her school days. After clearing the UPSC preliminary exam, she regularly studied to achieve her goal.

Several organization and local residents congratulated her on her feat. A local resident said, "We wish Ishwari a bright future and hope that through her unfathomable talent she would always dedicate herself for the betterment of the people, thereby reflecting the dignity of the district of Sonitpur and her locality as well."

Morigaon prepares for Lok Sabha polls with 7,25,801 voters

HT Correspondent
MORIGAON, April 16: The Morigaon district with a total of 7,25,801 voters, is gearing up for the second phase of Lok Sabha polls, which is scheduled to take place on April 26.

Addressing the media on Tuesday, the district commissioner and district election officer Devashish Sharma along with the expenditure observer Pachiappan P said that the voting will take place from 7 am to 5 pm on April 26, with vote counting scheduled for June 4, marking the completion of the entire election process by June

A total of 13 candidates from various political parties are in the fray for the Nagaon Lok Sabha constituency seat, of which Morigaon is a part. In the upcoming second phase of polling, three legislative assembly constituencies of Jagiroad (SC), Laharighat, and Morigaon will be involved. The district comprises of a diverse electorate, with 3,66,678 male voters, 3,59,112 female voters,

and 11 third gender voters.

procedures, 911 polling stations have been set up in Morigaon with special provisions for all women polling stations and model polling stations. A total of 29 polling stations will be exclusively managed by women," Sarma said.

Among these, six have been designated as model polling stations, three polling stations will be run entirely by young personnel and one polling station will be efficiently managed by women personnel with disabilities, ensuring inclusivity and accessibility for all voters.

Furthermore, arrangements have been put in place for home voting on April 17, catering specifically to voters with disabilities and senior citizens.

"A total of 545 persons with disabilities and individuals aged 85 years and above will have the opportunity to cast their votes from the comfort of their homes. On April 19, voting for essential services personnel will take place, ensuring their participation in the

"To facilitate smooth voting electoral process," said Pachiap-

The implementation of the model code of conduct has been rigorous in Morigaon, with various authorities ensuring compliance and taking action against any violations. Moreover, key officers have been appointed to oversee the electoral process and address any concerns or objections raised by the stakeholders.

The district commissioner also informed that the flying squad and static surveillance team have seized cash worth Rs 38,35,150 till April 14. This action is part of the ongoing efforts to ensure a fair and transparent electoral process.

A meeting was also convened where the district commissioner, expenditure observer, and representatives of different political parties discussed further arrangements and addressed queries regarding the electoral process. The meeting was attended by ASP Dhruba Jyoti Nath, ADC Pallavi Kachari and Sulakshana Barpatrogohain and election officer Jagriti

Sarbananda Sonowal campaigns in Naharkatia, partakes in pada yatra



HT Correspondent

DIBRUGARH, April 16: Union minister and BJP candidate contesting from Dibrugarh Lok Sabha Constituency (LSC), Sarbananda Sonowal on Tuesday campaigned across the Naharkatia legislative assembly constituency (LAC) at Tarani Pathar, Nigam and Namrup.

Sonowal also took part in a pada yatra, where thousands joined in to rally support for BJP on

Later in the evening, Sonowal also addressed a meeting in Shantipara Netaji park within Di-

The Union minister was accompanied by the Union minister of state, Rameshwar Teli, Naharkatia MLA, Taranga Gogoi and noted cine artist Pranjal Saikia among other leaders of the

Addressing the meeting Sonowal said, "The people of Assam has witnessed how the BJP led double engine government has worked towards development and welfare of the state. Major initiatives have been executed that has led to the enhancement of the quality of living. The main differentiator of BJP is its innate capability to work towards achieving a vision. It has a plan, it has honest intent to put it through which has resulted in the historic transformation of the state and the country. We have done some good work, while pursuing to deliver the best. But, we must keep working towards realising the vision of Narendra Modi to transform India as the third largest economy of the world, a feat that was unthinkable during the misrule of Congress governments.' "Today, the Narendra Modi has already pio-

neered and prepared a 100-days plan after people elect him back to power for the third consecutive term. On the contrary, the opposition Congress remains aimless, visionless and clueless. People can see this through. The 'Bohagi Bordoichila' will tear through the conspiracy of Congress led alliance as the people of Dibrugarh and Tinsukia will cut them to size,

NFR observes 133rd birth Congress leader Pawan Khera slams BJP for anniversary of Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar

GUWAHATI, April 16: The 133 rd Birth Anniversary of Bharat Ratna Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar was observed on Tuesday at the Bhupen Hazarika Sabha Griha in the Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) headquarters in Maligaon.

Chetan Kumar Shrivastava, general manager of NFR and others officials paid homage by lighting the lamp and offering floral tribute on the portrait of B. R. Ambedkar, also known as the Father of the In-

The officers and staff of NFR, representatives of various associations and unions were also present on the occasion. Speaking on this occasion. Chetan Kumar Shrivastava mentioned about Ambedkar's contribution towards framing of our Constitution, providing justice and equality to all classes of the society. He also spoke on his role in women empowerment and development of under-privileged section of the society.

His whole life is an inspiration for all classes of the society.

using ED, CBI against opposition leaders DIBRUGARH, April 16: Congress leader Pawan Khera on Tuesday criticised the BJP government for misusing the Enforcement Directorate (ED) and the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) against opposition leaders, who raised their voices against them.

Addressing a press conference here, Khera, senior Congress spokesperson, said, "This election is very important in the country's history. The people are in constant fear that if BJP comes into power again, there will be no elections held. Democracy will be finished and the Constitution will be changed as per their wish.'

"I appeal to all voters to vote consciously and to vote to save democracy and the constitution. If someone fears them (BJP) and joins their party, they will help him become chief minister. But those who don't come into their trap, they will put behind bars using ED and CBI," Khera stated.

Khera said, "If we form the government, then those officers who helped the BJP to illegally use the ED and CBI against opposition

leaders will not be spared. We will take action against them, and they will be put behind bars. The Congress leader asked why the four-lane highway in Assam has not been completed after many years. "The BJP government promised the six ethnic groups to give ST status, but why have they not been able to tag the communities as ST till date?" Khera asked. "The wages of tea garden workers have not been increased, which was promised by the government during the last parliamentary election. The BJP government has failed to fulfill the promises they made during the last elections," Khera stated.

In BJP, only two persons make decisions. They will not listen to the cabinet: only two persons. Narendra Modi and Amit Shah, rule the whole party. Now, Narendra Modi is afraid because they are claiming 400 plus seats, but the result will tell us the whole story, he said. Slamming Assam chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, Khera said, "What Himanta Biswa Sarma said is not important for us. When he (Himanta Biswa Sarma) was in Congress, he was a disciplined man, but now he has changed after joining the BJP.'

Baukhungri Festival concludes in Kokrajhar

Festival organised by BTR govt in collaboration with tourism department

HT Correspondent KOKRAJHAR, April 16: The 11th edition of the Baukhungri Festival, the biggest festival in Bodoland Territorial Region has concluded with two days of colourful programme held along

the Baukhungri Hill Harinaguri in

Kokrajhar. The festival comprised of traditional folk culture, indigenous sports and local food traditions at the Harinaguri, which was organised by the government of Bodoland Territorial Region and the tourism department. The celebration of Rongjali Bwisagu also included hill trekking on the last

day of Choitra month on April 13. The event has gained mass participation cutting across different communities from several states of

the country. The concluding day witnessed a prize distribution ceremony, where competition winners were awarded cash prize and gifts by the organising committee amidst a huge

gathering of visitors. On the first day of the event, a



ond and third spot respectively. In

the female category, Sabina Rai

(West Bengal), Shyamali Singh

(West Bengal) and Madhu Rai

(Uttar Pradesh) were spotted as

first, second and third respectively.

hill trekking competition for men and women was held, which was flagged off at the Harinaguri High School playground. People in large numbers participated in the com-

In the male category, Puran Rai (Sikkim), Pradip Mahato (West

darison Winniang (Meghalaya), Alancemayer Lyngdoh Nanglait (Meghalaya) and Burlungbuthur Narzary(Bodoland) bagged the first, second and third respectively in the men's category. In the women category, Phymai Kyndait (Meghalaya), Bhasati Saikia (Assam) and Rwisumwi Bala Basumatary (Bodoland) were adjusted as first, second and third spot respectively.

Several competitions were held for men and women were also organised, which included mountain bike cycling competition, hills trekking competition, indigenous games and sports competition, showcasing of traditional food items and cultural demonstrations representing different communi-

In the mountain cycling, Alvin-

Bodoland University registrar Subung Basumatary, NRL independent director Sandeep Pradhan, AFA secretary Sangrang Brahma, BTC secretary Ditaka Nanda Hazarika and joint secretary Pami Brahma graced the occasion.

Former KAAC EM Prodip Rongpi joins Congress

DIPHU, April 16: Congress of Karbi Anglong received a boost as the former executive member (EM) of Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC), Prodip Rongpi along with his supporters returned to Congress fold. Sources claimed more than 30 party workers from BJP and Nationalist People's Party (NPP) have joined the Congress.

The former EM of KAAC, Rongpi including others were welcomed into the Congress by felicitating them with Karbi traditional turban in a joining programme held at Karbi Anglong District Congress Committee (KADCC) office in Diphu on Tuesday

The former EM said that it was like a homecoming for him. Rongpi had won four consecutive times as member of KAAC from Chinthong Member of Autonomous Council (MAC) constituency, West Karbi Anglong. He first won an ASDC ticket in 2001. Two years later Rongpi then joined the Congress. In Congress he won another two consecutive times as Member of Autonomous Council (MAC) from the same constituency Chinthong and was also an EM



chief executive member (CEM) of KAAC, Tuliram Ronghang along with 26 elected members of KAAC joined BJP en-mass.

In 2017 Rongpi again contested the KAAC election from the same Chinthong MAC constituency with a BJP ticket and won the election.

He was EM, KAAC then. In the last KAAC election in 2022, the BJP denied a party ticket to Rongpi. It may be mentioned here that his son Alom Rongpi had also joined Congress last December. Rongpi said, "I have been elected MAC and EM of KAAC for four times from 2001. In 2001 I was ASDC MAC and two years later I joined Congress. In Congress I was MAC and EM, KAAC for two consecutive terms. In June, 2016 under the leadership of present CEM, KAAC, Tuliram Ronghang we

switched to BJP. In 2017 the BJP party gave me a party ticket. I won the election and was MAC and EM, KAAC. But in the last KAAC election in 2022 I was denied a party ticket. Though I was not given a party ticket, I did not go against party principle and stayed loyal to the party."

Rongpi said that although the BJP had given the promise of implementing Article 244(A) of Indian constitution for granting Autonomous State, and though 10 years in power now, has not

"BJP leaders like LK Advani, Rajnath Singh and Amit Shah have made their promises for implementing Article 244(A). Their promises have become lies. But for the Congress Rahul Gandhi has assured to implement it," the former EM said

He also said his joining the Congress will give a fresh energy to the Congress of Chinthong.

Another person joining the Congress today is Pitor Tisso, BJP state executive member and Prabhari of West Karbi Anglong Minority Morcha.

Tisso on April 15 resigned from the party and within 24 hours he was seen joining the

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QUOTE OF THE DAY

It is better to fail in originality than to succeed in imitation — Herman Melville.

Assessing Iran's attack on Israel

The recent escalation between Iran and Israel has set the Middle East on edge, prompting concerns about the potential for a broader conflict. The events of Saturday night, marked by Iran's coordinated drone and missile attack on Israel, underscore the fragile dynamics in the region. However, a deeper analysis reveals a complex interplay of strategic calculations and diplomatic manoeuvring. Iran's decision to launch a significant assault on Israel, purportedly in retaliation for an airstrike on its embassy in Syria, reflects a calculated move aimed at asserting its position in the face of perceived provocations. Quoting unofficial estimates, the BBC reported that the assault involved 170 drones, 30 cruise missiles, and a minimum of 110 ballistic missiles. Thanks to collaborative efforts with the US, UK, and neighbouring Arab nations like Jordan, Israel managed to intercept a staggering 99 percent of the formidable arsenal. While some interpret Iran's actions as an attempt to inflict meaningful damage, others view it as a symbolic gesture designed to save face without escalating tensions further. Regardless of interpretation, the attack underscores the limitations of Iran's military capabilities compared to those of Israel and its allies. The aftermath of the attack presents a delicate diplomatic balancing act for Israel's leadership. While urged by some, including US President Joe Biden, to "take the win" and avoid further escalation, the pressure to respond decisively remains palpable. The risk of exacerbating tensions and triggering a full-blown conflict looms large, with potential implications for regional stability and international re-

However, if Israel opts for a forceful response to Iran's attack, it risks escalating the situation rapidly. Such retaliation could trigger a cycle of retaliation and counter-retaliation, potentially leading to a full-scale war. Moreover, a robust Israeli response may strain relations with the US, which has played a pivotal role in intercepting Iranian missiles and opposes further Israeli retaliation. While Prime Minister Netanyahu previously exercised caution in military matters, recent events, notably Hamas attacks, have spurred a more aggressive approach, resulting in significant Palestinian casualties. Amidst these uncertainties, voices of restraint within Israel, such as war cabinet member Benny Gantz, advocate for a cautious approach. Building regional coalitions and holding Iran accountable through strategic means are posited as alternatives to immediate retaliation.

This shifting dynamics in the Middle East underscore the need for vigilance and strategic foresight. The declaration by Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps of new rules of engagement with Israel signals a heightened risk of escalation and underscores the need for diplomatic initiatives to defuse tensions. As the region navigates this precarious juncture, it is essential to heed the lessons of history and prioritize dialogue and diplomacy over brinkmanship. The potential for unintended consequences and the spectre of a broader conflict loom large, necessitating a concerted effort to de-escalate tensions and chart a path towards stability. While the immediate crisis may have been averted, the underlying tensions in the Middle East persist. The events of Saturday night serve as a sobering reminder of the fragility of peace in the region and the imperative of diplomatic engagement to prevent further escalation. As Israel weighs its response and Iran asserts its position, the stakes could not be higher. The path forward demands a measured and strategic approach, guided by a commitment to dialogue and de-escalation.

World Hemophilia Day

Breakthrough treatment options offer hope for Hemophilia patients

emophilia meaning love (philia) of blood (hemo) has been referred to as the "disease of the kings," as is often described in the descent of Oueen Victoria of England. Haemophilia affects 1 in 10000 live births. The disease is of two kinds-Hemophilia A and B. Hemophilia A is more prevalent (80% to 85% of the total haemophilia population) than haemophilia B.

Hemophilia is usually an inherited condition and is caused by the congenital deficiency of clotting factors in the blood. As a result, your blood doesn't clot properly causing prolonged and excessive bleeding after minor trauma or sometimes even spontaneously. Haemophilia A and B are caused by a deficiency of factors 8 and 9 respectively.

The diagnosis combines an index of suspicion due to a family history of bleeding, clinical manifestation, as well as laboratory testing. Your doctor does a simple test of PTT, mixing study and factor assays and confirms the diagnosis. Hemophilia is diagnosed if the factor activity is less than 40% of normal factor activity. The disease is categorised into mild, moderate and severe forms by quantification of factors activity done in a good laboratory and interpreted by an expert.

Both haemophilia A and B are inherited via an X-linked recessive pattern which means all the males carrying the affected gene will have the disease and 100% of females born from affected fathers will be carriers. Affected men have affected sons and carrier daughters. Carrier females have a 50% chance of affected sons and a 50% chance of carrier daughters. Up to a third of haemophilia cases happen sporadically which means that there is no evidence of the in family

The haemophiliac kid can present at varying stages based on their severity as joint swelling (knee, elbow, ankles commonly), oral bleeding, skin bleeds, prolonged bleeding following tooth extraction or tonsillectomy or

such as brain bleeds, and abdominal bleeds. Repeated bleeding affects the day-to-day quality of life and causes arthropathy or destroys the joints permanently and should be dealt with as a matter

While performing pain man-

agement, one should avoid aspirin and take painkillers with doctors' guidance as chances of bleeding may increase. All vaccinations to be given intramuscularly should be given by experts or avoided. The haematologist's advice is PRICE therapy in case of a bleeding episode known acronym for Protect the joint, Rest, ice application, compression, and elevation. Immobilization of painful joints, early initiation of physical therapy and exercise program, maintaining strength, and preventing further injury by gait training patients go hand-in-hand. The treatment is fulfilling the deficiency that nature has bestowed i.e. urgent factor replacement. These are intravenous drugs given as a replacement basis as and when required or prophylactic to avoid ioint bleeds. There are also newer subcutaneous once-a-month iniections available. Emicizumab that has changed the life of haemophiliac kids.

Overall, haemophilia is an inherited condition. The median life expectancy with care and prophylaxis is reaching normal values. Adequate counselling, genetics opinion, and haematologist consultation are needed. In case of family history, be alert for testing during pregnancy. If your child is haemophilia consult an expert haematologist, always carry factor backups for emergencies with adequate storage, have appropriate peri-procedural consultation, screening for "inhibitors", and adequate and planned follow-ups. Gene therapy for haemophilia has progressed remarkably and could soon become a reality. (The author is the Principal Director and Head - Pediatric Hematology, Oncology & Bone Marrow Transplant, Fortis Hospital Gu-

Assam BJP counter attacks anti-CAA leaders before Lok Sabha polls

Olitical parties and leaders in Assam who had launched a violent anti-Centre agitation in December 2019 that led to the death of five youths must acknowledge their guilt and assume full responsibility. Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswas Sarma has challenged prominent state leaders like Lurinjyoti Gogoi, and Akhil Gogoi to explain their motives in organizing an inflammatory, destructive campaign against the Centre-sponsored Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA).

Alleging that opposition leaders had only sought to whip up latent Assamiya fears of turning into a minority for their own narrow political ends, Sarma reiterated the familiar Bharativa Janata Party (BJP) stand on the CAA. The legislation was meant not to deprive any one of citizenship, but only to ensure normal civic rights and privileges to deserving, deprived people who had been facing various difficulties in recent years

Yet, alleged Sarma, major opposition parties in the Northeast region had deliberately misinterpreted the Centre's clear stand and instigated common people to destroy valuable public property, major disruptions through their entirely false propaganda, for days on end!

The unrest was not engineered in Assam alone. The law and order situation was tense in Christian-dominated states like Nagaland, Mizoram and Meghalaya. Non tribal citizens were ha-



rassed and threatened.

West Bengal saw the biggest outbreak of mob violence that led to the destruction of ₹ 60 crore worth of Railway station property, signalling equipment and tracks, wagons and other rolling stock, owing to apparently well planned arson carried out by organized armed youths

Bengal police, run by the Trinamool Congress Government it may be noted, did not intervene at all. Chief Minister Mamata Baneriee bitterly attacked the BJP at the time. She supported the agitation, and the Assam unit of her party actively joined the anti CAA agitations.Sarma's challenge seems has got some support as not even ten persons in Assam have reportedly applied for fresh official registration to confirm their citizenship. The CAA had been enacted in Parliament by simple majority by the ruling BJP.

However, its effective implementation has only just begun The present situation in Assam

nario dreamed up by By: Ashis Biswas Assam opposition forces in 2019. They Bangladeshi Hindus would cross

would turn up in Assam! No wonder Sarma, never one to make things easy for the weak and divided Assam agitators, has gleefully exploited the near total disconnect between their obsessions and present ground realities. As of now, fewer than ten some reports even suggest that only one person! - have applied seeking protection from the CAA in Assam. The Chief Minister,

is a far cry indeed from the dreaded sce-**DEGREE OF THOUGHT**

had claimed that' truckloads of borders to reach Assam to seek Indian citizenship rights! To drive home such fears deep among Assamiyas, it had been said that lakhs of Bengali Hindus

addressing a series of election rallies in different parts of Assam is relentlessly pressing Lurinjyoti Gogoi and Akhil Gogoi to assons. Neither has responded to Sarma's challenge yet.

It needs stressing that the controversy around the CAA was not restricted to West Bengal or the NE states only. In recent times, no piece of legislation passed in the Indian Parliament had generated more tension and concern as the CAA, in Bangladesh.

Remarkably, while the main opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) opposed it openly as being anti-Muslim, the ruling Awami League, being

friendly to India as well as the ruling BJP, could not speak out

However, it was common knowledge that while the Awami league leaders approached the subject with caution, in informal conversations, they were every

bit as worried as their BNP coun-

terparts Even Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, who was embarrassed by the fact that between 1947 to the present day, the Hindu population in East Pakistan and later Bangladesh had declined from around 30 % to only around 9/10%, had expressed her concerns. The steady exodus among Bangladeshi Hindus mostly to India, made a mockery of the ruling Awami League's claims of being a secular party which upheld minority interests.

Post CAA, senior League leaders felt, would only accelerate the ongoing Hindu migration, which would effectively weaken their party's minority vote bank.

While it was a fact for most Hindus in Bangladesh that their plight remained basically similar no matter whether the BNP or the AL came to power, they still had no option other than turning to the AL in the ultimate analysis.

In private conversations with Indian BJP leaders, they had sounded their fears. On its part, the BJP had strongly assured Bangladesh and the ruling AL that it would not take any step that would weaken the secular forces in its immediate neighbourhood or the Awami league.

It had further assured Dhaka that regardless of official actions taken by successive administrations in Assam or NE India against people identified as illegal Bangladeshi aliens, there was no question of any arbitrary Indian pushback of such people. Always, there would be official talks between the two countries before a bilaterally agreed decision would be hammered out.

Bangladesh Government is monitoring the implementation of CAA in India and its impact in the Lok Sabha polls. After its victory in January national elections, the ruling Awami League is confident of its administration and its comfortable relationship with the minority Hindus. The leadership, especially Sheikh Hasina do not want any strain in relationship with the Indian government over the implementation of CAA. (IPA Service)

2024 electoral battle: Initial litmus test for BJP, Opposition forces

By: Dipak Kurmi

s the clock ticks towards April 19th, India prepares to embark on the world's largest democratic exercise - the 2024 General Election. This mammoth event will see 96.8 crore people, over 10% of the global population, casting their votes across seven phases until June 1st to elect a new Parliament. It is, as Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar aptly describes, "the biggest festival of democracy.'

The scale of this election is staggering, with 69% of India's population enrolled to vote, a remarkable increase from the 49% turnout in the first Lok Sabha election of 1952. This surge in participation is a testament to the Indian electorate's unwavering faith in the democratic process, a faith that has grown stronger with each passing

As the marathon poll season commences, all eyes are on the crucial first phase on April 19th, where the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance, helmed by

Their campaign revolves around Modi's persona, his ambitious schemes benefiting 60 crore people, his pledge to make India the third-largest global economy, and the cultural revival symbolized by the conse-

cration of the Ram Mandir in Ayodhya. On the other hand, the Congress-led INDIA (Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance) bloc fights to halt the saffron surge and reclaim its once-dominant position. For the Congress, a party that ruled India for 54 of the 76 years since Independence, this election is a test of survival, having been relegated to the fringes in the last two elections. The first phase will witness voting across 102 constituencies, spanning 21 states and union territories, and accounting for 19% of the total Lok Sabha strength. Key battleground states across the North, South, West, East, and Northeast will witness a distinct election dynamic, characterized by the dominance of pre-poll alliances forged by both the BJP and the Congress

In a historic first, the Congress will con-

chances against the BJP juggernaut. The BJP, too, has embraced newfound allies, including the RLD in Uttar Pradesh, JD(U) in Bihar, Eknath Shinde's Shiv Sena and Ajit Pawar's NCP in Maharashtra, and regional parties across the Northeast, all in pursuit of crossing the 400-seat

The stakes are particularly high in the South, where all 39 seats in Tamil Nadu will go to polls. The DMK-led INDIA alliance faces the challenge of overcoming anti-incumbency to replicate their 2019 sweep, while the BJP seeks to establish a foothold in the state's electoral landscape. The BJP's aggressive outreach, including the Prime Minister's rallies and cultural appeals, will be countered by the INDIA bloc's promises of a caste census, allegations of misuse of central agencies, and accusations of discrimination against non-BJP-ruled states. The Hindi heartland, where the BJP

swept in 2019, bagging over 50% of votes in 11 states and union territories, will also test the majority of seats (46 out of 102) be a battleground in the first phase. The Prime Minister Narendra Modi, seeks an in alliance with INDIA partners, a strate- Congress will need a strategic campaign (The writer can be reached at dipakkurunprecedented third consecutive term. gic move aimed at maximizing their to regain ground in states like Bihar, Mad-

hya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, and Uttarakhand, where the BJP and its allies currently hold 30 out of the 35 seats going to polls. The Northeast, too, emerges as a crucial region, with 15 of its 25 Lok Sabha seats voting in the first phase. While the BJP currently holds seven of these seats, the INDIA allies are hopeful of making significant gains.

In West Bengal, the battle lines are drawn between the ruling Trinamool Congress and the BJP, which made significant inroads in the northern belt during the 2019 elections. The Congress and the Left, fighting together, are considered marginal players in the state. As the world's largest democracy gears up for this monumental event, the first phase of the 2024 General Election will undoubtedly set the tone for the battles to come. With alliances playing a pivotal role and issues ranging from economic development to cultural identity at the forefront, the Indian electorate will once again demonstrate their commitment to the democratic process, shaping the future of the nation for the next five years

Uphold values of inclusivity and vote for development

emocracy's success partially lies in the success of its electoral processes and electioneering. India is all set to set an example once again in its journey as a democracy. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has already invited representatives of parties from different countries to witness the momentous exercise of electoral democracy in India. Many parties have accepted the invitation and the world is going to witness this humongous veritable celebration of the world's largest democracy.

Having witnessed elections and electoral politics from close corners, my experience as a polling officer in one of the remotest areas of the country did not give me an ideal sensation of satisfaction, which I think, had been there in my memory giving me painful prickles.

Whenever I found a reason for me to rejoice at the festivities of elections and being witness to the jubilation of political parties dominating the social ambiance completely, there has always been a sense of remorse originating in my memory from the uproar of animosity between two groups who fought and wounded each other in the name of their candidates and in another instance, to my horror, I still remember having been approached by a candidate offering a handsome amount for my vote, which he said, if I was ready to cast in favor of him.

Again, in another situation I realized how challenging it could be when you find a particular section of the society is shooed away from casting its votes and some people by exercising their muscular dominance forcefully cast the votes of those who they managed to drive and keep away from reaching the polling booths.

This indiscriminate monopoly by parties and groups that belong to prominent caste fractions and disruptive elements is still active in areas where even the media fail to expose them and the officials are forced to derail the pro-

This year, from April 19 to June 1, we will participate under the scorching sun of the Indian peninsula, the exercise I mentioned in the beginning and its festivities. There is everywhere an enthusiasm for change or there is of course a demand emanating from the desperation of unfulfilled desire of people that asks the government to go through a profound polishing im-

Always seeking something better from the government is the usual norm. Those who failed to improve their position were discarded and this was the principal reason that forced us to test new parties and their new governance methods.

Post independence India had a particular regime under Nehru that went for more than a decade. But there was this incense of dissatisfaction seeking change and people were soon to look for alternatives and new political parties were formed to topple the hegemony of the ruling class. Every election brings this opportunity or gives liberty to people to decide as to what their requirements are. It is a period that forces the warhorses on the fray to stop and listen to the people.

You will find politicians walking the extra mile in implementing tactics to convince and console voters and fling offers of prospects in case of their being voted to power.

From framing impactful narratives to field popular candidates with winning strike rate to the preparations to attract votes into their kitty, all parties are busy in



way. Election season holds the voters responsible for their decisions. They can decide as to what should be the deciding factors that they would elect a particular candidate for.

National Elections 2024 decisively is a straight fight between the most prominent Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the rest of his opposition which has directly or indirectly chosen to stand under the I.N.D.I.A umbrella. This time, the government under Modi is well aware of the fact that the main plank it can fight the elections is its performance. Its usual anti-Congress stance may not fructify in winning elections.

Congress has been out of power for a decade and the corruption scenario that it was held responsible for before 2014 is slowly fading. The new voters and the first timers need new narratives and new hopes. While jubilation on the winning side is always justified, there is an important aspect that frequently goes sidelined.

In the case of the 2019 National Elections, almost 33 percent of the genuine voters preferred not to vote. Which means, despite being jubilant about India's success as a democracy, there is a chunk of population that identifies the emerging scenario as meaningless and decides to stay away from it. Every election brings with it social, economic, political and religious consequences.

Interestingly, India's electoral democracy is not a holistic exercise for development alone. It is bound to bend its head to family, society, caste, religion, region, language and many more factors. An ideal study truly reveals the fact that development has never been the main reason that we chose a particular candidate for.

A candidate is chosen to jump into the fray for various reasons. This could be his family prominence in that locality or the caste dynamics that would go in his favor or it can also be due to his radical ideological stance that shoots him to popularity. There is again a factor that counts important these days, a person's social media reach. The subjects he handles in the social media and the acceptance and sometimes the quantum of opposition he receives makes him a favorite pick for candidature.

In such cases development always takes a back seat. But naturally the candidate chosen by a particular party fits in the narrative it sets and he is mounted on shoulders with fictitious and spontaneous glory he is deliberately adorned with. In order to make fortunes from

the Sandeshkhali horror, the BJP decided to field Rekha Patra, a survivor of the violence, someone who dared to question the TMC hooligans. She was one among those the Prime Minister called over the phone. Describing her "Shakti Swaroopa" the Prime Minister was setting a distinctive trend helping her shoot to popularity and giving a big blow to his opponent the TMC. Every vote really is a commu-

nication that a voter makes to his country. He communicates his aspirations and conveys his concerns. Irrespective of the electoral hysteria and pomp on the streets, in the polling booths a voter is silent. He needs to make a decision not for him but for his country. He understands the intensity of convulsion he is passing through as his dreams fall apart. He is worried about the future of his children who he knows should find a place in a country that houses the world's largest population. He is expected to realize his responsibility while pressing the button on the EVM.

There is the realization of India's growth as a significant global power. There is again a pinch of reality painfully passing through his veins for his not being able to catch up with the wind of progress. Every election is a new stepping stone wherein we give wings to our dreams. Standing before the EVM there should be a dream flashing the sphere of our mind dictating where we would like to see our country when it completes a century of its independence. Vote for the status quo or vote for the change, the decision is ours and that is the beauty of democracy. (The author is a freelance journalist who can be reached at mrlalu30@gmail.com)

Page 5 Apr 17_Normal Pages 16-04-2024 18:12 Page 1

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 17, 2024 Which fruits should you eat during pregnancy?

By: Bethany Cadman

nutritious diet plays an essential role in a person's overall health, helping the body to function effectively and reducing the risk of some diseases.

Most people are aware that a healthful diet should include plenty of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean protein, and healthful fats. However, they may not realize that specific fruits are particularly beneficial during pregnancy.

In this article, we explain why it is important to eat fruit during pregnancy. We also cover which fruits are best to eat during this time, and which types of fruit pregnant women may wish to

What are the benefits of eat-

ing fruit during pregnancy? Eating a healthful, varied diet is particularly important during pregnancy as the right nutrients can help the fetus to develop and grow as it should.

In addition to supporting the growing baby, an increased intake of vitamins and minerals can help a pregnant woman keep her own body in the best condition possible.

Eating plenty of fresh fruit during pregnancy can help to ensure that both the woman and baby remain healthy. Fresh fruit contains lots of essential vitamins and nutrients and is a good source of fiber too.

The best fruits to eat during pregnancy

Snacking on fruit can be a great way to boost vitamin intake in addition to curbing sugar cravings. Below, we list 12 of the best fruits to include in a healthful pregnancy diet.

Apricots contain:

- vitamins A, C, and E
- calcium
- iron • potassium
- beta carotene • phosphorus

silicon All of these nutrients help with the baby's development and growth. Iron can prevent anemia and calcium helps bones and teeth grow strong.

2. Oranges

Oranges are an excellent source of:

- folate
- vitamin C
- water

Oranges are great for keeping a person hydrated and healthy. Vitamin C can help prevent cell damage and assist with iron ab-

Folate can help prevent neural tube defects, which can cause brain and spinal cord abnormalities in a baby.

Neural tube defects can cause conditions such as spina bifida, where the spinal cord does not develop properly, and anencephaly, in which a large part of the brain and skull is missing.

3. Mangoes Mangoes are rich in vitamins A and C. One cup of chopped mango provides 100 percent of a person's recommended daily allowance (RDA) of vitamin Č and more than a third of their

RDA of vitamin A. A baby born with vitamin A deficiency may have lower immunity and a higher risk of postnatal complications, such as respiratory infections.

4. Pears

- Pears provide lots of the following nutrients:
- potassium

Getting plenty of fiber in a pregnancy diet can help ease constipation, a common pregnancy symptom. Potassium can benefit heart health for both the woman and baby. It also stimulates cell regeneration.

5. Pomegranates

Pomegranates can provide pregnant women with plenty of:

- vitamin K calcium
- folate • iron
- protein

Nutrient-dense pomegranates are also a good source of energy, and their high iron content helps prevent iron-deficiency.

Vitamin K is also essential for maintaining healthy bones.

Research suggests that drinking pomegranate juice may help to decrease the risk of injury to the placenta.

6. Avocados Avocados are an excellent source of:

- vitamins C, E, and K • monounsaturated fatty acids
- fiber B vitamins
- potassium

Avocados contain healthful fats that provide energy and help to prevent neural tube defects. They also boost the cells responsible for building the skin and brain tissues of the developing

The potassium in avocados can provide relief from leg cramps, another symptom that is common during pregnancy, particularly in the third trimester.

7. Guava Guava is an excellent choice

of fruit for people wanting more of the following nutrients:



- vitamins C and E
- polyphenols
- carotenoids isoflavonoids

folate Guava contains a varied combination of nutrients, making it ideal for pregnant women. Eating guava during pregnancy can help to relax muscles, aid digestion, and reduce constipation.

8. Bananas Bananas contain high levels

- vitamin C
- potassium
- vitamin B-6

The high fiber content of bananas can help with pregnancyrelated constipation, and there is some evidence to suggest that vitamin B-6 can help relieve nausea and vomiting in early

pregnancy. 9. Grapes

Eating plenty of grapes can boost people's intake of:

- vitamins C and K
- folate · antioxidants
- fiber
- · organic acids pectin
- The nutrients in grapes can help to aid the biological

changes that occur during preg-

They contain immune-boosting antioxidants, such as flavonol, tannin, linalool, anthocyanins, and geraniol, which also help prevent infections.

- 10. Berries Berries are a good source of:
- vitamin C
- healthy carbohydrates antioxidants

Berries also contain lots of water, so they are an excellent source of hydration. Vitamin C helps with iron absorption and boosts the body's immune sys-

11. Apples

Apples are packed with nutrients to help a growing fetus, in-

- cluding: • vitamins A and C
- fiber potassium
- One study found that eating apples while pregnant may reduce the likelihood of the baby

developing asthma and allergies over time 12. Dried Fruit

The following nutrients occur in dried fruit:

• vitamins and minerals

same nutrients as fresh fruit. Therefore, pregnant women can get their RDA of vitamins and minerals by eating portions of dried fruits that are smaller than the equivalent amount of fresh

However, it is important to remember that dried fruit can be high in sugar and does not contain the water content that fresh fruit does. This means that it does not aid digestion. Pregnant women should only

eat dried fruits in moderation and should avoid candied fruits altogether. It is best to eat dried fruits in

addition to fresh fruits, rather than instead of them

How much fruit should someone eat during preg-

women is to eat at least five portions of fresh fruit and vegetables each day and to vary these as much as possible. Fruit can be fresh, canned, frozen, or dried.

As a general rule, a serving of

fruit is: • one piece of fruit, for fruits that are larger than the size of a tennis ball

• one cup of chopped fruit Eating plenty of fruit and vegetables during pregnancy provides pregnant women with adequate nutrition to support their developing baby. It should

nourish the woman's body. Are there any fruits a person should avoid during pregnancy?

also minimize the risk of certain

diseases and defects and help to

There is no particular fruit that pregnant women should avoid. However, it is essential

tion size. Some fruits have a Dried fruit contains all the high sugar content, and certain forms of fruit, such as juices and dried fruits, are often significantly higher in sugar and calories than their fresh counterparts.

Buying organic fruit will ensure that it has not come into contact with fertilizers and pesticides that could damage its quality. However, if organic fruit is not an option, non-organic fruit is still better than eliminating fruit from the diet altogether. It is important to remove any pesticides and bacteria that might be present on fruit by washing it thoroughly before eating it. People should take other safety precautions by:

• removing areas of bruised fruit, which are more likely to contain bacteria

• storing fruit in a separate The advice for pregnant area of the fridge to any raw

meat products

• avoiding precut melons · only drinking pasteurized or boiled fruit juice

Takeaway Fruit is an excellent source of nutrients that are essential during pregnancy. Fruits can provide vitamins, folate, fiber, and more, which all help to keep the woman and baby healthy. These

nutrients can also help to relieve some of the common symptoms of pregnancy. Pregnant women should aim to consume at least five different portions of fruit and vegetables each day. The 12 fruits listed in this article are particularly good choices during pregnancy. Pregnant women should also limit their intake of dried fruits and

fruit juices as these can be high in sugar and calories than fresh types. (Courtesy: Medical News due to unsafe public transport

Kimchi for health 52% women say no to job opportunities and glowing skin

By: Shahnaz Husain

ove spicy food? Want a healthier gut? ✓Are you tempted? There's nothing like indulging in a meal that tastes sour, salty, and zingy and is full of numerous beauty benefits, right?

Fermented food Kimchi is full of the good bacteria responsible for keeping things running smoothly in our gut and has gained a well-deserved reputation for making your outer appearance appear excellent

Kimchi is a salted, fermented vegetable dish that's a staple in Korean cuisine. It was invented thousands of years ago as a way to preserve vegetables.

With attention focused

firmly on inner health in

2024. Kimchi make vour inner beauty shine through 'glass skin' - clear, acnefree, smooth, and hydrated. The spicy kick dish is made by napa cabbage, carrots, radish and other ingredients from cucumber to pumpkin which is left at room temperature from a few days to a few weeks to ferment in salted brine with seasonings such as sugar, salt, onions, garlic, ginger,

and chilli peppers. How-

ever, other foods can also

be used to make kimchi.

such as celery, beetroot,

bamboo shoots, eggplant, broccoli, and even apples! Kimchi, especially when fermented for a long time, has the most significant anti-aging prevention effect. Alongside its natural probiotic effect, it boasts a high activity of lactic acid

and zymogens. The fermentation process involved in making kimchi produces bioactive compounds such as flavonoids and phenolic acids, which have anti-inflammatory properties. It can treat skin conditions like acne, rosacea, and premature

Kimchi has plenty of an-

tioxidants to fight free rad-

icals and prevent the

oxidative damage they cause. In other words: it keeps those premature wrinkles away from your face for way longer. The selenium found in garlic in kimchi keeps your skin and hair healthy, and eating kimchi helps you prevent wrinkles in the long

run. Kimchi contains vari-

ous antioxidants, including

vitamins A and C, which

are essential for skin health. caused by free radicals, en-

plexion

To start, fresh vegetables

mulated air escape and then



Antioxidants help protect the skin from damage vironmental stressors, and UV radiation. Kimchi contributes to a more radiant and youthful-looking com-"Kimchi has a high quan-

tity of 'good' bacteria which occurs as a result of the fermentation process that it undergoes." The good bacteria help your microbiome to thrive. Kimchi contains of vitamins including vitamins A and C, 10 different minerals, and amino acids.

such as Chinese cabbage and other fresh vegetables like carrots, radish, and onions are chopped to a large bowl with salt and tossed to distribute the salt evenly in the cabbage. Stirring it every half hour to ensure that the cabbage has wilted down completely. When the salt has completely dissolved after few hours then they're rinsed and drained to remove the extra water.

Spread other ingredients like ginger, garlic, sugar, salt, rice flour, chilli oil, chilli powder or pepper flakes, fish sauce in between the layers of cabbage leaves and let it sit for 2–3 hours. Use a ratio of 1/2 cup (72 grams) of salt to every (2.7 kg) of cabbage. Pack the mixture into a large sterile container or sealed jar for storage. Close the lid and let ferment at room temperature for a few days depending on how deep you want the flavours to be. Make sure you let the jar breathe regularly by unscrewing the lid to let accu-

closing it up again. Once you see bubbles beginning to form (usually after 3 days), store them in the fridge so they can continue to ferment for another 2 weeks or so where they'll develop the deep, complex flavours kimchi is known for. Don't forget to occasionally unscrew the lid to let the air out!

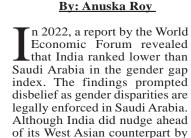
The probiotics in kimchi are "beneficial for immune function because the majority of immune function takes place in the gut, kimchi can also do your heart good by upping the levels of antioxidants especially vitamin C in your body, thanks to ingredients like ginger and hot red peppers. Antioxidants help stabilize damaged cells that can accelerate the disease process, so having a high antioxidant status can protect you from chronic con-

ditions, like heart disease. The anti-inflammatory properties of vitamin Crich foods may help decrease the risk of heart disease. Kimchi is full of healthy bacteria like probiotics which may improve heart health by reducing cholesterol and inflammation. The fibre, antioxidants, and nutrients in kimchi can also help lower blood sugar and cholesterol levels, which can boost heart health

Eating kimchi every day may help people tackle a bulging waistline. The "good" bacteria in kimchi can have an effect on weight. Kimchi is high in sodium, with about 500 milligrams per cup. That's more than 20% of all the sodium that you're supposed to get in a day. Too much sodium can raise your risk of high blood pressure. If kimchi isn't prepared or stored properly, it can cause food poisoning.

its own, as a side dish, or as an ingredient in other foods. Its spicy, tangy flavour is an excellent complement to savoury foods, and it's often paired with rice dishes to add contrast to a meal. Kimchi can go bad if it isn't kept at a cool, stable temperature, it can grow harmful bacteria or mould. Don't eat any soft, slimy kimchi; toss it out. (The author is an international fame beauty expert and is called the herbal queen of India)

Kimchi can be eaten on



finds itself lingering near the bottom of the list, at a dismal 127 out of 146 countries. This index takes into account four key areas – economic participation and opportunities, educasurvival, and political empowerment. India's struggles with prowomen economic opportunities have been a major

a small margin in 2023, it still

factor holding it back on the global stage. Did you know that Indian women only contribute about 18% to the country's GDP? It's one of the lowest rates globally. And here's another eye-opener: just a quarter of India's labour force is made up of women. When we look at urban areas specifically, we see a myriad of issues holding women back from fully participating in the work-

force and the economy. Various factors ranging from societal norms to economic challenges and infrastructure issues present significant hurdles for women. However, among these obstacles, inadequate public transportation emerges as a prominent barrier. Public transport systems frequently suffer from unreliability, inaccessibility, and safety concerns. Consequently, these challenges impede women's ability to enter the workforce and participate in economic activities with the same degree of freedom enjoyed by

For women to actively participate in the labour force, perceptions of public safety need to change. Youth Ki Awaaz (YKA) and Observer Research Foundation (ORF) conducted a survey to understand women's perceptions of safety about public transportation in 2019-2020. The survey gathered responses from over 4000 women from 140 Indian cities. With 88% of surveyed women utilising public transport, it is evident that improving safety measures within these systems is crucial for fostering an environment where women feel secure and empowered to actively contribute to the labour

While analysing distances

travelled by women, it was found

that 22% women travel between

10-20 km every day, followed by

18% travelling between 5-10 km

and only 3% travelling less than

1 km. Moreover, it was noted

use public transport, the least who rely on public transport. proportions were in the lower-income groups, with 6% in the below- ₹ 10.000 monthly income group, and 8% in the ₹ 10,000-15,000 monthly bracket.

This sheds light on a critical socio economic aspect: the maiority of surveyed women may not have the financial means to afford private modes of transportation. Despite facing the necessity of travelling between 10-20 kilometres per day, these women are constrained by financial limitations, compelling them to rely on public transport, which may often be unsafe and unreliable. This mix of economic constraints and safety concerns in public transportation points to the complex dynamics impacting rates and highlights the urgent

these challenges. A staggering 52% of women tunities because of safety concerns during their commute. With a considerable portion of during travel acts as a deterrent, limiting their ability to access educational and professional op-

portunities. In the data gathered by YKA and ORF, 18% participants answered that they felt most unsafe at interchanges while 16% felt most unsafe inside overcrowded public transport vehicles. This data highlights not only a lack of gender sensitive infrastructure to support mobility for women, but also a lack of vehicles to accommodate the mobility needs of everyone in cities. Moreover, participants not

only seek more transport facilities (buses for example) on the road but also emphasise the importance of accessing data on vehicle occupancy to mitigate discomfort and ensure safety. However, a stark disparity exists where India needs to increase the number of public transport buses by 2600%. Data reveals that there is a requirement of 666,667 buses against the current 25,000 in operation. Hence, there is a significant gap in meeting the unsettling turn when some mid-

that of those women who do not transportation needs of women

The failure to address the glaring inadequacies in public transportation not only hampers individual economic opportunities but also incurs significant economic losses at a national level. With a considerable portion of women opting out of education or employment due to safety concerns during commutes, the workforce remains deprived of valuable talent and expertise.

This loss of human capital translates into reduced productivity, innovation, and competitiveness in the global market. Furthermore, by perpetuating gender disparities in workforce participation, these decisions reinforce existing inequalities, hin-

In 2017, Annu Singh, a member of Youth Ki Awaaz, shared her personal account of confronting harassment in public spaces. In her poignant narrative, she sheds light on the myriad ways in which women endure unwelcome touches, leers, and gestures in public settings, all of which contribute to their profound discomfort and unease. In one such incident she recalls travelling in a train seated in the upper compartment with a junior colleague.

Their peaceful journey took an

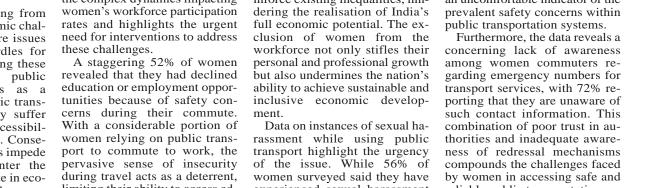
dle-aged men joined their compartment at a station. To their discomfort, one of them took the seat directly beneath. After a while, she began to feel a strange sensation, as if something was poking at her thighs. Concerned, she lifted her leg to investigate, only to discover that the man had

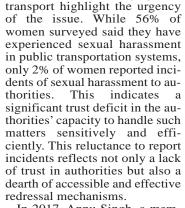
inserted two of his fingers

through a break in the seat. Following the publication of this article, numerous women came forward to recount their own encounters with uncomfortable crowds. Garnering the attention of over 100,000 readers, the piece sparked a significant debate across various social media platforms. Annu's story, along with the countless narratives shared by other women serve as an uncomfortable indicator of the

reliable public transportation. The data presented highlights the urgent need for policymakers and stakeholders to take proactive steps in improving safety in public transportation to enhance women's economic participation. It is imperative that policymakers prioritise the implementation of stringent safety protocols, raise awareness about available support services and emergency contact information, and improve the accessibility and inclusivity of public transportation infrastructure.

Public spaces are meant to be accessible for all. However, mobility concerns for women are vastly different from men and need sensitive and pointed solutions. By addressing these issues, policymakers have an opportunity to create a safer and more inclusive public transportation environment that not only supports women's empowerment but also facilitates their increased economic participation. (Courtesy: Youth Ki Awaaz)





SYDNEY, April 16: A teenager has been accused of wounding a Christian bishop and priest during a church service in a second high-profile knife attack to rock Sydney in recent days, leaving communities on edge, leaders calling for calm and a besieged church urging against retaliation.

The 16-year-old was overpowered by the shocked congregation at Christ the Good Shepherd Church after he allegedly stabbed Bishop Mar Mari Emmanuel and Fr. Isaac Royel during a service on Monday night that was being streamed online.

Police have not commented on reports that the boy's fingers were severed by parishioners in the Orthodox Assyrian church in suburban Wakeley, but confirmed his hand injuries were "severe."

Video of the attack spread quickly on social media and an angry mob converged on the church demanding vengeance. They hurled bricks, bottles and fence boards at police, who temporarily barricaded the boy inside the church for his own safety. Many in the crowd chanted "an eye for an eye" and "bring him out."

Several people including police officers required hospital treatment following the hourslong riot.

The church said in a statement on Tuesday it "denounced retaliation of any kind." Police stood guard around mosques in parts of Sydney on Tuesday after reports that text messages were circulating urging the Assyrian Christian community to retaliate against Muslims.

Police and community leaders said public anxiety had been heightened by a lone assailant's knife attack in a Sydney shopping mall on Saturday that killed five women and a male security guard who attempted to intervene. The 40-year-old assailant, Joel Cauchi, had a history of mental illness and trouble with women and a fascination with knives. He was shot dead by police.

Prime Minister Anthony Albanese urged the public not to take the law into their own hands.

"We understand the distress and concerns that are there in the community, particularly after the tragic event at Bondi Junction on Saturday," Albanese told reporters, referring to the Westfield Bondi Junction shopping mall. "But it is not acceptable to impede police and injure police doing their duty or to damage police vehicles in a way that we saw last night," Albanese added.

News South Wales Police Commissioner Karen Webb on Tuesday declared the church attack a terrorist incident, but not the shopping mall

The terrorism categorization al-



lows more law enforcement resources to be focused on the crime. The declaration also gives police expanded powers to stop and search people, premises and vehicles with-

Webb said the teen's comments and actions pointed to a religious motive for the attack. She didn't detail the wording of the comments that led her to believe he had been religiously motivated.

Ten Network television reported the boy had told churchgoers who restrained him in Arabic: "If they didn't insult my Prophet, I wouldn't have

The Australian Security Intelligence Organization, the nation's main domestic spy agency, and Australian Federal Police have joined state police in a counterterrorism task force to investigate who else was potentially involved.

ASIO Director-General Mike Burgess agreed with Webb that the mall attack was not terrorism as defined by Australian authorities.

To call it a terrorist attack, there must be "information or evidence that suggests actually the motivation was religiously motivated or ideologically motivated," Burgess said. "In the case of Saturday, that was not the case. In this case, the information we and the police have before us ... would indicate strongly that that is the case and that's why it was called an act of terrorism.'

A coronial inquest will investigate the circumstances of the six knife deaths in the mall attack and what policy changes could be made to prevent similar attacks from occurring in the future. The coroner will also consider whether security guards should be armed. Westfield Bondi Junction mall guards, including knife victim Faraz Tahir, do not carry guns.

New South Wales Premier Chris Minns said he was reviewing government restrictions on how security guards could be armed following the knife attack. But he has ruled out allowing them to carry guns, saying the fewer firearms in the community, the

Australia because assault rifle-style semi-automatic firearms are banned from public ownership under tough national gun laws. (AP)

China has refused to criticize the invasion and has maintained ties with Russia

On a China visit, the German chancellor says Russia's invasion of Ukraine threatens global security

BEIJING, April 16: German Chancellor Olaf Scholz told Chinese leader Xi Jinping who hosted him in Beijing on Tuesday that Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine threatens global security, in an apparent call for China to apply greater pressure on its neighbor and close strategic partner to resolve the conflict.

Scholz also told Xi at their meeting that the use of nuclear weapons in the 2-year-old war should not even be threatened, German media reported. Russian President Vladimir Putin warned last month that Russia is ready to use nuclear weapons if its sovereignty or independence is threatened, his latest such threat since invading Ukraine.

Scholz told Xi that Germany's "core interests" were impacted by the war against Ukraine, which has threatened to spread into a regional conflict and has disrupted energy and global food supplies and other

Russia's actions "violate a principle of the United Nations Charter and the principle of the inviolability of national borders," Scholz was quoted as saying by German

China has refused to criticize the



not sending military aid to Moscow, it has provided it with an economic lifeline to help it cope with sanctions from the West. Beijing has also been urging peace talks between Ukraine and Russia, offering a proposal that says nothing about the settlement of the key territorial disputes between them and which has received a tepid response from the two countries or the international community. Despite that, China continues to insist that the United Nations charter should prevail in international affairs and that the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all nations be respected, in apparent contradiction with Russia's military agenda.

China's official Xinhua News invasion and has maintained ties Agency quoted Xi as saying the

and supports all efforts that are conducive to the peaceful resolution of the crisis, and supports the timely convening of an international peace conference recognized by Russia and Ukraine, with equal participation by all parties, and fair discussion of all peace options," Xi

"China is willing to maintain cooperation with all relevant parties, including Germany, in this regard," Xi was quoted as saying.

Scholz on Monday called for fair competition in trade relations while warning about dumping and overproduction during a talk to college students in the financial hub of Shanghai, where German companies have major investments.

related tensions as the European Union and other nations complain that China is competing unfairly through the use of tariffs, intellectual property theft and political in-

The European Union is mulling tariffs to protect its producers against cheaper Chinese electrical vehicle imports, which some fear will flood the European market.

Scholz began his three-day China trip on Sunday in the industrial hub of Chongqing, where he and his delegation of ministers and business executives visited 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 was due to meet Premier Li Qiang later on Tuesday in Beijing before returning to Berlin in the late evening.

Along with Russia, China is one of five permanent veto-wielding nembers of the U.N. Security Council, and a U.S. intelligence report last week found Beijing has increased equipment sales to Moscow to indirectly boost its war effort against Ukraine. Berlin is also worried about a potential Chinese invasion of Taiwan, a self-

miles) off China's coast that Beijing claims as its own.

Scholz told students in Shanghai that borders "must not be moved by

"We should not be afraid of our neighbors," he said, emphasizing the importance of international institutions such as the World Trade Organization.

Despite the political and trade frictions, China was Germany's top trading partner for the eighth straight year in 2023, with 254.1 billion euros (\$271 billion) in goods and services exchanged between the sides, slightly more than what Germany traded with the U.S. but a 15.5% contraction from the vear before.

This is Scholz's second trip to China since he became chancellor in late 2021. His previous visit was in November 2022 and essentially was a one-day trip because of the strict COVID restrictions still in place at the time.

It is his first visit since the German government last year presented its China strategy, which met with criticism from Beijing. Premier Li and a delegation of senior officials visited Berlin in June.

Trump will return to court after first day of hush UK PM faces resistance over money criminal trial ends with no jurors picked

NEW YORK, April 16: Donald Trump will return to a New York courtroom Tuesday as a judge works to find a panel of jurors who will decide whether the former president is guilty of criminal charges alleging he falsified business records to cover up a sex scandal during the 2016 campaign.

Trump's four criminal cases to go to trial

The first day of Trump's history-making hush money trial in Manhattan ended with no one yet chosen to be on the panel of 12 jurors and six alternates. Dozens of people were dismissed after saying they didn't believe they could be fair, though dozens of other prospective jurors have yet to be questioned. It's the first of

and may be the only one that could reach a verdict before voters decide in November whether the presumptive Republican presidential nominee should return to the Mass killings are relatively rare in White House. It puts Trump's legal problems at the center of the closely contested race against President Joe Biden, with Trump painting himself as the vic-

tim of a politically motivated justice system working to deprive him of another

Trump has pleaded not guilty to 34 felony counts of falsifying business records as part of an alleged effort to keep salacious — and, he says, bogus stories about his sex life from emerging during his 2016 campaign. On Monday,

Trump called the case brought by Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg a 'scam' witch hunt.' The charges

on \$130,000 in payments Trump's company made to his

then-lawyer, Michael Cohen. He paid that sum on Trump's behalf to keep porn actor Stormy Daniels from going public with her claims of a sexual encounter with Trump a decade earlier. Trump has denied the sexual encounter ever hap-

Prosecutors say the payments to Cohen were falsely logged as legal fees. Prosecutors have described it as part of a scheme to bury damaging stories Trump feared could help his opponent in the 2016 race, particularly as Trump's reputation was suffering at the time from comments he had made about women.

Trump has acknowledged reimbursing Cohen for the payment and that it was designed to stop Daniels from going public about the alleged encounter. But Frump has previously said it had nothing to do with the campaign.

Jury selection could take several more days — or even weeks — in the heavily Democratic city where Trump grew up catapulted to celebrity status decades before winning the White Only about a third of the 96 people in

the first panel of potential jurors brought into the courtroom on Monday remained after the judge excused some members. More than half of the group was excused after telling the judge they could not be fair and impartial and several others were dismissed for other reasons that were not disclosed. Another group of more than 100 potential jurors sent to the courthouse on Monday was not yet brought into the courtroom for question-

his smoking ban plans

LONDON, April 16: British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak faces very vocal resistance against his plans to effectively ban smoking for anyone aged 15 and younger as a new bill comes up for a vote in the House of Commons on Tuesday.

The British Indian leader proposed the Tobacco and Vapes Bill last year and declared his vision for creating a "smokefree generation" by making it an offence to sell tobacco products to anyone born after January 1, 2009, which covers children aged 15.

Once it clears its parliamentary journey, the new legislation will introduce some of the world's strictest anti-smoking laws in the

"I propose that in future we raise the smoking age by one year, every year. That means a 14-year-old today will never legally be sold a cigarette and that they — and their generation — can grow up smoke-free. We know this works," Sunak had declared at the Conservative Party conference in October last year.

As there is Opposition backing for the bill in Parliament and governing Conservative MPs have a free vote on the bill, any Tory votes against the bill will not be seen as a full-blown rebellion against the Prime Minister.

But two of Sunak's immediate predecessors, Liz Truss and Boris Johnson, have been leading a very vocal group of Tories who plan to vote against the bill as "un-Conservative" and taking away choice

The truth is that there is no safe level of tobacco consumption. It is uniquely harmful, and that is why we are taking this important action today to protect the next generation," said UK Health Secre-

This Bill will save thousands of lives, ease the strain on our NHS [National Health Service], and improve the UK's productivity," she

Fire rages through the 17th-century Old Stock Exchange in Copenhagen, toppling the iconic spire

COPENHAGEN, April 16: A fire raged through one of Copenhagen's oldest buildings on Tuesday, causing the collapse of the iconic spire from the 17thcentury Old Stock Exchange as passersby rushed to help emergency services save priceless paintings and other valuables.

Danish Culture Minister Jakob Engel-Schmidt said it was "touching" to see how many people lent their hand "to save art treasures and iconic images from the burning building." One man jumped off his bicycle on his way to work to help in

Brian Mikkelsen, chief of the Danish Chamber of Commerce, which is headquartered in the Old Stock Exchange, and his staff were seen scrolling through a binder with photos of paintings to be saved. They were carried to the nearby parliament and Danish National

Archives, around the corner from the burning building. "It is a national disaster," Mikkelsen told reporters.

The fire began Tuesday morning in the copper roof of the Old Stock Exchange. or Boersen, spread to much of the building and the roof, parts of which also collapsed, and destroyed the building's interior, said firefighters spokesman Jakob Vedsted Andersen.

Firefighters who reportedly pumped water from the nearby canal were seen spraying water through the doorway of the Old Stock Exchange's gilded hall that is used for gala dinners, conferences, parties and other events and where many of the paintings hung.

The cause of the fire was not immediately known. The building, which is situated next to the Christiansborg Palace where the parliament sits, is a popular

tourist attraction and has been photographed millions of times. Its distinctive spire, in the shape of the tails of four dragons twined together, reached a height of 56 meters (184 feet).

Huge billows of smoke rose over downtown Copenhagen and people were seen rushing inside the building to save paintings. The plume could be seen from southern Sweden, which is separated by a narrow waterway.

Ambulances were at the scene but there were no reports of casualties. A spokesman for the company working on renovating the building said the carpenters who worked on the roof had all come out. Up to 90 members of an army unit were also deployed from a nearby base to cordon off the area and "secure valuables," Denmark's armed forces said.

Substantial increase in attack on Hindus in US: Indian-American Congressman WASHINGTON, April 16: Observing that there is a substantial

increase in attacks against Hindus in the US, an Indian-American Congressman has said that this was just the "beginning of a coordinated anti-Hindu attack", as he asked the community members to unite against hate crimes. Congressman Shri Thanedar's

remarks came during a news conference held at the National Press Club here on Monday. "Today I am seeing in the United States a substantial increase in attacks on Hinduism. A lot of misinformation is being circulated whether it is online or otherwise," Thanedar said. Thanedar and four other Indian-American lawmakers - Ro Khanna, Raja Krishnamoorthi, Ami Bera and Pramila Jayapal had recently written to the Department of Justice seeking an investigation on the recent surge in attacks on Hindu temples and places of worship.

At the press conference organised by HinduAction, a non-profit body, Thanedar complained that no action has been taken against those responsible for the attacks and no arrests have been made either, "We have experienced substantially more events of this kind in recent months. I have a feeling that this is just the beginning of a very coordinated attempt against this community and the community must stand together. The time has come and I will stand with you," Thanedar said.

"Having practised Hinduism, having grown up as a Hindu in a Hindu household, I know what Hinduism is. It is a very peaceful religion," he said, adding that it is not a religion that attacks others.



tinues to be misrepresented, misunderstood, deliberately, he said. "I recently joined four of my Indian-American colleagues to write to the Department of Justice. You know, one of the concerns that we had was the rising attacks on places of worship," Thanedar said.

However, this community con-

"We've seen those happening in California, we have seen those happening all the way in New York and all across America. It appears to be a very coordinated

effort to attack these places of worship, which has created a lot of fear in the community," he said. Thanedar alleged that often local law enforcement enters into these investigations which go nowhere. He said it leaves the community feeling like they have nobody who cares about them. That means that the community continues to live in fear. The community continues to live in an adverse situation with essentially no help from law enforcement, he added.

Thanedar said that there is a need to coordinate efforts between the local law enforcement, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and the Department of Justice. "A higher priority needs to be assigned to such hate crimes against this peaceful community,'

Pro-Palestinian demonstrators shut down airport highways and key bridges in major US cities

CHICAGO, April 16: Pro-Palestinian demonstrators blocked roadways in Illinois, California, New York and the Pacific Northwest on Monday, temporarily shutting down travel into some of the nation's most heavily used airports, onto the Golden Gate and Brooklyn bridges and on a busy West Coast highway.

In Chicago, protesters linked arms and blocked lanes of Interstate 190 leading into O'Hare International Airport around 7 am in a demonstration they said was part of a global "economic blockade to free Palestine," according to Rifqa Falaneh, one of the organizers.

Traffic in the San Francisco Bay Area was snarled for hours as demonstrators shut down all vehicle, pedestrian and bike traffic on the Golden Gate Bridge and chained themselves to 55-gallon drums filled with cement across Interstate 880 in Oakland. Protesters marching into Brooklyn blocked Manhattan-bound traffic on the Brooklyn Bridge. In Eugene, Oregon, protesters blocked Interstate 5, shutting down traffic on the major highway for about 45 min-



utes. Protesters say they chose O'Hare in part because it is one of the largest airports. Among other things, they've called for an immediate cease-fire in the war between Israel and Hamas.

Anti- war protesters have demonstrated in Chicago near daily since Hamas' Oct. 7 attack on southern Israel that killed around 1,200 people. Israeli warplanes and ground troops have since conducted a scorchedearth campaign on the Gaza Strip.

The Israeli offensive has killed more than 33,700 Palestinians, according to the Gaza health ministry. The ministry does not differentiate between civilians and combatants in its count but says women and children make up two-thirds of the dead.

O'Hare warned travelers on the social platform X to take alternative forms of transportation with car travel "substantially delayed this morning due to protest activity."

Some travelers stuck in standstill traffic left their cars and walked the final leg to the airport along the freeway, trailing their luggage behind them. Among them was Madeline Hannan from suburban Chicago. She was headed to O'Hare for a work trip to Florida when her and her husband's car ended up stalled for 20 minutes. She got out and 'both ran and speed walked" more than a mile (1.6 kilometers). She said she made it to the gate on time, but barely."This was an inconvenience," she said in a telephone interview from Florida. "But in the grand scheme of things going on overseas,

While individual travelers may have been affected, operations at the airport appeared near normal with delays of under 15 minutes, according to the Chicago Department of Aviation. Inbound traffic toward O'Hare resumed around 9 a.m.

it's a minor inconvenience.'

Near Seattle, the Washington State Department of Transportation said a demonstration closed the main road to Seattle-Tacoma International Airport. Social media posts showed people holding a banner and waving Palestinian flags while standing on the highway, which reopened about three hours later.

About 20 protesters were arrested at the Golden Gate Bridge demonstration and traffic resumed shortly after noon, according to the California Highway Patrol. The agency said officers were making arrests at two points on the interstate, including one spot where roughly 300 protesters refused orders to disperse,

prevents motorists from safely reaching their destinations," the agency said in a statement.

ters) south of Portland. (AP)

Congressional hearing on China on Monday. "Attempting to block or shut down a freeway or state highway to protest is unlawful, dangerous, and Control since February 2021, he

Oregon State Police said 52 protestors were were arrested for disorderly conduct following the Interstate 5 protest in Eugene, Oregon, about 110 miles (177 kilome-

turmoil: top US intelligence official tells Congress WASHINGTON, April 16: Pakistan sustained its nuclear modernisation efforts last year despite its economic turmoil as its con-

tentious relationship with India continues to drive its defence policy, the top US intelligence official has told Congress. The remarks by Lt Gen Jeffrey Kruse, Director of the Defence Intelligence Agency came during a

Kruse told lawmakers that Pakistan has sought international support, including from the UN Security Council, to resolve its dispute with India about Kashmir. Separately, Islamabad and New Delhi have maintained an uneasy ceasefire along the shared Line of

"Pakistan has sustained its nuclear modernisation efforts despite its economic turmoil. Terrorist violence against Pakistani security forces and civilians also rose last year," he said.

According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Insti-

tute, Pakistan is reported to have 170 nuclear warheads as of January 2023. Cash-strapped Pakistan is bank-

Pak sustained its nuclear programme despite economic

ing on close allies like China and Saudi Arabia for loans to tide over its economic woes. Moreover, Pakistan's finance minister Muhammad Aurangzeb is now

in Washington to discuss a new loan package with the International Monetary Fund. Pakistan's contentious relation-

its defence policy, Kruse told top American lawmakers. However, cross-border violence between the countries has decreased since their February 2021

recommitment to a ceasefire, he

ship with India continues to drive

"Islamabad is modernising its nuclear arsenal and improving the security of its nuclear materials and nuclear C2 (command and control). In October, Pakistan successfully tested its Ababeel medium-range ballistic missile,"

In 2023, militants killed approximately 400 security forces, a nine-

he said

year high, and Pakistani security forces have conducted almost daily counterterrorism operations during the past year.

Islamabad and New Delhi have a long history of strained relations, primarily due to the Kashmir issue as well as the cross-border terrorism emanating from Pakistan.

In 2019, Pakistan downgraded its diplomatic ties with New Delhi after the Indian government abrogated Article 370 of the Constitution, revoking the special status of Jammu and Kashmir and bifurcating the State into two Union Terri-

India has been maintaining that it desires normal neighbourly relations with Pakistan while insisting that the onus is on Islamabad to create an environment that is free of terror and hostility for such an engagement.

New Delhi has also asserted that the constitutional measures taken by the Indian government to ensure socio-economic development and good governance in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir are matters internal to India. (PTI)



Airlifting of more polling teams to remote polling stations where road communication is not conducive

Election officials, EVMs airlifted to four remote polling booths in Arunachal

40 election officials including police personnel were airlifted to four remote polling stations in Arunachal Pradesh's Kra Daadi district to conduct polling for the simultaneous Lok Sabha and Assembly elections in the northeastern state on April 19, an official said on Tuesday.

Page 7 April 17_Normal Pages 16-04-2024 21:44 Page 1

The polling officials along with Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) and Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trails (VVPATs) were airlifted on Monday to the polling stations located at Pip-Sorang Circle in the remote district bordering China, the official said.

'They were airlifted in two sorties by an MI-172 chopper operated in the state by Skyone airways," Toko Babu, officer on special duty (OSD) to the state's Chief Electoral Officer (CEO), said on Tuesday.

Airlifting of more polling teams to remote polling stations where road communication is not conducive, would be done as per requirements of respective district electoral officers (DEOs) of various districts, he said.

"The polling teams airlifted on Monday will be stationed at Tali, the ADC headquarters in the district, from where they will undertake a foot march to reach Pip-Sorang circle," Babu said.

Tali assembly constituency which falls under Arunachal West Parliamentary seat, is



one among the 10 assembly seats won unopposed. Jike Takku of BJP had won the seat uncontested this time.

Each polling team consists of 10 persons on an average including, a presiding officer, two polling officers, one polling attendant besides, security personnel, the official said. and added that the four polling stations in the Pip-Sorang circle include, Tedung, Pip-So-

rang, Kharsang and Korapu.

The OSD added that remaining polling stations in the state, which require the polling teams to undertake a foot march, will start leaving for their respective polling booths on April 17 from the respective district headquarters.

There are altogether 228 polling stations in the state out of the total 2,226, which

Out of these, to reach 61 polling stations it requires two days of foot-march, while in seven other booths, polling officials have to march for three days to reach their respective

The northeastern state will go to simultaneous polls for two Lok Sabha seats - Western Parliamentary and Eastern Parliamentary constituencies along with 50 assembly seats in the first phase on April 19.

There are a total of 60 assembly seats in the state out of which, BJP won 10 seats unopposed.

A total of 8.92,694 voters including, 4,54,256 female, will decide the fate of 143 candidates contesting for the 50 assembly seats and 14 candidates vying for the two Lok Sabha seats.

A total of 11,130 polling officials have been deployed to conduct the polling process while 6,874 EVMs would be used for conducting Lok Sabha and Assembly

As many as 80 companies of central armed police forces (CAPF) have been deployed in the northeastern state to manage law and order.

Counting of votes for assembly elections

would be held on June 2, while that of Lok Sabha polls on June 4, respectively. (PTI)

thorough investigation to ensure

that justice is administered in ac-

cordance with the laws of the state.

It is essential that such incidents

are not tolerated and the miscre-

ants are held accountable for their

Further, the JTSA reminded the

concerned citizens of Manipur

state that the NH37 is a lifeline for

the people of Manipur. "And as we

embark on the forthcoming 18th

Lok Sabha Election 2024, we be-

lieve in the potential of positive

change and any unfortunate inci-

dent should not be invited within

the state in any circumstances.

Rather, we appeal to all the citizens

to act as an ambassador of peace

for the harmonious existence of

It then said panicked general

public are rushing to all fuel

pumps (outlets) across imphal.

of the state that no such incident

will be allowed to happen in the

near future. Everything will go on

We also want to assure the people

Manipur", the JTSA added.

actions," it also demanded.

of "safety" is against the "very idea" of India and should be condemned left, right and centre, said Congress' Lok Sabha poll candidate A Bimol Akoijam. An associate professor at Jawaharlal Nehru University's School of Social Sciences, Akoijam asserted that as long as the two communities continue to be citizens of the country,

IMPHAL, April 16: Separating

Kukis and Meiteis geographically

in violence-hit Manipur in name

The comments by Akoijam, 57, came amid demands by the Kuki-Zo community in Manipur for a

they will have to live and work to-

separate administration. Equating the violence in Manipur to "Rwanda-like ethnic conflict", Akoijam alleged that the BJP-led government at the Centre and in the state has deliberately allowed the situation to aggravate in the state and claimed that there

is some purpose behind it. "The kind of situation we are seeing...we don't believe that this can happen in a settled democracy like India...it almost sounds like an ethnic conflict like those happen in Rwanda for instance, this has been allowed to happen for so long...so returning back to normal life will take long, long time," he

Akoijam, who is contesting his debut election from Inner Manipur constituency, questioned why is the Indian state allowing partitions to happen within itself.

told PTI in an interview.

When a multi-cultural and multi-ethnic country like India as usual along NH-37", the JTSA says that Kukis and Meiteis have been separated geographically, emotionally and so on and so forth, it is complete nonsense. It is against the very idea of India to say that Kukis and Meiteis cannot live together.

"If Sikhs were attacked...you tried to protect the locality where a certain community was residing. I am very suspicious of why did they start shifting these people from that side to this and vice versa in name of safety," he said.

"I consider this as an inability of the Indian state that it allowed to aggravate these situations and I suspect that it is being deliberately done. It is not inability of the Indian state, it is unwillingness to act, and my suspicion is that it has some purpose behind it," he further alleged.

Akoijam claimed that people seem to encourage and legitimise the separation and termed it a "sorry state of affairs".

"That's a very sorry state of affairs...I think that is why one must not celebrate. These kinds of issues must be condemned left,

Separating Kukis, Meiteis

geographically against

idea of India: Cong LS poll

nominee Akoijam

Akoijam claimed that people seem to

encourage and legitimise the separation

platform be that Parliament, (state) assembly, government institutions, private institutions...as fellow citizens, they will have to live together and work together.

right and centre. As long as Kukis

and Meiteis remain citizens of this

country, they will share every

"You don't have to justify the fact that they can't work together. That is complete nonsense and unacceptable," he said.

Manipur has witnessed sporadic, sometimes intense, ethnic clashes since May 3 last year between the majority Meitei community and the Kukis, resulting in the loss of more than 200 lives. While the Meiteis are now concentrated in Imphal city, the Kukis have moved to the hills.

Polling for the two Lok Sabha seats in Manipur will be held in two phases. While Inner Manipur and some segments of Outer Manipur will vote in the first phase on April 19, the remaining segments of Outer Manipur will vote in the second phase on April 26.

Asked about the Congress stand on the demand for Scheduled Tribe (ST) status for Meiteis, Akoijam said, "It must be pursued and I shall be doing my bit to ensure that this process is done without harming or hurting other communities.

Akoijam is pitted against BJP's Thounaojam Basanta Kumar Singh, who is also the state's Law and Education Minister.

Asked about the steps he will take to address the situation. Akoijam said, "change the narra-

"One of the things is to change the narrative. That is why in the Congress manifesto, we have the word 'reconciliation'. In a society that is fractured and where there is estrangement in inter-community relationships, you need reconciliation... My step would be to accentuate this process of reconciliation," he said.

"The violence must be reigned in, accountability fixed and justice done to the victims, that is the first priority. The crisis is manifestation of historically rooted issues in the state so it needs to be addressed with a particular perspective and I will be working on a project where every community can live together with a sense of dignity...a united Manipur," he added.

The Congress has fielded MLA Alfred K Arthur from the Outer Manipur seat, reserved for tribals. The BJP has not fielded any candidate from the Outer Manipur seat and is extending support to Naga People's Front (NPF) candidate Kachui Timothy Zimik. (PTI)

Involvement of **NSCN-KYA** in threatening voters in Arunachal

HT Correspondent DIBRUGARH, April 16: With only a couple of days left for the first phase of elections to be take place across the country, reports have come in that the NSCN (K-YA) has directly got involved in the electioneering process by threatening voters to vote for a particular candidate in Longding Pumao constituency in the insurgency infested Longding district of Arunachal Pradesh.

Leaflets in this regard are being distributed in the villages of the constituency.

Moreover, for the last few days, heavily armed militants from the NSCN (K-YA) have been moving in villages like Niuasa, Longkhaw, Mintong, Longphong etc and have been threatening people at gun point to vote for NPP's Thangwang Wangham. Sources said that the BJP leaders and workers have been targeted by the militants during which they are being threatened to vote for the NPP candidate or to face serious action.

DIMAPUR. April 16: Forum for

Naga Reconciliation (FNR), calling

upon the Nagas for unity, appealed to

all the "inhabitants of the Naga-Land

Incident between Kaimai and Tollen village condemned their heinous act and we expect a

IMPHAL, April 16: The Joint Tribes Students' Association (JTSA) of All Inpui Students' Union (AISU), Zeme Students' Organisation, Manipur (ZSOM), Rongmei Naga Students' Organization, Manipur (RNSOM), Liangmai Naga Katimai Ruangdi, Manipur (LNKR-M) strongly condemned the incident that happened between "Kaimai Kuki village and Tollen kuki village along NH37, where 5 trucks were damaged including one LPG and four oil tankers were allegedly ambushed and shot by Kuki miscreants and injuring a driver". The JTSA expressed this "reprehensible act" of violence that took place within its jurisdiction along the Jiribam-Imphal road.

In a statement, the JTSA said, "In such an excruciating juncture, the Nagas are playing pivotal roles to accommodate and bring tranquility and peace among different communities in the state". It also said, "Irrespective of different backgrounds communities/tribes the JTSA strongly believes in the



principle of unity in diversity and a peaceful coexistence of people leaving aside its individual(s) interest and differences". The JTSA asserted that any untowards incident that happens within the jurisdiction of JTSA in the future will not be tolerated and this statement is constrained to issue as a stern final warning against the defaulters. It further said such an act of "cowardly indulgence" is a serious crime

Panic buying of

fuel in Imphal

vehicles. At the same time, some

retail outlets were found sticking

In a bid to ease the fear, the Con-

sumer Affairs Food and Public

Distribution (CAF&PD) depart-

ment issued a press release stating

that there is sufficient stock of

petrol and diesel in the state. There

will be no shortage of vehicle

"It is to inform that there is suffi-

cient stock of MS-Petrol and HSD-

"No Stock" bills.

fuels, it assured.

against humanity and an act of terrorism that even crosses the line beyond communalism especially during this hard time in this present scenario.

Incidents like this not only tarnish the image of the particular community and state but also undermine the harmonious atmosphere we strive to maintain, the JTSA said. "We demand that immediate action be taken against those responsible miscreants for

assured. (NNN) PM Modi to address election rally in Agartala today

state general secretary Amit Rak-

a no-fly zone for choppers and drones has been declared in the

mercial flights will be able to use the state's airspace," District Magistrate of Tripura West, Vishal Kumar, told PTI. Around 1,500 personnel will be deployed as part of a three-tier security

Diesel in the state. There will be no layer for the prime minister during his visit to the northeastern state, he shortage of stock of POL. All petrol pumps are directed to open as usual," Chief Minister Manik Saha and other state BJP leaders will also be the press release said. (NNN)

to render your solidarity across ethnic and religious affiliation". FNR then said, "Giving a chance to the future is our common hope" In a statement issued today, FNR said Naga history has always with-

FNR calls upon Nagas for unity

stood the test of times and this has baffled activists and insiders alike for obvious reasons. "Once again. Naga history is roused and brought to life from what has been seemingly neutralized. Our history, as with other histories, is a being on which transformative changes take place," it added.

In the recent past, according to FNR, with the event of "Nurturing Naga Peoplehood: Liberating the Naga Spirit," held from February 16 to 18, 2024, at Kutsapo, Nagaland, the Naga political groups (NPGs), civil society organizations, churches, prayer centers and citizens from across Naga areas converged with a renewed spirit of imagining the Naga future. This was strengthened by subsequent meetings of the NPGs and the Forum for Naga Reconciliation (FNR) at Kohima, on March 2, 2024, followed by Dimapur, March 6, 2024 and the latest meeting in Dimapur, Saturday, April 13, 2024. These meetings were both critical reflections coupled with constructive appraisals of the Journey of Common Hope, it also said.

A part of the constructive Journey of Common Hope is the practice of Naga sovereignty without impinging anyone, FNR stated. The Naga identity is not without a boundary as all identities imply a boundary, it further said.

FNR then affirmed that Naga identity is permeable. In consonant, the meetings of March 6 and April 13, 2024, have resolved to legally adopt Naga National Anthem, written and composed by late Mr. R. Kevichusa, IAS, FNR informed. In this connection, the resolution adds that ".... NPGs, institutions of learning, Naga civil bodies and all other organizations sing the Naga National Anthem on important oc-

tive with the publication of the news item, it further added. In the meeting of April 13, 2024,

casions." This shall become effec-

of the NPGs and the FNR, it was agreed that May 16 being the Naga Plebiscite Day, will be marked by a special program "organized by the FNR with the support of NPGs and other Naga bodies, on May 16, 2024, at Dimapur, to commemorate the Naga common political history and move forward without delay, the statement said. It may be added that the FNR and the NPGs request individuals, institutions and organizations across Naga areas to attend and show solidarity.

According to FNR, April 13, 2024, meeting also took serious cognizance of FNR's resolution that stated, "We (NPGs) have understood and affirmed the importance of working out the Naga political process through cooperation as agreed in the 'September Joint Accordant' September 14, 2022."

FNR also said the meeting also reminded the NPGs to once again, honor the "Covenant of Reconciliation" signed on June 13, 2009, by the highest level leaderships, in toto.

The statement of FNR then said that sporadic unpleasant happenings in the Naga context have been assessed in seriousness. The FNR statement further said the Kutsapo gathering has become a historical moment for "our repentance" and seeking forgiveness of sins of omission and commission. Without a doubt, it also has become the ground for renewal of faith and recommitment to God and to "our fellow brothers and sisters. No matter how difficult it has been, today we confess our personal and collective pride and hate before God and our people and seek forgiveness from God and our people.'

FNR then said it "believes" that seeking forgiveness has transformative power. "It is the strength empowered in the weak. We appeal to all the inhabitants of the Naga-Land to render your solidarity across ethnic and religious affiliation. Giving a chance to the future is our common hope," the statement of FNR appealed. (NNN)

IMPHAL, April 16: Following the attack on the Imphal-bound oil tankers, there was panic buying of Minister Narendra Modi will adfuel from retail outlets in Imphal dress an election rally in Agartala and other valley districts and on Wednesday, a state BJP leader queued up to fill fuel tanks of their

Modi is scheduled to land here at 1.45 pm, and will then head to the Swami Vivekananda ground to take part in the public meeting, BJP's

"Keeping in mind the PM's visit.

state on April 16 and April 17 to ensure tight security. However, com-

Khasis celebrate annual thanksgiving festival Festival of the indigenous people to the Almighty for bountiful harvest, health, wealth and peace the characteristic qualities that the women the silver quiver having three arrows.

SHILLONG, April 16: Khasis in Meghalaya celebrated the Shad Suk Mynsiem or the 'Dance of the Joyful Souls', an annual thanksgiving festival. Organized annually by the Seng Khasi

Seng Kmie, the Shad Suk Mynsiem, also

known as the 'Spring Festival' concluded in

Shillong on Monday. Thousands of spectators including tourists witnessed the colourful traditional thanksgiving dancing festival, held at Weiking Ground, Jaiaw in the city for the past over

Braving heavy rainfall, hundreds of people belonging to the 'Niam Khasi' including young and old took part in the dancing festival accompanied by the beats of the drums and tangmuri to give thanks to God for all the blessings that he has bestowed.

Highlighting the importance of the festival, an elder of the Seng Khasi said, "Shad Suk Mynsiem is a thanksgiving dance festival of the indigenous people to the Almighty for bountiful harvest, health, wealth and

He said the dance was a tradition since inception but it was only in 1911, the Seng



Khasi decided to have it in an organized manner at the Weiking Ground.

He also informed that over 1,634 dancers took part in the Shad Suk Mynsiem. The festival was also witnessed by Tourism Minister

Paul Lyngdoh and other dignitaries. During the dance, there was a display of

lavish gold and silver jewellery forming part of the attire of the dancers.

The most important of the women's wears is the silver crown that adorns the heads of the virgin damsel.

The crown and the 'lasubon' follower protruding from the nape of the neck, speak of should cultivate, in the day to day life, in the upbringing of the children in the home and

The Jewellery piece of the male dancer is

The arrows symbolize lifelong companies of a man, from birth till death. In the naming ceremony three arrows form part of the rituals after the birth of a boy child.

The first arrow is designated to guard oneself, the second arrow is for guarding the honour of one's family and clan and the third arrow is for the territorial protection of the first ancestral mother of the clan.

It is in the Shad Suk Mynsiem that the beat of drums, cymbals, the melodious tunes of the piped instrument-the Tangmuri, has in them a systematic discipline of rhythm, which is pulsating.

The pattern of dancing responds to the change of beats and rhythm of the music, a music that has been kept alive from the deep recesses of tradition.

The festival is also a message that life should be meaningful, eventful and purpose8 THE HILLS TIMES

Exercise to ferry polling personnel in helicopters begins amid tight security in Naxalite-hit Bastar

Teams that reach their destinations ahead of the polling day will stay in the nearest camp of security forces



EVMS will be transported in

choppers on Tuesday from Sukma

A total of 255 polling booths

have been set up in Sukma district,

and polling parties for 42 booths

will be shifted in choppers, Sukma

At least 42 have been relocated

Elections to 11 Lok Sabha seats

in Chhattisgarh will be held in

three phases on April 19, April 26

and May 7, and votes will be

Bastar is the only Lok Sabha

constituency to go to polls in the

first phase on April 19, while Ma-

hasamund, Rajnandgaon and

Kanker (ST), which also have

Naxalite presence in some pock-

The remaining seven seats –

Raipur, Durg, Bilaspur, Raigarh

(ST), Korba, Janjgir-Champa (SC)

and Surguja (ST) — will go to

polls in the last phase of the elec-

Earlier, an officer from the of-

fice of the chief electoral officer in

Raipur had said helicopters will

ferry polling personnel for 167

last year, the Indian Air Force

(IAF) conducted 404 sorties with

eight MI-17 choppers for six days,

facilitating the deployment and

evacuation of 853 polling team

members in five districts of Bastar

division Sukma, Bijapur, Kanker,

Dantewada and Narayanpur. (PTI)

Supreme Court commends Indian Railways' 'Kavach' initiative to enhance train safety

#BharatKaKavach

TRAIN

DEFENSE

SYSTEM

Operating at Safety Integrity Level - 4 stan-

dards, this indigenous system serves as a state-of-

the-art electronic safeguard, designed to prevent

trains from passing signals at Danger (Red) and

train braking system if the driver fails to adhere to

speed restrictions, significantly reducing the risk

Moreover, 'Kavach' automatically activates the

through in train safety technology.

thereby averting potential collisions.

ets, will vote on April 26.

(to safer places) in remote areas of

district headquarters, he said.

collector Haris S said.

the district, he added.

counted on June 4.

tions on May 7

graphical location.

BLIAPUR/SUKMA, April 16: With tight security in place, the authorities on Tuesday kicked off an exercise to ferry polling personnel in helicopters in Chhattisgarh's Naxalite-hit Bastar Lok Sabha constituency, where voting will take place in the first phase of the elections on April 19.

The authorities have started dispatching electronic voting machines (EVMs) and polling parties to booths in sensitive areas of Bijapur and Sukma districts, a senior official said.

Located in the southern part of the Bastar Lok Sabha constituency, Bijapur and Sukma districts have reported multiple incidents of Naxalite attacks on security personnel during elections in the past.

A total of 245 polling booths have been set up for general elections in Bijapur, of which 99 booths in the interior areas have been relocated (to safer places), Bijapur collector Anurag Pandey said. Around 76 polling parties will be ferried to their destinations in helicopters, and the exercise began on Tuesday from the Bijapur district headquarters, three days before the polling, he said.

The teams that reach their destinations ahead of the polling day will stay in the nearest camp of security forces, he said.

All preparations have been made to ensure peaceful polling, Pandev said.

Talking about the security arrangements, Bijapur Superintendent of Police Jitendra Yadav said sufficient security personnel were deployed for the elections in the district, and search and area domination operations have been intensified

Polling parties were also being dispatched to the neighbouring Sukma district, another official

At least 27 polling teams and

GUWAHATI, April 16: In a significant develop-

ment, the Supreme Court of India has lauded the

efforts of Indian Railways in implementing

'Kavach,' an indigenous Automatic Train Protec-

tion System, aimed at bolstering safety measures

highlighting the pivotal role of 'Kavach' in pre-

venting collisions and ensuring the safety of pas-

the Union of India and Indian Railways, the

Supreme Court acknowledged several initiatives

geared towards enhancing the anti-collision sys-

These measures include the installation of safety

systems, track quality improvements, staff training

and sensitization, reforms in maintenance prac-

tices, and the implementation of the cutting-edge

Developed by the Research Design and Stan-

dards Organisation (RDSO) in collaboration with

the Indian Industry, 'Kavach' represents a break-

The commendation came on April 15, 2024,

Recognizing the multifaceted approach taken by

for train operations.

sengers and personnel.

'Kavach' System.

PURNEA/GAYA (BIHAR), April **16:** In an apparent rebuttal of the

opposition's charge that the BJP wanted to scrap the Constitution, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday asserted that he felt "indebted to Baba Saheb Ambedkar's samvidhan" which enabled him to rise from humble origins.

Modi, who addressed back-toback election rallies in Bihar's Gaya and Purnea districts, spoke extensively of the high esteem in which he held the Constitution, mentioning his government's measures like "celebrating Samvidhan Diwas, from schools to the Supreme Court and Parliament". "This year is special. We are

going to celebrate 75 years of the Constitution on a scale similar to the Amrit Kaal celebrations which marked 75 years of Independence", said Modi, adding "Our intent is to reach out to every nook and corner of the country where youngsters will be told how our glorious Constitution was drafted and what is its

"People ask me why do I care so much for the poor, the Dalits. I do so because I have risen from among them. I therefore, feel, indebted to the social class. I also feel indebted towards the Constitution framed by Babasaheb Ambedkar which helped me reach where I am," said the Prime Minister.

Modi's refrain came a day after RJD president Lalu Prasad, the BJP's principal opponent in Bihar, raked up utterances made by a num-



Indebted to Ambedkar's Constitution: Modi in Bihar

the Emergency. Those who want

power to remain confined within

the hands of a family always treat

the Constitution as an eyesore. A

reason why they have even begun to

threaten that they will not accept out-

comes of polls held under the provi-

remain united to foil their attempts,"

said the prime minister.

sions of the Constitution. We must

NDA government, Modi said, "Those

who cry hoarse about the Constitution

never had the courage to implement

it in Jammu and Kashmir. When we

The prime minister also pulled no

punches in attacking the RJD, which

he mentioned by name, and accused

of having ushered in "jungle raj and

corruption" while in power in Bihar

and "claiming credit for all the good

bit the bullet, they threatened that the

entire region will be on fire".

ber of leaders of the saffron party who have said the "Constitution will be changed if we get two-thirds majority in Parliament".

References are also being made to RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat's call for "review" of the Constitution in 2015, when Prasad used the statement to allege that the provision of reservations for deprived castes was under attack, and the BJP-led NDA was trounced in the assembly polls held that year.

Modi, who has been equating the Constitution with sacred books like the Ramayana, Bible and Koran, pointed out that it was under the rule of the Congress, the RJD's ally, that the Emergency was imposed and several constitutional provisions were suspended.

"Our opponents are those who had held the Constitution hostage and tried to tamper with it during

Kumar, who heads the JD(U), was

headed by Nitish Kumai

conspicuous by his absence at both rallies, though the one at Purnea was held for party MP and candidates Santosh Kushwaha and Dulal Chandra Goswami

work done by the NDA government

The PM stressed that "NDA brought Bihar out of the era of jungle raj" and warned that crackdown on corruption will continue in the next five years, apparently referring to the name of Prasad and his family members, including son and heir apparent Tejashwi Yadav, figuring in scams being investigated by central agencies. In Purnea, Modi spoke of "ambitious schemes" launched by his government for development of the district, in particular, and the Seemanchal region in general, drawing a contrast with governments of the past which washed their hands off by seeing the backwardness of the area as irreversible

Modi also came down heavily on vote bank politics which has allowed Holding out abrogation of Article infiltration to flourish in Seeman-370 as a "big achievement" of the chal", claiming "this has been to the detriment of the poor, the Dalits of the region, many of whom have suffered attacks and even their houses have been set on fire"

The fate of this region hinges on the poll outcome of June 4", said the PM, adding, "Those who oppose the CAA should know Modi is not someone who can be stopped or cowed down".

"Today everybody is saying that it is only the NDA government at

Rahul Gandhi slams PM Modi over electoral

'NDA brought Bihar out of the era of jungle raj' the Centre which is capable of big achievements", said Modi, holding out the examples of Ram temple at Ayodhya, abrogation of Article 370 and military operations in response to cross-border terrorism.

In his speech at Gaya, Modi also spoke of the pilgrim town's fame and underscored his government's efforts to preserve the country's cultural heritage, adding, "Our fight is against those who have no respect for our culture".

The rally at Gaya also served as an occasion to soothe ruffled feathers as those invited to share the stage with the Prime Minister included Pashupati Kumar Paras, who recently resigned from the Union cabinet in protest against the NDA giving weightage to his estranged nephew Chirag Paswan, and Ashwini Kumar Choubey, who has been denied the BJP ticket from Buxar, which he has represented two times on the trot.

At the Gaya rally, the PM also took the mic while names of others present on the occasion were being announced. He said "I may please be excused for breaking the protocol. It is going to be a hectic day when I am scheduled to address five rallies and have to visit up to

The PM had to repeatedly ask euphoric crowds at both Gaya and Purnea to give up chants of "Modi! Modi!" while he was holding forth. He said, "Save this enthusiasm for the polling date. It will be needed a

Days ahead of voting, Gadkari unveils manifesto for Nagpur

NAGPUR, April 16: Union minister and BJP Lok Sabha candidate from Nagpur Nitin Gadkari on Tuesday released his own "manifesto", promising to create one lakh jobs in the next five years if reelected and put the urban constituency in Maharashtra among top five cities in terms of development

polling booths in Lok Sabha conand cleanliness. Gadkari's 'Vachannama' or elecstituencies of Bastar (ST), Kanker tion manifesto underlined his vision (ST) and Mahasamund considerfor Nagpur for the next five years if ing the Maoist threat and geoelected from the Vidarbha city, As per the plan, 919 polling perwhere voting will take place in the sonnel will be sent to 156 polling first phase on April 19, for a third term. Addressing a press conferstations by helicopters in Bastar, ence after releasing the document and 84 personnel to nine booths in Kanker seat and two in the Gariathree days ahead of polling, the 66band area of Mahasamund seat, he year-old senior BJP leader also gave account of the work done by During the assembly elections him as an MP in the last ten years.

Gadkari emphasised that in his third term he will work towards making Nagpur 'sundar and swachh' (beautiful and clean) and putting it among top five cities in the country in terms of development, sanitation and hygiene.

The former BJP president said

with the help of state and central governments he will help towards giving ownership rights to residents of unauthorised slums on regularisation and help them in construc-

tion of new houses. The Union minister said he has already started the work in one of of the slum areas in the city and given ownership rights of 500 to 600 houses. Gadkari said 100 gardens will come up in various parts of the city and these will include existing ones which will be renovated.

He noted that modern markets for hawkers, farmers, grain wholesalers and oil merchants will come up at dedicated places in the city, which will also help in reducing traffic congestion.

Gadkari said creating truck terminals, metro gauge lanes, new four-lane railway tracks and logistics parks in Nagpur, among other initiatives, will be among his priorities. The Union minister assured that one lakh new jobs in Nagpur and five lakh employment opportunities in the Vidarbha region will be created by 2029. (PTI)

It also addresses the possibility of collision be-

tween locomotives equipped with the system. Re-

markably, 'Kavach' stands out as one of the most

cost-effective Safety Integrity Level 4 (SIL-4) cer-

tified technologies, boasting an exceptionally low

not only ensures the security of railway operations

but also paves the way for potential exports of this

indigenous technology, presenting a lucrative op-

The implementation of 'Kavach' is particularly

prioritized on the High Density Network (HDN)

and Highly Used Network (HUN) routes, which

tified HDN and HUN routes for the deployment

of 'Kavach,' covering approximately 1966 Route

As Indian Railways continues its commitment

to enhancing safety standards, the introduction of

'Kavach' underscores a significant stride towards

ensuring the security and reliability of train travel

Notably, the North Frontier Railway has iden-

form the backbone of railway traffic in India.

Kilometers from Malda Town to Dibrugarh.

With its impeccable safety credentials, 'Kavach'

probability of error -1 in 10,000 years.

portunity for the Indian Railways.

bond issue, Calls it 'form of extortion' kOZHIKODE/WAYANAD

(KERALA), April 16: Senior Congress leader Rahul Gandhi launched an attack on Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday over the electoral bond issue, describing it as a "form of extortion" and alleging "intimidatory tactics" against targeted businessmen.

'There are some people in every small town or village who extort money on the streets by threatening physical harm. In Malayalam you call this extortion 'kolla adikkal' (loot), but Modi calls it electoral bonds. What a common thief is doing on the streets, the PM is doing at an international level," Gandhi alleged. During his campaign in Wayanad Lok Sabha seat, the Congress candidate accused the BJP-led central government of using sophisticated tactics to threaten targeted businessmen.

He also lashed out at Modi, acusing him of helping a few rich businessmen in the country

"At the electoral bond level, the threats are much more sophisticated. The ED, CBI and Income Tax people will come, they will interrogate and at the end of it, they will say why don't you give this (their business) to (businessman) Adani," the sitting Congress MP from Wayanad LS constituency alleged.

He alleged that this is how businessman Adani got the Mumbai airport from its previous

In other instances, such "intimidatory tactics" also led to the businessman paying the BJP in electoral bonds, the Congress MP alleged.

He raised the electoral bond issue by referring to a recent interview of Modi. "In his interview, he was trying

to defend the biggest corruption scandal on the planet -- the electoral bond scheme through which of rupees by extorting India's businessmen," Gandhi alleged while speaking to party supporters, workers and the huge crowd that turned up for his roadshow from Kodiyathur in Kozhikode

Later addressing people during another roadshow, Gandhi alleged that Modi "does not have the understanding to run the country'

The Congress leader also mocked the PM for his statements asking people to bang steel utensils and switch on their mobile phone lights during the COVID-19 pandemic. Earlier in Kodiyathur, Gandhi

alleged that Modi's job was also to distract people from the real issues in the country, protect the richest businessmen in India and "forgive their bank loans". Modi is helping "five or six of

the biggest, richest businessmen" in India, he alleged during his and change the Constitution and campaign in areas falling under the Wayanad Lok Sabha constituency in Kozhikode and Malappuram districts of the state.

He claimed that Modi has given around Rs 16 lakh crores to 20-25 people in the country. "But he does not talk of the is-

sues farmers are facing in the country, the unemployment or the price rise," Gandhi said He said that since Modi was

giving away money to a few rich people in the country, the Congress has decided to give money to the poor when it comes to power. He promised to give Rs one lakh per annum to one woman from every poor family in the country and his government will frame a law that will make it mandatory to provide one year paid internships or apprenticeships to every graduate or diploma holder in the country.

Under the proposed law, the interns and apprentices will get ₹ one lakh per year for their one year of training in their chosen nounced. (PTI)

field in the public or private sector or PSUs.

For women, he has also assured to provide 50 per cent reservation in government jobs, PSUs and government compa-

"We will also ensure reservation for women in Parliament and vidhan sabhas immediately," he

Additionally, he also promised to double the wages of Asha workers and women working in Anganwadis if the Congress-led INDIA bloc comes to power.

The Congress MP from Wayanad also said that the Agnipath scheme was an insult to the brave youth dreaming of joining the Indian Army and protecting the country and will be cancelled if the Congress-led alliance forms a government at the Centre. Gandhi also accused the BJP and the RSS of trying to destroy said that this was the only big issue of the 2024 Lok Sabha polls and all other issues emanated from it.

The Congress leader took out a massive road show from Kodiyathur here around 11.30 am as part of his ongoing campaign for the upcoming Lok Sabha polls in the southern state and was accompanied by hundreds of party workers and supporters who ran alongside and ahead of the vehicle carrying

He intermittently sat atop the SUV or stood out of its sun roof constantly waving at the public gathered in large numbers on both sides of the road.

Party workers and supporters accompanying him carried placards with his photo.

Gandhi, who is hoping to win again from Wayanad, came to the constituency on April 15 for the second time after the date of the Lok Sabha polls were an-

Packaged commodity ads must mention quantity info: Metrology Dept



AMARAVATI (ANDHRA PRADESH), April 16: The Andhra Pradesh Legal Metrology Department on Tuesday said companies advertising price of their pre-packaged commodities must also mention their quantity and noncompliance is a violation, citing the case of Hindustan Unilever Ltd. Selectively mentioning the price of the prepackaged commodity and refraining from revealing its net quantity violates Section 18 (2) of the Legal Metrology Act, 2009, an official said.

"Any advertisement mentioning the retail sale price of a pre-packaged commodity shall contain a declaration as to

the net quantity or number of the commodity contained in the package in such form and manner as may be prescribed," said Andhra Pradesh Legal Metrology controller H Arun Kumar in a press release.

Kumar, who is also the civil supplies commissioner, noted the inspector of Legal Metrology, Visakhapatnam City has registered a case under Section 18 (2) of the Legal Metrology Act, 2009 against Hindustan Unilever Ltd on October 4, 2023. He said the inspector registered the case for not declaring the quantity of an advertisement on YouTube in connection with Bru instant coffee.

Incidentally, the global FMCG giant appealed to the controller, claiming the advertisement was telecast on a private YouTube channel and argued it was not the authorised channel of the Hindustan Unilever Ltd, prompting the controller to initiate a probe. In this backdrop, Kumar highlighted that every adver-

tisement of packaged commodities indicating their sale price must also inform their corresponding weight "Such cases where MRP (maximum retail price) is only indicated without (the) corresponding net quantity is a violation of Legal Metrology provisions and consumers may take note of it and such violations may be brought to the

He said consumers can reach out to him through toll free number 1967 or mail him at clm-ap@nic.in (PTI)

notice of the controller," Kumar added.

'PM should look in the mirror first': Mamata on allegations of corruption against TMC



JALPAIGURI, April 16: Demanding a white paper on the investigations conducted by central teams in West Bengal, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Tuesday said that PM Narendra Modi who accuses her TMC of corruption should look in the mirror first.

Addressing an election rally at Mainaguri in Jalpaiguri district, Banerjee said it was the TMC which is fighting the BJP in the state, while the CPI(M) and Congress were working with it.

"BJP had sent 300 central teams to Bengal to investigate the allegations of corruption but they didn't find anything. Now, PM Modi needs to answer the people of Bengal, what happened to the MGNREGA funds? Poor people worked under the scheme but were not paid," she

said, demanding a white paper on the investigations.

"The PM says TMC is a corrupt party. He should look in the mirror first. His party is filled with dacoits," she added.

Raising the issue of demonetisation, Banerjee sought to know who benefitted from it.

She called the BJP an "anti-Bengali party", and alleged that it was "planning to drive out" tribals, Dalits and OBCs in the "garb of NRC". "We won't allow NRC in Bengal," she asserted.

Upping the ante against the CPI(M) and Congress, she said, "Only the TMC is fighting the BJP in Bengal, while the other two opposition parties are working with it. We are with the INDIA bloc at the national level, but in Bengal, TMC must win to save the country.'

Banerjee claimed that if the BJP returned to power no more elections would be held in the country.

"There will be the rule of one man and one party," she claimed. The chief minister also took on the Election Commission, accusing it of not allowing the state government to rebuild the houses damaged by a storm in Jalpaiguri, Coochbehar and Alipurduar.

"Let the polls be over, we will rebuild those houses," she said. Claiming that the BJP-led government at the Centre did nothing for

the ailing tea gardens of northern West Bengal, she said, "Our government has reopened 59 tea gardens and gave land rights to the workers who have been living there for decades. Banerjee alleged that some BJP members shouted "chor-chor", tar-

getting her convoy in the Chalsa area of the district. "Just imagine their audacity. I am not even drawing my MP pension. I don't take any salary. I travel in my own car and do not use a government vehicle. I wear simple clothes and lead a simple life. I even pay

for expenses such as a cup of tea," she said. (PTI)

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 17, 2024

Page 9 April 17_Normal Pages 4/16/2024 8:17 PM Page 1

Six dead as boat capsizes in Jhelum River in J&K

SRINAGAR, April 16: A boat carrying mostly school children capsized in the Jhelum river on the outskirts of the city on Tuesday, leaving six people dead, officials said

The incident took place around 8 am in Gandbal Nowgam area here and six people have been pulled out of the river whose water level had risen over the last couple of days due to incessant rains in the Kashmir valley. The exact number of people on the boat was not clear. Deputy commissioner, Srinagar, Bilal Mohi-ud-Din Bhat, said six people have died and their bodies have been retrieved.

"Six people have unfortunately died, while we have rescued six others -- out of which three are under treatment but stable. The rest three are at home," Bhat told reporters.

"The unfortunate incident occurred between 7:45 am and 8 am. We are ascertaining how many people were travelling in the boat, but the information we have so far is that 15 people were on it, including seven minors," he said. The deputy commissioner said the rescue operations were on. Asked if the administration had warned the people in view of an increase in the water levels of various rivers and streams in the valley. Bhat said the authorities had issued an alert on Monday asking people living near the embankments of the river to remain cautious.

"We issued an alert yesterday. I was touring the city till around midnight. The danger level of Jhelum in Ram Munshibagh (in Srinagar) is 18 feet. When the level crosses 10 feet, we issue an initial alert asking people living near the banks to remain cautious. (However), it was flowing below the danger level and the rain had also stopped around 10 pm last night," he

In response to a question whether the boat was overloaded, the deputy commissioner said, "We are looking into it". Senior officials from police and civil administration, including Divisional Commissioner Kashmir, Inspector General of Police, Kashmir, Deputy Commissioner Srinagar and Senior Superintendent of Police Srinagar, were at the spot at Gandbal Batwara monitoring rescue operations. Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha and many other leaders expressed grief over the loss of lives in the

"I am deeply grieved by the loss of lives due to a boat accident in Srinagar. My thoughts are with the bereaved families & I pray to the Almighty to give them strength to withstand this immense loss. Team of SDRF, Army & other agencies are carrying out relief & rescue work," Sinha said in a post on X.

The LG said he is constantly monitoring the situation and guiding the team on the ground.

"The administration is providing all possible help to the bereaved families who have lost their near and dear ones and medical facilities to those who have been injured. Marcos teams have also been alerted. I am constantly monitoring the situation and guiding the team on the ground," Sinha said. The National Conference also expressed grief over the incident. "JKNC President Dr. Farooq Abdullah and VP @OmarAbdullah express deep shock and sadness over the tragic demise of three minors whose boat capsized in Gandbal, Batwara. JKNC senior leader @Ruhullah-Mehdi, along with CI @ahsanpardesi also join in expressing their profound grief," the party said in a statement on

Aditya Srivastava tops civil services exam; Animesh Pradhan, Donuru Ananya Reddy get 2nd, 3rd ranks

Marks will be available on the website within 15 days from the date of declaration of result: Commission

NEW DELHI, April 16: Aditya Srivastava has topped the prestigious civil services examination 2023, with Animesh Pradhan and Donuru Ananya Reddy getting the second and third ranks respectively, the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) announced on

Srivastava qualified the examination with electrical engineering as his optional subject.

He has done his graduation (Bachelor of Technology) in electrical engineering from Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Kanpur, according to the results of the civil services examination 2023 announced by the UPSC

Animesh Pradhan, a graduate (BTech) in computer science from National Institute of Technology (NIT) Rourkela, secured the second rank with sociology as his optional sub-

Donuru Ananya Reddy, who possesses Bachelor of Arts (Hons) geography, from Miranda House, Delhi University, stood third in the rank with anthropology as her optional

A total of 1,016 candidates (664 men and 352 women) have qualified the examination and have been recommended by the Commission for appointment to various services.

top five comprises three men and two women candidates, it said. PK Sidharth Ramkumar and Ruhani have

Among the finally qualified candidates, the

got fourth and fifth rank respectively in the civil services examination. Ramkumar, a Bachelor of Architecture

from College of Architecture in Trivandrum, secured fourth rank with anthropology as his optional subject.

Ruhani, a Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in economics from St Stephens College, Delhi Uni-



Aditya Srivastava Rank 1 versity, secured the fifth rank with economics

and 15 men. The civil services examination is conducted annually in three stages -- preliminary, main and interview -- by the UPSC to select

as her optional subject, according to the re-

sults of the civil services examination 2023.

The top 25 candidates comprise 10 women

officers of the Indian Administrative Service (IAS), Indian Foreign Service (IFS) and Indian Police Service (IPS) among others. Educational qualifications of top 25 successful candidates range from graduation in engineering, humanities, science, commerce,

business administration, architecture and law from premier institutions of the country such as IIT, IIM, NIT, University of Delhi and National Law University among others.

Animesh Pradhan Donuru Ananya Reddy Rank 2 Rank 3 Top 25 successful candidates have opted for subjects like anthropology, chemistry, geography, economics, electrical engineering, law, history, mathematics, physics, political science and international relations and soci-

> (main) examination, the UPSC said. The recommended candidates also include 30 persons with benchmark disability (16 orthopedically handicapped, six visually challenged, five hearing impaired and three with multiple disabilities).

ology as their optional choice in the written

The civil services (preliminary) examination, 2023 was conducted on May 28 last year. A total of 10,16,850 candidates applied for this examination, out of which 5,92,141 candidates actually appeared in the examina-

"A total of 2,855 candidates qualified for the personality test of the examination," the Commission said.

Of the total 1,016 recommended candi-

As many as 14,624 candidates qualified for

appearance in the written (main) examination,

which was held in September, 2023.

dates, 347 are from general category, 115 are from economically weaker sections, 303 from other backward classes, 165 from Scheduled Castes and 86 from Scheduled Tribes, it said. The government has reported 1,143 vacan-

cies -- 180 in IAS, 37 in IPS, 200 in IPS, 613 posts in different central Group A services and 113 in Group B services -- to be filled through the civil services examination 2023, the UPSC said.

As many as 240 candidates have been put in a reserved list, it said, adding that the candidature of 355 recommended candidates has been kept provisional.

UPSC has a "Facilitation counter" near the examination hall in its campus.

"Candidates can obtain information/clarification regarding their examinations/recruitments on the working days between 10:00 hours to 17:00 hours in person telephone over 23385271/23381125/23098543," it said.

Result will also be available on the UPSC

website, http://www.upsc.gov.in. Marks will be available on the website within 15 days from the date of declaration of result, the Commission said.

Delhi University graduate Ishita Kishore had topped the civil services examination 2022, with women candidates bagging the first four ranks. Garima Lohia, Uma Harathi N and Smriti Mishra had secured the second, third and fourth ranks respectively in the 2022 examination. (PTI)

200-km green corridor created to transport kidney of brain-dead man

INDORE, April 16: A green corridor of about 200 km was created between Bhopal and Indore in Madhya Pradesh to transport a kidney harvested from a brain-dead man, officials said on Tuesday. The police are roped in to create green corridors by

clearing traffic for ambulances

to transport organs. Talking to PTI, Dr Rakesh Bhargava, a member of the State-Level Authorisation Committee for organ donation, said Harishankar Dhimole (56), a teacher at a government primary school in Sagar district, had suffered a brain haemorrhage and was brought to Bansal Hospital in Bhopal on April 12.

"Dhimole was declared brain dead during treatment, and after his family agreed to donate his organs his kidnevs were harvested on Monday," he said.

One of the kidneys was transplanted to a needy patient at Bansal Hospital, and the other kidney was transported through a green corridor for a patient at Indore's Choithram Hospital, Dr Bhargava said.

Dr Amit Bhatt, deputy director (Health Services) of Choithram Hospital, said, "It took only two hours and 45 minutes to transport the kidney from Bhopal to Indore due to the green corridor, whereas it takes three-and-a-half to four hours to cover this distance." (PTI)

Centre asserts in SC its power to regulate industrial alcohol, cites steps taken to manufacture sanitisers during pandemic

NEW DELHI, April 16: Asserting its right to regulate industrial alcohol, the Union government told the Supreme Court on Tuesday that framers of the Constitution intended to give the Centre complete control over any industry through enactment of Industrial (Development and Regulation) Act, 1951 in 'public interest''.

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the Centre, told a bench headed by Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud that as per the Act, the development and regulation of a number of important industries, the activities of which affected the country as a whole, were required to be brought under central control.

Citing the example of Covid, the law officer said the government can utilise its regulatory power in national interest as it did during the outbreak by issuing orders to ensure availability of ethanol at a notified price for manufacturing sanitisers.

"Suppose the Union government required during Covid that entire quantity of industrial alcohol should be used for manufacturing sanitisers, then the government can utilise its regulatory power," Mehta told the constitution bench, also comprising Justices Hrishikesh Roy, Abhay S Oka, B V Nagarathna, J B Pardiwala, Manoj Misra, Ujjal Bhuyan, Satish Chandra Sharma and Augustine George Masih.

The nine-judge constitution bench is examining the issue of overlapping powers of the Centre and states with regard to production, manufacturing, supply and regulation of industrial alcohol.

Industrial alcohol is not meant for human consumption. While Entry 8 in the State List under the 7th Schedule gives states the power to legislate on the



manufacture, possession, transport, purchase and sale of "intoxicating liquors" Entry 52 of the Union List and Entry 33 of the Concurrent List mentions industries whose control is "declared by Parliament by law to be expedient in public interest"

While both Parliament and state legislatures can enact laws on subjects mentioned in the concurrent list, where a central law exists, it will have primacy over the state law.

A clutch of petitions came before the bench after a seven-judge constitution bench ruled against the states.

The matter was referred to the ninejudge bench in 2010 after the sevenjudge bench ruled in 1997 that the Centre would have regulatory power over the production of industrial alcohol.

The seven-judge bench had in 1990 observed that through the Industries (Development and Regulation) Act, 1951, the Union had "evinced a clear intention to occupy" legislative competence on the subject and hence Entry 33 could not empower a state government.

Mehta submitted that the Government of India has been implementing Ethanol Blended with Petrol (EBP) Programme throughout the country wherein Oil Marketing Companies (OMCs) sell petrol blended with ethanol.

He said under the EBP Programme. the government has fixed the target of 20 per cent blending of ethanol with petrol by 2025.

'Under this scheme viz. National Biofuel Policy, 2018, Government is facilitating entrepreneurs to set up new distilleries (molasses-based, grain-based and dual-feed based) or expansion of existing distilleries throughout the country.... This would at some stage need regulation to ensure sufficient quantity of ethanol," he said, making a case for the Centre to regulate industrial alcohol.

The top court had earlier sought to know from the Centre why the states, as the custodians of the health of citizens, cannot impose regulations on industrial alcohol and levy fees to ensure that its abuse does not take place.

Commencing his arguments before the nine-judge bench, Mehta had earlier said the interpretation given by the court would not impact just industrial alcohol (the only subject argued by the petitioners) but every industry included in Schedule I of Industries Regulation and Development Act, 1951.

The hearing remained inconclusive and will resume on April 16.

The Centre had earlier told the apex court that legislative power to levy excise duty on alcohol not fit for human consumption but meant for industrial use lies exclusively with Parliament.

Attorney General R Venkataramani had submitted that a "conscious decision" was taken to treat alcoholic liquors fit for human consumption and alcoholic liquors not fit for human consumption separately, with the former falling within the domain of provincial legislatures and the latter within the ambit of the federal

Prior to that, BJP-ruled Uttar Pradesh and TMC-governed West Bengal were on the same page in the top court where they asserted the legislative power vested in states to regulate industrial alcohol is untrammelled and complete and beyond the Centre's jurisdiction.

Senior advocate Dinesh Dwivedi, appearing for the Uttar Pradesh government, had told the court that liquor has always been within the legislative sphere of states and the Centre does not have any jurisdiction with regard to industrial alcohol.

Excise, liquor and spirit have always been part of the state's jurisdiction, including industrial alcohol, he had said.

MKCG Medical College Hospital doctors conduct rare surgery on 9-year-old girl

BERHAMPUR (ODISHA), April 16: A group of doctors in government-run MKCG Medical College and Hospital here performed laparoscopic bilateral adrenalectomy of a 9-year-old girl child, who was suffering from Cushing syndrome, a very rare disease, for the first time in the state. Cushing syndrome is caused due to a rare genetic disease called primary pigmented nodular adrenocortical disease (PPNAD), an extremely rare disorder with a prevalence of less than one in two lakh. The doctors took around three hours to perform the laparoscopic on April 9, said a doctor.

"This might be the first case in the state and our doctors successfully treated the girl. The condition of the girl is now good and will be in the hospital for some days for observation," said Suchitra Dash, superintendent of the medical college and hospital.

After visiting the patient on Monday, principal of the medical college Santosh Kumar Mishra and superintendent thanked the team of doctors for conducting successful laparoscopy of the patient, which was a very difficult task. It is characterised by small to normalsized adrenal glands containing multiple small cortical pigmented nodules. In this disease, both adrenal glands in the above kidney secrete excess hormone cortisol and if not treated early leads to cardiac disease and stroke and early death. The treatment is by removal of both side adrenal glands and lifelong supplementation with low-dose steroids, said P Ravi Kumar, professor, endocrinology department.

This was a very challenging operation performed by a team of doctors consisting of paediatric surgeons, urologists, anaesthesia, and paediatrics departments.

Besides, parent department endocrinology provided support for steroids throughout the surgery, said Manas Ranjan Dash, associate professor, of paediatrics surgery, who led the team. Ravi Kumar said the patient from Khandadeuli village in Ganjam district was admitted to the endocrinology department on April 4. She was suffering from excessive weight, acne and high blood pressure. After thoroughly investigating, she was diagnosed to be a case of Cushing syndrome, he said. (PTI)

India aims to achieve debris-free space missions by 2030: ISRO chief Somanath



BENGALURU, April 16: ISRO Chairman S Somanath on Tuesday announced that India aims to achieve debris-free space missions by

Addressing the 42nd Inter-Agency Space Debris Coordination Committee (IADC) annual meet here, he said ISRO has a very clearly laid out plan as far as space exploration and space utilisation are concerned for the coming

"It is one of the intent or initiative of India to ensure that debris-free space missions are conducted so as to ensure the sustainability of space. I would like to make this initiative a declaration today, possibly this can be discussed

and debated in the coming days," Somanath, also Secretary in the Department of Space, said.

"This initiative aims to achieve debris-free space missions by all Indian space actors, governmental and non-governmental, by 2030. India also encourages all state space actors to follow this initiative for long-term sustainability of outer space," he said. "Currently, we have 54 spacecraft in orbit, plus there are non-functional objects.

"We have been taking very careful action wherever it is possible to dispose of or remove the space objects from its active role once it is over to deorbit and bringing them to a safe location has been one of the important topics that we have been taking action all throughout," he

Somanath also said ISRO wants to make sure that for all the spacecraft that it is likely to launch in future, it takes action to make sure that it deorbits and also bring it to a safe loca-

"We also make sure that within the systems that we launch, including the upper stages of the rocket or the spacecraft, we create a mechanism by which we will be removing all energetic possibilities within that by careful design as well as implementation of principles so that it will not really cause any additional debris creation," he added.

He also stressed the need to develop skills "especially when you are looking at future explorations, possibly not within the earth orbit, but also far beyond the earth orbit, especially the earth, moon systems, as well as in solar planetary explorations. I think all those areas are also becoming crowded, especially domains like -- the moon is also becoming crowded."

Speaking about India planning to set up its own space station 'Bharatiya Antriksh Station' by 2035, Somanath said ISRO would look at the orbit where there are more space stations coming up in those ranges of orbits. "I think this area has to be protected for sustained human presence in space.

"We would like to look at the agreements on all the space stations and all space actors, including private space actors, to comply with the guidelines of how to make sure that the space is sustainable and make sure we don't propagate activities so as to create more debris so that human beings continue exploration of space in the coming days actively," he said. (PTI)

home: 2 arrested from Gujarat MUMBAI/BHUJ, April 16: Two persons including a man who allegedly opened fire outside Bollywood actor Salman Khan's residence in Mumbai have been arrested from Gujarat, police said on Tuesday.

The two persons - Vicky Gupta (24) and Sagar Pal (21) - who were on the run after firing outside Khan's house on Sunday, were nabbed late Monday night from a temple premises at Mata No Madh village in Gujarat's Kutch district, Deputy Inspector General of Kutch-West, Mahendra Bagadiya,

Both the accused are natives of West Champaran in Bihar, he said, adding the two have admitted to the crime.

After getting a message from the Mumbai police that the duo might be present in Kutch district, local police activated their sources to trace them, said a release by Kutch-West police.

"Based on the technical surveillance and information received from informers, joint teams of the Kutch-West and Mumbai police nabbed the duo from a temple premises at Mata No Madh late Monday night," Bagadiya said.

A preliminary probe suggested that both Sagar and Vicky were hired by the gang of incarcerated gangster Lawrence Bishnoi to



Firing outside Salman Khan's

open fire at Khan's house, he said. While Sagar fired at Khan's house, Vicky was in touch with the gang members, Bagadiya said.

After being nabbed, the accused were first brought to Dayapar police station in Kutch and then handed over to the Mumbai police as the complaint is registered there, he said.

They were booked under Indian Penal Code section 307 (attempt to murder) and relevant provisions of the Arms Act, the police said. At around 5 am on Sunday, two

motorcycle-borne persons fired four rounds outside 58-year-old Khan's house at the Galaxy Apartment in Bandra area of Mumbai and fled the spot.

They had rented a house for a month in Navi Mumbai's Panvel, where the actor has a farmhouse,

an official said on Monday. The police on Monday questioned three persons from Navi Mumbai, including the house owner, the previous owner of the two-wheeler used in the crime, the agent who facilitated the sale, and several others as part of the probe into the firing incident, the official The motorbike was abandoned

from the actor's house, the police A Facebook post claiming responsibility for the firing surfaced

near Mount Mary Church in

Mumbai, a little over a kilometre

at around 11 am on Sunday. The IP (Internet Protocol) address of the FB post was traced to Portugal and the police were verifying it, a senior official said on Monday.

Prima facie, the shooters had conducted a recce around the Galaxy Apartment in Bandra a few days ago, he said.

Police suspect a VPN (virtual private network) was used for uploading the Facebook post, allegedly by Anmol Bishnoi, the brother of jailed gangster Lawrence Bishnoi on Sunday, he

A VPN establishes a digital connection between a computer and a remote server owned by a VPN provider, creating a point-to-point tunnel that encrypts personal data, masks IP addresses, and allows the user to sidestep website blocks and firewalls on the Internet. (PTI)

Veteran Kannada actor, producer & director **'Prachanda** Kulla' Dwarakish passes away

BENGALURU, April 16: Veteran Kannada actor, producer and director Bungle Shama Rao Dwarakanath, popularly known as Dwarakish who is best known for his roles as a comedian in a film career spanning more than five decades, died following a cardiac arrest at his residence here on Tuesday, family sources

A doyen of Kannada film industry, the 81-year-old had acted in over 90 movies and produced and directed around 50 movies.

"Morning he had told his son that he was feeling tired and asked him to wake him up at 9 am. When he went to wake him up he did not respond," a family source said.

Tributes poured in for the versatile actor who was so "synonymous" with comedy that the audience would start giggling the moment he appeared on the big screen.

"Sharing the screen with great actors like Dr Rajkumar and Dr Vishnuvardhan, he made his own mark in the minds of the audience through his humorous acting. Kannada cinema has become poorer with the death of Dwarakish," Chief Minister Siddaramaiah said.

Tamil superstar Rajinikanth said In a post on 'X': "The demise of my long time dear friend Dwarakish is very painful to me..starting his career as a comedian, he raised himself up to being a big producer and director.. fond memories come to my mind.."

Born on August 19, 1942 at Hunsur in Mysuru district, the legendary actor was a household name in the State during the prime of his career.

He is also credited with introducing noted Hindi playback singer Kishore Kumar to Kannada film industry with the song 'Aadu Aata Aadu' (Play the game) for the movie 'Kulla

Agent 000' in which Dwarakish played the lead role.

A diploma holder in mechanical engineering, Dwarakish made his debut in the tinsel town in 1966 by co-producing a "Mamatheva Bandhana" under the banner of Thunga Pictures.

He tasted big success as a producer with his movie 'Mayor Muthanna" starring Kannada matinee idol Dr Rajkumar and Bharathi in the lead roles in 1969.

Being short would have been a drawback for many but Dwarakish turned it to his advantage; the little master of Kannada film industry was fondly called 'Prachanda Kulla' (fiery dwarf).

'Prachanda Kulla', 'Kulla Agent 000', 'Cowboy Kulla', 'Singaporenalli Raja Kulla', 'Kulla Kalli', and 'Hosa Kalla Hale Kulla' were some of the movies he made.

However sombre the plot of

the movie could be, Dwarakish's presence would ensure that there would be an adequate dose of humour, a film critic

Dwarakish's directorial-debut movie 'Nee Bareda Kadambari' in 1985 was well received by the audience. His movie 'Apthamitra', a remake of Malayalam movie 'Manichithrathazhu', was a grand

success. Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar said Dwarakish brought life to roles as a comedian, hero and supporting actor.

Former Chief Minister H D Kumaraswamy said: "Not only as an artist, his unparalleled service to the Kannada film industry as a producer and director is unforgettable. He was an asset to Kannada cinema due to his versatile talent, who acted with great actors like Dr Rajkumar, Dr Vishnuvardhan and Ambareesh." (PTI)

Juicy when there is conflict between two characters: Anne Hathaway on recipe for ideal rom-com



NEW DELHI, April 16: How do you know you have a perfect romantic comedy at hand? For Hollywood star Anne Hathaway, it's when there is a "pleasurable conflict" between two characters, much like one of her favourites "It Happened One Night".

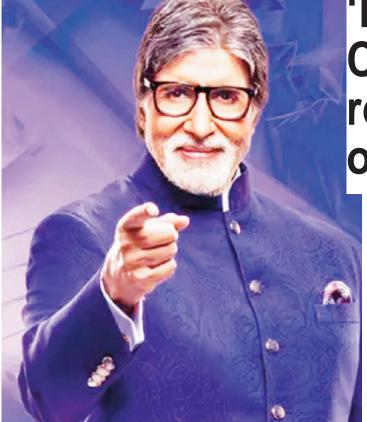
In her upcoming film "The Idea of You", the Oscar winner plays Solene Marchand, a 40-year-

old single mother who begins an unexpected romance with 24-year-old Hayes Campbell, played by Nicholas Galitzine, the lead singer of August Moon, the hottest boy band on the planet. "It Happened One Night", a 1934 love story featuring Clark Gable and Claudette Colbert, starts with some friction between lead characters. It follows Ellie, a pampered socialite seeking

liberation from her father, who falls in love with a roguish reporter, Peter. This conflict, Hathaway said, was also present in "The Idea of You", set to premiere on Prime Video globally on May 2. "One of my favourite rom-coms is one with Clark Gable and Claudette Colbert called 'It Happened One Night' and so any time you can get believable tension and conflict between the two characters, that's very juicy. Conflict is really important but it has to be a pleasurable conflict," the actor told PTI in an international roundtable interview

Popular in India for her performances in "The Princess Diaries" films, "The Devil Wears Prada", "Interstellar", "Love & Other Drugs" and "One Day", Hathaway said unlike other movies in the rom-com genre, the conflict in "The Idea of You" is not between her and Galitzine's characters but the couple and the world. In the movie, the age difference between Solene, an art gallery owner, and Hayes leads to a paparazzi storm, forcing the couple to evaluate their priorities. According to the 41-year-old star, the fact that the characters get along well was interesting. "What seemed very fresh to me was: this is a relationship that is clearly working for these two

people. It's just outside of the parameters of what society thinks a relationship should look like. The conflict isn't actually between the couple, it's between the couple and the world. "It's really interesting that we can't be just happy for people when they are happy, we try to complicate it. I love that these two people decide to keep going deeper into their love and not care about what the world has to say about it until they must," she added. (PTI)



'Kaun Banega Crorepati 16' registration to open on April 26

> MUMBAI. April 16: Registrations for the 16th edition of the "Kaun Banega Crorepati" will start from April

26, the show's team announced on Tuesday. Sony Television, which airs the long-running quiz show, hosted by megastar Amitabh Bachchan, shared the news in a post on its official X page.

"So much love has been showered that it is returning once again, #KaunBanegaCrorepati . Starting #KBCRegistrations 26 April at 9pm. #KBConSonyTV #KBC16 #KBCIsBack," the channel posted.

Bachchan, 81, has hosted "KBC" since it started in 2000, except for the third season in 2007, which was hosted by superstar Shah Rukh Khan.

The veteran actor will next be seen in filmmaker Nag Ashwin's "Kalki 2898 AD", also featuring his "Piku" co-star Deepika Padukone and Prabhas, and Rajinikanth's "Vettaiyan". (PTI)

AKSHAY KUMAR TO MAKE TELUGU CINEMA DEBUT WITH 'KANNAPPA'

NEW DELHI, April 16: Bollywood superstar Akshay Kumar has boarded the cast of the Vishnu Manchu-starrer "Kannappa", the makers announced on Tuesday.

While details about Kumar's role are unknown, the film marks the actor's Telugu cinema debut.

Manchu, who plays the titular role in "Kannappa", shared the news of Kumar's casting on his official X page. "The #Kannappa journey just got more thrilling as we welcome the Superstar Mr. Akshay Kumar to the Telugu Film Industry. Thrilled to announce his debut in Telugu cinema with Kannappa. Get ready for an unforgettable adventure!" the actor captioned his post. Kumar, who currently stars in action film "Bade

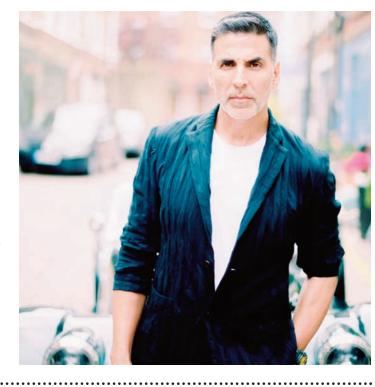
Miyan Chote Miyan", thanked Manchu for making him

"Thank you @iVishnuManchu for such a warm welcome and making me a part of your #Kannappa journey. Jai Mahakaal," the 56-year-old actor posted on X.

Based on a true story, the upcoming movie will follow the journey of Kannappa, an ardent devotee of Lord Shiva. "Kannappa" is directed by Mukesh Kumar Singh and produced by Manchu's banners AVA Entertainment and 24 Frames Factory.

The film also stars Preity Mukhundhan, Mohanlal, Prabhas, Mohan Babu, R Sarathkumar, Brahmanandam, Madhoo, and Mukesh Rishi.

It will be released in Telugu, Tamil, Malayalam, Kannada, Hindi and English. (PTI)



Tasted success after digital release of '12th Fail': Medha Shankr

MUMBAI, April 16: Actor Medha Shankr, who made her cinema debut with the acclaimed "12th Fail", says she was inundated with congratulatory messages after the film was released on OTT.

Shankr, the Hindi film is based on Anurag Pathak's best-selling novel about the incredible journey of IPS officer Manoj Kumar Sharma and IRS officer Shraddha Joshi.

Directed by Vidhu Vinod Chopra, "12th Fail" was a surprise hit at the box office, earning around Rs 70 crore worldwide upon its release last October. Two months later, the digital release on Disney+ Hotstar only amplified its reach. Shankr, who played Shraddha Joshi in the movie, said she re-

quarters once "12th Fail" started streaming.

"I tasted success after the OTT release because of the kind of love I got from the industry and otherwise on the internet. My Instagram literally blew up. This is just my first film and people have been in-

credibly kind to me. "Audiences were lovely to me but also the fraternity-directors, producers, actors, they all messaged me, called me, warmed up to me to appreciate my work and how much they loved the film. I hope and pray that I get to work with the kind of filmmakers I've always dreamt of working with," the actor

The film, based on the 2019 eponymous non-fiction book by Anurag Pathak, recently completed Shankr said she is full of grati-

"Twenty-five weeks in the cinemas. It's big. We're just cherishing that moment for now. It's definitely opened up more avenues, more opportunities. But right now, I'm just enjoying the moment.

"People have so much respect and regard for every single actor in the film and the filmmaker. They (audience) look at us as if we have given them some motivation and inspiration. That regard in somebody's eyes is very special," she added. The Noida-born actor, who was earlier seen in projects such as "Beecham House", "Shaadisthan" and "Dil Bekaraar" in supporting roles, said it took her around six

years to get a breakthrough. "I've been in Bombay for the past five-six years now, and it took me that long to get a film like this. Before that I've done some projects but it didn't give me the kind of recognition I wanted. It was a long journey till this film hap-

pened.' One just has to believe in themselves and keep going, said

Shankr. "Every single day we have to restart in our lives because selfdoubt is going to creep in from time to time. All the negative talk is going to creep in. But you have to believe in yourself and keep

"You have to be your biggest critic and your biggest cheerleader and just give yourself the self-belief because nobody else is going to give it to you. So, you have to give it to yourself and keep going," she added. (PTI)



Starring Vikrant Massey and

told PTI in an interview here. ceived a lot of love from all 25 weeks in theatres.

Page 11 April 17_Normal Pages 4/16/2024 8:26 PM Page 1

US Olympic committee strikes sponsorship deal to help athletes get degrees after they retire

American Olympic athletes have a new place to turn to lock down college degrees and other skills for life after sports thanks to a partnership U.S. Olympic leaders announced Tuesday with the Denverbased education company Guild. The deal between Guild, organizers of the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics and the U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Committee is designed to help the Olympic organizations fulfill commitments to help athletes begin the next chapters of

form contains more than 250 offerings, including opportunities for undergraduate and graduate programs, certification programs and career

"You'd be hard-pressed to think that someone's going to go in there and not find something that works for them," said Carrie White, the USOPC's vice president of athlete development and engagement.

White said in a recent survey of 5,000 Olympic and Par-

younger said they needed help with career and professional development. She said within days of the program's launch earlier this month, some 95 athletes had created profiles on the platform.

Guild CEO Bijal Shah said that because Olympic and Paralympic athletes spend most of their time early in life focusing on sports, they sometimes enter the workforce in need of skills for new careers that others in the job market have already acquired.

"We thought that their capa-

provides could be an amazing opportunity for those athletes," Shah said.

Shah said Guild was formed in 2015 to offer solutions to the reality that "there was a problem in this country around the student-debt crisis," along with the overall cost of postgraduate studies, that often stymied people's quest for degrees and other adult educa-

Guild works with employers — Walmart, Chipotle and Target are among its big-name clients — that offer programs

company's platform that helps them further their educations, tuition-free.

Shah said people who embark on Guild are 2.6 times more likely to move up in their company and two times as likely to see incremental wage increases compared to those who don't.

Jess Bartley, who heads the USOPC's psychological services department, said post-retirement planning is one of the most consistently difficult conversations to start up with

the USOPC and LA28 are trying to accomplish in an era in which they are increasingly being pressed to consider athletes' overall well-being, and not just how they perform inside the lines.

Janet Evans, the four-time gold-medalist swimmer who officer, said "Guild's vision ... ment to supporting the whole athlete, from their performance to their total well-being."

White said the USOPC

of how this deal fits into what lion in tuition grants in 2023 to qualified athletes, most worth around \$4,500 that were paid directly to the schools they at-

Those grants will continue, while the partnership with Guild offers a different option and, White said, more benefit because many programs are serves as LA28's chief athlete fully funded. For programs that are partially funded aligns with LA28's commit-through Guild, the USOPC will cover up to \$10,000 a year. Athletes who qualify will be eligible to use Guild for up to 10 years after they retire.

Australian aggression can be countered with better innovative passing: Rupinder Pal Singh

recent 0-5 drubbing notwithstanding, former drag-flick specialist Rupinder Pal Singh feels the Olympic-bound Indian men's hockey team can counter Australia's aggressive style of play with better defensive coordination and some innovative passing. India were blanked in the five-Test series in Perth some days ago, a disappointing outing for the team, which did reasonably well in the FIH Pro League before that and is expected to better or match its bronze from Tokyo Olympics at the Paris Games in July-August.

Singh, who was part of the 2014 Asian Games gold-winning side, is not too concerned by the final result as he felt the team kept improving with every game. "We lost the first match 5-1, after that the team improved and the score-lines were close, we missed some chances, some work needs to be done prior to the Olympics. The series was a preparation for Paris Olympics, as new variations and players were tried out," he told

Asked how should the team counter Australia's attacking style of play, he said innovative passing could do the trick.

"Australia's hard press can be countered, high level of coordination is required for that, defender-to-defender ball transfer, quick passes from defenders to the mid-field, overhead passes



would be useful in countering such a style of play," the 33-

year-old suggested. He sees no fault in India's reliance on penalty corners for "...all international scoring. teams, all are dependent on penalty corners -- the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, Australia. Defences have become stronger, here PC conversion is such an important tool that in every match about 1-2 goals have to be scored from them," he pointed out.

He described current India captain Harmanpreet Singh as one of the best drag-flickers in he world. He was, however, concerned about the penalty corner conversion rate of the women's team, which is seeking to rebuild itself after its stunning failure to qualify for the "That's Olympics. worry(Penalty corner conver-

sion), its penalty corner is an important tool in today's hockey we need to work on that," he said. Singh was speaking on the sidelines of a three-day training Bali, along with India goalkeepers Adrian D'Souza, Bharat Chetri, Helen Mary, Dipika Murty, Akash Chikte, and PT Rao. Apart from Singh, the other eminent former India drag-flickers who attended the training were Gurjinder Singh, VR Raghunath, and Jaspreet Kaur. The former stars have drawn up a curriculum on the basics of drag-flicking and goalkeeping which would be implemented across all academies and centres in the country.

Despite the Olympic heartbreak, women's hockey will do well, according to bali, who picked Manipur's Bichu Devi Kharibam as the successor for long-serving goalkeeper Savita Punia. "In Bengaluru, we trained with top six goalkeepers of India, and I found Bichhu to be the best in India after Savita. She could be India's number one after Savita," Bali said.

Bali said Indian women's hockey has grown by leaps and bounds in recent years.

"Compared to when I started playing, there are a lot more facilities, now there are scientific advisors, nutrition experts to help the development of the players. "Earlier Indian Railways was the prominent employment provider for hockey players, now several departments are offering jobs, so program organised by Hockey things are going well," she said.

Kane says he plays with 'point to prove' against Arsenal after being released when he was 9



MUNICH, April 16: Harry Kane was released by Arsenal when he was 9 years old. He has been on a revenge mission ever

The England captain has scored 15 goals in 20 appearances in all competitions against player and now while at Bayern Munich — and will look to add to that record in the second leg of the Champions League quarterfi-

Bayern held Arsenal to a 2-2 draw in the first leg in London last week, with Kane scoring.

He opened up Tuesday about his feelings when playing against Arsenal after being rejected as a kid. "Up until this year, I've played them at least twice a year for the last 10 years," Kane said at a news conference ahead of Wednesday's game at the Allianz Arena. "It was always a big occasion, a big moment. Of course, always maybe it was in the back of my mind, being released from a young age, that there was always a point to prove and I feel like I'm the type of player who throughout my whole career has had points to prove along the way. "I don't feel that ever leaves you. It will always be in my DNA until I'm retired. There will someone wrong or prove to myself I can do something.

Liam Brady, who was Arsenal's academy manager when Kane was at the club, has since said Kane "was a bit chubby, he wasn't very athletic but we made a mistake.

Writing in a piece for The Players' Tribune in 2018, Kane said being released by Arsenal "was probably the best thing that ever happened to me, because it gave me a drive that wasn't there

On Tuesday, Kane said there was more at play now that he had joined Bayern.

"I don't think specifically I look back to that and think that because I was released at 9 years old, I really need to make a difference tomorrow." he said. "Now I'm at Bayern Munich, it's just they are a top team in the Champions League.

"Of course I have history with (Arsenal) but all I can do is help Bayern Munich qualify for the semifinals of the Champions League.'

Arsenal captain Martin Odegaard trained Tuesday after coming off in the second half of the team's 2-0 loss to Aston Villa in the Premier League on Sunday with what manager Mikel Arteta

stay in joint lead

TORONTO, April 16: Indian black. With three minor pieces Grandmaster D Gukesh held on to the joint top spot with Russian Ian Nepomniachtchi after they played out an easy draw in the 10th round of the Candidates chess tournament here.

The all-Indian duel between R Praggnanandhaa and Vidit Gujrathi also ended in a draw while Fabiano Caruana and Hikaru Nakamura defeated Firouza Alireza and Nijat Abasov respectively to come back within striking distance of the two leaders.

With just four rounds to come in the biggest event of the year, Gukesh and Nepomniachtchi have an identical six points each with Praggnanandhaa, Caruana and Nakamura close on their heels half a point behind.

Gujrathi, on six points, is sole sixth while for all practical purposes, Alireza and Abasov are out of the race with 3.5 and two points respectively.

Nepomniachtchi has not been taking many risks in the event with either colour and his solid play makes him the only player who is unbeaten after 10 rounds.

The Ruy Lopez as white gave the Russian just an optical advantage after the opening and the 17year-old Gukesh ensured parity with some timely exchanges leading to a rook and pawns endgame. The contest was almost uneventful other than the opening part and in the endgame, the players exchanged another pair of rooks and a few pawns to reach a theoretically drawn position. Praggnanandhaa has also been very solid with just a lone loss early in the second round against Gukesh. The 18-year old faced the Berlin defense by Gujrathi who equalised easily as and the queen off the board early, the rook and opposite colour Bishop endgame did not quite offer chances to either player. The game was drawn after 39 moves. Caruana faced the Sicilian Najdorf by Alireza and secured the advantage out of a side variation. The players overlooked a simple tactic but Caruana still remained ahead in endgame after winning a pawn on the 29th move. Alireza fought on but the result of the game was never in doubt.

Nakamura transposed to a French exchange out of a Petroff defense and piled up pressure on the queen side.

At one point in a complex middle game, Abasov missed the thread of the position and ended up losing a rook for a Bishop. The rest was just a matter of time and the American wrapped the issue in 58 moves.

In the women's section, Tinjie Lei of China ended the unbeaten run of Aleksandra Goryachkina of Russia and regained joint lead with compatriot Zhongyi Tan who played out a draw with Koneru Humpy.

R Vaishali bounced back after a string of losses in a rollercoaster game with Nurgyul Salimov of Bulgaria while Russian Kateryna Lagno drew with Anna

Muzychuk of Ukraine. With 6.5 points apiece, the Chinese duo of Lei and Tan are sitting pretty with a full point lead over Goryachkina and Lagno. Humpy is a distant fifth on 4.5 points, a half point ahead of Salimova and Muzychuk and Vaishali, despite the victory still holds the last spot on 3.5 points. (PTI)

Candidates Chess: Despite weather glitch, the Gukesh draws with Nepomniachtchi to stav in ioint lead Despite weather glitch, the Paris Oly flame is lit at the Greek cradle of ancient games

(GREECE), April 16: Even without the help of Apollo, the flame that is to burn at the Paris Olympics was kindled Tuesday at the site of the ancient games in southern Greece.

Cloudy skies prevented the traditional lighting, when an actress dressed as an ancient Greek priestess uses the sun to ignite a silver torch — after offering up a symbolic prayer to Apollo, the ancient Greek sun god.

Instead, a backup flame was used that had been lit on the same spot Monday, during the final re-

Normally, the foremost of a group of priestesses in long, pleated dresses dips the fuelfilled torch into a parabolic mirror which focuses the sun's rays on it, and fire spurts forth.

But this time she didn't even try, going straight for the backup, kept in a copy of an ancient Greek pot. Ironically, a few minutes later the sun shone forth.

From the ancient stadium in Olympia, a relay of torchbearers will carry the flame more than 5,000 kilometers (3,100 miles) through Greece until the handover to Paris Games organizers in Athens on April 26.

International Olympic Committee President Thomas Bach said the flame lighting combined "a pilgrimage to our past in ancient Olympia, and an act of faith

"In these difficult times ... with wars and conflicts on the rise, people are fed up with all the hate, the aggression and negative news," he said. "We are longing for something which brings us together; something that is unifying; something that gives us



Thousands of spectators from all over the world packed Olympia for Tuesday's event amid the ruined temples and sports grounds where the ancient games were held from 776 B.C.-393 A.D.

The sprawling site, in a lush valley by the confluence of two rivers, is at its prettiest in the spring, teeming with pink-flowering Judas trees, small blue irises and the occasional red anemone

The first torchbearer was Greek rower Stefanos Douskos, a gold medalist in 2021 in Tokyo. He ran to a nearby monument that contains the heart of French Baron Pierre de Coubertin, the driving force behind the modern revival of the games.

The next runner was Laure Manaudou, a French swimmer who won three medals at Athens in 2004. She handed over to senior European Union official Margaritis Schinas, a Greek.

The flame will travel from Athens' port of Piraeus on the Belem, a French three-masted sailing ship built in 1896 — the year of the first modern games in

According to Captain Aymeric Gibet, it's due on May 8 in the southern French port of Marseille, a city founded by Greek colonists some 2,600 years ago.

The Belem arrived in Katakolo, near Olympia, on Monday. Lookers-on included a small, enthusiastic group of tourists from the northwestern French region of Brittany, where the ship's homeport of Nantes is, waving French and Breton flags.

"We thought it would be a unique opportunity to see the flame lighting at the historic site of Olympia," said Jean-Michel Pasquet from Lorient, near Nantes. "And when we also learnt the Belem would carry the flame ... we said we must do this." But Pasquet said he'd have to watch the Paris Games from home. "For us, it would be really very expensive, unaffordable," to go to the venues, he said. "So we'll watch them on television ... from our armchairs." (AP)

'Four titles in seven months, success of Kolkata's 'Big Three' will have huge impact'

cess of Kolkata's 'Big Three' --Mohun Bagan, East Bengal and Mohammedan Sporting -- will not just have a massive impact on state football but will also have a positive effect on the sport in the country, said All India Football Federation president Kalyan

Chaubey on Tuesday. Seven months, four titles, and the 'Mecca of Indian football' was celebrating after Mohun Bagan's maiden League Winners Shield triumph following their 2-1 win over Mumbai City FC at the packed Salt Lake Stadium here on Monday. "Bringing home the ISL Shield, I-League Trophy, Super Cup and Durand Cup to West Bengal is a sign of new-age football in the state, and adaptability of these clubs to the newer norms

of football," Chaubey told PTI. 'The three giants of Kolkata enjoy enormous fan support in West Bengal, India and globally. I'm sure the success of MB and EB, along with Mohammedan Sporting joining the two in ISL next season, will have a massive impact on Indian football."

It all began with Mohun Bagan starting the season with their first Durand Cup title in 23 years, defeating arch-rivals East Bengal 1-0 on September 3 last year.

win the Super Cup, beating Odisha FC 3-2 in Bhubaneswar on January 29. It marked the end of their 12-year trophy drought.

Having faced multiple relegation, Mohammedan Sporting came back from oblivion to defeat Shillong Lajong FC 2-1 earlier this month to win the I-League with a round to spare and confirm their promotion to ISL.

Mohun Bagan then went on to lift the ISL Shield in front of a record 61,000-plus home crowd at the Salt Lake Stadium.

The Green and Maroon brigade will now aim to finish season by lifting the ISL Trophy, which would be a 'High Five' for the Maidan 'Big Three'.

Mohun Bagan is the oldest club in India, having been established in 1889, while Mohammedan Sporting came into existence two years later in 1891. East Bengal (established in 1920) also recently celebrated their centenary year.

"They are the 'Big Three' of Kolkata football. With historic milestones and to have ruled Indian football for decades, the three have centuries-old football culture and I'm just glad that they have all come around once again to help the city earn the bragging rights, he said. (PTI)

Page 12 April 17_Normal Pages 16-04-2024 20:12 Page 1

12 THE HILLS TIMES Gujarat Titans, Delhi Capitals search for consistency

jrat Titans will be striving for much needed consistency when they meet Delhi Capitals in an Indian Premier League match here on Wednesday.

Unlike the past two editions, the Titans have not been able to play like a well-oiled machine though they still have time to fix the flaws.

À last ball win over table leaders Rajasthan Royals on April 10 was just the kind of result the Titans needed to infuse fresh live to their campaign. They have only managed only two wins from their first six games but with another eight matches remaining, the Shubman Gill-led team has enough time to turn things around.

The absence of Mohammad Shami has hurt them but they must best use the available resources. Umesh Yadav has taken seven wickets but has leaked more than 10 runs per over. His new ball part-



soned Mohit Sharma too can improve on their economy rate.

been at his frugal best but would kitty. His cameo in the last game

Star spinner Rashid Khan has like to have more wickets in his

helped Titans seal a thrilling win cess of his maiden IPL game. and the team would also be expecting more out of him with the bat.

Delhi Capitals, on the other hand, have struggled to assemble their playing eleven due to form and fitness issues.

After four losses in five games, they got a much needed boost with the win against Lucknow Super Giants but they still have a lot to sort out if they are to push themselves for a place in the play-offs.

The presence of a fit again Kuldeep Yadav made a huge difference as he broke the backbone of the opposition with three timely strikes in Lucknow. Kuldeep, who has added more speed to his craft, seems to be at the peak of his powers and it could be difficult for Titans batters to face him, especially against his googlies.

In Jack Fraser-McGurk, Capitals seem to have found an able number three and will be hoping that the Australian builds on the suc-

Anrich Nortje, who has been

taken to the cleaners by the batters so far in the IPL, did not play the last game.

Mukesh Kumar has conceded 10 runs per over in the five games and was also expensive in his comeback game against LSG.

The biggest positive for the team has been the batting form of skipper Rishabh Pant, who seems to be getting better with every outing. It would be fair to say that the southpaw is in prime position to make India's squad for the T20 World Cup despite stiff opposition from the likes of Sanju Samson and Ishan Kishan.

Thin on Indian bating talent, the Capitals rely heavily on the likes of David Warner, who would itching to make an impact after not contributing much in the last three

The Teams: Gujarat Titans: Shubman Gill (c), David Miller, Wriddhiman Saha, Sai Sudharsan, Shahrukh Khan, Matthew Wade, Kane Williamson, Azmatullah Omarzai, Abhinav Manohar, Rashid Khan, Vijay Shankar, Rahul Tewatia, Spencer Johnson, Kartik Tyagi, Joshua Little, Darshan Nalkande, Noor Ahmad, Ravisrinivasan Sai Kishore, Mohit Sharma, Jayant Yadav, Umesh Yadav, Sushant Mishra, Sandeep Warrier, Sharath BR. Manay Suthar.

Delhi Capitals: Rishabh Pant (c), David Warner, Abishek Porel, Ricky Bhui, Yash Dhull, Shai Hope, Prithvi Shaw, Tristan Stubbs, Kumar Kushagra, Swastik Chikara, Ishant Sharma, Jhye Richardson, Rasikh Dar Salam, Vicky Ostwal, Anrich Nortje, Mukesh Kumar, Kuldeep Yadav, Praveen Dubey, Khaleel Ahmed, Sumit Kumar, Axar Patel, Mitchell Marsh, Lalit Yadav, Jake Fraser-McGurk.

Match starts 7.30pm IST. (PTI)

RCB's Maxwell takes "mental and physical" break from IPL 2024

BENGALURU, April 16: Royal Challengers Bengaluru all-rounder Glenn Maxwell has decided to take an indefinite "mental and physical" break from the Indian Premier League, blaming his wretched batting form for the decision.

Maxwell's absence from RCB's match against Sunrisers Hyderabad here on Monday was initially attributed to a finger injury he suffered during the previous match against Mumbai Indians.

But he later admitted to dropping himself from the squad.

"It was a pretty easy decision. I went to Faf and the coaches after the last game (vs Mumbai Indians) and said it was probably time we tried someone else (in his place)," Maxwell said in the post-match press meet

"It's actually a good time to give myself a bit of a mental and physical break, get my body right. If I'm required to get in during the tournament, I can, hopefully, get back into a solid mental and physical space where I can make an impact," he added.

This is the second time in his career that Maxwell has opted out of competitive cricket in order to gather himself.

He had taken a similar break in October 2019, stating that he felt mentally and physically ruined at that time. The 35-year-old made his comeback a couple of months later. In the ongoing IPL, Maxwell has been quite underwhelming with the bat in the six matches he has played this season, contributing just 32 runs at an average of R and a strike-rate of 94

Twenty eight of those 32 runs came against Kolkata Knight Rid-



ers alone, helped to a great degree by two dropped catches.

"I have been in this situation in the past where you can keep playing and get yourself deeper into a hole. We have had a pretty big deficiency after the power play, which has been my area of strength over the last couple of seasons.

"I felt like I wasn't contributing with the bat, and with the results and the position we find ourselves on the table, I think it's a good time to give someone else an opportunity to show their wares, and hopefully, someone can make that spot their own," a candid Maxwell said.

The big-hitting Australian, however, still hoped to return and make an impact in the later stages of the tournament.

"The management here has been

too much. "When you are going well, that goes wide of the (wicketkeeper's)

gloves, you get a boundary. You are 4 off 1, and you are away for the tournament," he noted.

game. Even if you look at the first

game, I ran one off the middle of

the bat to the keeper. I picked up

the length, saw a scoring opportu-

nity, but opened the face a little bit

Maxwell said luck was not on his side in this tournament.

"I probably just haven't got away. In the first few games, I feel I made reasonably good decisions (for shot selection). But I was finding ways to get out.

"It can happen in T20 cricket and when it snowballs like that, you can go searching and try too hard and forget the basics of the

Maxwell experienced a similar barren run in IPL 2020 while playing for Punjab Kings. During that season, the Australian scored a mere 108 runs from 11 matches and failed to hit a single six.

However, Maxwell did not draw parallels between the two seasons. "I was bowling really well back then. I was actually playing more as a spinner. We had KL (Rahul) and Mayank (Agarwal) who were

"So, there weren't a lot of balls left in the game (for him). I wasn't able to get any match rhythm. So, I said the same thing to the Punjab management that we can have an overseas bowler in my place.

the two leading run-scorers at that

"But we didn't have an off-spinner, so, I sort of played as a seas off-spinner who could bat a crafted off 39 balls, was the fourth "T20 cricket is a pretty fickle little bit," he explained. (PTI)

RCB-SRH game was one of sixes, not of batsmanship: Finch

BENGALURU, April 16: Sunrisers Hyderabad and Royal Challengers Bengaluru unleashing a barrage of sixes in their IPL match left little room for batsmanship and what mattered was who hit the most number of sixes, said Australia's T20 World Cup-winning skipper Aaron Finch.

Travis Head's maiden T20 ton and Heinrich Klaasen's pillaging 67 drove SRH to a record-breaking 287 for three, which helped them go past their own 277/3 against Mumbai Indians at Hyderabad this March 27.

Dinesh Karthik then smashed a blazing 35-ball 83 but RCB ended up losing the match in which 38 sixes were hit all around the park.

"It was never going to be a game where you talk about batsmanship. It's a game where you talk about who hit the most sixes and that was the difference," Finch said on Star

'They (RCB) had to start at 14 (runs per over). And if you have one bad over it goes to 16." Finch said the Hyderabad side

used the Powerplay segment "They (SRH) were getting lucky in the first powerplay and they

needed those sixes and Travis Head was the difference there. "He started off well, his intent to get the ball rolling and then a courageous move to keep Klaasen

at No. 3 and say we need to keep

going, we have a deep batting lineup and we are going to put the bowlers to the sword here," added Finch. Head's destructive hundred,

fastest in the tournament, the cor-

changing their strategies by bringing in big-hitters like Klaasen up the order as they play fearless cricket. "A lot of times teams think that

Finch said IPL teams had started

nerstone of SRH's 25-run win.

FORGET IT

Klaasen has so much power to the back end, let's hold him back. Like (RCB's) Glenn Maxwell at times, you don't want to expose him right now because if he gets out, then we've got to rebuild. Teams don't think like that anymore.

"(SRH coach) Dan Vettori has talked about that, play aggressive, play fearlessly and bear the consequence if it doesn't go right. If it does go right, you don't lose."

Dinesh Karthik once again underlined his value making a 35-ball 83 at a strike-rate of 237. Finch said the ability to strike the ball comes naturally to Karthik, given his more than two decades of ex-

"Well, once you've got 20-25

and you've got that bulk of balls you've hit throughout your whole career since you were five years old, you don't lose that ability to

LINK

FORGET

"So. I think, it works in their favour because they train specifically for that role which they play for their team. They don't over train, they aren't trying to improve on their skills or they aren't trying to improvise anymore, they just train specifically," said Finch.

The Victorian cricketer added that players like Karthik are examples for others preparing to be specific about their roles.

"That should be a lesson for players around the world, that you have to be really specific with your preparation and how you go about

"You can hit as many balls as you want, if you walk out to the middle with a clouded mind or are hard no matter how well you're

Mani Ram dominates

We want to attack Power Play: Head says, revealing SRH's batting philosophy Being one of RCB's big dogs, there **BENGALURU, April 16:** Sunrisers Hyderabad have taken T20 batting to the next level 40/3 and 76/0, and none of the other nine teams was pressure on Maxwell: Ponting play," said Head in the post-match press con-

NEW DELHI, April 16: Delhi Capitals head coach Ricky Ponting on Tuesday showed complete empathy for a struggling Glenn Maxwell, saying the constant pressure of being a star RCB player got to him and he made the right call of taking an indefinite "mental and physical

bats for mental well-being

health" break from the game. For the second time in his career, Maxwell has taken a break of this nature

The Australian himself asked to be rested from the game against Sunrisers Hyderabad on Monday night following a string of low scores this season

"For someone like Glenn in that team (RCB), he being one of the 'Big Dogs' along with Virat, a lot of pressure comes on couple of players playing in that team. If they don't perform, the results tend to not follow them," Ponting, who has seen Maxwell from close quarters, told PTI in an exclusive interaction.

RCB are currently last in the 10 team table with six defeats from seven games.

"If you see what they have done in the tournament so far, pressure builds up on individual player as well. I read that article today morning that Glenn wants to step aside, just have a few games off and try and refresh," Ponting said, adding that every individual has its own coping mechanism.

"Every individual is different right. Some guys would want to get going and push through that and get some runs on board and thus that will change their way of how they think about the game



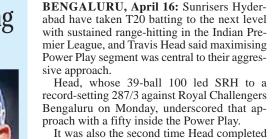
and have a break," the legendary Aussie and three-time World Cup winner explained.

Ponting feels it becomes very important for the coach of a team to prioritize a player's mental well-being.

"That's why one needs to be really understanding as a coach now that anyone who is around the cricket team, their health and well-being and welfare of the players is something you think about first.

Ponting believes that for elite athletes, it is important to have their loved ones around them as they are central to their success and failure.

"With more and more cricket being played, a lot of times you are away from home when you play international sport. You are away from all the things that make you happy, that certainly is the biggest part of what we do, coaching or playing. (PTI)



outstanding. I don't think I've had

a better six months in cricket lead-

up like this. But if I can get my

body and my mind right, there's no

reason I can't finish the tourna-

ment well if I do get another op-

The sudden dip in his form was

surprising, considering the hot run

he had in the run-up to the IPL.

Maxwell had made 552 runs from

17 T20Is from November onwards,

averaging 42 and his strike-rate

But the Victorian started the IPL

with a first-ball duck against Chen-

nai Super Kings in an away match,

and from that point his fortunes

"So, it's frustrating when it ends

ing into this tournament.

portunity," he said.

was an impressive 185.

It was also the second time Head completed a half-century within the first six overs. "We've definitely got a lot of power through

our top and middle-order and I think we've sort of got to tailor the way we want to play around that power that we've got, especially in power

The Australian opener has a perfect ally at the top in an equally belligerent Abhishek Sharma, who blunts slower bowlers upfront while Head goes about destroying the pacers.

"I guess Abhi and I at the top of the order try to maximise that (Power Play) as much as we can. It may be fours, it may be sixes.

"But yeah, we want to try to attack the power play with the two of us and then obviously we've got a lot of power through that middleorder," Head added.

It wasn't a mere tall claim as a quick check will reveal SRH's power play scores in six matches this season as 65/1, 81/1, 58/1, 78/1, the left-hander. (*PTI*)

have come close to those numbers. But it was not blind hitting. Head revealed

his approach in the initial six overs. "Depending on the field positions, I try to sum up what the bowlers are trying to do. In the power play, with just two fielders out, I try to think about hitting the ball 360, around the

whole ground, as you only have to go over the infield or through the infielders for boundaries. "I'd worked on a few things over the last couple of days. I did not execute the way I would have liked (in the last two matches). But today, especially in the power play, I was

able to strike the ball the way I wanted," said

round one in Gurgaon Open NUH (HARYANA), April 16:

Haryana's Mani Ram dominated round one with a scorching nineunder 63 to lead by two shots at Rs 1 crore Gurgaon Open being played at the Classic Golf & Country Club here on Tuesday. The Bengalurubased C Muniyappa fired a sevenunder 65 to be placed second on a windy day with the sun and clouds playing hide and seek. M Dharma, another Bengaluru

golfer and Chandigarh's Rajiv Kumar Jatiwal, were a further shot back in tied third place. Mani Ram, currently 13th on the

TATA Steel PGTI Ranking with a runner-up finish to his credit this season, started his birdie-run on the third hole, followed by a long conversion on the fourth and an accurate approach that led to a tap-in on the sixth.

The 42-year-old Mani Ram, a three-time winner on the PGTI Feeder Tour, then rose further on the leaderboard with three more birdies on the eighth, ninth and 10th.

His lone bogey on the 11th was an aberration as Mani Ram came roaring back with a chip-in for birdie on the 13th and eagle and birdie on the next two holes, where he left himself putts within five feet. Mani Ram saved par on the 16th

with a 30-feet conversion. However, he missed out on a birdie from five feet on the 18th that could've seen him equal the 2009 course record of 62 jointly held by Thailand's Chapchai Nirat and India's Anirban Lahiri. Mani Ram said, "I couldn't have asked for a better opening round. It's my career-best score. My confidence has been skyhigh this season due to my good hitting form. The putting has been a bit up and down, but today even my putter was hot. (PTI)

Every game is like semifinal for us now: RCB coach Flower

BENGALURU, April 16: After his side's sixth defeat in seven matches in the ongoing Indian Premier League, Royal Challengers Bengaluru head coach Andy Flower confessed that each of their remaining seven matches will have to be treated like a semifinal.

In the latest setback to their playoff aspirations, RCB went down by 25 runs against Sunrisers Hyderabad here on Monday.
"It is obviously knockout time and every game is like a

semifinal for us now. But we will have to think that we will come back stronger," Flower said on RCB Game Day. RCB conceded the highestever IPL total – 287 for three – as the Hyderabad batters went

rectionless bowlers. Flower admitted that it was a tough night for his side. "It was a really tough night

in the field, of course, as they

on a merry ride against their di-

finished so powerfully that it probably took the wind out of

our souls," he said. However, Flower found

shards of positives during RCB's chase such as Dinesh Karthik's superlative 83 off 35 balls and skipper Faf Du Plessis' 28-ball 62. The Zimbabwean wanted to

build on them in the coming matches. "I am really proud of the way

we fought with the bat out there in the middle. We lost the game but I was really proud of the way we fought," said Flower. The former England coach lauded Karthik for the way he

took on SRH bowlers, and said it would not be surprising if the wicketkeeper batter made it to India's T20 World Cup squad. Dinesh Karthik is really making a push for the World

Cup team (of India) as well and

is only getting better on the field," he added.

RCB will next face Kolkata Knight Riders at Eden Gardens on April 21. (PTI)

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