

Over 72 pc voting in 5 seats in Assam SC seeks Centre, Assam's reply on fresh plea challenging CAA rules

Voters were also seen queuing up since early morning before the 752 polling stations

Lok Sabha polls

GUWAHATI, April 19: More than 72 per cent of 86.48 lakh electors cast their votes on Friday during the first phase of polling across five Lok Sabha constituencies in Assam

According to Election Commission data, around 72.1 per cent of 86,47,869 electors, including 42,82,887 men, 43,64,859 women and 123 third gender, exercised their franchise to decide the fate of 35 candidates in Dibrugarh, Jorhat, Lakhimpur, Sonitpur and Kaziranga seats.

"This is the tentative voting percentage at 5 pm. It will increase further as people are still in queues at the polling booths. All those coming to the booths before 5 pm will be allowed to cast their votes," chief electoral officer Anurag Goel told PTI. While voting was on, a heavy spell of rain lashed entire Upper Assam, forcing people to stay indoors for some time, and they came to cast their votes after



the downpour, he added Jorhat recorded the highest

turnout of 77.45 per cent, followed by Kaziranga (71.57), Sonitpur (71.34), Dibrugarh (71.05) and Lakhimpur (68.85), as per ECI data. Goel said that there were reports of malfunctioning of EVMs from some booths and those ma-

chines were replaced. "As per the reports, around 5.5 per cent of VVPATS were replaced, while 3.3 per cent of control units and 1.6 per cent of ballot units were changed till 5 pm. These

figures may go up slightly if more machines are replaced after 5 pm," he added. The total number of polling sta-

tions in the first phase was 10,001, of which webcasting was done in 5,509 booths. Asked if any repoll will take place in any booth, the CEO said, It will be decided by the presiding officers and observers tomorrow. It was a peaceful voting across the

constituencies.' An SUV carrying an EVM partially sank into Deopani River after

which took place during the day.

"In Barpeta, Congress nominee

Deep Bayan is a very weak candi-

date and has no impact at all. So, we

have decided to extend our moral

support to CPI(M) MLA and candi-

date Manoranjan Talukdar, who is

water level rose suddenly, washing away a mechanised boat that was ferrying the vehicle in Lakhimpur constituency to replace a machine after a technical glitch was detected in it.

The driver and the polling officer, a part of the quick response team stationed at Sadiya, managed to get out of the vehicle before water gushed into the SUV.

Brisk polling was reported since the beginning of voting at 7 am with women and first-time voters flocking the booths even before polling began. "I reached the voting centre at 6

am. I didn't want to miss the election," 20-year-old Akhtara Begum, who voted for the first time, said while standing in the queue at a voting centre in Jorhat constituency

In the 92 model polling stations, there was a festive atmosphere as those were decorated with balloons and flowers and the voters were welcomed by volunteers wearing traditional dresses. Voters were also seen queuing up since early morning (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

NEW DELHI, April 19: The Supreme Court on Friday sought replies of the Centre and the Assam government on a plea challenging the Citizenship (Amendment) Rules, 2024, meant to operationalise and regulate the process of grant of Indian citizenship to non-Muslim migrants who came from Pakistan. Bangladesh and Afghanistan before December 31, 2014.

A bench comprising Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud and Justice JB Pardiwala took note of the submissions of a lawyer representing petitioner Hiren Gohain, a Guwahati resident, and issued notices to the state government and the union ministries of Home Affairs and External Affairs.

The top court also ordered that the fresh plea be tagged with those pending on the issue. The lates plea on the hugely contentious issue said, "The uncontrolled influx of illegal migrants from Bangladesh to Assam has caused huge demographic changes in Assam. The indigenous people, who were once the majority, have now become a minority in their own land."



Recently, the bench, while refus-

ing to stay the operation of the CAA Rules, asked the Centre to respond to the applications seeking a stay on their implementation till the apex court has disposed of the pleas challenging the validity of the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019. Gohain, in his plea, said the CAA Rules, 2024 are "ultra-vires to the Constitution" as they are "palpably discriminatory, manifestly arbitrary, illegal and against the basic struc-

ture of the Constitution".

"It is stated that the impugned Citizenship (Amendment) Rules, 2024 violates the petitioners' fundamental rights guaranteed under Articles 14 (right to equality), 15 (right against discrimination on basis of religion, race, caste etc), 19 (freedom of speech and expression). 21 (right to life and personal liberty) etc of the Constitution," it said. Gohain said he has filed the plea in his personal (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

HTBRIEFS

GUWAHATI: Assam Governor Gulab Chand Kataria interacted with a group of IAS and ACS probationary officers at Raj Bhavan today and asked them to imbibe the 'spirit of public service' to serve the people and the society in the Amrit Kaal. The Governor said that in a welfare society like India, the taxes paid by the citizens help the country to create infrastructure. Right from schools to hospitals, everything is constructed with the tax payers' money. Therefore, public servants have the responsibility towards the people of the society. He asked them to be dedicated to the cause of the public and render their services to strengthen the edifice of welfare society. He also asked them to contribute to the country's journey of becoming developed nation. The Governor moreover said that the parents and teachers of the officers have shed



GUWAHATI, April 19: All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF) on Friday announced its moral support to CPI(M), TMC and BPF candidates in three Lok Sabha constituencies in Assam, where it is not contesting. Addressing a press conference

any nominee.

doing very well," Islam said. here, AIUDF organisational general Talking about Silchar, he said it is secretary and MLA Aminul Islam a very prestigious constituency in said the party has decided to support the Barak valley but the AIUDF did the "strongest secular democratic" not field any candidate. "The Congress is fighting, but not candidates against the BJP in the

constituencies where it did not field able to create any wave in its favour till now. On the other hand, TMC's He said they have decided to Radheshyam Biswas is an experioffer their support to such candienced, prominent and strong leader. dates in the second and third phases, He was AIUDF's working presibut it did not announce any such dent. Although we had expelled move for the first phase of polling him, we are now supporting him,"

Islam said.

In Darrang-Udalguri, the Congress and the BPF are two anti-BJP parties, but Madhab Rajbangshi of the grand old party was "not able to make any impact" and was "maintaining a very low profile", he claimed. "The BPF, which was our partner in the last assembly polls in the opposition camp, is doing well. Its candidate Durgadas Boro is a very strong nominee. So, AIUDF has decided to extend moral support to the BPF nominee," Islam said.

Speaking on Guwahati and Kokrajhar, where voting will take place in the third phase, he said AIUDF is waiting for the situation to evolve and will take a decision after some days. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

KOHIMA, April 19: Polling personnel in six eastern districts of Nagaland waited for nine hours in booths, but not one of the four lakh voters of the region turned up following a shutdown call given by an organisation to press for its demand for 'Frontier Nagaland Territory' (FNT).

Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio on Friday affirmed that the state government does not have any problem with the Eastern Nagaland People's Organisation's (ENPO) demand for FNT as it has already recommended autonomous powers for the region.

The ENPO is the apex body of eastern region.

over 5 lakh vote margin: Himanta

ment of people or vehicles on major streets in eastern Nagaland except those of the district administrations and other emergency services. Additional Chief Electoral Officer of Nagaland Awa Loring said polling personnel were present between 7 am and 4 pm in the 738 polling stations in the region which comprises

20 assembly constituencies. Sources in the CEO's office said none came up to cast votes in those nine hours. Those 20 MLAs also did not exercise their franchise. Of the 13.25 lakh voters in Naga-

land, the six districts in Eastern Nagaland have 4.00.632 voters. Speaking to reporters after casting his vote at his village in Touphema, (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Peaceful voting recorded in Sonitpur HT Correspondent TEZPUR, April 19: The first

phase of general elections in Sonitpur HPC concluded peacefully on Friday, with no significant incidents reported and voter turnout was robust, with an overall rate of 71.34 per cent.

Voter participation varied across different Legislative Assembly Constituencies (LACs), with Dhekiajuli LAC registering a 72.24 per cent turnout, Barchala at 71.2 per cent, Tezpur at 72.7 per cent, Rangapara at 75.96 per cent, Naduar at 73.9 per cent, Biswanath at 71 per cent, Behali at 58 per cent, Gohpur at 78.11 per cent, and Bihpuria at 67 per cent. Notably, Behali LAC saw the lowest turnout, while Gohpur LAC had the highest (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Over 1,000 components

of EVM sets replaced

Confident of winning Guwahati by

the seven tribal organisations of the Officials said there is no move-

Interaction with IAS

position they in at present.

Road safety

JAGIROAD: The District Road Safety Committee meeting held today under the chairmanship of district commissioner Devashish Sharma at the conference hall of the DC office, Morigaon. Concerned by the alarming statistics showing that 80% of the district's road accidents last month involved motorcycles, the committee concentrated on preventive measures. The district commissioner issued a directive for strict enforcement of helmet usage among two-wheeler riders and pillion riders post the second phase of the Lok Sabha elections on April 26. Stressing on strict enforcement, fines, and legal repercussions for non-compliance, the directive encompassed every corner of the district. Discussions also encompassed licensing requirements for e-rickshaw drivers, with joint operations by the police and transport department slated for post-elections to ensure compliance.

Ampareen Lyngdoh

SHILLONG: NPP candidate for Shillong parliamentary seat and cabinet minister Ampareen Lyngdoh on Friday said the "dirt or hate brought the opposition Voice of the People Party (VPP)" into the political scenario of Meghalaya is very regretful.

ASDC champions Autonomous State bid

<u>HT Bureau</u>

DIPHU, April 19: The Autonomous State Demand Committee (ASDC) on Friday held an election meeting with voters of Longchap Engleng village under the Barelong Tokbi LP School Polling Station, within the Langfer Member of Autonomous Council (MAC) constituency. Longchap Engleng village has

long been an ASDC stronghold. At the gathering, ASDC Vice President Sonasing Terang stated, "We need to contest elections to have elected representatives who can voice our concerns in the State

Assembly and Parliament." Terang credited the signing of the MoU with the Central government on April 1, 1995, as a pivotal

achievement of the Autonomous State movement, noting it enhanced the powers of the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC) by transferring 30 departments from the State government to the KAAC.

Despite attempts by several antiautonomous forces, including the BJP and Congress, to derail the Autonomous State movement, the ASDC has persisted.

"On April 12, the ASDC delegation met with Assam chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, urging him

Modi govt will never touch

reservation policy: Amit Shah

issue as soon as possible, to which the CM has agreed," said Terang. Terang also criticised the All Party Hills Leaders Conference (APHLC)-backed independent candidate JI Kathar and BJP candidate Amarsing Tisso. He also commented that Kathar, having spent his career as an ACS and later an IAS officer outside Karbi Anglong, only entered politics after retirement, questioning his ability to contribute significantly at this stage.

to resolve the Autonomous State

Meanwhile, he accused Tisso, known for his alleged involvement in corruption during land acquisitions for NH 36's four-lane road construction in Karbi Anglong, of being unfit for office. He urged voters to maintain

their support for ASDC and the struggle for an Autonomous State, appealing to them to vote for Jotson Bey on April 26.

Daniel Teron, ASDC's publicity secretary, said the BJP's inability to issue land pattas or support the Autonomous State was evident, especially criticising BJP candidate Amarsing Tisso, who as a sitting member of autonomous council (MAC) and executive member (EM) in charge of Land and Revenue, has (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

GUWAHATI, April 19: As BJP "The enthusiasm of the people candidate for the Guwahati Lok here today shows the support for Sabha constituency Bijuli Kalita BJP and our candidate. It is a big Medhi filed her nomination on Friencouragement for us," Sarma day, Assam chief minister Himanta said, addressing a gathering before Biswa Sarma exuded confidence Medhi filed her papers.

that the party will retain the seat The CM, who is a voter here and also represents Jalukbari Assembly with a margin of over 5 lakh votes.

segment of Guwahati, said, "This support shows that we will win here by a margin of over 5 lakh votes. As it is, we are already winning all the five seats where elections are taking place today."

Sarma maintained that the support was for Narendra Modi and to make him the prime minister for the third successive term.

"We want to take Assam forward, Modi ji is trying to make Bharat the 'Vishwa guru' and we will present these things during campaigning," he added.

Medhi, who is a vice-president of the state BJP and former president of the party's women wing in the state, also sounded confident of winning the seat.

"The public has come to support me. With the blessings of the people, I am confident of winning in Guwahati," she said, after submitting her (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

celebrations and also cast our

His wife, a voter in Nagaon con-

stituency which is going to polls in

votes," he said.

GUWAHATI, April 19: A total of 1,025 Electronic Voting Machine (EVM) components -- control units, VVPATs and ballot units -were replaced due to malfunctioning in the first phase of polling across the five Lok Sabha seats in

Assam on Friday, officials said. In several cases, complete EVM sets were replaced, while it was changed in parts in most of the cases after snags were detected, a senior official of the Election Department told PTI.

Several of these glitches were noticed during the mock polling, which started 90 minutes before the commencement of the actual voting, and those machines were replaced accordingly, he added.

An EVM has three components -- Control Unit (CU), Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT) and Ballot Unit (BU). "In the five constituencies, 330 CUs, 540 VVPATs and 155 BUs were replaced in (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

'I shifted to Guwahati two years ago and this is the first election since then' Migrants take extended Bihu leave to cast votes in Assam

GUWAHATI, April 19: Many migrants from Assam got a chance to spend a few more days at home this year as they extended their annual leave for Bihu festivities to be able to cast their votes in the first phase of Lok Sabha elections on Friday

The elections also gave intrastate migrants, who are working within Assam but are away from their homes, a reason to extend their leaves.

Uttam Pegu, a voter in Lakhimpur constituency who came back to his village in Dhemaji district from Rajasthan, said he always ensures to return to Assam to cast his vote in every major election.

"I have been living outside Assam for years now, but I always make it a point to come home and



exercise my franchise during gali Bihu, the Assamese New Year, was an added advantage. polls," Pegu told PTI. "We could participate in Bihu

An agriculturalist in the northern state, Pegu said it was his duty as a responsible citizen to participate in the elections, while adding that the fact that polls coincided with Ronthe second phase on April 26, however, could not come due to certain issues

Another Lakhimpur voter Irshad Alam, who works in Nalbari district in the state, had more reasons to cheer as he celebrated Eid and Bihu before casting his vote.

Eid was celebrated on April 11, while Bihu festivities started on April 14.

"Sure, it took some adjustment of the schedule, but as a young person, I think it is my responsibility to exercise my franchise," Alam said. Rocktim Borthakur, who worked outside the state for several years before returning to Guwahati, got a chance to vote in his Jorhat constituency after missing out on previous elections due to his inter-state (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

NEW DELHI, April 19: Union home minister Amit Shah on Friday made it clear that the Narendra Modi government will never touch the reservation policy or let anyone else do it.

Shah also said that the government will do its best to eradicate Naxalism from the country.

"We will never touch the policy of reservation or let anyone else do it," he told NDTV in an interview.

The home minister also dismissed speculations regarding the government planning to amend the Constitution. "If we had to change the Constitution, we could have done it earlier," he said.

Shah said the BJP-led NDA government has not misused the majority it has in Parliament.

jority, not us," he said. Shah said there has been no change in the BJP's commitments and highlighted that the Women's Reservation Act and the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) were

"We have not misused the majority we have had for

ten years. The Congress has the habit of misusing ma-

brought by the Modi government. He said the opposition Congress has no issues to at-

tack the BJP-led government. "I have travelled across the country, everyone is waiting to vote for PM Modi for the third time. My roadshow in Gandhinagar on Thursday was in areas where I pasted the party's posters as a common karyakarta," he said. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

BUSINESS

FSSAI to probe composition of Nestle's Cerelac baby cereals sold in India: Consumer Affairs Min

NEW DELHI, April 19: The Consumer Affairs Ministry on Friday said it has asked the food safety regulator FSSAI to investigate the composition of Nestle's Cerelac baby cereals sold in India, amid a global report that claimed the company was adding higher sugar content in the product.

According to findings by Swiss NGO, Public Eye and International Baby Food Action Network (IBFAN), Nestle sold baby products with higher sugar content in less developed South Asian countries including India, Africa and Latin American nations as compared to markets in Europe.

"We have written to the FSSAI to take cognizance of the report on Nestle's baby product," Consumer Affairs Secretary and Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA) chief Nidhi Khare told PTI.

In the letter written to FSSAI, Khare said it has come to the notice of the Department of Consumer Affairs through various news articles regarding the practices of Nestle company in India, particularly concerning the composition of the Nestle Cerelac cereals. As per news reports, the Switzerland-based organisation has published a report highlighting Nestle's manufacturing practices in India, she said.



'According to the report, Nestle has been alleged to add 2.7 gram of sugar per serving of Nestle Cerelac baby cereals sold in India, while refraining from such practices in other countries such as Germany, Switzerland, France and the UK," Khare said in the letter.

Authority of India (FSSAI) is a Asserting that high sugar in statutory body under the adminisbaby products raises serious contration of Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. cerns about the potential implica-The National Commission for tions for the health and safety of Protection of Child Rights children in our country, the Secretary said, "the health and wellbeing (NCPCR) has also taken note of of our citizens, especially infants the report and issued notice to the and young children, is of para-

FSSAI. mount importance, and any devia-Meanwhile on Thursday, Nestle tion from safety standards could India had said it never comprolead to serious health concerns." mises on compliance and it has re-In light of these reports, Khare duced added sugar in baby food products in India by up to 30 per said, "the FSSAI has been recent depending on variants over quested to initiate an appropriate

company regarding the composi-

tion of Nestle Cerelac baby cereals

sold in India". FSSAI should in-

vestigate the matter and come out

The Food Safety and Standards

with facts, she added.

"Reduction of added sugars is a priority for Nestle India. Over the past 5 years, we have already reduced added sugars up to 30 per cent, depending on the variant." the company spokesperson had said

Stressing that compliance is an essential characteristic of Nestle India, the spokesperson said, "We will never compromise on that. We also ensure that our products manufactured in India are in full and strict compliance with CODEX standards (a commission established by WHO and FAO) and local specifications (as required) pertaining to the requirements of all nutrients including added sugars.'

According to the report, Nestle's wheat-based product, Cerelac for six-month-old babies is sold without any added sugars in the UK and Germany but 15 Cerelac products analysed from India contained 2.7 grams of added sugar per serving on average.

The sugar content was declared on the packaging in India, the report said. The highest sugar content in the product was 6 grams in Thailand. In the Philippines, sugar content was found to be 7.3 grams in five out of eight samples tested and the information was not even declared on the packaging, according to the report. (PTI)

Contd. from Page 1...

SC seeks Centre, Assam's

as well as in representative capacity of a majority of the indigenous people living in Assam and seeks enforcement of their fundamental rights. Raising the issue of "uncontrolled" influx of illegal migrants from Bangladesh to Assam, the plea said it was not a communal issue.

"Neither it is a Hindu-Muslim or indigenous people v/s Bengali immigrant's issue. Rather it is an issue of foreign infiltrators, be it Hindus or Muslims, who are inundating the land that for centuries has belonged to the indigenous people of Assam. In other words, it is an issue between Indians and non-Indians/ foreigners and one of grave importance for the entire nation," it said. "It is stated that according to the 2011 census the population of Assam was about 3.21 crore out of which only 1.34 crore people are indigenous Assamese. This figure includes the Assamese Muslims and indigenous people of the different tribes like Bodo, Missing, Rabha, Karbi etc.

Additionally, there are about 48 lakh people that comprise the tea tribes, it said. "The sum total of the aforesaid two figures comes to about 1.82 crore. A major part of the remaining population of Assam essentially comprises Bengali speaking Hindus and Muslims and a minor part comprises Hindi/other language speaking people who have migrated from the other states of India," the petition said. With the unveiling of the rules on March 11, days ahead of the announcement of the Lok Sabha elections, the Modi government kicked off the process of granting Indian citizenship to persecuted non-Muslim migrants -- Hindus, Sikhs, Jains, Buddhists, Parsis and Christians -from Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh. The rules came into force with immediate effect, according to a gazette notification. The massively polarising CAA had sparked protests in various parts of the country in late 2019 and early 2020 over its alleged discriminatory provisions. (PTI)

AIUDF offers support

"We tried several times to stitch the opposition alliance to jointly fight against the BJP. We met Nitish Kumar and had meetings with Lalu Yadav and Tejashwi Yadav. But our efforts failed due to strong opposition from the Congress and the reason is that it has a tacit understanding with the BJP," Islam claimed. He pointed out that the AIUDF was a part of the UPA. (PTI)

Zero voter turnout in 6

some 41 km on the outskirts of the state capital, the chief minister said he accepted the draft working paper for FNT which was handed over to him in the presence of Union home minister Amit Shah. "Everything looks okay except the power-sharing the elected legislators of the region and members of the proposed FNT," he said.

The ENPO has been demanding a separate state comprising six districts alleging that successive governments did not bring about socio-economic development in the region. The chief minister, however, said the state government has already recommended an autonomous body so that the region gets sufficient economic packages to come at par with the rest of the state. "When an autonomous body is created, there has to be a proper system with the elected members. The state government has nothing to do with this. The MLAs and ENPO should sit across the table to work out a formula. We can talk only after that," Rio said. Asked if any action would be initiated against the 20 legislators of eastern Nagaland for not casting votes, he said, "We don't want confrontation. Let us see what will happen." Hours before the Lok Sabha elections are due to begin in Nagaland, the ENPO imposed an indefinite total shutdown in the eastern part of the state from 6 pm on Thursday.

The organisation also cautioned that if any person goes to vote and any law and order situation arises, it will be the responsibility of the voter concerned. Nagaland CEO Vayasan R, while viewing the shutdown as an attempt to exert undue influence during elections, issued a show cause notice to the ENPO on Thursday night. (PTI)

Peaceful voting recorded

at 78.11 per cent. Prominent candidates, including BJP's Ranjit Dutta and the Indian National Congress's Premlal Ganju, participated in the electoral process, casting their votes in Behali LAC. AAP's Rishiraj Kaundinya voted in Tezpur LAC. Technical glitches with voting machines briefly disrupted the process at a few stations. However, issues with an Electronic Voting Machine (EVM) in the Gudamghat area and a Voter Verified Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT) device in Tezpur Polo-field were promptly resolved, allowing voting to continue smoothly.

An incident at the Mokuwa LP School polling station in Panchmile area led to the arrest of two individuals, Muskan Begum and Saiful Islam, by local police following a disturbance. This resulted in a temporary halt to the voting process. This election also featured 11 model polling stations, showcasing themes such as renewable energy and rainwater harvesting at Netaji Vidya Mandir High School, and celebrating notable Assamese figures and culture. These thematic stations not only educated voters but also encouraged a higher turnout.

Besseria Higher Secondary School's polling station highlighted Assamese society and the cultural integration of the Northeast, which captivated voters and contributed to an increased turnout compared to previous elections. Additionally, the establishment of 150 women-specific polling stations enhanced the voting experience, drawing a significant number of female voters. The involvement of persons with disabilities, serving as polling officials, marked a notable step towards inclusivity in the election process

Deba Kumar Mishra, the returning officer for the election district, praised the efforts put into organising these model stations and highlighted their role in enriching the democratic experience for voters across the constituency.

ASDC champions Autonomous

failed to clear any files regarding the issuance of land pattas. Regarding the Congress, Teron noted that candidate Joyram Engleng, along with Karbi Anglong District Congress Committee (KADCC) president Sum Ronghang, Raton Engti, Prodip Rongpi, and Jagatsing Engti, were part of the BJP until recently. They switched parties only after failing to secure BJP tickets.

Confident of winning Guwahati

nomination accompanied by senior party leaders later. Elections are due in Guwahati in the third phase on May 7. (PTI)

Over 1,000 components

Hyundai launches 'GrameenMahotsav' initiative



HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, April 19: Hyundai Motor India Ltd. (HMIL) is embarking on a mission to strengthen its presence in rural India with the introduction of "GrameenMahotsav." This initiative aims to celebrate the essence of rural India while fostering strong bonds with rural communities. With rural sales constituting over 19% of its total sales, HMIL is committed to catering to the diverse needs of consumers across the country. Through "GrameenMahotsav," Hyundai is organizing a variety of engaging activities, including product displays, interactive demonstrations, and cultural performances such as nukkadnatak, live music, folk dance, and talent shows. The two-day carnival will take place at 16 locations across India, featuring vibrant marketplaces showcasing artisanal crafts, carnival rides, gaming zones, and food stalls. Beyond celebration, "GrameenMahotsav" serves as a **IMF** applauds India for maintaining fiscal discipline in election year

WASHINGTON, April 19: The International Monetary Fund has applauded India for maintaining fiscal discipline in an election year, saying that the Indian economy is doing well and continues to be the world's bright spot.

"At this point in time, India's economy is doing well. Growth at 6.8 per cent is very good. Inflation's coming down. We have to make sure that inflation comes down to target and it is there on a durable basis. Macro fundamentals look pretty good," Krishna Srinivasan, Director, Asia and Pacific Department, at the IMF told PTI in an interview. "One thing I would say is that maintaining fiscal discipline, especially in the election year, for me, has been quite a highlight because countries do embark on fiscal adventures in the election year.

"This government has maintained a discipline, I think, is very important because at the end of the day, sound macro fundamentals are the basis on which countries prosper and have durable growth. So that's very important to maintain that," Srinivasan said.

India, he said, has successfully navigated multiple shocks over the last several years. It's emerging to be one of the fastest major economies in the world. "In fact, for this year, for 2024-25, we project growth at 6.8 per cent led by private consumption and public investment. Inflation is coming down gradually. It's now below 5 per cent," he said

If you look at the macro fundamentals, they're

sumption and a lot of public investment... India will contribute almost 17 per cent of global growth. So that's one reason why we think it's a bright spot," he said.

'The second driver is Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI). I think this is an important moment, almost like a watershed moment. It's very fundamental because what the DPI does is it enhances productivity by fostering competition and innovation. It also furthers financial inclusion and makes the public sector that much more efficient. So this is a big thing," he said.

That's another reason why the IMF thinks India a bright spot. "The third reason, is that India has a young and growing population. India is likely to add 15 million people to the labor force every year. There could be other factors which lead us to believe it's a bright spot. But again, when I talk about the young population and to benefit from the demographic dividend, I think a lot of reforms will be needed, which going forward over the medium-term will require a lot of reforms," he said

For the demographic dividend to be reaped, India has to invest a lot in education and health. "I cannot emphasize this more because it's not just about the population and how to employ them proactively. You're going to have transformations like AI coming into play.

"In India's labor force, the young have to be well skilled, well equipped to deal with these transformation changes to contribute effectively to the economy. In that sense, yes, investment in education, health is very important. That's one thing in terms of reforms, he said. "I would also say that making the labor market smoother, functioning well by implementing these labor reforms which have been passed recently is very important. Reducing the number of trade restrictions is important because this is, you give opportunities for people to expand the horizon beyond the domestic economy. Making the country more attractive to business investment is very important. 'Even now when you talk to investors, they talk about the red tape, the bureaucracy, how long it takes to get things done in India. I think those are things which need to be addressed effectively for India to gain from this young population and have long-term growth, Srinivasan said. "For the medium-term, we have a growth rate of 6.5 per cent, which is good. But you need more than that. And the last thing I would say is for investors to make well-informed decisions about the economy, about various issues, it'll be important to also at a fundamental level think in terms of our macroeconomic statistics, which can help people make well-informed decisions about investment, which is more durable, said the IMF official. (PTI)

platform for Hyundai to delve into the vast potential of rural markets and identify new customers.

Expressing his enthusiasm for the initiative, Tarun Garg, COO of Hyundai Motor India Ltd., highlighted the company's commitment to bolstering rural connectivity and its remarkable growth in rural markets in the financial year 2023-2024. He emphasized Hyundai's belief in the potential of upcountry markets and its dedication to fulfilling the evolving aspirations of Indian consumers. "At Hyundai Motor India, we firmly believe in the progress of both Bharat and India. With initiatives like 'GrameenMahotsav,' we aim to nurture relationships with customers across the country and understand market trends to meet their expectations," said Garg. By engaging dealers, rural influencers, financiers, customers, and their families, Hyundai Motor India is building a strong network to enhance brand recall and drive sales in rural markets. The inaugural "GrameenMahotsav" event, held successfully in Mahemdavad, Gujarat, marks the beginning of Hyundai's efforts to extend its reach and impact across rural landscapes.

pretty solid, despite this being an election year, the government has adhered to fiscal discipline. You look at the reserve position, it's strong. If you look at overall macro fundamentals, it's pretty good," he said, adding that risks to the economy are broadly balanced.

According to the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), India's forex reserves jumped by USD 2.98 billion to a fresh peak of USD 648.562 billion for the week ended April 5. In the previous reporting week, the forex kitty had increased by USD 2.951 billion to USD 645.583 billion, which was an all-time high.

"In the short-term, an important risk is volatile commodity prices with various tensions... But going beyond the short-term, you could think in terms of weather-related shocks, fragmentation, all these are things to worry about in terms of risks to the outlook. "Of course, there are also risks to the upside when I say private consumption could be stronger. The impact from CapEx spending in India could be stronger with more crowding in the private investment. So those are upside risks. In a nutshell, India has a sweet spot at this point in time," the IMF official said. Srinivasan said India is among the main drivers of global growth. "This year we expect economic growth at 6.8 per cent. That is led by private con-

total from different machines," the official said. During the mock poll, 150 complete sets of EVMs were replaced after they malfunctioned, the official said. He, however, declined to share details such as how many EVMs malfunctioned in which constituency. When contacted, chief electoral officer Anurag Goel said that there were reports of malfunctioning of EVMs from some booths and those machines were replaced. "As per the reports, around 5.5 per cent VVPATS were replaced, while 3.3 per cent of control units and 1.6 per cent of ballot units were changed till 5 pm. These figures may go up slightly if more machines are replaced after 5 pm," he told PTI. Another official said that reports of EVM malfunctioning came from at least three polling booths of Bihpuria in Lakhimpur, one each in Hojai, Kaliabor and Bokakhat, and one in Naharkatia of Dibrugarh.

"Voting at Jorbil Baniya LP School booth in Majuli started one hour late as the EVM stopped functioning and it began after a new machine arrived. Two more polling stations at Majuli witnessed more than an hour delay in voting due to malfunctioning," he added. Likewise, failure of three EVM sets resulted in almost an hour delay in three polling stations in Mariani, the official said. The total number of polling stations in the first phase is 10,001, of which 92 are model polling stations, 11 are PwD-managed and 752 are women-operated centres. Webcasting is being done in 5,509 polling stations. (PTI)

Modi govt will never

The minister said for 30 years, the people in Gandhinagar have been voting for him -- first as an MLA and then as an MP -- and it was an emotional journey for him. Shah said the BJP will register its best performance in south India in the Lok Sabha polls this time. "South is ready to convert PM's popularity into seats," he said.

Shah said the Modi government has repeatedly asked Naxalites to shun violence. "In 90 days, the BJP government in Chhattisgarh has worked extensively to combat Naxalism. We will eradicate Maoism from India," he said. He also claimed that during the Congress rule in Chhattisgarh, there was no clampdown on Naxalites. (PTI)

Migrants take extended

migration. "I shifted to Guwahati two years ago and this is the first election since then. I annually visit my home during Bihu, but this time I have extended my stay to be able to vote," he said. Besides Lakhimpur and Jorhat, Sonitpur, Dibrugarh and Kaziranga constituencies went to the polls in the first phase in the state. Elections will be held in five seats in the second phase on April 26, and four remaining constituencies of the state in the third phase on May 7. (PTI)

India a standout performer amidst sluggish global growth trends: India's Economic Affairs Secretary

WASHINGTON, April 19: Despite a challenging global scenario, India's economy has shown robust growth over the past year backed by sustained consumption and investment demand, a top Indian official told members of a World Bank committee here.

The GDP growth estimate for the fiscal, which has been revised upwards from 7.3 per cent to 7.6 per cent in the second advance estimates, highlights the enduring strength and resilience of the Indian economy, India's Economic Affairs Secretary Ajay Seth said while addressing the Development Committee meeting here on Thursday

"India grew above 8 per cent for three consecutive quarters of FY24, reaffirming its position as a standout performer amidst sluggish global growth trends," Seth said. He said that similar sentiments have been echoed by various agencies who have revised India's fiscal 24 growth estimate



elections.

ers due to the ongoing Lok Sabha

Committee that India's thrust on

capex continued to crowd in pri-

India's inflation outlook appears

Seth told the Development

closer to 8 per cent. India's proactive stance on reform and investment in sustainable growth avenues sets a benchmark for emerging economies.

The Indian delegation at the anvate investment resulting in ennual Spring Meeting of the Interhanced Gross Fixed Capital national Monetary Fund and the Formation (GFCF) at constant World Bank is being represented at prices registering a growth above 10 per cent in FY24. the official level this time. Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman is not attending the annual positive with headline and core ingathering of global financial leadflation trending downwards, indi-

cating a broad-based moderation in price pressures, he said.

Seth said that on the external front, the narrowing merchandise trade deficit and the rising net services receipts are expected to improve the current account balance in fiscal 2024. To catalyse and democratise the Artificial Intelligence (AI) innovation ecosystem in the country, the Centre has approved the "India AI Mission' with a budget outlay of INR 103 billion for building computing infrastructure, developing indigenous AI capabilities, streamlining access to datasets, attracting AI talent, and financing AI start-ups.

"The Mission aims to establish a robust AI ecosystem through strategic programmes and partnerships across the public and private sectors. The focus on infrastructure and technology is expected to propel India to stay on the curve of technological innovation, consolidate and solidify its position in the global supply chain," he said. (PTI)

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Over 72 pc voting in 5 seats

before the 752 polling stations with all-women personnel. A special feature in this election was 11 polling booths which were completely managed by people with disabilities (PwD). Many volunteers were seen escorting the elderly and PwDs in their wheelchairs in several booths. Lankeswar Barua, a 100-year-old voter, decided not to opt for the home voting facility and came along with his wife in the morning at a booth in Naharkatia of Dibrugarh constituency. "Who said I am old? I can come myself and vote. I have never voted from home, why should I when I can walk around?" he told reporters with a laughter when asked why he did not choose the home voting option.

Prominent candidates include Union minister and BJP nominee Sarbananda Sonowal, who is contesting from Dibrugarh against the Opposition nominee Lurinjyoti Gogoi, and Lok Sabha Deputy Leader of Congress Gaurav Gogoi, who is contesting from Jorhat against BJP's sitting MP Topon Kumar Gogoi.

Some other important candidates from the BJP are Lakhimpur sitting MP Pradan Baruah, Rajya Sabha MP Kamakhya Prasad Tasa (Kaziranga) and sitting MLA Ranjit Dutta (Sonitpur). Roseline Tirkey from Kaziranga, Premlal Ganju from Sonitpur and Uday Shankar Hazarika from Lakhimpur are trying their luck on Congress tickets. Most of the candidates exercised their franchise within the first two hours of polling.

"My heartfelt thanks to every voter of Dibrugarh Lok Sabha Constituency. I extend my gratitude to each and every hardworking karyakarta of @BJP4India and our allies who toiled day and night during the campaign period. "The immense support, love & affection that I have witnessed in this period has reaffirmed that Hon'ble PM Shri @narendramodi ji is returning with a massive mandate to carry forward the journey of Viksit Bharat," Sonowal said in a post on X. Thanking everyone coming to exercise their franchise, Gaurav Gogoi said people voted to "save Indian democracy and culture". Assam Jatiya Parishad's Lurinjyoti Gogoi said, "Through voting, a message was sent by everyone that this election is to save democracy and Constitution. Injustices that are being done, the betrayal that was done to all, this election is a reply to it."

AIUDF's nominee for Dhubri, which will go to polling in third phase, and sitting MP Badruddin Ajmal voted in Hojai of Kaziranga constituency. "The message that should go today is that rather than sending men to space what is more important is peace, controlling price rise and harmony among the people. Voting is not a joke, it will set the country's fate for next five years," he told reporters. Kaziranga has the highest number of 11 candidates, followed by nine in Lakhimpur, eight in Sonitpur, four in Jorhat and three in Dibrugarh. (PTI)

REGION

Excitement, enthusiasm mark first phase of voting in Dibrugarh LS seat



HT Correspondent DIBRUGARH, April 19: Despite inclement weather, there was a wave of excitement among voters in Dibrugarh as they came out in large numbers to cast their votes for the Dibrugarh Lok Sabha seat in the first phase of election on Friday.

Long queues were observed at different polling stations as early as 5 am, two hours before polling began. Polling officially began at 7 am. From women voters to elderly and first-time voters, there was palpable excitement as they lined up to exercise their right to franchise.

The atmosphere at the polling stations was peaceful, with voters posing with their inked fingers after casting their ballots. The district administration had made elaborate arrangements to ensure a smooth voting process in all the 1,923 polling stations of the constituency

The Dibrugarh Lok Sabha constituency comprises of 10 assembly segments spread over Dibrugarh and Tinsukia districts, including Dibrugarh, Chabua-Lahowal, Khowang, Duliajan, Tingkhong, Naharkatia, Tingkhong, Margherita, Digboi, Makum and Tinsukia. In total, the constituency has 16,59,588 voters, including 8,49,563 female voters, 8,09,990 male voters and 35 third gender voters.

As per the Election Commission of India figures, 70.65 per cent of poling was recorded in Dibrugarh Lok Sabha constituency till 5 pm. However the figure is likely to go up as the final data has not been computed

Among the three candidates for the Dibrugarh Lok Sabha constituency, Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) candidate and Union minister. Sarbananda Sonowal cast his vote at the Dibrugarh Sahitya Sabha polling station in the morning hours.

Assam Jatiya Parishad (AJP) candidate Lurinjyoti Gogoi chose to exercise his franchise at Laipuli ME School in Tinsukia, while Aam Admi Party (AAP) candidate Manoj Dhanowar cast his vote at the Dainijan LP School in Dibrugarh

The candidates urged the voters of the constituency to come and

HT Bureau GUWAHATI, April 19: The state government has declared a exercise their right to vote in the great festival of democracy. Speaking about the high turnout, public holiday on April 26 in Lok Sarbananda Sonowal stated, "I am Sabha constituencies, which will overwhelmed to see the enthusigot to polls on the second phase asm of the people in Dibrugarh. of the Lok Sabha elections. This election is important for the The holiday has been declared development of our constituency as per the Governor order under and I urge everyone to exercise

the Negotiable Instruments Act their right to vote and participate (N.I.A) of 1881 mandates. in the great festival of democ-Dima Hasao district will also to polls during the second phase

GUWAHATI, April 19: Long

queues were seen outside booths

since the morning as polling was

underway for five constituencies in Assam in the first phase on Fri-

day. Poling began at 7 am in Di-

brugarh, Jorhat, Lakhimpur,

Sonitpur and Kaziranga seats, and

86.5 lakh voters are eligible to

Union minister Sarbananda

Sonowal of the BJP and Con-

gress's deputy leader in Lok Sabha

Gaurav Gogoi were among those

who cast their votes in the first

hour. There were apprehensions

that the weather might play a

spoilsport with the entire Upper

Assam remaining cloudy, but

people are coming out in such a

large number. People's sponta-

neous participation will strengthen democracy," Sonowal, the BJP candidate of Dibrugarh, said after

Holiday declared

in Dima Hasao on

Diphu,

April 26

"It is really a good sign that

gradually the sky cleared up.

vote.

AJP candidate Lurinjyoti Gogoi on April 26 within the jurisdicemphasised the significance of voting, stating, "Every vote counts, and I believe that the people of Dibrugarh will make an informed choice for the betterment

Aam Aadmi Party candidate Manoj Dhanowar echoed the sentiment, saying, "Our votes have the power to shape the future and I am confident that the people will tea gardens, and industries within the specified jurisdiction of the

Only June 4, when counting will take place, will reveal if the luck of these candidates has favoured them.



Union Minister Sonowal, MP Gogoi

cast their votes; hopeful of winning

were Sonowal's rival Lurinjyoti

Gogoi in Tinsukia district, BJP's

Behali, Kaziranga's Congress con-

family had died after consuming

wild poisonous mushrooms in Bor-

juri Kleng Bey Village of Rong-

mongve in Karbi Anglong district.

department informed that with the

rains the time of growing wild

mushrooms in jungles has arrived.

forage for wild mushrooms. Some

people cannot differentiate between

poisonous and edible mushrooms

and end up eating the poisonous

The health officials, ASHA and

health workers met people in the vil-

lages and organised awareness pro-

The awareness

Villagers venture into the forest to

Sources from the district health

in Devi Charan Barua Higher Seccasting his vote at a polling booth in Laxminath Bezbarua Bhawan in ondary School in Jorhat town. Among the other prominent per-Chowkiding.

People are happy under the leadership of PM Narendra Modi and that is why they are coming out in large numbers, he claimed. Gogoi voted at a polling booth

Health awareness campaign conducted in Karbi Anglong

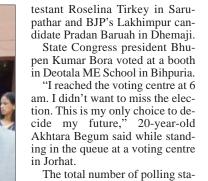


<u>HT Bureau</u>

DIPHU, April 19: In view of the recent deaths by consuming wild mushrooms, the Karbi Anglong district health department in collaboration with the District Health Society, National Health Mission have organised an awareness programme in the district.

The awareness programme included different activities like sensitization meeting in villages, announcements in market places and on roads, screening of short social media films, radio messages and posts on social media platforms like Facebook, Youtube, X etc. on the side effects of consuming wild mushrooms.

programme will continue up to Five out of nine members of a June, the health department said.



tions in the first phase is 10,001, of which 92 are model polling stations, 11 are PwD-managed and 752 are female-managed centres. Webcasting was available at 5,509 polling stations.

Lankeswar Barua, a 100-yearsons who cast their votes early old senior citizen, decided not to opt for home voting and went along with his wife to a booth in Sonitpur candidate Ranjit Dutta in Naharkatia in Dibrugarh. "Who said I am old? I can come

myself and vote. I have never voted from home, why should I when I can walk around?" he told reporters. Reports of EVM malfunctioning came from at least three polling booths of Bihpuria in Lakhimpur, one each in Hojai, Kaliabor and Bokakhat, and one in Naharkatia of Dibrugarh, an official said.

"Most of the glitches were noticed during the mock poll, which started 90 minutes before the commencement of the actual voting. Those glitches were rectified immediately. Voting started sometime late in those booths and now it is going smoothly," he said.

A total of 40,004 polling personnel are engaged in the first phase, with a posse of security personnel from state and central forces

In total, 35 candidates are in the fray in the five constituencies. (PŤI)

66.79 % voters' turnout recorded in Hojai

HT Correspondent HOJAI, April 19: Hojai district recorded a voters' turnout of 66.79 per cent till 5 pm on Friday. The first phase of the Lok Sabha elections passed off peacefully in

Hojai district under Kaziranga Consistuency on Friday.

Of the total 741842 voters in the district, 495512 have cast their vote in during the first phase of the Lok Sabha polls held in five constituencies in the state on Wednesday. While the percentage of vot-ing in the Binnakandi Legislative Assembly constituency is 71.91 per cent, Hojai Legislative Assembly constituency and Lumding Legislative Assembly constituency recorded a polling percentage of 65 per cent and 63.2 per cent respectively. Many differently abled in dividuals also came to their respective polling stations to cast their votes

Voting began at the district's 814 polling stations in Hojai, Lumding and Binnakandi Legislative Assembly constituencies from 7 am. Voters could be seen standing in long queues waiting for their turn to cast their votes. However, even after the stipulated time of voting was over, a large number of voters could be still standing in queues in a few polling stations.

BU observes birth anniversary of Gurudev Kalicharan Brahma

HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, April 19: The Bodoland University observed the 165th birth anniversary of Gurudev Kalicharan Brahma, an eminent social reformer at the university premises in Debargaon in Kokrajhar on Friday

Subung Basumatary, registrar of the university paid floral tribute to the statue of Gurudev Kalicharan Brahma. The programme was attended by faculty members and officers as well as students of the Bodoland University. Office bearers of the Gurudev Kalicharan Brahma Trust (GKBT) were also present in the event.

Basumatary while inaugurating the event said, "Gurudev Kalicharan Brahma was the main architect of social reformation in the Bodo society as well as down trodden communities, who brought about great changes in various socio-cultural aspects. His contributions towards the up liftment of the Bodo society are enormous for which we much recollect his deeds."

The event highlighted the contributions and dedication of Gurudev Kalicharan Brahma who rendered his endless services for promoting

tion of 6-Diphu (ST) parliamentary constituency along with Darrang-Udalguri, Karimganj, Silchar(SC) and Nagaon constituencies. of the constituency.' In all government and nongovernment offices, PRIs, urban local bodies, educational institutions, business and commercial establishments including banks,

make the right decision.3 constituencies will remain closed on polling days on account of public holiday under N.I.Act,

led central and state governments for up liftment of the needy people Sarma also prom-

CM Sarma campaigns for BJP candidate Suresh Bora at Nagaon

campaigned for BJP candidate Suresh Bora at three different spots in the Nagaon Lok Sabha constituency, which will go to polls during the second phase of the general elections on April 26.

HT Correspondent NAGAON, April 19: Chief

minister Himanta Biswa Sarma

During the day, Sarma participated in three election rallies at Nagaon Bhutaigaon, Raha and Doomdooma near Batadroba respectively and sounded poll bugle against the candidates of the opposition Congress as well as AIUDF.

While addressing a rally held at Bhutaigaon Bhutai Deka playground, Sarma claimed that BJP candidate Suresh Bora would certainly win from the Nagaon parliamentary constituency this time as the voters of the constituency have witnessed the transparent journey of progress and development in



the state as well as in the country under the leadership of PM Narendra Modi.

Taking a dig at the opposition, Sarma said, "During the tenure of Congress, the activities of terrorism, frequent public protests or agitations disrupted the routes of development. Besides, communal clashes or riots took place between Hindus and Muslims in the country. However, since the BJP came into power under PM Narendra Modi such negative feedback slowly disappeared from the scene.³

Elaborating the various welfare schemes sponsored by BJP

ised that within a year, his government will generate another 50,000 new appointments for unemployed youths in the state. We will bear half of the total educational expenditure of male students and the entire expendiconstituency recorded 73.08 per ture of female students," said

Sarma. He however said if PM Narendra Modi is voted to power for the consecutive third term, the government will initiate another 3 crores new PMAY houses for the poor people in the

entire country. During his trip to Nagaon, the chief minister was accompanied by local MLA Rupak Sarma, BJP district president Abhijit Nath, BJP candidate Suresh Bora, district president of Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) Moni Madhav Mahanta and other members of district BJP.

Margherita records 73.08 % voters' turnout in LS polls

ones.

grammes.

HT Correspondent MARGHERITA, April 19: The candidate, Manoj Dhanwar are in the fray for the Dibrugrah parlia-Margherita Legislative Assembly mentary seats.

Gogoi had gained popularity cent of voters' turnout during the across the state in connection first phase of Lok Sabha polls on with the CAA movement on be-Friday. The polling commenced half of the Congress alliance. from 7 am and concluded at 5 pm Manoj Dhanowar, son of late at polling stations in Margherita Congress leader and former Digunder the Dibrugarh Lok Sabha boi MLA Rameshwar Dhanowar has contested in the elections on The total number of voters in behalf of the Aam Aadmi Party. Margherita is 1,69,732, of which While Margherita MLA 82.865 are males and 84.367 are Bhaskar Sharma cast his vote at females. Voting was conducted in the Margherita Public Higher Secondary School, Rajya Sabha MP Pabitra Margherita cast his Lurinjyoti Gogoi, the candidate of the United Opposition vote at the Margherita Segunbary Primary School on Friday. No Forum Assam, Union minister untoward incident was reported and BJP candidate. Sarbananda Sonowal and Aam Aadmi Party in Margherita.

healthy welfare.

Vehicle carrying EVM sinks in river in Lakhimpur

NORTH LAKHIMPUR, April 19: An SUV carrying an electronic voting machine partially sank into a river after water level rose suddenly washing away a mechanised boat that was ferrying the vehicle in the state's Lakhimpur Lok Sabha constituency on Friday, officials said. The driver and the polling officer of the vehicle managed to get out before water gushed into the vehicle, an official said.

It was on its way to Amarpur area in Sadiya to replace an EVM after a technical glitch was detected in it as polling commenced in the morning, the official said.

A quick response team stationed at Sadiya dispatched the SUV with the EVM, accompanied by the driver and an official.

"As the vehicle was being carried by a mechanised boat across the Deopani river, its water level and current suddenly increased. The boat sank under the force of the water, and the vehicle also partially sank,' the official said. "A State Disaster Response Force team was called in to pull the vehicle out of the water. The EVM, meant for replacement was damaged in the accident," he added. (PTI)

Gaurav Gogoi fondly recalls casting NFR operates 88 trips of vote along with father for Jorhat seat summer special trains

194 polling constituencies.

constituency.

HT Correspondent JORHAT, April 19: Indian National Congress (INC) candidate for Jorhat Lok Sabha constituency Gaurav Gogoi, while casting his vote at the DCB Girls' High School here, recalled fond memories of coming to to vote there several times with his late father Taru Gogoi and mother Dolly Gogoi.

Gogoi, who is the sitting Kaliabor (now renamed Kaziranga) MP, went to his family's residence at Nazir Ali here near the polling centre where he paid homage by lighting a lamp before the portrait of his father late, who was the three-time chief minister of the state.

Speaking to the media before casting his vote, he said that he missed his father very much. He said that he sought blessings from his father by praying before his portrait.

"I was drawn toward the political field by the activities of his father. He always guided me in my political journey and advised me on several political aspects," said Gogoi.

The Congress candidate said,



"My father always tried to work for betterment of the general people of and his attitude to serve the society throughout his public life inspires me the most. People of the state bestowed abundant love and affection on my father. I am trying to move in the path he has shown.' Gaurav, while replying to a

query, said that as his mother was not keeping well and was undergoing medical treatment in Delhi she could not come here to cast her vote, but her blessings were with him. HEexpected that people, especially the youths and the first time voters would come out in large numbers to cast their votes.

While replying to another query, the Congress candidate said that he was overwhelmed by the response from the people during campaigning and is hopeful of a positive outcome.

His uncle Dip Gogoi, a former Kaliabor MP, also later cast his vote at the same polling centre. This particular polling station earlier had several VVIP voters, which included former Union minister late Bijoy Krishna Handique and former Assam minister late Abhijit Sharma, who was an AGP minister in the first Prafulla Kumar Mahanta-led AGP Government.

Rajya Sabha BJP MP Kamakhva Prasad Tasa, who is the BJP candidate for the Kaziranga (Earlier Kaliabor) Lok Sabha seat, also had cast his vote at the polling station at Jorhat's Duliagaon.

Besides Gaurav there are three other candidates in the fray in the 14 Jorhat HPC, including Jorhat MP Topon Kumar Gogoi of BJP, Arun Chandra Handique (Ekam Sanatan Bharat Dal) and Raj Kumar Duarah (independent).

special trains during summer

Indian Railways operating 9111 trips of

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, April 19: To ensure the convenience of passengers and manage the anticipated surge in travel demand during summers, Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) will be operating 88 trips of additional trains to ensure smooth and hassel free travel for the passengers.

The Indian Railways is operating a record-breaking 9111 trips of special trains during the summer. This marks a substantial rise compared to the summer of last year, where a total of 6369 trips were offered. This translates to an increase of 2742 trips, demonstrating Indian Railways' commitment to meeting passenger demands effectively.

The additional trains have been meticulously planned to connect key destinations across the country, ensuring seamless travel on major railway routes. All zonal railways spread across India have geared up to operate these additional trips, catering to the summer travel rush from different states.

Under the jurisdiction of NFR, summer special trains are in operation from states like Assam, Tripura and part of West Bengal and Bihar to major destinations spreading all over India.

Planning and running of additional trains is a continuous process for which inputs are taken from all

the communication channels round the clock like media reports, social media platforms, railway integrated helpline number 139, apart from details of waiting list of passengers in PRS system, to assess demand of trains on a particular route. Based on this requirement, the number of trains and the number of trips are augmented. Neither the number of trains nor the number of trips run by additional trains is static for the entire season.

During the summer, availability of drinking water at railway stations for passengers is also being ensured. Elaborate crowd control arrangements are being made at all major and important railway stations. Senior officers are stationed at these stations to monitor all the activities to regulate the crowd in a systematic manner.

RPF personnel have been deputed at originating stations to ensure queue system for entry in general class coaches. Skilled RPF staffs are deployed in CCTV control rooms to keep a close watch on the crowded areas and render real time assistance to passengers. Government Railway Police (GRP) and

Railway Protection Force (RPF) staffs are deployed at foot-over bridges to regulate crowd smoothly inorder to avoid stampede like situation during the heavy rush period.

4

Connecting the dots s the Israeli ag-gression against

QUOTE OF THE DAY

THE HILLS TIMES

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Experience is simply the name we give our mistakes. -Oscar Wilde

Kejriwal's Mango Saga

n recent days, the Enforcement Directorate (ED) has veered into culinary territory, raising eyebrows with its investigation into the lunchbox contents of Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal. The accusation? That Kejriwal, a diabetic, is deliberately indulging in mangoes and sweets, allegedly in a bid to orchestrate a 'sugar-for-bail' scam. This culinary scrutiny has sparked a debate that transcends the confines of a lunchbox. It delves into the realms of personal freedom, medical understanding, and the delicate balance between law enforcement and individual rights. At the heart of the matter lies the assertion that Kejriwal's consumption of mangoes and sweets is a deliberate ploy to manipulate his health condition for legal advantage. However, such a claim seems speculative at best and raises questions about the ED's jurisdiction in matters of dietary discretion. Firstly, the notion that all sweets are off-limits to diabetics is a gross oversimplification. While it's true that managing blood sugar levels is crucial for diabetics, demonizing all sweet foods ignores the nuanced approaches to diabetes management endorsed by medical professionals. With proper monitoring and medication, individuals with diabetes can enjoy certain sweets in moderation. Moreover, the ED's insistence on policing Kejriwal's lunchbox reflects a misplaced prioritization of resources. Instead of focusing on matters of financial misconduct, the agency seems preoccupied with the contents of a single individual's meala task better left to nutritionists than law enforcement.

"The cause of concern is that he was prescribed home cooked food because he claimed he has high diabetes. Kejriwal is eating high sugar content food despite having type 2 diabetes. He is consuming 'aloo poori', mango, and sweets. This is being done to make grounds for medical bail," ED told the court. "He was particularly consuming sweet food which is not permitted for any diabetic patient." The suggestion that Kejriwal's cultural affinity for mangoes and sweets is somehow suspicious is both unfounded and culturally insensitive. As a member of the Agarwal community, known for its culinary traditions rich in sweets. Keiriwal's dietary preferences are deeply ingrained in his cultural identity. To deny him access to these foods is to disregard his cultural heritage and infringe upon his personal autonomy. The ED's attempt to dictate Kejriwal's dietary choices raises broader concerns about the erosion of personal freedoms in the name of law enforcement. While it's important to uphold accountability and transparency in public office, there must also be a recognition of individuals' rights to make choices about their own bodies, particularly when it comes to matters as intimate as food. In light of these considerations, it's imperative that the courts exercise prudence and uphold Kejriwal's right to enjoy the food prepared by his wife, Sunitha Kejriwal. The court's decision to grant him 'GharKaKhana' is a testament to the recognition of his basic human needs, including the comfort and nourishment provided by home-cooked meals.

Ultimately, the focus should shift away from scrutinizing Kejriwal's lunchbox and towards addressing more pressing issues facing the nation. As the political landscape evolves and new challenges emerge, it's crucial that law enforcement agencies prioritize their efforts effectively, leaving matters of personal choice and cultural heritage beyond their purview. In the case of Arvind Kejriwal, let him enjoy his mangoes in peace. After all, in a democracy, even politicians deserve the freedom to savour life's simple pleasures.

A gression against Palestine entered its seventh month, the world witnessed a number of unrelated events or proclamations adopted by the western powers to get the genocide stopped in Palestine. Though at the first glance, most of these incidents seems unrelated but at closer scrutiny we find that these are related to one another and are playing or may play a definitive role in getting the conflict resolved.

Let's try to analyse and see for ourselves how these unrelated incidents are related and have a bearing on the on-going conflict

The first event, on the last day of March saw at the ground level the increasing protests against the Benjamin Netanyahuled government in Israel. On 30th March, tens of thousands of Israelis gath-

ered across Tel Aviv and other occupied cities for protests against their Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu. For the first time, the families of the Israeli pris-

oners being held by the resistance in Gaza, who normally hold separate rallies, joined the massive crowds of anti-government protesters - whose movement initially started with the prime minister's

controversial overhaul initiative last year. After nearly six months of war, hostages' families join with anti-government rallies. Demonstrators also clashed with police in

Jerusalem, where around 200 rampaged through police barricades in order to outside Neprotest tanyahu's home in the occupied holy city. În occupied Caesaria,



matic and political overtures on the continuing conflict. Historically, there has been broad bipartisan support in the US for Israel. judicial

But the situation in Gaza has evolved into divided opinion, in the US - a significant section of Americans is now critical of both Israel's action, and the full US backing for it. Though at the ground level US President Joe Biden seems to be supporting the Israeli govern-

ment but at the political level, he is seen trying protesters were arrested hard to win over the Muswhile cutting off roads lim population and even

the younger American population who stand against the Israeli aggression, and who mat tilt the scales against him in the presidential elections. Despite an overall dis-

approval rate of 57% among registered voters towards President Biden's handling of the conflict, it Council is particularly noteworthy

> DEGREE OF THOUGHT exthe Asad Mirza

were used to block resolutions condemning Israel. reveals that a significant Between 1991 and 72% of voters aged 18-29 2011, of the 24 vetoes cast disapprove of President by the United States, 15

The on-going conflict in Palestine has revealed the intricate cobweb

of false promises, ambiguous stands and false jubilations by the

western nations on adopting a hollow UN resolution

Biden's efforts in managwere specifically eming the situation. ployed to shield Israel Thirdly, due to this reafrom censure. However son the US felt it was pothis time. US and Biden litically prudent to not use administration has not backed Israel and allowed

its veto to block the call for an immediate ceasefire the resolution to pass. at the United Nations. In fact, only a couple of days earlier, the US itself had sought to move a resolution calling for a cease-

fire and release of hostages, which was ve-

toed by Russia, which presidents Bill Clinton found some of the language unacceptable. We should also note that historically, the United States has provided significant political support to Israel, frequently exercising its veto power at the United Nations Security

stances

where the

US has used

power, 42

veto

its

and Barrack Obama. Perhaps thinking foolishly that Hussein Obama

may be able to win over the Arab Americans. But in reality demonstrators harangued the trio.

Winning over Arab Americans is important in the context of the presidential election in November. For President Joe Biden, the Arab and Muslim vote, as well as the vote from the Democratic Party's left wing, are crucial - and these voters have been critical of Israel. Swing states like Michi-

gan and Wisconsin (both of which were won by Biden in 2020) have significant Muslim populations, and will be crucial for the President in his likely re-match with Donald Trump. Also, many Arab coun-

Politically, to rally the Muslim population to his tries, some of which are campaign, Biden held a important partners to the fund raising event in New US, are growing increas-York to target the Musingly concerned at Israel's lim/Arab Americans votactions. In reality, the US has ers along with former

taken this position at the UN in a very specific situation. Its leaders remain invested in the broader US-Israel relationship. They do not identify all of Israel with Netanyahu, whose relations with the current US administration have deteriorated significantly.

Earlier this month, Senate majority leader Chuck Schumer described Netanyahu as an obstacle to peace, and called for early elections in Israel - this is the line that the Democrats are taking, distancing themselves from the ruling dispensation and their political choices, but not necessarily from Israel.

So Biden's outreach to American Muslims and the US' support to the UN resolution should not be seen in isolation, but together, as a ploy by Biden to win over his supporters and critics. In addition, young American voters, who see this war as unnecessary and criticise Biden and Democrats for it, also have to be won over by Biden.

Meanwhile, hours after Biden's early-April statement, the Washington Post reported that his government had signed off on adbombs and ditional warplanes for Israel in recent days worth billions of dollars

This shows the real face of the US-Israel relationship.When we start connecting the dots then we realise that come what may, US will continue to support Israel overtly and covertly, and foil any plans, which might be able to establish peace in the region. As the ME region on the boil serves the trade, defence and political aims of the US. (The author is a Delhi-based senior political and international affairs commen-

Uniform ivil ode and bullet wounds

By: Kanchan Basu

¬ arlier the month of February 2024, the state of Ut-tarakhand passed, with much fanfare, what it calls the Uttarakhand Uniform Civil Code (UCC). The Uttarakhand UCC is popularly believed to be a statelevel precursor to a larger-scale, potentially nationwide attempt to

was meant to provide a legal gateway to marriage for interfaith or inter-caste couples, whose union might not be sanctioned by their relevant personal laws. However, the Special Marriage Act also has a set of provisions called "the notice and objection regime".

According to these provisions, notice of an impending marriage under the SMA must be provided to the registrar in advance, who - in turn – is required to enter it into a register, as well as display it prominently outside his office. The SMA also authorises any person to make an objection to the impending marriage, and puts the marriage on hold until the registrar decides the objection.

has outsourced the work of coercion to society - and socially powerful groups - through legal devices such as the notice and objection regime, and Uttarakhand's registration requirement. The State thus facilitates social pressure, bullying, and intimida-

tion, and tries to accomplish indirectly what it cannot forbid directly. On the afternoon of February 8, Aman Hussain's brother Anas, a student of Class VIII, was not at home when violence broke out in Haldwani, the largest city in Kumaon region of Uttarakhand, and a gateway to Nainital, one of the most populated hill stations of north India. Worried that Anas would get caught in the melee, his father Zahid Hussain, a 48year-old construction material supplier, went looking for him. 'Minutes later, our neighbours told us that my father was lying in a pool of blood," recalls Aman. "I took him to a clinic nearby. My stomach turned when I saw Anas lying there on a stretcher with a bullet injury below his waist.' That evening, Anas and Zahid bled to death. They were two of the four people who died dur ing the violence that day. A fifth victim, who had been shot, succumbed to injuries days later. Leading up to the deaths was a single event. A few hours earlier, on that cool afternoon in the foothills of the Himalavas, municipal authorities proceeded towards the Banbhoolpura area with bulldozers and other heavy machinery to demol- ish the Mariyam mosque and the Abdul Razzaq Zakariya madrasa. Scores of angry residents, in cluding children, gathered at the spot to protest against the demolition. The two structures were built decades ago on government land in an area popularly known as Malik Ka Baghicha, which, the authorities alleged, had been encroached on by a contractor named Abdul Malik The officials claimed that the demolition was taking place as part of an ongoing "anti-en-croachment drive". The stated aim of the drive was to free acres of Nazool land in order to broa den roads or build schools and bus stops. Nazool lands once belonged to kings and were later taken over by the British. After Independence, the British vacated these lands, but as there was no proper documentation of many parcels, they came to be owned by the government.

Nazool land is often leased out to entities for 15 to 99 years for public purposes. Uttarakhand has over 2.42 crore square metres of Nazool land.

The district administration claimed that the structures under their scrutiny were not registered as a mosque and school and were illegal. They contended that

lice for interrogation or have run away fearing arrest. The women have stayed.

Hina Bibi, 24, is six months pregnant. She runs from lane to lane asking for cooking gas. The paramilitary forces guard every corner and she cannot take the risk of violating the curfew as she has left her two-year-old

Nazool land. We will not bow down to rioters," he says. Condemning the violence,

Sumit Hridayesh, the Congress MLA from Haldwani, says everyone involved in the violence must be punished. He alleges that the district administration and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led State gov-

no Nazool land in Haldwani. Now it has demolished the mosque and madrasa saying the land is Nazool," he says.

According to an interim factfinding report published by the advocacy group Association for Protection of Civil Rights, Muslims across the State are being targeted. The members of the

Out of a total of 83 instrongest objections. A recent The Times/Siena survey

put into place a "uniform civil code". The exact contours and nature of this Code have been contentious and long-debated: even in the context of Uttarakhand, experts have questioned how "uniform" it is, given that it excludes the Scheduled Tribes (STs) from its ambit, and also leaves the Hindu Undivided Family (HUF) untouched. It is evident, therefore, that the contention around this project is far from over.

That apart, however, there is one feature of the Uttarakhand UCC that has attracted particular scrutiny, especially when set against the claim that a UCC is essential to advance the claim that a UCC is essential to advance the rights of women – the regulation of "live-in relationships" (or, as euphemistically defined under Indian law, "a relationship in the nature of marriage"). The law requires live-in partners to notify the registrar about the relationship within 30 days of entering into it, following which the registrar is expected to conducted an investigation, and formally register the relationship if everything is above board. Failure to notify the registrar carries criminal sanctions.

This provision has naturally, attracted mockery and derision, with people wondering how it will ever be possible to enforce a law seeking to regulate something as fluid as a relationship. Others have raised serious concerns about the infringement upon the right to privacy, and pointed out how this law will be used as a weapon of harassment. These concerns are well-taken. However, it is crucial to understand that the Uttarakhand UCC is only the latest in a series of laws - going back to colonial times – that have sought to enlist the services of both the State's coercive apparatus, as well as social pressure, to drive "disapproved" relationships beyond the pale.

Consider, for example, the Special Marriage Act (SMA) of 1954. The Special Marriage Act

The "notice and objection regime" is borrowed from English matrimonial law, where the basic idea was to prevent fraudulent or otherwise illegal marriages from being solemnised (for example, if one of the parties is lying about their age). In the context of India, however, it has become a weapon of abuse, especially in cases where an interfaith or inter-caste couple is marrying against the wishes of their families. The SMA's notice and objection regime's forced publicity thus provides fillip for social pressure, intimidation, and even violence. It hits precisely those vulnerable and marginalised couples who are most in

need of the law's protection. During the recent hearings before the Supreme Court on marriage equality - where the present writer was also involved - the notice and objection regime was challenged. It was pointed out that granting marriage equality to same-sex couples would be meaningless if they were, nonetheless, subjected to the coercive framework of the notice and objection regime. Regrettably, however, the Supreme Court refused to decide the issue one way or another.

The Uttarakhand UCC, therefore, is best understood as a continuation of an existing legal framework, rather than something new and unprecedented. Indian law has long looked down on socially "unsanctioned" relationships – whether inter-faith, inter-caste, or live-in – and has sought to penalise individuals who enter into such relationships

Because it is no longer acceptable for the State to directly ban such relationships, in essence, it

they had sent notices to the "encroachers", giving them an opportunity to prove ownership of the land. When ownership could not be proved, the authorities decided to proceed with the demolition "as per due process," they said

The police, who were accompanying the officials, managed to disperse the crowd. The demolition began and the structures, one painted green and the other cream, turned into rubble.

Minutes later, violence broke out. The police claim that the residents began throwing stones, while the men and women allege that the police began to lathicharge them. Violence surged and the mob allegedly set fire to a police station. Dozens of vehicles, both government and private, were burnt and around 100 police personnel were injured. Several civilians received bullet, stone, and cane injuries.

To maintain law and order, the authorities imposed a curfew in the area which includes at least 8,000 homes and 50,000 people. They is- sued shoot-at-sight orders. Paramilitary forces were deployed, forcing residents, including those whose relatives had been admitted in hospital, to remain confined within their homes. Three First Information Reports (FIR) were filed and unidentified people 5.000 booked for rioting and arson. Malik was named as the main accused.

A deserted city:

Days after the violence, there are charred vehicles in every second lane of Banbhoolpura. The windows of the mostly small, single-storey, and poorly constructed houses are cracked or bro- ken. The lanes are deserted. The stench from the ditches, which have not been cleaned, has forced everyone to cover their faces.

The district administration says the area has been cleaned and essential supplies provided to people. Most houses are locked from the outside; their occupants fled Haldwani when the violence broke out. Many men have been picked up by the pochild at home.

Anam Ali, 28, is inconsolable. She holds the hand of one child and carries the second in her arms. Anam alleges that the police barged into her house on February 10, two days after violence broke out in Haldwani, thrashed her husband Rizwan, and took him away. She has neither seen nor heard of him since. "Please ask them to take me as well," she pleads while sobbing. 'My husband is innocent. I can't live without him."

Firoza, whose nephew Mohd Shoib was beaten by the police, claims that the participants in the violence were not residents of Banbhoolpura.

At Abid Siddiqui's singlestorey house, located 200 metres from the demolition spot, a paper pasted on the door announces that he saved the pas life of a constable. Lakshmi, who was attacked by the mob on February 8. It also provides her phone number. "I had saved the life of the constable when a mob was beating her up. She was bleeding profusely. I pulled her into my house, gave her first aid, and helped her rejoin her squad after the situation was brought under control. I had to paste this paper on the wall after the police attempted to pick me up as well," says Abid. He alleges that police action against men, women, and children continued for days after the violence.

Taking a communal turn:

Pankaj Upadhyay, the municipal commissioner of Haldwani who was transferred to Udham Singh Nagar days before the violence, says the an-ti-encroachment drive will continue. He believes that the violence was aimed at challenging the state machinery.

"Those who are calling the demolition an attack on a particular community must know that our drive to free Nazool land has been going on since May 2023. We have demolished over 250 structures, including temples, shops, and houses. We razed the famous Rokhariya Baba temple in January. In Metropole, we demolished 164 houses built on

ernment are unnecessarily play ing politics over the incident.

"I heard some officials saying that the violence was an attempt to threaten the State which had passed the Uniform Civil Code (UCC) a day earlier. I found this vague and irresponsible. Why would only Haldwani's Banbhoolpura, which has many Hindus, and no other place in the State have a problem with the UCC?" Hridayesh feels that the administration was playing with religious sentiments by going ahead with the demolition of the

mosque without taking religious leaders into confidence. The violence, which the administration insists is not com-

munal, has taken a communal turn in other parts of the city. Nawab Khan, 48, who rented a house in the Chaupla Chaumalla area, says he was threatened to vacate the house by a resident named Manu Goswami, who aims to be a politician. "Manu told me that Muslims will not be allowed to live in Hindu-dominated areas. My children have exams. Where will I go on such short notice?" Khan was finally forced to move out of the place on February 15 as the police issued a challan to his landlord. Goswami says he harbours no ill-feeling to- wards Khan, but if a Muslim lives in an area dominated by Hindus, "it will create tension"

Ahrar Baig, a lawyer practising in the Uttarakhand High Court, says that Banbhoolpura has been a "target" for some time. Last year, about 4,000 families, mostly Muslims and Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes living in a 2 km stretch along the railway track in Banbhoolpura, were served eviction notices by the Indian Railways on the orders of the High Court. The Railways claimed that the houses had been built illegally on its land. After weeks of protest, the residents moved the Supreme Court. The matter is now sub judice.

Ahrar Baig is representing many families in this case. "During that time, the government told the High Court that there is body visited Haldwani on February 14, and concluded that the violence was a result of "a steady rise in communal tempers...over recent years."

It went on to say, "The State government...and radical right wing citizen groups have together contributed to a highly polarising narrative.... One strand of this discourse is about creating Uttarakhand as a Devbhoomi. the holv land for Hindus, which would have no place for other religious minorities.

Other strands of this divisive discourse include unsupported extravagant claims of a series of jihads allegedly waged by the Muslim population of the State including love jihad, land jihad, vyapar jihad, and mazaar jihad. One consequence of this discourse has been calls for economic and social boycotts of Muslims."

In 2023, Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami launched a State-wide drive to remove encroachments from forest land under which over 500 mazaars (Muslim shrines) were demolished. The government says scores of temples were also razed. Dhami stated a few days after the incident in Haldwani that the situation was under control and a police station would come up at the demolition site. Those who suffer:

In the medicine ward of the Sushila Tiwari government medical college, Shahnawaz Ahmed sits next to his brother Sarfaraz, 26, who was shot in the chest on February 8. Sarfaraz, a tailor, had gone to deliver clothes to a client near the demolition site when the incident took place.

Five days since he brought Sarfaraz to the hospital, Shahnawaz has been wearing the same blood-soaked clothes. In his hurry, he forgot his wallet. He barely has money to buy clothes or even eat two meals. He sleeps on the floor with- out a blanket every night. "It is only the poor who get punished every time. whether during a pandemic or an incident of violence," he says. "It is better to die than to be poor in India.

JOBS & CAREER

Understanding Actuarial Common Entrance Test

By: Ranjan K Baruah

SATURDAY, APRIL 20, 2024

e are very much familiar with words like insurance, life cover, term insurance, accidental insurance, general insurance, etc. This area is purely related with finance and money and there are many scopes in the field of finance. One of the terms which we must know from the career perspective is 'actuary'.

It means a person qualified to calculate financial and commercial impact and valuation of uncertainty and risk of future events by using advanced techniques and models based on future scenarios under financial, economic, social, demographic, technology and probabilistic situations.

Actuaries are experts in as-

sessing the financial impact of uncertain events of future times. They use data science and data analytics techniques and build financial models to project future risks and uncertainties based on the assumptions on historical trends and future projections. In short, Actuaries make financial sense for the future. Traditionally Actuaries work

in the area of Insurance where risk and uncertainty is at highest levels. Within the Insurance domain, Actuaries are involved in product design and pricing, valuation of liabilities and reserves, asset liability management, research and analysis.

Actuaries also play a key role in the valuation of Pensions, Annuities, Employee Benefits, Social Security, Health Benefits, Government Schemes and In-



vestments

To be part of these professions students may appear in Actuarial Common Entrance Test which would be conducted on 4th May. "Actuarial Common Entrance Test" is applicable to the candidates who plan to enroll as student members of the Institute of Actuaries of India and wish to

take actuarial examinations. Actuarial skills are becoming relevant for risk management at banks, application of data science and data analytical techniques across the industries, measurement of cyber risks, management and measurement of climate risks and valuation of future assets and liabilities.

Eligibility Criteria to appear in this exam is students who have appeared 10+2 or an equivalent examination and waiting for the result; a candidate who have passed 10+2 or any other higher courses/examinations; finance, or any other stream, but have love for Mathematics and skills in Numeracy; engineering, management, Chartered Accountant, Cost Accountant, Company Secretary, etc . ACET Examination is conducted only in India and ACET result is valid for 3 years from the date of declaration of the exam result for taking student membership of IAI.

ACET is a 3 hour, 100 marks online exam which has 70 multiple choice questions with one correct answer for each question. The distribution of questions will be: (i) 45 questions – 1 mark

each; (ii) 20 questions – 2 marks each and (iii) 05 questions – 3 marks each. The Allocation of Marks will be as under: (i) Mathematics - 30 marks, (ii) Statistics - 30 marks. (iii) Data Interpretation - 15 marks, (iv) English - 15 marks, Logical Reasoning - 10 marks. There will not be any negative marking for incorrect answers

Syllabus in Mathematics includes -Notation and standard functions, Numerical Methods, Algebra, Differentiation, Integration, etc. The syllabus in Statistics includes permutations and combinations, types of data, statistical diagrams, bar chart, histogram, dot plot, stem-and-leaf, box plot, etc.

Syllabus in English includes vocabulary Based (Synonyms Antonyms), English Usage or grammar, sentence correction, fill in the blanks, etc

Institute of Actuaries of India (IAI): IAI is a statutory body established under The Actuaries Act 2006 (35 of 2006) for regulation of the profession of Actuaries in India.

The provisions of the said Act have come into force from 10th dav of November 2006, in terms of the notification dated 8th November 2006, issued by the Government of India in the Ministry of Finance, Department of Economic Affairs.(With direct inputs from the IAI's website) (The author is the Advisor of Skill Employment and Entrepreneurship Department of Bodoland Territorial Region, Kokrajhar and can be reached 8473943734 at or bkranjan@gmail.com)

UPSC CMS Examination 2024 – Gauhati High Court Recruitment Action Northeast Trust Recruitment 2024 – 8 Law Clerk Posts 827 Vacancy, Apply Online - Thematic Lead Post Last Date: 25/04/2024

Gauhati High Court has released an employment notification for the recruitment of 8 Law Clerk Posts in the Principal Seat of the Gauhati High Court. Interested and eligible candidates may apply online.

Name of post: Law Clerk No of posts: 8 posts Pay: ₹ 30,000 per month

Educational Qualification: Candidate must be a Graduate/ Post Graduate in Law or Doctorate in Law from any recognized University in India. Candidate must possess the educational qualification as on the last date of application.

Other Criteria of Gauhati High Court Recruitment

Age Limit: Candidate's age should not be more than 40 years as on 25th April 2024

- Age Relaxation: Category-wise age relaxation is as mentioned below. # OBC/ MOBC: 3 years
- # SC: 5 years
- **# STP/ ŠTH:** 5 years

Preference: Candidates practicing at the Bar or having professional experience or literary works in Law to their credit would get preference.

Employment Exchange Certificate: The candidate must have a valid Employment Exchange Registration Number for the State of Assam.

Application Fee of Gauhati High Court Recruitment

Candidates have to pay the application as mentioned below according to their caste:

<u>Category</u> SC/ ST	Application Fee
PWD	Rs.250 Nil
Others	Rs.500

Important Dates of Gauhati High Court Recruitment 2024 # Starting date for submission of online application: 5th April 2024 # Last date for submission of online application: 25th April 2024 till 5 PM # Last date for payment of fees: 30th April 2024, Till bank transaction hours

DC Sonitpur Recruitment 2024 – **26 Junior Assistant & MTS Posts**

Last Date: 25/04/2024

Last Date: 27/04/2024.

The ant (the action northeast trust) Rowmari, Chirang has released an employment notification for the recruitment of 1 Health and Wellbeing Thematic Lead post. Interested and eligible candidates may apply online.

Name of post: Health and Wellbeing Thematic Lead

No of posts: 1

Preferred: Women and other identities

Pay: ₹ 35,000 to ₹ 40,000 pm

Educational Qualification: Preferably Masters in Public Health and Epidemiology. Experience: Minimum 5 years experience in managing projects and people.

Requirements:

Regular formatted interaction with all stakeholders including partner NGOs, Psychiatrists, MOs, patients.

Knowledge of project cycle elements, project proposal development, monitoring and evaluation.

Regular client/patient satisfaction feedback.

Increasing range of services, counselling, ensuring compliance of legal necessities like monthly tally of drugs in physical vs electronic records, drug storage, patient confidentiality, prescription and system audits, besides usual supervisory responsibilities for man-money-material management

Knowledge of computer knowledge with excellent command on MS Excel, and other database and statistical applications (Epi Info, STATA, etc) # Excellent fluency in English both verbal and written.

Teamwork, adaptability, Coordination & good interpersonal skills.

How to Apply for Action Northeast Trust Recruitment ? Send your resume with a cover letter to recruitment@theant.org

Last date to apply: 27th April, 2024.

About the ant:

The ant is part of the voluntary sector and is registered as a Public Charitable Trust since October 2000. The ant works in over 1000 villages in Chirang and Udalguri district of Assam Bodoland. It's work spreads across in the villages in the following thematic areas to promote the rights and development of children, Education, Sports and intercultural exchanges, Empowering women and girls, Community Media Unit, Livelihood, Mental Illness Treatment Alliance (MITA), Capacity building of voluntary sector in the Northeast and Aagor Daagra Afad.

UPSC IES/ ISS Recruitment 2024 – Economic

Last Date: 30/04/2024

Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) has released an employment notification for the recruitment of 827 Assistant Divisional Medical Officer, General Duty Medical Officer & Other posts through Combined Medical Services (CMS) Examination 2024. Interested and eligible candidates may apply online.

Name of exam: Combined Medical Services Examination 2024 No of posts: 827 posts

Category-wise vacancy:

General Duty Medical Officers Sub-cadre of Central Health Service: 163 # Assistant Divisional Medical Officer in the Railways: 450 # GDMO (New Delhi Municipal Council): 14 # General Duty Medical Gr.-II (Municipal Corporation of Delhi): 200

Eligibility Criteria of UPSC CMS Examination

Age Limit: A candidate for this examination must not have attained the age of 32 years as on 1st August, 2024 i.e. the candidate must have been born not earlier than 2nd August, 1992. However, for Medical Officers Grade in General Duty Medical Officers Sub-cadre of Central Health Services, the upper age limit must not exceed 35 (thirty-five years) as on 1st August, 2024.

Age Relaxation: The category-wise age relaxation is as mentioned below.

- # SC/ST: 5 years
- **# OBC:** 3 years
- # **PWD:** 10 years

Educational Qualification: Candidate should have passed both the written and practical parts of the final M.B.B.S. Examination.

Physical and Medical Standards: Candidates must be physically and medically fit according to the physical/ medical standards for the Combined Medical Services Examination, 2024 as per regulations.

Application Fee: Candidates (Excepting Female/SC/ST/PwBD candidates who are exempted from payment of fee) are required to pay of fee of ₹ 200 (Rupees Two Hundred only) either by depositing the money in any Branch of SBI by cash or by using net banking facility of State Bank of India or by using Visa/ Master/ RuPay Credit/ Debit Card/ UPI Payment or by using Internet Banking of SBI.

Important Dates of UPSC CMS Recruitment 2024 # Starting date of submission of online application: 10th April 2024 # Last date of submission of online application: 30th April 2024

AAI Recruitment 2024 – 490 Junior **Executive Posts, Online Apply**

THE HILLS TIMES 5

Office of the District Commissioner, Sonitpur has released advertisement for recruitment of 26 Grade-III and Grade-IV posts in the cadre of Junior Assistant and Multi Tasking Staff in the newly constructed Tea Garden Model Schools of Sonitpur District. Interested and eligible candidates may apply.

1. Junior Assistant (Grade-III)

No of posts: 13 (Thirteen)

Scale of Pay: Pay Band-2 ₹ 14,000 – 70,000, Grade Pay - ₹ 5,600. Educational Qualification: Candidates must have passed Bachelors Degree from any stream (Arts/Science/Commerce) from any recognized university. Computer Skills: Candidates must have minimum 6 (Six) months Diploma in Computer Application.

2. Multi Tasking Staff (Grade-IV)

No of posts: 13 (Thirteen) Scale of Pay: Pay Band-1 ₹ 12,000 – 52,000, Grade Pay- ₹ 3,900. Educational Qualification: Candidates must have passed Class VIII from any recognized institute.

Other Criteria of DC Sonitpur Recruitment

Age Limit: Candidates age must be minimum 18 Years and not more than 40 years as on 01st January 2024.

Age Relaxation: Permissible relaxations in upper age limit for different categories are as under:

SC/ ST: 5 years **# OBC/MOBC:** 3 years # PwBD: 10 years **# Ex-Servicemen:** 2 years

Nationality: The candidate should be a citizen of India and a permanent resident of Assam.

Employment Exchange Registration: Applicant must be registered in Employment Exchange.

Application Fee: Candidates need not pay any application fee.

How to Apply for DC Sonitpur Recruitment ?

Interested and eligible candidates may apply in Standard Form of Application as published in Assam Gazette in Part-IX. Duly filled application along with other documents may be sent by post or by hand to the following address. Office of the District Commissioner, Sonitpur. Sealed envelope should be superscribed with post applied for.

Documents to be enclosed:

a) Age proof (Birth Certificate/ HSLC Admit etc.) b) Proof of Educational Qualification - Highest Examination Passed Certificate. c) All marksheets from HSLC onward (only for Grade-III) d) Caste Certificate if Applicable. e) Employment Exchange Registration proof. f) 2 passport Size recent Photographs without any wearable. g) Proof of Residence (PRC/ Voter ID etc.) h) Computer Diploma / Degree Certificate (Only for Grade-III)

Important Dates of Sonitpur Recruitment 2024 # Starting date to apply: 15th March 2024

Last date to apply: 25th April 2024, up to 5 PM

Service/ Statistical Service Examination

Last Date: 30/04/2024

Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) has released a notification for the recruitment of 48 vacancy against Indian Economic Service (IES)/ Indian Statistical Service (ISS) Examination 2024. Interested and eligible candidates may apply online.

Name of Exam: Indian Economic Service/ Indian Statistical Service Examination 2024

No of posts: 48 posts

Examination wise vacancy:

Indian Economic Service: 18 # Indian Statistical Service: 30

Eligibility Criteria of UPSC IES/ ISS Recruitment

Age Limit: A candidate must have attained the age of 21 years and must not have attained the age of 30 years on 1st August, 2024 i.e he/she must have been born not earlier than 2nd August, 1994 and not later than 1st August, 2003.

Age Relaxation: The category-wise age relaxation is as mentioned below.

SC/ST: 5 years **# OBC:** 3 years # PWD: 10 years

Educational Qualification:

Indian Economic Service: A candidate for the Indian Economic Service must have obtained a Post-Graduate Degree in Economics/Applied Economics/Business Economics/Econometrics from a University incorporated by of an Act of the Central or State Legislature in India or other Educational Institutes established by an Act Parliament or declared to be deemed as University under Section 3 of the University Grants Commission Act, 1956 or a Foreign University approved by the Central Government from time to time.

Indian Statistical Service: A candidate for the Indian Statistical Service must have obtained a Bachelor's Degree with Statistics/Mathematical Statistics/Applied Statistics as one of the subject or a Master's degree in Statistics/Mathematical Statistics/Applied Statistics from a University incorporated by an Act of the Central or State Legislature in India or other Educational Institutes established by an Act of Parliament or declared to be deemed as University under Section 3 of the University Grants Commission Act, 1956 or a Foreign University approved by the Central Government from time to time.

Physical Standards: Candidates must be physically fit according to physical standard for admission to Indian Economic Service/ Indian Statistical Service Examination, 2024 as per Regulations given in Appendix III of the rules for the Indian Economic Service/ Indian Statistical Service Examination, 2024 published in Gazette of India dated 10th April, 2024.

Application Fee: Candidates (excepting Female/ SC/ ST/ Persons with Benchmark Disability Candidates who are exempted from payment of fee) are required to pay fee of ₹ 200 (Rupees Two Hundred only) either by remitting the money in any Branch of State Bank of India or by using Visa/ Master/ RuPay Credit/ Debit Card/ UPI or by using Internet Banking of any Bank.

Important Dates of UPSC IES/ ISS Recruitment 2024 # Starting Date to Apply Online: 10th April 2024 # Closing Date to Apply Online: 30th April 2024

Last Date: 01/05/2024.

Airports Authority of India (AAI) has released an employment notification for the recruitment of 490 Junior Executive (Civil, Electrical, Electronics, IT & Architecture) posts through GATE 2024 in Airports Authority of India. Interested and eligible candidates may apply online.

Name of post: Junior Executive No of posts: 490 posts

Discipline-wise vacancy:

Architecture: 3 # Civil Engineering: 90 # Electrical Engineering: 106 # Electronics: 278 **# Information Technology:** 13

Pay Scale: ₹ 40000-3% - 140000

Educational Qualification: Discipline-wise educational qualification is as mentioned below

Architecture: Bachelor's degree in Architecture and registered with Council of Architecture

Civil Engineering: Bachelor's Degree in Engineering/ Technology in Civil.

Electrical Engineering: Bachelor's Degree in Engineering/ Technology in Electrical.

Electronics: Bachelor's Degree in Engineering/ Technology in Electronics/ Telecommunications / Electrical with specialization in Electronics.

Information Technology: Bachelor's Degree in Engineering/ Technical in Computer Science/ Computer Engineering/IT/ Electronics OR Masters in Computer Application (MCA).

Other Criteria of AAI Recruitment

Nationality: Only Indian Nationals fulfilling eligibility criteria shall apply for the above posts.

Age Limit: The candidates' age shall be maximum 27 years as on 01/05/2024.

Age Relaxation: Category-wise age relaxation is as mentioned below .

OBC/ NCL: 3 years **# SC:** 5 years **# ST:** 5 years **# PWD:** 10 years

GATE Score: Candidates must have a valid GATE score in respective GATE 2024 test Paper.

Application Fee:

SC/ST/Female/ Apprentice: Nil # **Others:** ₹ 300 # PWD: Nil # Payment mode: Online

Important Dates of AAI Vacancy 2024 # Starting date of submission of online application: 2nd April 2024 # Last date of submission of online application: 1st May 2024

World

SATURDAY, APRIL 20, 2024

US vetoes Palestinian bid to gain statehood at the United Nations

UNITED NATIONS, April 19: The US has vetoed a resolution in the UN Security Council on the latest Palestinian bid to be granted full membership of the United Nations, an outcome lauded by Israel but criticised by Palestine as "unfair, immoral, and unjustified"

The 15-nation Council voted on a draft resolution on Thursday that would have recommended to the 193-member UN General Assembly "that the State of Palestine be admitted to membership in the United Nations.'

The resolution got 12 votes in its favour, with Switzerland and the UK abstaining and the US casting its veto.

To be adopted, the draft resolution required at least nine Council members voting in its favour, with no vetoes by any of its five permanent members - China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States.

Palestinian attempts for recognition as a full member state began in 2011. Palestine is currently a non-member observer state, a status that was granted in November 2012 by the UN General Assembly. This status allows Palestine to participate in proceedings of the world body but it cannot vote on resolutions. The only other non-member Observer State at the UN is the Holy See, representing the Vatican. Israel's Foreign Minister Israel Katz from direct negopraised the US for vetoing what he called tiations between

a "shameful proposal." the "The proposal to recognise a Palestin-Wood said there ian state, more than 6 months after the are "unresolved largest massacre of Jews since the Holoquestions" as to caust and after the sexual crimes and whether Palestine other atrocities committed by Hamas termeets the criteria to be considered rorists was a reward for terrorism", Katz wrote on X, after the US veto. a State.

US Ambassador Robert Wood, Alternacalled on the tive Representative for Special Political Affairs, said in the explanation of the vote Palestinian Auat the Security Council meeting on Palesthority to undertinian membership that Washington contake necessary reforms to help establish tinues to strongly support a two-state the attributes of readiness for statehood solution. and note that Hamas - a terrorist organi-

"It remains the US view that the most expeditious path toward statehood for the Palestinian people is through direct negotiations between Israel and the Palestinian Authority with the support of the United States and other partners," he said. "This vote does not reflect opposition

sation - is currently exerting power and

influence in Gaza, an integral part of the

state envisioned in this resolution," he

parties."

"We have long

Wood noted that since the October 7 atto Palestinian statehood, but instead is an tacks last year against Israel by Hamas, acknowledgement that it will only come US President Joe Biden has been clear

01 60 A

Council resolution."

that sustainable peace in the region can only be achieved through a two-state solution, with Israel's security guaranteed.

said, adding that "For these reasons, the

United States voted "no" on this Security

"There is no other path that guarantees Israel's security and future as a democratic Jew-

ish state. There is no other path that guarantees Palestinians can live in peace and with dignity in a state of their own. And there is no other path that leads to regional integration between Israel and all its Arab neighbours, including Saudi Arabia," he

Mahmoud Abbas, sharply criticised the US veto, saying that it was "unfair, immoral, and unjustified, and defies the will of the international community, which strongly supports the State of Palestine obtaining full membership in the United Nations.

of the State of Palestine, said that "our "Our right to self-determination is a

mination is inalienable...," he said.

made the remarks, Mansour said that a majority of the Council members "have risen to the level of this historic moment" and have stood "on the side of justice, freedom and hope."

He asserted that Palestine's admission as a full member of the UN is an "invest-

ment in peace." On April 2, 2024, Palestine again sent a letter to UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres requesting that its application for full UN membership be considered again.

For a State to be granted full UN membership, its application must be approved both by the Security Council and the General Assembly, where a two-thirds majority of the members present and voting is required for the State to be admitted as a full member

Earlier in the day, Guterres, in his remarks to a Council meeting on the Middle East, warned that the region is on a "knife edge". "Recent escalations make it even more important to support good-faith efforts to find lasting peace between Israel and a fully independent, viable and sovereign Palestinian state," Guterres said.

"Failure to make progress towards a two-state solution will only increase volatility and risk for hundreds of millions of people across the region, who will continue to live under the constant threat of violence," he said. (AP)

The warplanes were seen around the time loud noises and drones

groups backed by Iran - carried out a cross-border attack that killed

Israel responded with an offensive in Gaza that has caused wide-

spread devastation and killed more than 33,900 people, according to

2 suspects detained in Poland

,200 people in Israel and kidnapped 250 others.

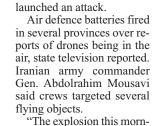
Iran has fired air defenses at a major air base and a nuclear site near the central city of Isfahan after spotting drones

Israel targets air defense system Iran fires at suspected Israeli attack drones in Syria, state news agency says near Isfahan air base and nuclear site JERUSALEM, April 19: Israel carried out a missile strike targeting an air defense unit in its south and causing material damage, Syria's state-run SANA news agency quoted a military statement as saying on Friday.

DUBAI, April 19: Iran fired air defences at a major air base and a nuclear site early on Friday morning near the central city of Isfahan after spotting drones, which were suspected to be part of an Israeli attack in retaliation for Tehran's unprecedented drone-and-missile assault on the country.

No Iranian official directly acknowledged the possibility that Israel attacked, and the Israeli military did not respond to a request for comment. However, tensions have been high since the Saturday assault on Israel amid its war on Hamas in the Gaza Strip and its own strikes targeting Iran in Syria.

US officials declined to comment as of early Friday, but American broadcast networks quoting unnamed US officials said Israel carried out the attack. The New York Times quoted anonymous Israeli officials claiming the assault, which came on Iranian Supreme Leader Avatollah Ali Khamenei's 85th birthday. Israeli politicians also made comments hinting that the country had



ing in the sky of Isfahan was related to the shooting of air defence systems at a suspicious object that did not Facility at Isfahan. damage," cause any Mousavi said. Others suggested the drones may be socalled quadcopters — four rotor, small drones that are the air defence, these guys that you're watching, and commercially available.

Authorities said air deover there too." The facility at Isfahan opfences fired at a major air base in Isfahan, which long erates three small Chinesehas been home to Iran's fleet supplied research reactors, of American-made F-14 as well as handling fuel production and other activities Tomcats - purchased before the 1979 Islamic Revofor Iran's civilian nuclear lution program.

Tasnim also published a sites associated with Iran's video from one of its reporters, who said he was in nuclear program, including the southeastern Zerdenjan its underground Natanz enarea of Isfahan, near its "nurichment site, which has clear energy mountain." The been repeatedly targeted by suspected Israeli sabotage atfootage showed two different anti-aircraft gun positacks. tions, and details of the all atomic sites in the area as video corresponded with



known features of the site of "fully safe." The United Na-Iran's Uranium Conversion tions' nuclear watchdog, the International Atomic Energy Agency, also said "there is "At 4:45, we heard gunshots. There was nothing no damage to Iran's nuclear going on," he said. "It was sites" after the incident.

The IAEA "continues to call for extreme restraint from everybody and reiterates that nuclear facilities should never be a target in military conflicts," the agency said. Iran's nuclear program has rapidly advanced to producing enriched uranium at nearly Isfahan also is home to weapons-grade levels since the collapse of its atomic deal with world powers after then-President Donald Trump withdrew America from the accord in 2018. While Iran insists its pro-

gram is for peaceful pur-State television described poses, Western nations and the IAEA say Tehran oper-

weapons program until 2003. The IAEA has warned that Iran now holds enough enriched uranium to build several nuclear weapons if it chose to do so — though the U.S. intelligence community maintains Tehran is not actively seeking the bomb.

Dubai-based carriers Emirates and FlyDubai began diverting around western Iran about 4:30 a.m. local time. They offered no explanation, though local warnings to aviators suggested the airspace may have been closed. Iran then grounded commercial flights in Tehran and across areas of its western and central regions. Iran

Around the time of the incident in Iran, Syria's staterun SANA news agency quoted a military statement saying Israel carried out a missile strike targeting an air defense unit in its south and causing material damage. The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, an opposition war monitor, said the strike hit a military radar for government forces. It was not clear

if there were casualties, the Observatory said. That area of Syria is di-

rectly west of Isfahan, some 1,500 kilometers (930 miles) away, and east of Israel.

Meanwhile in Iraq, where a number of Iranian-backed militias are based, residents of Baghdad reported hearing sounds of explosions, but the source of the noise was not immediately clear.

about the conflict again esca-Middle East, which have been seeing attacks by the Iranian-backed Houthi rebels of Yemen on shipping over the war in Gaza.

drone activity in the skies.

dications commercial vessels are the intended target," it wrote.

on shipping, seized one vessel and sank another since

were reported near a major Iranian air base and nuclear site early on Friday. That area of Syria is directly west of Isfahan, some 1,500 kilometers (930 miles) away, and east of Israel. Iran fired air defense batteries early Friday and some flights were diverted or grounded after reports of explosions near a major airbase and nuclear site where drones were spotted. U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken didn't comment about the latest Middle East developments as he arrived for the final session Friday morning of a Group of Seven foreign ministers' meeting in Capri, Italy. Israel has vowed to respond to Iran's unprecedented weekend attack, leaving the region bracing for further escalation after months of fighting

The incident Friday in in Gaza. Allies have urged Israel to hold back on any response to the Iran also sparked concerns attack that could spiral. The United States and Britain announced Thursday that they were lating across the seas of the imposing a new round of sanctions on Iran. The moves came as European Union leaders meeting in Brussels vowed to ramp up sanctions on Iran to target its drone and missile deliveries to proxies in Gaza, Yemen and Lebanon Regional tensions have increased since the start of the latest Israel-Hamas war on Oct. 7, when Hamas and Islamic Jihad - two militant

The British military's United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations centre warned ships in the region that they could see increased "There are currently no in

Houthis have The

after last month's attack on a launched at least 53 attacks November, according to the U.S. Maritime Administra-

said. The Palestinian Authority President,

Riyad Mansour, Permanent Observer right to self-determination has never once been subject to bargaining or negotiation.

natural right, a historic right, a legal right. A right to live in our homeland Palestine as an independent state that is free and that is sovereign. Our right to self-deter-

Getting emotional and choking up as he

Navalny ally in Lithuania "As for the details, we will find

VILNIUS, April 19: Two people have been detained in Poland on suspicion of attacking Russian opposition activist Leonid Volkov, an ally of the late activist Alexei the brutal attack and was hospital-Navalny, the Lithuanian president

local health officials. (AP)

them out soon. Can't wait to find out!" Volkov wrote.

Volkov suffered a broken arm in ized He accused Russian President Vladimir Putin's "henchmen" of

later restored normal flight

service, authorities said.

Russian strategic bomber. Moscow says the plane crashed

Ukraine claims it shot down a

KYIV, April 19: Ukraine's air force claimed bers were rescued after ejecting from the airon Friday it shot down a Russian strategic bomber, but Moscow officials said the plane crashed in a sparsely populated area due to a malfunction after a combat mission.

Neither claim could be independently verified. Previous Ukrainian claims of shooting down Russian warplanes during their more than two-year war have met with silence or denials from Moscow.

Russia's air force is vastly more powerful

than Ukraine's, but sophisticated missile systems provided by Kyiv's Western partners are a major threat to Russian aviation as the Kremlin's forces slowly push forward along the around 1,000-kilometer (620mile) front line in what has become a grinding war of attrition.

The Ukrainian report said the air force and military intelligence cooperated to bring down the Tu-22M3 bomber with anti-aircraft missiles. Russia commonly uses the bomber to fire Kh-22 cruise missiles at Ukrainian targets from inside its own airspace. The plane can also carry nuclear warheads.

The Russian defense ministry said the warplane crashed "in a deserted area" in Russia's southern region of Stavropol. Three crewmem- cepted, it said.(AP)



craft, and the search for a fourth is taking place, according to the ministry. But Stavropol Gov. Vladimir Vladimirov said one of the rescued pilots died.

On Christmas Eve, Ukraine claimed to have shot down two Russian fighter jets. In January, the Ukrainian air force said it shot down a Russian early warning and control plane and a key command center aircraft that relays information to troops on the ground, in what appeared to be a significant

blow for the Kremlin's forces. The next month, Ukraine said it knocked out another early warning and control plane.

Also in January, Moscow accused Kyiv of shooting down a Russian military transport plane that was carryng Ukrainian POWs who were headed for a prisoner swap. Meanwhile, Russian missiles struck cities in

the central Dnipro region of Ukraine, killing eight people, including an 8-year-old girl, and injuring 25, local officials said.

Russian forces conducted a combined aerial attack with the use of 22 missiles of various types and 14 Shahed drones during the night, the Ukrainian air force said. All fourteen Shahed drones and 15 of the missiles were inter-

bombing attempt in Pak's Karachi

5 Japanese escape unhurt in a suicide

KARACHI, April 19: when the terrorists tried to Five Japanese nationals had a lucky escape when their vehicle was targeted by militants in a suicide attack here in Pakistan's Sindh province on Friday, police said, in the latest at-

tack on foreign nationals in the country. Deputy Inspector General (DIG) East Azfar Mahesar said the terrorists on a motorbike attempted to hit the van of the Japanese nationals, reportedly working with Pakistan

Suzuki Motors, near Murtaza Chorangi in Landhi. "All five Japanese remained safe. However, the private security guard with them was injured,"

he said. "The Japanese nationals were on the way to the Export Processing Zone from their residence in Zamzama, Clifton," he said. Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) DIG Asif Aijaz Shaikh said the Japanese nationals were travelling in a van along with two security guards

hit the van. The security guards killed one terrorist while another blew himself up in an attempt to get close to the van, the official said. "All five Japanese nationals are safe," DIG Shaikh

said. "No one has claimed responsibility so far," the DIG said, adding that the vehicle carrying the Japanese nationals was bullet-proof.

Jinnah Hospital officials said three injured, two security guards and a passerby, were brought to the medical facility out of which two were in critical condition.

The hospital confirmed no foreigner was brought for treatment. The Japanese nationals worked at Pakistan Suzuki Motors, the official said. Karachi is the largest city in Pakistan and the capital of southern Sindh province. Sindh Transport Minis-

strongly condemned the attack. "The timely action of the police has foiled the exile. ambitions of the terrorists," Memon said.

"The nefarious actions of the terrorists will not be hammer, police said at the time. allowed to succeed," he added. Sindh Governor Kamran Tessori condemned the suicide attack work. He said the suspects would and demanded a report on be handed over to Lithuania but did the incident. not specify when.

"Terrorism will not be tolerated in the city under any circumstances," the governor said. He asked the law enforcement officials to trace the motives behind the incident and apprehend the masterminds

Small separatist groups and Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan have in recent years stepped up attacks on Chinese nationals working on projects related to the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), which includes a multitude of megaprojects such as road construction. power plants and agriculter Sharjeel Inam Memon ture. (PTI)

announced on Friday. Volkov was attacked in March

Vilnius and thanked Poland for its

"Two people have been detained

in Poland on suspicion of beating

Russian opposition leader Leonid

Volkov. I thank the Republic of

Poland for the excellent work it has

Polish president and thanked them

for their excellent cooperation,"

ment from Polish President An-

drzej Duda or any other Polish

ter, that he didn't know the details

of the arrest, but "saw how energet-

ically and persistently the Lithuan-

ian police have worked over the

past month on this case" and was

very glad that this work has paid

Volkov said on X, formerly Twit-

There was no immediately com-

Nausėda said.

officials.

done. I have discussed this with the

responsibility in the attack and outside his home in the Lithuanian vowed to keep up his opposition capital, Vilnius, where he lives in work.

The attack on Volkov took place The attacker smashed one of his nearly a month after Navalny's uncar's windows, sprayed tear gas explained death in a remote Arctic penal colony. He was Russia's bestinto his eyes and hit him with a known opposition figure and President Gitanas Nausėda an-Putin's fiercest critic. nounced the arrests to reporters in

Navalny had been jailed since January 2021 and was serving a 19year prison term there on the charges of extremism widely seen as politically motivated.

Opposition figures and Western leaders laid the blame on the Kremlin for his death - something officials in Moscow vehemently rejected.

His funeral in the Russian capital on March 1 drew thousands of supporters, a rare show of defiance in Putin's Russia amid an unabating and ruthless crackdown on dissent.

Navalny's widow, Yulia, vowed to continue her late husband's work. Volkov used to be in charge of Navalny's regional offices and election campaigns.

He ran for mayor of Moscow in 2013 and sought to challenge Putin in the 2018 presidential election. Volkov left Russia several years ago under pressure from the authorities. (AP)

Attack blamed on IS militants kills 22 pro-govt fighters in central Syria

BEIRUT, April 19: An attack on pro-government fighters by suspected members of the Islamic State group in central Syria killed 22 pro-government fighters, an opposition war monitor and pro-government media reported on Friday.

Gunmen attacked a bus carrying members of the Quds Brigade, a government and Russian-backed faction of mostly Palestinian fighters in Syria, near the town of Sukhna late Thursday night. Sukhna was once an IS stronghold.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility but both the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a U.K.-based opposition war monitor, and the pro-government radio station Sham FM said IS was behind the attack.

Both the Observatory and Sham FM said 22 fighters were killed. Sham FM said they were all Quds Brigade gunmen, while the Observatory said the majority belonged to the group.

The Quds Brigade fought on the side of Syrian government forces during the country's 13-year conflict, which has killed half a million people and displaced half the country's pre-war population of 23 million.

The Quds Brigade is different from the military wing of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad group, which uses the same name.

Despite their defeat in Syria in March 2019, IS sleeper cells have been blamed for deadly attacks against both Syrian government forces and against members of the U.S.-backed and Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces. (AP)

San Francisco mayor announces the city will receive pandas from China

BEIJING, April 19: San Francisco is the latest U.S. city preparing to receive a pair of pandas from China, in a continuation of Beijing's famed "panda diplomacy.'

San Francisco Mayor London Breed announced the panda loan in Beijing on Friday, alongside officials from China Wildlife Conservation Association, or CWCA.

It will be San Francisco's first time hosting the beloved animals long-term the result of a yearlong advocacy campaign, Breed said.

San Diego previously announced it was receiving two pandas back in February

China is home to the only natural habitat for pandas and owns most of the black-and-white bears in the world.

Beijing loans the animals to other countries as a tool for diplomacy and

wildlife conservation.

"San Francisco is absolutely thrilled to be welcoming giant pandas to the San Francisco Zoo," Breed said after signing a letter of intent for international cooperation on giant panda conservation.

Breed said the city had been working with its Chinese and Asian communities to advocate for the pandas for almost a year leading up to an Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation leaders' meeting in San Francisco last November, during which the U.S. and Chinese presidents

met. CWCA Secretary General Wu Minglu said the association will work with San Francisco officials to prepare for the pandas' arrival and to ensure the technical standards for their conservation.

"We look forward to a pair of giant pandas being in San Francisco in 2025," he said.



When San Diego broke the news in February that it would receive a pair of pandas, it was the first time in more than two decades that China had agreed to send pandas to the United States.

Only four giant pandas are currently in the U.S., all at the zoo in Atlanta. China in recent years has not renewed loan agreements at zoos in Washington, D.C., and Memphis, Tennessee, sparking fears it was ending its historic panda diplomacy with Western nations due to geopolitical tensions.

The black-and-white bears have been a symbol of U.S.-China friendship ever since Beijing gifted a pair of pandas to the National Zoo in Washington, D.C., in 1972, ahead of the normalization of bilateral relations. China later loaned pandas to zoos to help breed cubs and boost the population.

Friday's announcement comes ahead of a planned visit to China next week by U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken.

Washington and Beijing have boosted their diplomatic exchanges in recent months, in an effort to ease escalating tensions. But frictions remain on trade, national security and the countries' diverging stances on conflicts such as Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the Israel-Hamas war. (AP)

NORTHEAST

THE HILLS TIMES

Incidents of firing, intimidation reported from few places in Manipur

IMPHAL, April 19: Incidents of intimidation and firing were reported from at least two places in Inner Manipur constituency where voting for the Lok Sabha polls is currently underway, officials said on Friday.

At Thamnapokpi under Moirang constituency in Bishnupur district, armed men fired several rounds in the air near a polling booth prompting voters to flee, police said on Friday, adding additional security personnel were rushed to the spot to contain the situation.

Unidentified armed men also intimidated election agents of a particular political party at different places and asked them to leave the polling stations, they said.

At Uripok and Iroishemba in Imphal West district, armed men asked agents of a party to leave the premises of polling stations, an official said

"Incensed with the intimidation. voters at Iroishemba forcefully entered polling stations and destroyed elections materials and equipment," the official said.

At Kiyamgei in Imphal East district's Keirao constituency, armed men fired blank shots and intimidated Congress polling agents.

Earlier in the morning, at Khongman Zone 4 in Imphal East district, an altercation broke out between voters and unidentified men leading to damage of EVMs. Meanwhile, several areas in

Manipur CM urges people to cast votes to save Indigenous people

IMPHAL, April 19: Manipur chief minister N Biren Singh on Friday urged people to cast their votes to save indigenous people of the state and protect its territorial integrity.

Singh talking to reporters after casting his vote at Luwangsangbam Mamang Leikai said, "I hope both Th Basanta Singh of BJP for Inner and K Timothy Zimik of NPF for Outer Manipur will surely win and support to form the BJP led NDA government at the Centre.'

"I want to appeal to the people of Manipur to cast their votes and save the indigenous population of the state as well as to protect the integrity of the state and bring peace at the earliest," Singh said.

The CM said, "I am very happy today because the first phase of elections of the 140 crore Indians happened. We have to make Modi (ji) Prime Minister for the third term and I had the opportunity for that. I want to appeal to my brothers and sisters of the state to cast their vote for BJP and strengthen Modi."

Around 12.6 per cent of the over 15.44 lakh voters have exercised their franchise for the two Lok Sabha seats in the ethnic violence-affected Manipur till 9 am on Friday. Inner Manipur constituency recorded 13. 82 per cent polling while the turnout in Outer Manipur is 11. 57 pc in the first two hours of voting. (PTI)

ZPM won't join any alliances at Centre: Mizoram CM

AIZAWL, April 19: Mizoram said. The former IPS-officerchief minister and Zoram Peo- turned politician expressed confiple's Movement (ZPM) leader Lalduhoma on Friday said if their candidate wins the Lok Sabha polls, their party will stay independent and neutral from any alliances at the Centre.

Speaking to reporters after casting his vote in Aizawl's Chawlhhmun area, Lalduhoma said his party will neither join the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) nor the INDIA bloc if ZPM candidate Richard Vanlalhmangaiha is elected.

"We are not joining either the NDA or the INDIA bloc. We want to maintain our identity. We don't want to be controlled from cent voter turnout in the 2019 New Delhi. We want to take in- Lok Sabha polls, which was sig-

dence that his party will win the polls. Polling for the lone Lok Sabha seat in the state is underway amid tight security arrangements.

State chief electoral officer (CEO) Madhup Vyas said no technical glitch with EVMs or law and order problem has have been reported till now. Officials said more than 26 per cent votes have been cast till 11 am. Over 8.56 lakh voters, includ-

ing 4.4 lakh women, are eligible to exercise their franchise to decide the fate of six candidates.

Mizoram registered 63.13 per dependent decision on any issue nificantly lower than the national



Kuki-dominated assembly segments in Outer Manipur recorded a thin turnout till 1pm. Saitu and Saikul constituencies said. Henglep in Churachandpur

in Kangpokpi district recorded a Polling is underway in 15 asturnout of 13.22 per cent and 8.58 sembly segments of the total 28 per cent, respectively, officials constituencies of Outer Manipur on Friday. (PTI)

Over 68 pc votes cast in Tripura West till 3 pm amid allegations of irregularities

AGARTALA, April 19: Tripura West Lok Sabha constituency registered a voter turnout of 68.11 per cent till 3 pm on Friday amid allegations of irregularities.

The opposition Congress and CPI(M) alleged that large-scale "rigging" happened in several places across the constituency, with the Election Commission saying that it received some complaints and was looking into those.

In the bypolls to Ramnagar assembly seat, which was being held simultaneously, a turnout of 56.68 per cent was recorded.

"Polling has been largely peaceful. Some complaints of stopping voters from going to booths, driving out of polling agents and malfunctioning of EVMs were received. We are checking all the complaints," Tripura West Returning Officer Vishal Kumar said. Security forces are keeping a close watch on the sit-

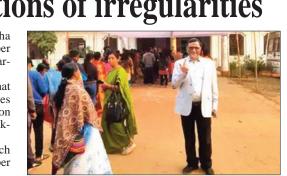
uation, he said Amidst threats and intimidations of voters and

polling agents, a delegation of opposition INDIA bloc met Kumar and urged him to ensure that all eligible voters can exercise their franchise.

"For the past two days, BJP-backed miscreants have been threatening selected polling agents of INDIA bloc in various subdivisions of Tripura West Parliamentary constituency and Ramnagar assembly seat. Many voters were driven out of the voting line. We briefed these matters to the RO for seeking remedial measures", Asish Saha, INDIA bloc candidate for Tripura West Lok Sabha seat told reporters.

Congress-supported CPI(M) candidate in Ramnagar, Ratan Das, alleged that "goons" drove out his agents from most of the booths.

Das said he handed over a letter to the RO inform-



district recorded

43.67 per cent turnout.

turnout than Kuki areas.

ficials said.

ing him about largescale irregularities in several booths of Ramnagar.

"In the Ramnagar assembly seat, voters living along the Indo-Bangla border were threatened on Thursday evening not to go to the polling booths. The BJP workers forcibly took away the voter slips distributed by the EC", Das wrote in the letter.

BJP chief spokesperson Subrata Chakraborty, however, refuted the allegations of rigging and threats to voters and polling agents.

"Voters were seen in long queues and there was no threat or intimidation. Actually, people have not accepted the electoral tie-up between the CPI(M) and Congress. That's why they did not find their election agents. We are sure that the deposits of INDIA bloc candidates will be forfeited", he said.

Altogether 14.61 lakh people are eligible to vote in Tripura.

Congress has pitted Saha against BJP's Biplab Kumar Deb, the former CM, in the Tripura West seat. In Ramnagar, where 54,669 voters are eligible to

exercise their franchise, the BJP has fielded Agartala mayor Dipak Majumder against CPI(M)'s Das. (PTI)

53 pc voter turnout till **3 PM in Arunachal**

Violence reported in few places



ITANAGAR, April 19: Amid reports of violence from a few districts in Arunachal Pradesh, over 53 per cent of 8.92 lakh electors cast their votes till 3 PM on Friday in the northeastern state where polling for two Lok Sabha seats and 50 assembly constituencies is underway, officials said.

Supporters of two candidates clashed near a polling station in the Bameng constituency in East Kameng district, Inspector General of Police (Law & Order) Chukhu Apa said, adding that the situation was brought under control and polling is continuing

Incidents of EVM damage were also reported from three polling stations in East Kameng, Kurung Kumey and Upper Subansiri districts, the police officer said.

Polling resumed there after the replacement of machines and the situation is "now peaceful", he said

The turnout, which was moderate in the morning hours due to inclement weather, improved later in the day

In a few polling stations, voting got delayed in the morning as the electronic voting machines (EVMs) developed a technical snag, and later the machines were replaced, Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) Pawan Kumar Sain said.

The ruling BJP has already won ten seats unopposed in the 60member assembly.

Union earth sciences minister Kiren Rijiju, chief minister Pema Khandu and Deputy CM Chowna Mein exercised their franchise this

morning. Rijiju cast his vote in his village

5 pm amid incidents of shooting, intimidation

his franchise at a government secondary school in Bomba, from where he did his schooling, in Mukto constituency in Tawang district, the officials said. Mein also exercised his franchise at Chowkham. Governor Lt Gen (Retd) K T Parnaik and his wife Anagha Parnaik cast their votes at polling sta-

district, while Khandu exercised

tion-1 at P Sector government secondary school here. "I had cast my vote as per the

Constitutional privilege I have and appeal to all the voters of the state to exercise their franchise and make our democracy a success,' the governor told reporters.

Altogether 8,92,694 voters will decide the electoral fate of 133 candidates in the assembly elections and 14 Lok Sabha poll contestants.

In the Arunachal West parliamentary seat, eight candidates, including Union Minister Kiren Rijiju and state Congress president Nabam Tuki, are in the fray.

Sitting BJP MP Tapir Gao and state Congress vice president Bosiram Siram are among the six candidates who are contesting from the Arunachal East.

According to reports from various districts, the polling remained "peaceful so far", the CEO said.

In the 2019 Lok Sabha and assembly polls, which were held simultaneously, the state witnessed a record 83.33 per cent voting.

Counting of votes for assembly elections will be held on June 2, while that of Lok Sabha polls is scheduled on June 4. (PTI)

Sikkim registers 52.73 per LS polls: Manipur records 67.46 pc turnout till cent polling till 3 pm

GANGTOK, April 19: Over 50 Singh Tamang, who is spearheadin the lone Lok Sabha constituency native Soreng district, where he is

per cent of the 4.64 lakh voters in ing the ruling Sikkim Krantikari Sikkim have exercised their fran- Morcha (SKM)'s bid for a second chise in the 32 Assembly seats and term in power, cast his vote in his

IMPHAL, April 19: Manipur recorded a voter turnout of 67.46 per cent till 5 pm amid incidents of a polling booth in Thamnapokpi under Moirang asshooting and intimidation, officials said.

prises 32 of the 60 assembly segments in the state, personnel were rushed to the spot to contain the situ-

Armed men also fired several rounds in the air near sembly constituency in Bishnupur district, prompting The Inner Manipur Lok Sabha seat, which com- voters to flee, police said, adding additional security

from here," the Chief Minister average of 67 per cent. (PTI)

Mizoram records over 49 per cent polling till 3 pm

AIZAWL, April 19: More than 49 per cent of total 8.56 lakh voters in Mizoram have exercised their franchise for the lone Lok Sabha seat till 3 pm on Friday, election officials said.

Polling for the lone Lok Sabha seat in the state is underway amid tight security arrangements, they said.

The state recorded 49.77 per cent voting till 3 pm, according to an election official.

Officials said that polling will conclude at 5 pm. However, voters who entered the polling area before 5 pm will be allowed to cast their votes after the deadline, they said.

Meanwhile, Mizoram chief

Meghalaya CM, LS candidates cast votes early

SHILLONG, April 19: Meghalaya chief minister Conrad K Sangma and the two Lok Sabha MPs of the state, who are also candidates, cast their votes early in the morning on Friday. Sangma, also the NPP president, stood in a queue with others at Walbakgre polling station in Tura Lok Sabha constituency and exercised his franchise.

"I reached the booth at 6.30 hoping to vote first. But I was pleasantly surprised that there were many people before me. It is a healthy trend. Voting is a right of every citizen," said the chief minister who drove himself to reach the polling station. He urged all to exercise their democratic right. The northeastern state has two Lok Sabha constituencies - Tura and Shillong

NPP's Agatha K Sangma and state Congress president Vincent H Pala are seeking re-election from Tura and Shillong seats respectively.

Tura MP Agatha Sangma, NPP leader and sister of the chief minister, expressed happiness that a large number of people have come out to vote in the morning. "People are generally more enthusiastic to vote in assembly elections compared to the Lok Sabha polls. So, it is a very positive sign, she said. (PTI)

NAME CORRECTION

. ZUBAIR AHMAD do hereby declare that I am a permanent resident of the below is ZUBAIR AHMAD Which is appeared in my PAN card, Voter ID card, Adhar card, Birth certificate and other relevant documents. That have an International passport vide No . S4879304 dtd 30/01/2019 wherein my name has been recorded as Mainul Hoque in place of ZUBAIR AHMAD. That Mainul Hoque and ZUBAIR AHMAD are the same and one person. That I signed this AFFIDAVIT at Mangaldai NOTARY on 17/04/24.

ZUBAIR AHMAD, S/O-Abdul Hoque Vill-NO 1 Sialmari, PO & PS- Dalgaon, Dist-Darrang (Assam)

electoral officer (CEO) Madhup Vyas appealed to the people, particularly government servants and their families, to turn up in large numbers to cast their votes

The government has declared holiday for government servants and paid holiday for private sector employees to ensure that they exercise their voting rights in the elections, he said.

Mizoram had recorded 63.13 per cent voter turnout in the 2019 Lok Sabha polls.

Mizoram has 8.56 lakh voters, including 4.4 lakh female voters, are eligible to exercise their franchise this time to decide the fate of six candidates. (PTI)

till 3 pm on Friday, an official said. Voting for the 32 Assembly constituencies and in the lone Lok sabha seat in the Himalayan state began at 7 am and will end at 5 pm. Till 3 pm the Himalayan state has registered 52.73 per cent

polling, the official said Polling is underway in 573 polling stations, out of which 88

are in urban and 485 in rural areas, Sikkim chief electoral officer D Anandan said. Thirteen companies of CAPF have been deployed in Sikkim, of which five companies are from ITBP and eight from SSB, he added.

Sikkim chief minister Prem

contesting from the Soreng-Chakung assembly constituency. Tamang is also contesting from

the Rhenock assembly seat. Former India Football captain and Sikkim Democratic Front (SDF) vice president Bhaichung Bhutia who is contesting from Barfung (BL) assembly seat cast his vote in his native Sanganath vil-

lage in Namchi district. A total of 146 candidates are in the fray for 32 assembly constituencies.

Sitting Lok Sabha MP Indra Hang Subba and SDF's PD Rai are among 14 candidates in the lone Lok Sabha seat. (PTI)

recorded 71.01 per cent turnout, while 15 of the 28 assembly segments of Outer Manipur that went to polls during the day registered a turnout of 61.12 per cent.

Wangkhem in Thoubal district recorded the highest turnout among the 32 assembly constituencies under Inner Manipur at 82.41 per cent.

In Outer Manipur, Chandel, which has both Naga and Kuki voters, recorded the highest turnout at 85.54 per cent.

Incidents of shooting and intimidation were reported from several places in Inner Manipur seat, officials said.

A 65-year-old man was shot at by unidentified armed men at Moirangkampu Sajeb in Khurai constituency in Imphal East district, police said.

The man was standing near a polling station when the armed assailants opened fire, they said, adding he has been taken to a hospital in Imphal for treatment.

ation

Unidentified armed men also intimidated election agents of a particular political party at different places and asked them to leave the polling stations, they said. At Uripok and Iroishemba in Imphal West district, armed men asked agents of a party to leave the premises of polling stations, an official said.

"Incensed with the intimidation, voters at Iroishemba forcefully entered polling stations and destroyed elections materials and equipment," the official said.

At Kiyamgei in Imphal East district's Keirao constituency, armed men fired blank shots and intimidated Congress polling agents.

Earlier in the morning, at Khongman Zone 4 in Imphal East district, an altercation broke out between voters and unidentified men leading to damage of EVMs. (PTI)

Meghalaya's two LS seats register Lone voter casts vote in remote Arunachal district

ITANAGAR, April 19: The unique Malogam polling station in Anjaw district of Arunachal Pradesh recorded cent per cent polling with the lone female voter, exercising her constitutional right on Friday, officials said. The 44-year-old Sokela Tayang cast her vote around 1 pm, a district official said.

For the single voter, a team of polling officials trekked nearly 40 km on foot through treacherous terrain and set up a voting booth in the remote polling station. "I am delighted to exercise my franchise and thanked the election authorities for giving me the opportunity to cast my vote," Sokela said.

According to the election official, very few families reside in Malogam, and all the others except for Tayang are registered voters in other polling booths. But she was not willing to go to other booths to cast her vote. "It is not always about numbers but it is to ensure that every citizen gets his or her voice heard. Sokela Tayang's vote is a testament to our commitment to inclusivity and equality," said Chief Electoral Officer Pawan Kumar Sain. The village falls under the Hayuliang assembly constituency in Anjaw district bordering China and in the Arunachal East Lok Sabha seat where as many as six candidates are vying for their electoral luck. (PTI)

voter turnout of 62 pc till 3pm

SHILLONG, April 19: The two Lok Sabha seats in Meghalava recorded a voter turnout of 61.94 per cent till 3pm on Friday, chief electoral officer BDR Tiwari said. While the turnout for Shillong parliamentary constituency was 61.18 per cent, Tura recorded 63.23 voter per cent, he said. Polling was being held at 3,512 polling stations in the state in which 10 candidates are in the fray - six for the Shillong parliamentary seat and four for the Tura Lok Sabha seat. An estimated 22.67 lakh voters are likely to exercise their franchise to seal the fate of the candidates.

The NPP, which has been leading the ruling alliance for the last six years, is being backed by the BJP in both seats. (PTI)

Arunachal: Rijiju, Khandu cast votes in native villages

Incessant rain since morning

ITANAGAR, April 19: Arunachal Pradesh chief minister Pema Khandu and Union minister Kiren Rijiju cast their votes on Fridav at their native villages as the polling for two Lok Sabha seats and 50 assembly constituencies is underway,

officials said. Deputy chief minister Chowna Mein also exercised his franchise in his village in the Chowkham assembly segment.

Rijiju cast his vote in his village Nafra in the newly created Bichom district, while Khandu exercised his franchise in the Mukto constituency in Tawang district, the officials said.

Khandu and Mein are among the ten BJP candidates who have been elected unopposed to the 60-member assembly. "Arunachal Pradesh votes today

to elect representatives for the eighth State Legislative Assembly and 18th Lok Sabha. I appeal to all said on the microblogging site. eligible voters to exercise their franchise in large numbers.

could not dampen the spirit of the "Let us overwhelmingly particielectorates in the northeastern state pate in this vibrant festival to enas queues were seen outside rich democracy. I also call upon the polling stations youth and first-time voters to take

Elections are being held for two Lok Sabha seats and 50 assembly part in the elections, the chief minconstituencies in the state.

An estimated 8,92,694 voters, including 4,54,256 women, are eligible to exercise their franchise and decide the electoral fate of 133 candidates in the assembly polls and 14 Lok Sabha poll contestants. In the Arunachal West parliamentary seat, eight candidates, including Union Earth Sciences Minister Kiren Rijiju and state Congress president Nabam Tuki, are in the fray.

Sitting BJP MP Tapir Gao and state Congress vice president Bosiram Siram are among the six candidates who are contesting



from the Arunachal East. The state election authorities have made elaborate security arrangements to conduct peaceful polling.

Seventy companies of central armed police forces (CAPF), including India Reserve Battalion

and state police personnel, have been deployed, state chief electoral officer (CEO) Pawan Kumar Sain said.

Counting of votes for assembly elections will be held on June 2, while that of Lok Sabha polls is scheduled on June 4. (PTI)

constituency,

democratic process to elect your representatives for the 8th State Legislative Assembly and 18th

Lok Sabha. I also request all the new voters to take part in the elections," the deputy chief minister

-🐼

Mein posted his photo on the social media platform after casting his vote and appealed to all voters to exercise their franchise. home mv

ister posted on X.

"Cast my vote this morning at Chowkham. I appeal to each and every eligible voter to come forward and exercise your adult franchise and participate in the vibrant

NATION

PM takes dig at Pakistan, says a country supplying 'aatank' is struggling for 'aata' now

DAMOH (MP), April 19: Taking a dig at Pakistan without naming it, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday said a country which was a supplier of 'aatank' (terror) is struggling for 'aata' (flour) these days.

Addressing an election rally at Damoh in Madhya Pradesh, he said India, which once bought most of its arms from overseas, was now exporting high-tech weapons to other countries, and referred to providing BrahMos supersonic cruise missiles to the Philippines.

Citing the prevailing situation in the world, he pitched for a strong and stable government at the Centre, on a day when the the 2024 Lok Sabha polls, being held in seven phases, kicked off with voting in more than 100 seats.

There are many countries in the world whose condition has worsened. Many are getting bankrupt. Even one of our neighbours, which was a supplier of 'aatank' (terrorism), is now struggling for supply of 'aata' (flour)," Modi said, targeting Pakistan.

The PM asserted his government works with the principle of "Rashtra Pratham" (nation first) and never succumbs to pressure from any quarter or bows before anyone. Defending India's move to purchase oil from Russia in face of in-

ternational pressure after its



invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, he said "To ensure that the people of the country get cheap oil and farmers get adequate fertilisers. we have taken this decision in the national interest.

Asia and rising Iran-Israel tension. "We have seen in the last 10 years how a stable government reliant in the defence sector and is works in the interest of the people. in the process of exporting weapons worth ₹ 21,000 crore to During the Covid-19 crisis, there was chaos world over, but a strong other countries this year. BJP government brought back its citizens from all over the globe," is delivering a speech here (in he said. The BJP's star campaigner Damoh), India is exporting the emphasised the next five years are BrahMos supersonic cruise missiles system to the Philippines. crucial for making the country a

big global power. The PM said when war clouds are hovering in different parts of

guided by their own vested interest even when it comes to purchase of weapons for the defence forces.

He slammed the Congress for creating hurdles in the procurement of French-made Rafale fighter jets for the Indian Air Force, and said had the opposition party been in power, Tejas planes could not have taken to the skies. The BJP, in its manifesto, has promised that every individual above 70 years of age will be brought within the ambit of the Centre's Ayushman Bharat Yojana, ensuring free treatment to them up to Rs 5 lakh, Modi maintained.

The PM asserted his government was committed to the welfare of the poor and pointed out that the Centre has extended the free ration scheme for five more years for nearly 80 crore beneficiaries. Modi praised Iqbal Ansari, a former litigant in the Ramianmabhoomi-Babri Masjid case, for accepting the invitation to attend the January 22 consecration ceremony at the Ram temple in Ayodhya, and slammed the opposition for boycotting the event.

The BJP has fielded Rahul Lodhi from the Damoh Lok Sabha seat and state party president Vishnu Dutt Sharma from the Khajuraho constituency. Both these seats will vote in the second phase of elections on April 26. (PTI)

In a first, people of Andaman's vulnerable Shompen tribe vote

PORT BLAIR, April 19: For the first time in Andaman and Nicobar Islands, seven members of the Shompen tribe, a particularly vulnerable tribal group (PVTGs) of Great Nicobar Islands on Friday exercised their voting rights for the lone Lok Sabha seat in the union territory, an

official said. Not only Shompen tribe members exercised their voting rights at polling station 411 named as 'Shompen Hut'

built inside the forest staff quarters but also they posed for selfies at a designated cut-out made by the Election Commission of India, which reads - "I vote for sure". The Shompen tribes were assisted in their language by an inter-

preter known as 'Mathiyas' (a Nicobari tribal youth). Speaking to PTI, Chief Electoral Officer, B S Jaglan said, "This is for the first time a total of seven members of Shompen tribe exercised their voting rights. Earlier, we have given

them training about EVMs and VVPATs through a trainer. It's good to see that they came out of the jungle and voted for the first time." As per the 2011 census the popu-

lation of the Shompen was 229. "Other two primitive tribes like Onge and Great Andamanese too exercised their voting rights like in 2019 Lok Sabha election but seven

Shompen did it for the first time out of 98 Shompen voters," the CEO said. An election official said nearly 91 per cent of voting happened at Onge primate tribes live exclusively

Dugong Creek (little Andaman tehsil of South Andaman district) where (it is a reserved forest area). "Out of 68 Onge, 62 of

them voted including 35 male and 27 female,' Returning Officer, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Arjun Sharma said. Similarly, 100 per

cent voting happened at Strait Island which is an exclusively restricted area for the Great Andamanese tribe. "Out of 39 Great Andamanese, all 39 Great Andamanese exercised their voting rights," Sharma said.

The total number of voters in the Union Territory (UT) is 3,15148, which includes 1,64,012 male, 1,51,132 female and four voters in the third gender category. The voters include 39 Great Andamanese tribes of Strait Islands, 68 Onge tribes at Hut Bay and 98 Shompen tribes of Great Nicobar Island.

A total of 12 candidates, including two women and five independents will contest for the lone Lok Sabha seat in 412 polling stations. However, the contest is between the Congress candidate and sitting MP Kuldeep Rai Sharma and the BJP nominee Bishnu Pada Ray. (PTI)

Women throng 'pink booths' in J&K's Doda

SATURDAY, APRIL 20, 2024

DODA/JAMMU, April 19: Amid multi-tier security arrangements, 'Nari Shakti' (women power) was on display at the all-women staffed booths known as 'pink booths', in the Doda district of the Udhampur Lok Sabha constituency.

These 'pink booths' attracted more women voters, especially from the Muslim community.

More than 22 per cent of voters exercised their franchise in the first four hours of polling in the first phase of the Lok Sabha elections in Jammu and Kashmir's Udhampur parliamentary constituency despite torrential rains, election officials said.

As polling began this morning, a large number of women electors thronged the 'pink booth' set up at the Government Girls' Higher Secondary School in the Doda town to exercise their right to franchise despite heavy rains. Oueued up in long lines, they were happy to vote at the 'pink booth'.

"We are very happy to vote for the first time at these all-women polling booths. There are very good facilities. We are enjoying voting," said Arifa Begum, who cast her vote at the 'pink booth' in Doda.

She said this initiative has increased the number of women thronging this polling station. "We praise this initiative of the Election Commission," she added.

Nineteen 'pink booths' have been established in the Udhampur Lok Sabha constituency. In these model all-women polling stations, all staffers, including police and security personnel, are women, of-

Sunita Devi, a first-time voter who cast her vote at the 'pink booth', said it looked like she had come to a place of festival as the booth was decorated. "Such an initiative will attract more women to the polling booths and will increase the turnout. It's an innovative step to increase the female

a rush for voting since morning. It seems the initiative has attracted more women voters this time, they said.Polling began at 7 am in 2,637 polling stations across the constituency with over 16.23 lakh electors eligible to exercise their franchise. It is going on peacefully with no untoward incidents reported, officials said.

candidates, including Union Minister Jitendra Singh, who is eyeing a third term after winning the seat for the BJP in 2014 and 2019.

This is the first major electoral battle after the abrogation of Arti-"The Congress, the CM and cle 370 and the bifurcation of the state into two Union Territories on

Girl student's murder in Hubbali sparks protests; BJP targets Cong govt Silent undercurrent brewing across west

UP against Modi govt's 'failures': Cong



NEW DELHI, April 19: The Congress on Friday claimed that a "silent undercurrent" is brewing across western Uttar Pradesh against the "failures" of the Modi government, as it flagged issues such as "neglect" of sugarcane farmers and examination paper leaks.

Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh attacked the BJPled central government ahead of than the permissible limit of 500 per 100 millilitres," he said. Ramesh said the Central Pollu-

tion Control Board also found that water quality does not comply with

their standards. "While the Ministry of Jal Shakti claims that new STPs are working fine, a professor at IIT Varanasi said they were 'utterly useless' and that the government's plans were completely 'bogus'. Furthermore, as early as 2017, a CAG audit report of the project noted 'deficiencies in financial management, planning, implementation and monitoring'," the Congress leader said. "To make matters worse, contracts for STPs have been awarded to companies with well-established links to the BJP. In 2017, a 150+ crore STP contract was given to a company chaired by former BJP

HUBBALLI (KARNATAKA), April 19: The murder of the daughter of a city Corporation Councillor on the campus of her college here has sparked widespread condemnation and protests. The issue has snowballed into a

ernment which is capable of tack-

ling any exigencies, comments

coming in the backdrop of the Rus-

sia-Ukraine war, conflict in West

He said India has become self-

Modi underscored that while he

The PM accused the opposition

of weakening the country's de-

fence sector and said they are

political slugfest between ruling Congress and opposition BJP in Karnataka. While the ruling party has tried to project it as an incident with a personal angle, the saffron party suspects love jihad and has said that it shows the deterioration of law and order in the state.

BJP's student wing, Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) and other organisations aligned to Hindutva outfits have staged protests demanding justice and calling for severe punishment for the accused.

Similar protests have been reported in various other places.

In a shocking incident, Neha Hiremath (23), daughter of Congress Councillor of Hubballi-Dharwad Municipal Corporation Niranjan Hiremath, was stabbed to death on the campus of BVB College on Thursday. The accused Fayaz Khondunaik, who fled the scene, was ar-



In Munavalli, Fayaz's hometown in Belagavi district, there is outrage and demonstrations have been held by various organisations condemning the murder.

Union Minister and Dharwad Lok Sabha BJP candidate Pralhad Joshi suspected that there was a love jihad angle behind the incident.

There is complete deterioration of law and order under Congress regime, he alleged, urging CM Siddaramaiah to stop minority appeasement politics and special treatment to a "particular community."

However Home Minister

(special investigation team) should be formed." he said. Hubballi-Dharwad Police Commissioner had yesterday said, the girl

was stabbed as she rejected the accused's love proposal, but the Home Minister today says they were in love, Bommai pointed out, adding, "This shows that the government is trying to look at it with a political and vote-bank angle."

Hubballi-Dharwad including the

commissioner is inactive. A SIT

dents happen, the BJP routinely blames Congress, which is not right. Siddarmaiah's statement that the murder was due to "personal rea-"The government will control sons" and Parameshwara's comsuch incidents in accordance with ments that the two were in love, has law, but viewing everything with a political angle at the time of elecelicited sharp reactions from Neha's tions is not right. They (BJP) cannot family members and opposition parties. Štate BJP chief B Y Vijayendra dictate to investigate in a certain way and to invoke certain sections. Based said since the Congress came to on evidence, police will put the secpower last year, the law and order situation has completely deteriorated Chief Minister Siddaramaiah said in the state.

personal reasons were behind the murder. "The law and order situation Deputy CM have to take responsibil- erstwhile Jammu and Kashmir for such incidents increasing in

any individual and that it concerns ficials said the entire state." "A high-level inquiry has to be done, it cannot be done by the local police here, as everyone here in

turnout," she said.

Poll officials said there has been

Voting will decide the fate of 12

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's poll rally in Amroha.

"Today's questions for the PM as he heads to UP: Why has the BJP neglected UP's sugarcane farmers?₹20,000 crores later, why is the Ganga still India's most polluted river? Is the Modi Sarkar doing anything to prevent paper leaks

Elaborating on what he said were "jumla details", Ramesh said Uttar Pradesh is India's largest sugarcane producer and yet, the BJP government has "neglected" farmers' calls to increase the price of sugarcane.

"Prices stand at just ₹ 360/quintal in UP, much lower than Rs.386/quintal in Punjab and ₹ 391/quintal in Haryana. Price hikes have also failed to keep pace with inflation and farmers are now struggling due to the rising cost of fertiliser and pesticides," he said Area under cultivation has come down by almost 4000 hectares in

the last three years, he said. Amidst sugarcane shortages, mills are struggling to pay sugarcane farmers on time, and there are fears that some may shut down

permanently, Ramesh said. "This vicious cycle is threatening the livelihoods of sugarcane farmers and mill workers but the BJP government is nowhere to be seen. What is the double Anyay BJP government doing to support sugarcane farmers and mill workers in UP?" he said in a post on X. Noting that in 2014, PM Modi had promised a cleaner Ganga through his government's flagship Namami Gange programme, Ramesh said the project sanctioned an outlay of ₹ 20,000 crore between 2014 and 2019, and 815 new sewage treatment plants (STPs) had been built or proposed by 2021. The Ministry of Jal Shakti claims that there has been a marked improvement in the state of the river but, as is often the case with this government, that claim turned out to be a "bold-faced lie", Ramesh said.

'The Sankat Mochan Foundation found that rather than improving, water quality in the Ganga has actually been degrading - faecal coliform bacteria levels are a staggering one million times higher

MP Subhash Chandra that had no record of working in sewage treatment," he alleged. "Another plant is operated by

the Adani group, and 'scientific' studies worth 5 crores have been awarded to the Patanjali Organic Research Institute, he said.

Noting that last year, the Central Pollution Control Board declared the Ganga the most polluted river in India, Ramesh asked what have the Indian taxpayer's ₹ 20,000 crores achieved.

"Under the Modi Sarkar's reign, more than 43 papers for government recruitment exams have been leaked, hurting at least 2 crore candidates. Most recently, 60 lakh applicants for the UP Police Exams had their futures clouded when exams were cancelled due to paper leaks," he said.

These are not just numbers - it is the hopes and dreams of India's youth that are hanging in the balance. Ramesh asserted

"Under its Yuva Nyay Guarantee, the Congress has committed to bringing robust legislation that will design institutions and best practices to prevent paper leaks from occurring in the first place. What is Mr. Modi's vision to address the harm done to our youth?" he said. As the PM visits West Uttar Pradesh, it is important to remember that while he may have engineered the flight of the RLD from the INDIA bloc to the NDA, the real Lok Dal is still with INDIA and that the Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra in West Uttar Pradesh was welcomed with hoardings and banners of Choudhary Charan Singh and Indira Gandhi, Ramesh said.

"A silent undercurrent is brewing across this region, against the failures of this Government," he said and asked the PM to break his "silence" on these issues. (PTI)

rested by police subsequently. Neha was a first year student of

Master of Computer Applications and Fayaz was earlier her classmate. According to a senior police officer, Fayaz, who stabbed her multiple times, claimed during interrogation the two had been in a relationship but she had been avoiding him of late. "It needs to be corroborated and verified, but he was arrested immediately.

meshwara said there was no "love jihad" angle as of now.

"According to my information they both were in love with each other. The boy is said to have stabbed the girl as she tried to distance herself from him. The love jihad angle is not seen as of now. He might have feared her marrying someone else, the details are not known yet," Parameshwara said. Speaking to reporters in Tu-

in Karnataka is good. It is the duty of the government to maintain law and order of the state, and we are doing it."

makuru, he said, when such inci-

Calling this a shocking incident, BJP leader and former chief minister Basavaraj Bommai noted that as far as he could remember such a daylight murder on a college campus with a knife had never happened in Hubballi. He further said the government has to take this very seriously as "this is not an issue concerning

tions," he added.

the state ... such incidents are repeatedly happening, there is no fear of

Reacting to the incident and BJP's allegations, deputy chief minister D K Shivakumar said the government is firm on taking action in accordance with law and no one can take law into their hands.

The government will not interfere in the investigation, the law will take its course, he said. (PTI)

August 5, 2019. Prominent among others in the

fray include Congress leader and two-time former MP Choudhary Lal Singh and the DPAP's G M Saroori, besides six independents.

More than 11,000 polling staff, including reserves, have been deployed while tight security arrangements have been made to ensure free and fair elections, officials said. (PTI)

Archer Aviation will supply 200 electric vertical takeoff and landing (eVTOL) aircraft that can carry four passengers besides a pilot and operate just like helicopters but with lesser noise and better safety

InterGlobe, Archer Aviation plan electric air taxis in India in early 2026

NEW DELHI, April 19: Inter-Globe Enterprises, the parent company of India's top airline IndiGo, and US-based Archer Aviation will launch an all-electric air taxi service in India in 2026, that will carry passengers from Connaught Place in the national capital to Gurugram in Haryana in just 7 minutes.

Archer Aviation will supply 200 electric vertical takeoff and landing (eVTOL) aircraft that can carry four passengers besides a pilot and operate just like helicopters but with lesser noise and better safety. Besides Delhi, the joint venture between InterGlobe and Archer Aviation will launch similar services in Mumbai and Bengaluru to start with.

The cost of the seven-minute flight operated with the company's five-seater eVTOL (electric vertical takeoff and landing) aircraft from Connaught Place to Gurugram in Haryana could be around 2,000 to 3,000, according to Archer Aviation executives.

Archer Aviation Founder and CEO Founder & CEO Adam Goldstein on Friday said discussions are going on with the US regulator Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and the certification process for its aircraft is at an advanced stage

The certification is expected



next year and once that is in place, erations

the process will be initiated for the Initially, Archer Aviation will be certification by the Directorate focusing on Delhi, Mumbai and Bengaluru. With its flight, the duration will be around 7 minutes from Connaught Place in Delhi to Gurugram and the cost could be Rs 2,000 to 3,000. In a car, for the 27kilometre distance, it would take around 90 minutes and the cost

would be about Rs 1,500, accord-

ing to Goldstein. The five-seater Midnight aircraft will be able to accommodate the pilot and four passengers. The plane, which will have six battery packs, will get fully charged in 30-40 minutes and one minute charge broadly translates to one minute of flight, its Chief Commercial Offi-

cer Nikhil Goel said. Archer Aviation will be having

a joint venture with InterGlobe Enterprises and the final contours are being worked out.

The US company is also in discussions with various municipalities with respect to infrastructure and other aspects of the flight operations

Goel said it will use the full strength of InterGlobe, which is a conglomerate, and the joint venture might choose partners for the eVTOL operations in India.

Discussions are also going on with respect to the real estate space required for vertiports or the launchpads and other infrastructure for starting the flight operations. Archer Aviation will be opening its manufacturing facility in the US this year and initially, it will have a capacity to produce up to 650 planes and the same will be enhanced to 2,000 planes.

To a query on whether the company will be looking at manufacturing the planes in India in the future, Goldstein replied in the affirmative.

Last year, Archer Aviation entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with InterGlobe Enterprises, an Indian travel conglomerate and the country's IndiGo is part of it. (PTI)

General of Civil Aviation (DGCA). In an interview with PTI in the national capital, Goldstein said the company expects to start flights in

India in 2026 and aims to have 200 of its Midnight planes for the op-

NATION

2024 LS elections: From digital poll wars to voter awareness, memes flood social media

NEW DELHI, April 19: From attacking political opponents to raising awareness among the electorate, colourful memes, including many drawing humorous elements from popular Bollywood films, have flooded social media as the seven-phase Lok Sabha polls began on Friday.

The 2024 Lok Sabha elections is the largest democratic exercise in the world and major political parties have tried to outwit their rivals both in rallies on ground and slugfests online.

From Instagram to X, social media platforms, in the run up to the polls have seen bitter poster wars and even more bitter meme battles for political one-upmanship.

But, amid this digital melee, the Election Commission of India (ECI), which is holding the world's largest elections, has used memes to reach out to the electorate, especially the young and first-time voters, using at times quirky lines or dialogues from famous movies to drive the message home.

"We are excited to vote in #LokSabha-Elections2024 Are you ready #Elections2024 too?#SaathChalenge #ChunavKaParv #DeshKaGarv #First-Time Voters #ECI," the ECI posted on X on Wednesday, and used a meme based on a still from a scene from the film 'Yeh Jawaani Hai Deewani' with a tagline 'Excitement of first time voters before voting'. In the first phase, 102 seats spread across

21 states and Union territories are scheduled to go to polls, the ECI had earlier said. Polling began on Friday at 7 AM and will end at 6 PM.

Among those in the fray are Union ministers Nitin Gadkari, Sarbanada Sonowal and Bhupendra Yadav, Gaurav Gogoi of Congress, DMK's Kanimozhi and K Annamalai of BJP.

Voters include 8.4 crore men, 8.23 crore women and 11,371 from third gender. There are as many as 35.67 lakh first-time voters, besides 3.51 crore young voters in the age group of 20-29 years in the first phase.

As polling began for phase one of the elections, the ECI's X handle shared voters queuing up at booths, or flashing inked finger to security personnel on duty, from multiple states, reflecting the diversity of a democratic India.

In its posts on X, the Commission also at times used languages native to the region of polling to achieve greater connect with the masses.

"Amar vote, amar doyitvo ! #MyVote-MyDuty #YouAreTheOne #IVote4Sure Check out the facts at a glance of the #Phase1 poll in #WestBengal #ChunavKa-Parv #DeshKaGarv # GeneralElections2024 #GoVote," the ECI posted on Friday along with photos of young and old voters of West Bengal.



With photos showing voters in Rajasthan, it used lines such as "Padharo Mhare Polling Booth" in its post on X.

The ECI has described elections as the "festival of democracy" and "Chunav ka Parv", and on Thursday night, it shared an invite card on X, both in English and Hindi, calling it the 'Grand Voting Invitation' with RSVP for 'All voters of India'

On the eve of the first phase of the polls, sage of Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv the ECI also put up a series of posts, digital Kumar on Thursday in a digital poster.

"CEC appeals to every voter to come out and vote with their family and friends in #IVote4Sure #GeneralElections2024. #ChunayKaPary #DeshKaGarv #YouAreTheOne #SaathChalenge," it said. In the past several days, the Commission has also used memes to build awareness, as on April 11 it had posted a funny meme themed on web series "The Family Man", leaving netizens in splits.

Experts say memes and humour appeal to youths and hence may have the desired effect on the minds of such voters as the poll panel is seeking to boost turnout.

The ruling BJP and opposition parties Congress, AAP -- both part of INDIA (Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance) bloc -- have used the online medium and social media platform to outsmart each other in the 'NDA vs INDIA' battle. On Thursday, the AAP ran a series of posters on X, attacking the ruling dispensation

"Jaan ki baazi laga denge lekin desh ke samvidhan par aanch nahin aane denge," the AAP posted a digital banner on X with a photo of its leader Sanjay Singh who was recently released from jail

In the recent past, the AAP has targeted Prime Minister Narendra Modi many times in speeches, press conferences and on social media.

One such digital poster out up on AAP

by X recently, had a slogan -- 'Modi ko hatana hai kyoniki...." along with a tagline 'BJP Hatao, Samvidhan Bachao' and an image of Modi.

On Thursday, the Arvind Kejriwal-led party also posted on X a few posters about its 'Jail ka Jawab Vote se' campaign, with a hashtag #JailKaJawabVoteSe.

On March 15, the AAP had on X shared a video meme, mocking the BJP on the isse of electoral bonds, while other posts dubbed its manifesto -- Sankalp Patra as not a 'Ghoshna Patra' but a 'Jumla Patra'. The BJP's social media feeds have been

largely dominated by images and slogans such as 'Modi ki Guarantee' and 'Vikas Bhi, Virasat Bhi', both of which also figure prominently in their manifesto.

On Thursday, the Congress posted a video on X, taking a veiled swipe at the ruling BJP with a sarcastic tagline 'Berozgari bahut hai, Baki sab thik hai'.

On Wednesday, the grand old party also shared a poster on X with a quirky tagline, attacking Prime Minister Modi.

The Election Commission has deployed over 18 lakh polling personnel across 1.87 lakh polling stations where over 16.63 crore voters will exercise their franchise.

While the polls got underway from Friday, the meme wars would perhaps only get bitter from hereon till its last phase on June 1. (PTI)

UPSC releases marks of recommended candidates, 2021 Punjab motorcycle blast case: NIA topper Aditya Srivastava scored 54.27 pc freezes immovable property of accused

NEW DELHI, April 19: Civil services exam topper Aditya Srivastava scored 54.27 per cent in the prestigious exam conducted by the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC), according to the detailed marks of the recommended candidates released by the Commission on Friday.

Following closely behind is Animesh Pradhan, who scored 52.69 per cent in the Civil Services Exam 2023. As many as 1,016 candidates -- 664 men and 352 women -- have qualified in the examination, results of which were announced on Tuesday.

The civil services examination is conducted annually by the UPSC in three stages -- preliminary, main and personality test (or interview) -- to select officers for the Indian Administrative Service (IAS), Indian Foreign Service (IFS) and Indian Police Service (IPS), among others.

The preliminary examination consists of two objective type (multiple choice) question papers of 400 marks.

This stage is meant to serve as a screening test only, and the marks

Costume designer Sandhya



obtained in it by the candidates, who are declared qualified for admission to the main examination, are not counted for determining their final order of merit.

The merit is determined out of the total of 2,025 marks -- written or main exam is of 1,750 marks and the interview is of 275.

Srivastava (27) got a total of 1,099 marks -- 899 in the written and 200 in the personality test, according to the marks of recommended candidates disclosed by the UPSC.

A trainee Indian Police Service (IPS) officer, he hails from Lucknow puter science from the National

possesses an MTech degree. He had

the second rank.

and 175 in interview -- and secured

optional subject in the exam. Pradhan completed his BTech in com-

Institute of Technology (NIT) Rourkela and is currently an employee of the Indian Oil Corporation's (IOC) refineries division here. Third rank holder Donuru Ananya

Reddy, who appeared in the exam as an economically weaker section candidate, got 1,065 marks (52.59 per cent) -- 875 in the main and 190 in the interview -- and fourth rank holder P K Sidharth Ramkumar scored 1,059 marks (52.29 per cent) -- 874 in written and 185 in the interview.

in geography from Miranda House, Delhi University, had anthropology as her optional subject. She hails

degree in architecture from the Colment

(Hons) in economics from St Stephens College, Delhi University. The UPSC has put details of marks achieved by all the 1,016 candidates on its website. (PTI)

NEW DELHI, April 19: The NIA has freezed a property of a man involved in a blast in Punjab in 2021 and with links to Pakistan-based Khalistani terrorists, according to an official statement issued on Friday.

The case relates to an explosion in a Bajaj Platina motorcycle near a Puniab National Bank branch in Jalalabad in which the bike-bomber was killed.

Act, 1985, the statement said.

Surat Singh had links with Pakistan-based Khalistani terrorists Habib Khan alias 'Doctor', a weapons and drugs smuggler, and Lakhveer Singh alias 'Rode', according to the state-

Khan, Lakhveer Singh, a designated terrorist, and Surat Singh are among the nine people charge-sheeted by the NIA so far in the case, the federal probe agency said in the state-



comprises khewat numbers 84/78, 93/87, and 95/89, totalling an area of 13 kanal, 17 marla and five sarsai," it

said The NIA probe has revealed that Khan and Lakhveer Singh had collaborated with Surat Singh and their other associates in India to create a terror gang in Punjab with the aim of perpetrating improvised explosive device (IED) blasts and operating a narco-terror racket to destabilise the

In a major step towards destroying

terror operatives in the country, the NIA has freezed the immovable property of the key operative in the 2021 case relating to the fatal motorcycleborne explosion in Punjab, it said.

Surat Singh has been identified as a key agent in the terror network involved in smuggling of narcotics, explosives, arms and ammunition from Pakistan, the NIA said.

He used encrypted communication channels such as WhatsApp, along with fake IDs and virtual numbers to facilitate the logistical and financial aspects of terrorist activities as an overground worker (OGW) of the narco-terror network, according to findings of the NIA.

In association with the other accused, he had provided support for the execution of criminal conspiracies on the directions of Pakistan-based handlers, the statement said.

The case was initially registered under different sections of the Explosives Act at the City Jalalabad police station in Punjab's Fazilka on September 16, 2021, a day after the blast. The NIA took over the case on October 1, 2021. (PTI)

Ten held for clash on Ramnavami in J'khand's Palamu

SC upholds CESTAT order for service tax on Patanjali Trust

NEW DELHI, April 19: In a held that Yoga camps organised raised the service tax demand of ported by any positive evidence.

had said.

in Uttar Pradesh. Srivastava completed his BTech in electrical engineering from the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Kanpur and also

electrical engineering as his optional subject in the civil services exam. Pradhan (24), resident of Talcher town in Odisha's Angul district, scored 1,067 marks -- 892 in written

He had chosen sociology as his

from Mahabubnagar in Telangana. Ramkumar (27) has a bachelor's

lege of Architecture in Trivandrum. Ruhani got the fifth rank with a total of 1,049 marks (51.8 per cent) -- 856 in written and 193 in the interview. She completed her BA

Reddy (22), who has a BA (Hons)

posters on X to motivate voters to come out

and exercise their franchise. It also re-

posted a meme themed on film 'Gangubai

Kathiawadi' shared by Doordarshan, on

Thursday, as well as a classic poster by

Amul on the 2024 polls which had a pun-

laced tagline -- 'World's greataste elec-

The ECI's X handle also shared the mes-

tions! Amul Your favourite choice"

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) has "frozen" the property of Surat Singh alias 'Surti', a resident of

Mahatam Nagar village under Punjab's Sadar Fazilka police station, under the provisions of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances

region, the statement said.

the financial infrastructure of narco-

"The said property (of Surat Singh)

Raman's exhibition to

chronicle three decades of dance costuming

NEW DELHI, April 19: Having dressed renowned performers like Mallika Sarabhai, Astad Deboo, Aditi Mangaldas and Geeta Chandran, designer and textile activist Sandhya Raman will chronicle her three-decadelong journey in the field of dance costume design with an exhibition at the National Centre for Performing Arts in Mumbai.

"To Stitch or Knot", scheduled from April 25-29 at the Dilip Piramal Art Gallery, will feature 10-12 costumes from Raman's repertoire, alongside an array of approximately 50 photographs, and five installations.

"At 'To Stitch or Knot', an exhibition that chronicles my threedecade-long odyssey in the realm of dance costume design, visitors will have the opportunity to delve into the intricate relationship between textiles, nature, and the performing arts. From Bharatnatyam to Kathak, Sattriya to Kuchipudi, this exhibition celebrates the diverse tapestry of dance forms that have shaped my work," Raman said in a statement.

Inspired by the five elements and senses, the exhibition will project a vivid picture of Raman's approach to costume design – "where Earth meets texture, Fire intertwines with taste, Wind merges with smell through lighter fabrics, Sound resonates with water, and Light harmonises with space".

"I emphasise the connection between dance and drape, fabric and form. Through this showcase, I will bring to light the unseen and the complex relationship between textiles and the senses, attempting to draw inspiration from the heritage of weaving," she added.

An alumna of the National Institute of Design (NID), Raman added that design for dance remains a profession that has yet to gain significant recognition in India. (PTI)

MEDININAGAR (JHARK-HAND), April 19: Ten people were arrested for allegedly being involved in a clash between two groups during a Ramnavami procession in Jharkhand's Palamu district, police said on Friday

Five people from each warring group have been apprehended in connection with the clash in Kajru village on Thursday night, a senior police officer said.

Additional police personnel have been deployed in the village in view of the prevailing tension, Sub-divisional Police Officer (Bishrampur) Rakesh Singh told PTI.

Like every year, many people assembled to take part in the Ramnavami celebrations in the

ogy Roorkee.

from a fully-grown animal.

anaconda, they said. The find-

ings are published in the journal

The researchers have named

this newly discovered snake

species 'Vasuki Indicus' (V. In-

dicus) after the mythical snake

round the neck of the Hindu

deity Shiva and in reference to

its country of discovery, India.

Scientific Reports.

village, where members of the other group had opposed the procession which was supposed to pass through a mosque, the SDPO said. The clash broke out when

members of the other group argued that the Ramnavami procession had never passed through the mosque earlier and tried to prevent it, the officer said.

Around five two-wheelers were damaged in the clash, he said.

"In view of the prevailing tension, we have deployed adequate police forces as a precautionary measure in the area to maintain law and order," the SDPO said adding that the situation was under control. (PTI)

setback to the Patanjali Yogpeeth Trust, the Supreme Court on Friday upheld an appellate tribunal's ruling that the organisation is liable to pay service tax for charging an entry fee for organising Yoga camps, both resi-

dential and non-residential. A bench of Justices Abhay S Oka and Ujjal Bhuyan refused to interfere with the October 5. 2023 decision of the Allahabad bench of the Customs, Excise and Service Tax Appellate Tribunal (CESTAT).

The bench, while dismissing the Trust's appeal said, "The tribunal has rightly held that Yoga in camps for a fee is a service. We do not find any reason to interfere with the impugned order. The appeal is dismissed.' In its order, the CESTAT had

that a thriving research sys-

tem needs much greater au-

nomic power, India is also

more than ready to take the

next step towards becoming

a science powerhouse. This

is not yet a given, but it can

happen," it said.

"Along with being an eco-

tonomy.

by Patanjali Yogpeeth Trust, which charges fees for participation, come under the category of "health and fitness service" and attract service tax.

It had noted that the Trust, working under Yoga guru Ramdev and his aide Acharya Balkrishna, was engaged in providing Yoga training at various residential and non-residential camps

The tribunal had said a fee was collected from the participants by way of donation.

'Though this amount was collected as a donation, it was fees for providing the said services and hence covered under the definition of consideration," it had noted, adding that the Commissioner of Customs and Central Excise, Meerut range has

approximately Rs 4.5 crore for October, 2006 to March, 2011, with penalty and interest. In its reply, the Trust had contended it was providing services

which are for curing ailments. They are not taxable under "health and fitness service", it

The appellate tribunal in its order said, "In our view the appellant (Patanjali Trust) was engaged in providing the services that were classifiable under the taxable category of services provided by health club and fitness centre, as defined under Section 65 (52) of the Finance Act. to any person

"The claim of the appellant that they are providing treatment for specific ailments being suffered by the person is not sup-

Instructions on 'Yoga' and 'Meditation' in these camps are not imparted to an individual but to the entire gathering together. No prescriptions are made for any individual in writing, diagnosing and treating the specific ailment/complaint of any individual," it had said.

The appellate tribunal said the Trust collected the entry fee disguising it as donation.

"They issued entry tickets of various denominations. The holder of the ticket was granted different privileges depending on the denomination of the ticket. In return the appellant provided the person entry to the camp where Swami Baba Ramdev would give instructions in respect of Yoga and Meditation," it had said. (PTI)

Fossils of possibly largest snake to have ever lived found in Kutch, scientists say

NEW DELHI, April 19: Fos-V. Indicus is part of the now exsils recovered from Kutch in tinct madtsoiidae family, known Gujarat may have belonged to to have lived across a broad gethe spine of one of the largest ography, including Africa, Eusnakes to have ever lived, acrope and India, they added.

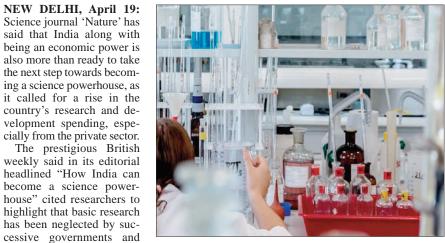
cording to new research from The authors said the snake the Indian Institute of Technolrepresented a "distinct lineage" originating in India which then From the Panandhro Lignite spread via southern Europe to Mine, researchers discovered 27 Africa during the Eocene, about "mostly well-preserved" bones 56 to 34 million years ago. The forming the snake's spinal colfirst ancestors and close relaumn, or vertebra, with some tives of the modern mammal connections still intact. They species are said to have appeared in the Eocene period. said the vertebrae appeared to be

The authors dated the fossils The snake is estimated to be to the Middle Eocene period, between roughly 11 and 15 meroughly 47 million years ago. tres long, comparable in size The vertebrae, measuring beonly to the extinct Titanoboa, tween 38 and 62 millimetres in known to be the longest snake to length, and between 62 and 111 millimetres in width, suggested have ever lived, the researchers said. Owing to its size, it may V. Indicus to possibly have had have been a "slow-moving ama broad, cylindrical body, the rebush predator," similar to an

searchers said. They extrapolated the measurements of V. Indicus to be between 10.9 and 15.2 metres in length. Despite uncertainties in estimates, the researchers said the snake was comparable in size to Titanoboa, the fossils of which were first discovered in

"In this editorial, we disthe 2000s from present day cuss a third aspect: how to Colombia. (*PTI*) bridge the funding gap. One

India more than ready to take next step towards becoming science powerhouse: Nature



thing India's government can do is to boost science spending by encouraging businesses to contribute more, as is the case for other leading economies. If policymakers and industrialists can get this right, an opportunity to put rocket boosters under the country's impressive scientific achievements is there for the taking," the journal said

achieve a soft landing on the Moon and the first to land near the lunar south pole, it said, adding that the country also has the world's largest constellation of remote-sensing satellites

The magazine said India is among the world's most prolific countries in terms of research output after the United States and China.

From 2014 to 2021, the number of universities increased from 760 to 1,113. In the past decade, seven more Indian Institutes of Technology have been established, raising the total to 23. In the same period, two new Indian Institutes of Science Education and Research were also established "Now consider that these

gains were achieved by a nation that spent just 0.64 per cent of its gross domestic product (GDP) on research and development (R&D) during 2020-21," it said.

Whichever political forthe fourth country ever to mation is elected to power in

the ongoing polls, it must consider how to increase the country's R&D spending, as well as what could be achieved with more money, it said.

Nature said around 60 per cent of India's research spending can be traced to central and state governments and universities, and around 40 per cent to the private sector. In comparable nations, there is often much more private-sector funding.

"In 2022, the private sector contributed, on average, 74 per cent of OECD nations' R&D spending and 66 per cent of such funding for the 27 members of the European Union. India today has many global companies in construction, information technology, manufacturing, pharmaceuticals and more. They could be contributing a lot more to the nation's research -both in terms of funding researchers and also infrastructure," it said. (PTI)

The editorial noted that in 2021-22, according to govcines and generic drugs, some of which were "cru-

cial" to fighting the COVID-19 pandemic worldwide. Last year, India became

ernment data, India had the world's third-largest pharmaceutical industry by volume and was the leading supplier of affordable medi-

Entertainment

GURINDER CHADHA ANNOUNCES NEW FILM 'CHRISTMAS KARMA', KUNAL NAYYAR TO PLAY LEAD ROLE



MUMBAI, April 19: Filmmaker Gurinder Chadha on Friday officially announced her new film "Christmas Karma", a contemporary Bollywood musical, inspired by Charles Dickens' classic "A Christmas Carol".

"The Big Bang Theory" alum Kunal Nayyar will portray the lead role of Scrooge in the movie, which also feature a starstudded cast of Eva Longoria, Billy Porter, Hugh Bonneville, Boy George, Leo Suter, Charithra Chandran, Pixie Lott, Danny Dyer, Bilal Hasna, Allan Corduner, Tracy-Ann

Oberman, Rufus Jones, Eve and Nitin Ganatra. Chadha, best known "Bhaji on the Beach", "Bend It Like Beckham", "Bride and Prejudice", "Angus, Thongs and Perfect Snogging", "It's a Wonderful Afterlife" and "Viceroy's House", is also producing and writing the new movie, which

will feature music written by acclaimed British singer-songwriter Gary Barlow, Shaznay Lewis and Nitin Sawhney. With "Christmas Karma", Chadha said, the aim is to create a

Actors can contribute to society through cinema, says Raveena Tandon

NEW DELHI, April 19: Actor Raveena Tandon believes artistes can return the love and adulation they receive from people by highlighting important issues in the society through their work.

The actor, who recently starred in Disney+ Hotstar movie "Patna Shukla", based around the topic of roll number scam, said she tries to take up subjects that she hopes would at least start a conversation.

"We all have done commercial hits in our lives but I have always believed that society has given us everything -- name, fame and status -- and at some point in our lives, we should contribute to society and this is the medium that we know the best," Tandon told PTI in an interview.

"Using this medium, if I can create a certain amount of awareness or deliver a message that at least brings the conversation to the table, then I would be like, 'Ok, I have done little bit of my contribution.' That's why once or twice a year, I pick up that one topic which I believe will make a difference or something that we need to talk about," she added.

"Patna Shukla" features Tandon as Tanvi Shukla, a small-time lawyer who gets drawn into the fight for justice against a widespread roll number scam affecting numerous students.

The courtroom drama, also starring Anushka Kaushik, Manav Vij, Chandan Roy Sanyal, Jatin Goswami and the late Satish Kaushik, has garnered good reviews.

Tandon, 51, said the script felt relevant to her and she instantly agreed when Arbaaz Khan, who has produced the movie, offered her the role.

"When this script came to me, I didn't know that the roll number scam like this existed. It was never in the headlines, it's always there in the back pages, which you just skip through and don't pay attention to.

"It got me thinking that this is so relevant and this is something that needs to be spoken about because this is a scam that is stealing student's lives and future at the beginning."

The need to highlight the issue also felt important as both Tandon and Khan are parents.

"Arbaaz (Khan) and my children, they both are students of the same age and this is something we strongly believe in. It is a conversation that needs to be brought on the table. "We keep championing the cause of a young, strong and educated India but who is dealing with these people who are doing these scams? I feel we need to build a certain infrastructure which kind of helps these students who have nowhere to go," she added.

In her career of over 30 years, Tandon has explored many facets of a working woman and Tanvi Shukla is another such character that navigates motherhood and her professional life.

"I have made a conscious effort to bring different characters of working women and the dilemma they face between handling home and their work. Even in 'Aranyak,' it was clearly shown the dilemma she has... It's always expected of the women and mothers to handle their home, children or in-laws, they are the ones who are responsible for it. Whereas the husbands can solely concentrate on their work.

"I have always said that families have to rally around women who are working and be their wings to be able to help them achieve their dreams and excel in their workplace because that is what they want to do."

"Patna Shukla" is the third project for Tandon in the OTT space after Netflix series "Aranyak" and most recently "Karmma Calling", which also premiered on Disney+ Hotstar.

The actor believes the medium has "relaxed" a lot of filmmakers as they don't have the box office pressure.

"Everyone wants their show or movie to be a hit, but those constraints that we have to encapsulate everything and establish every character in a cinematic form in two hours, that I think has relaxed the filmmakers a little and enabled them to experiment with the kind of stories they need to tell."

Tandon will next be seen in comedy movie "Welcome to the Jungle", also starring Akshay Kumar, Sanjay Dutt, Suniel Shetty, Arshad Warsi, Tusshar Kapoor, Shreyas Talpade and Paresh Rawal. (PTI)

Zack Snyder had approached Leonardo DiCaprio to play Lex Luthor in 'Batman v Superman'

festive classic for "our times and for generations to come". "By adapting one of history's greatest novels - Charles Dickens' 'Christmas Carol' - I am making a British film from my unique, original point of view but one that resonates with Dickens' masterful statement on the human condition. "I am blessed with such a great diverse cast and eclectic music team - the soundtrack will be banging, influenced by Gospel, Bhangra, Carols and classic pop songs. You will not be able to sit still," the 64-year-old director said in a statement.

"Christmas Karma" is backed by True Brit Entertainment, Bend It Films, Maven Screen Media and Civic Studios. Chadha, Celine Rattray, Trudie Styler and Amory Leader will serve as producers. The executive producers include Zygi Kamasa, Anushka Shah, Paul Mayeda Berges, Sophia Pedlow and Hannah Leader. Published in 1843, "A Christmas Carol" recounts the story of Ebenezer Scrooge, an elderly miser who is visited by the ghost of his former business partner Jacob Marley and the spirits of Christmas Past, Present and Yet to Come. In the process, Scrooge is transformed into a kinder, gentler man. (PTI)



LOS ANGELES, April 19: Filmmaker Zack Snyder has revealed that he had approached Hollywood superstar Leonardo DiCaprio for the role of Lex Luthor in his 2016 movie "Batman v Superman: Dawn of Justice".

Snyder, who directed three big-budget movies based on DC Comics superhero characters, said he had a meeting with DiCaprio during which the Oscar winner shared several ideas about the project.

"He had a lot of great ideas, actually, just in the meeting. I think, in the end, he was like, Eh, I don't know.' But he was really smart about the material and really smart about the character," Snyder told Happy Sad Confused podcast.

"In a lot of ways, I think he was the one that mentioned to me this idea about Superman fighting the Justice League at some point," he added.

The role of Lex Luthor, the arch nemesis of Superman, was eventually played by Jesse Eisenberg in "Batman v Superman: Dawn of Justice", which was a follow-up to Snyder's 2013 movie "Man of Steel".

The director also addressed the rumours that he wanted to cast Tom Hanks or Adam Driver for the role. "I think I did talk to Adam on the phone, yeah," Snyder said.

"Batman v Superman: Dawn of Justice" featured Henry Cavill as Superman, Ben Affleck as Batman and Gal Gadot as Wonder Woman.

Snyder's latest movie is Netflix's "Rebel Moon Part Two: The Scargiver", the follow-up to his 2023 title "Rebel Moon Part One: A Child of Fire". (PTI)

A TWIST OF MODERNITY WITH ESSENCE OF 'ISHQ VISHK': NAILA GREWAL ON 'ISHQ VISHK REBOUND'

NEW DELHI, April 19: Actor Naila Grewal, one of the four leads in "Ishq Vishk Rebound", says their version of the movie will tell a relatable story about modern relationships while retaining the "essence" of what made "Ishq Vishk" stand out.

The 2003 college romance drama made stars out of Shahid Kapoor and Amrita Rao, and Grewal is hopeful that the new movie will speak to the youth in a similar manner.

"When the first 'Ishq Vishk' came out, it was such a cult film. Everyone gravitated towards it. Firstly, it was that 'chocolate boy' image of Shahid Kapoor that we all fell in love with. And then the songs, dance sequences and the essence of college romance, all of it was so fun and exciting," the actor told PTI in an interview.

"Being able to bring this charm back

but with a new twist of modernity (is what the new film is about). What couples and youngsters are going through in relationships in today's age has changed. We are bringing all of this into this film and I hope people will gravitate towards our version," she said about the movie that also features Pashmina Roshan, Rohit Sharaf and Jibraan Khan. Grewal is currently basking in the success of Netflix comedy series "Maamla Legal Hai", which has been renewed for a second season by the streamer.

In the show, headlined by Ravi Kishan, she plays the role of Ananya Shroff, a Harvard educated lawyer who finds herself befuddled by the ground realities of the Indian judicial system. The popularity of "Maamla Legal Hai" has been humbling, said the Delhi-born actor, who studied at the In-

dian Institute of Mass Communication (IIMC) before branching out as an actor.

"I honestly feel very humbled and ecstatic at the same time. People have watched it four-five times and I feel the show has the capacity of constantly being watched on repeat. That means it has made a special place in people's hearts. It provides the message but it doesn't do it in a very preachy way. I think it fills all the right boxes," she added.

Grewal said she found her character in the legal comedy to be similar to who she is as a person and she found it easy to get into the headspace of the character.

"It helped me make Ananya more human. I didn't want her to come as someone who is looking down on all these people because she is coming

from this hoity-toity world. She had to look like she was here to make a difference. I tried to bring those elements from myself into the character." Grewal made her acting debut back in 2015 with Imtiaz Ali's 'Tamasha' which featured Deepika Padukone and Ranbir Kapoor in the lead. Calling it a "turning point", the actor said despite her involvement with dancing and theatre, she did not see herself on the screen before Ali's film. "I never thought that I would be a film actor, that I would be in front of the camera but I always knew that being in front of an audience really fascinated me. The love for that started when I was four or five and the idea of performing arts as something that I wanted to do full time grew with age... Once I went on set of 'Tamasha,' I realised that maybe this is something I want to explore." (PTI)



SPORTS

Leverkusen, Roma, Atalanta, Marseille into Europa League SF. Liverpool, West Ham, Milan, Benfica out

LONDON, April 19: Liverpool failed to overcome a three-goal deficit and was eliminated from the Europa League on Thursday despite beating Atalanta 1-0 in the second leg of their quarterfinal matchup.

The result officially ended Liverpool's hopes of a treble of trophies in manager Jurgen Klopp's final season at Anfield, though the feat had looked unlikely after the Italian team won 3-0 in the first leg in Merseyside.

"We won the game and that was the reaction we wanted to show," Klopp told TNT Sports. "It was difficult and we knew it would be, but Atalanta deserve to go through, 100%."

Days after celebrating its firstever Bundesliga title, Bayer Leverkusen remained on course to claim a historic treble by holding West Ham to a 1-1 draw at London Stadium to stretch its unbeaten streak to 44. Xabi Alonso's team advanced to the semifinals 3-1 on aggregate.

Leverkusen will face Roma in the last four after the capital club beat AC Milan 2-1 in an all-Italian quarterfinal to advance 3-1 on aggregate.

Michail Antonio put West Ham ahead early, heading in a cross from Vladimir Coufal. Jeremie Frimpong came off the bench and equalized in the 89th minute to clinch the aggregate victory and extend the team's unbeaten run.

Alonso's team will play second-division Kaiserslautern in

the German Cup final in Berlin on May 25, three days after the Europa League final in Dublin. In Bergamo, Liverpool had a

dream start after Trent Alexander-Arnold's cross hit Matteo Ruggeri's hand. Mohamed Salah sent goalkeeper Juan Musso the wrong way from the penalty spot for an early lead in the seventh minute.

But the Reds failed to convert any other chances — a long way off from their 5-0 win at Atalanta in the Champions League in

2020. Atalanta will meet Marseille after the French team topped Benfica 4-2 in a shootout after winning 1-0 to level the aggregate score at 2-2.

With the English League Cup already secured, Liverpool still hopes for a second Premier League title under its German manager but is now in third and two points adrift of first-place Manchester City.

Inconsistent in Serie A, Atalanta has been shining in the second-tier continental league this grini's shot bounced off the post

season. Thursday's loss was its first in the campaign after six wins and three draws.

It's only the second time the

Italian club reached the semifinals of a European competition. In Rome, Roma coach Daniele De Rossi marked an extension of his contract announced earlier Thursday by reaching the last four with his team reduced to 10 men. Gianluca Mancini put the hosts 1-0 up early at Stadio Olimpico after Lorenzo Pelle-

and the defender was in the right place to net. Mancini also scored the winner in the first leg at San Siro last week

Paulo Dybala doubled the advantage in the 22nd.

Roma defender Zeki Celik received a red card on the half-hour mark for fouling Rafael Leão but Milan only halved the deficit with a Matteo Gabbia header five minutes from time.

Milan, the seven-time European champion, is second in the Serie A, trailing leader Inter by 14 points on the way to finish the season without a trophy after it was knocked out of the Italian Cup

Âfter Arsenal and Manchester City were eliminated from the Champions League on Wednesday, the Premier League clubs were knocked out also from second-tier Europa League.

Aston Villa remains the only English club in Europe in the third-tier Europa Conference League

Emiliano Martínez saved two spot kicks and Douglas Luiz converted the decisive penalty for Villa to prevail 4-3 in a shootout over Lille and advance to the Europa Conference League semifinals. After Villa won the first leg of their quarterfinals 2-1 last week, Yusuf Yazici and Benjamin André scored in each half for Lille's 2-0 lead before defender Matty Cash's 87th-minute goal evened the aggregate score 3-3 to force extra time. (AP)

Scheffler wiped out from Masters and opens with a 69 at Hilton Head

HILTON HEAD ISLAND (SOUTH CAROLINA), April tie," Poston said with a smile. Poston chipped in from 65 **19:** Scottie Scheffler is running on fumes after an exhausting Masters victory just four days ago. He hit a shank from a bunker. He nearly lost his mind from mud on his golf ball. And he still managed a 2under 69 at the RBC Heritage on Thursday. J.T. Poston set the pace on an idyllic day on Hilton Head Island with nine birdies — six of them in a seven-hole stretch — for a 63 that gave him a two-shot lead over Collin Morikawa and Sea-

mus Power. Ludvig Aberg, the runner-up at Augusta, was in the group another shot behind. Rory McIlroy birdied his last two holes to salvage a scrappy day with the irons for a 67. Thousands of fans lined the fairways of Harbour Town to see Scheffler, the Masters champion who is going for his fourth win in his last five tournaments. There were times Scheffler didn't look like the No. 1 player in the world, and he figured that would be the case with very little time to prepare. "That's why I tried to give myself an extra little bit of grace on the course today, just because yeah, emotionally a little drained. Mentally, definitely a bit drained," he said.

"I feel like I have more energy now than I did at the beginning of the day, waking up to go play golf," he said. "I think getting into the tournament, hitting some shots, getting a bit frustrated, getting a bit excited about my finish there, all good emotions to feel. It's nice to be kind of back into tournament mode."

All but 16 players in the 69man field were at the Masters, at least for part of the week. Poston closed with a 70 at Augusta National and arrived at Hilton Head Island with a little excitement away from golf. This is the first time traveling with his month-old daughter, Katherine Scott.

They're calling her Scottie, a family name from both sides of the family.

Poston chipped in from 65 feet on the par-3 fourth hole to begin a remarkable run — three straight birdies from the 10-foot range followed, and then a 15-foot birdie putt on the short par-4 ninth and another birdie from 10 feet to start the back nine.

For Morikawa, it was more validation he's on the right track. The two-time major winner was among those who had a share of the lead Sunday at the Masters until he took a pair of double bogeys around the turn. He wound up in a tie for third.

"A lot of swing thoughts I've kind of been flipping the book through worked for one day or two days and then it's gone," Morikawa said. "But look, it lasted all the way through the Masters. It's lasted through here. What I'm doing, it's working. I've just got to stick to that and understand why it's working and just go out there and play golf."

Scheffler and Jordan Spieth were in the group behind Poston getting all the attention - Scheffler as the dominant player in golf, Spieth because his entertainment level is high. The fans probably weren't expecting a shank, and neither was Scheffler.

It happened on the third hole. He was in a bunker right of the green and hit it off the hosel of the club at a 45-degree angle away from the pin, over the green. He chipped to 6 feet and missed the putt, making double bogey.

"I shank it a decent amount, but never in competition," Scheffler said. "I tried to give myself a little bit of grace there. It clearly was just a mental lapse and I wasn't quite into it yet. I had a much better back nine.'

That had its moments, too, all on one hole. The 11th gives him fits off the tee, and he finally drilled one, only to see a clump of mud on his ball. His approached headed left and kept going as Scheffler shouted, "MUD BALL!" And the frustration was evident. (AP)

"Good time to be called Scot-

Amir's comeback on hold after Pakistan-New Zealand 1st T20 abandoned

RAWALPINDI, April 19: Fast bowler Mohammad Amir's return to international cricket was put on hold after the first Twenty20 between Pakistan and New Zealand was a washout on Thursday.

Shaheen Shah Afridi clean-bowled debutant Tim Robinson for a duck and New Zealand was 2-1 after two balls before rain denied further play in a reduced five-overa-side game. The toss was delayed for half an hour because of light drizzle in Rawalpindi, and just when Afridi was due to bowl the first ball, rain held up play for

more than two hours. The teams will return for the second T20 of five on Saturday.

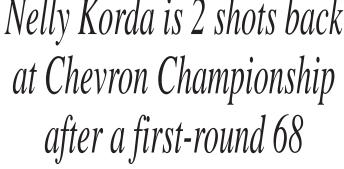
Amir and allrounder Imad Wasim came out of retirements and made themselves available for the T20 World Cup in the Caribbean and United States in June, and the Pakistan selectors named them in the 17man squad for the five-match home series against New Zealand.

Imad wasn't picked to play but Amir was in his hometown for his first international in four years. Both sides are using the series to prepare for the T20 World Cup under recalled white-ball captain Babar Azam. Pakistan named three debutants for the series opener — Usman Khan, Irfan Khan and Abrar Ahmed — after they impressed in the recent Pakistan Super League.

Usman was banned by the Emirates Cricket Board for five years after the batter shifted his allegiance to play for his country of birth. He hit back-to-back centuries in the PSL and got the attention of the Pakistan selectors.

Irfan was named the emerging player of the PSL, and Abrar shone with his leg-spin

bowling. Pakistan wicketkeeper Azam Khan was ruled out of the opening game after experiencing discomfort in his right knee and calf while batting in the nets on Wednesday. New Zealand was without nine key players who were playing in the Indian Premier League. The squad was further depleted just before the tour when Finn Allen and Adam Milne were injured in training. New Zealand awarded a T20 debut to Robinson, who scored 298 runs at an impressive strike rate of 187.42 in the Super Smash back home. (AP)



WOODLANDS THE (TEXAS), April 19: Nelly Korda, who is looking to tie an LPGA Tour record with her fifth straight win, shot a 4-under 68 on Thursday in the opening round of the Chevron Championship, leaving her two shots behind leader Lauren Coughlin in the year's first major.

Coughlin shot a bogey-free 66 in windy conditions at Carlton Woods, which is hosting the event for the second time.

The top-ranked Korda is seeking her second major after winning the Women's PGA Championship in 2021. She could join Nancy Lopez (1978) and Annika Sorenstam (2004-05) as the only players to win five consecutive LPGA events.

Korda said she was battling fatigue from recent tournaments at the beginning of her round. She bogeyed her first hole, the par-4 10th. "I (could) definitely still feel maybe a little bit of tiredness, so it took me a while to get going," she said. "I felt the nerves definitely at the start of the round. Once I made the turn, I was just playing free golf." She made her first birdie on the par-4 14th hole, something she half-jokingly credited to a snack. "I actually had an apple on 13, and that gave me actually a nice boost," she said. "I felt a lot better after that. Maybe I should have apples more often." The 25-year-old finished with six birdies, including four in the final six holes.

"Two of them were par 5s, so I got to take advantage of that with my length," she said. "Hit a really good tee shot, and then I was just on the front of the green on 17, and the other one I was just on the

fringe, too. I two-putted pretty much for birdie on those. Then I had wedge shots in on the other two, too. Taking advantage of my length and hitting good tee shots.' Marina Alex and Japan's Minami Katsu also shot 68. Lydia Ko was one of five players at 69. The 31-year-old Coughlin, who played in college at Virginia and has never won on the LPGA Tour, made three birdies in a four-hole span from Nos. 2-5. She believes

her game has benefited from her recent decision to make husband John Pond her full-time caddie. "He's really good at talking

through everything when I want to get really fast and make a decision really quickly," Coughlin said. "He is really good at putting all the work in, all the extra work, all the extra walking ... making sure the strategy is really good and double checking everything. But ... he's always been really good with how he talks to me and communicates what he thinks I need

to do and how I need to do it." Defending champion and world No. 2 Lilia Vu withdrew because of a back injury. She issued a statement on Instagram saying she had "severe discomfort" in her back during warmups. "I have been dealing with a back injury for a while now," Vu said in the statement. "Some days are better than others, and today was unfortunately not a good day. During my normal warmup routine, I had severe discomfort in my back and I felt that I could not compete up to my standards and made the decision to withdraw from the tour-

nament ahead of my tee time." She added that she was returning home to see her doctors and determine the next steps. (AP)

Nelly Korda is 2 shots back fined for pointing laser at rival in Liga MX match

MEXICO CITY, April 19: Nahuel Guzmán, a goalkeeper for the Mexican club Tigres of Nuevo Leon, was suspended 11 games and fined for pointing a laser at fellow goalie Esteban Andrada during a tournament match last weekend, Liga MX announced Thursday. The 38-year-old Guzmán is

recovering from right knee surgery and was in the visiting team's box at the BBVA stadium in Monterrey last Saturday during the first half when he pointed the laser in the direction of Andrada, a fellow Argentine and the starting

goalkeeper for Rayados. Monterrey's sports president, Jose Antonio Noriega, went to the box and took away the laser in the first half of the match, which ended in a 3-3 draw.

Chasing 5th straight win, Goalkeeper Nahuel Guzmán suspended for 11 games,

In addition to the suspension and fine, Guzmán must do unspecified community work

This is the first time in the history of Mexican soccer that a player has been sanctioned for pointing a laser at a rival. The 2014 Apertura final between América and Tigres was stopped momentarily because a fan was aiming a laser

gentina's roster for the 2018 World Cup in Russia, will miss the rest of the Clausura tournament because of the suspension. It's not clear when he will be healthy enough to

The fine of Guzmán was one of several stemming from the match.

Tigres was fined an unspecified amount for the behavior of its fans. A Tigres fan could be seen urinating in a glass and throwing it on Rayados fans in video posted on social media.

at players. Andrada received a fine for Guzmán, who was on Ar-a post on his Instagram account in which he made homophobic comments about Guzmán.

> And Monterrey was also fined over fan behavior. A video posted on social media showed a Rayados fan throwing liquid at forward André-Pierre Gignac and making an obscene gesture.

Without revealing names or the teams they supported, the Disciplinary Commission of Liga MX said two fans would be banned from attending league matches, although it did not say for how long. (AP)



Wesley Bryan would rather be at Hilton Head; He's leading in the Dominican Republic

PUNTA CANA (DOMINI-CAN REPUBLIC), April 19: Wesley Bryan chipped in for eagle early and for birdie late, giving him a 9-under 63 on Thursday for a three-shot lead in the Corales Puntacana Championship, a PGA Tour event held the same week as a place he'd rather be Bryan birdied his last two

holes to stretch his lead to three shots over five players, a group that includes former PGA Tour winners Charley Hoffman and Troy Merritt, along with tour rookie Parker Coody. The tournament is held oppo-

site the RBC Heritage, site of Bryan's only PGA Tour victory. The South Carolina native even took part in Harbour Town's promotional day last month. But with injuries to his left

shoulder and his wrist, his game has suffered and Bryan has spent more time delivering YouTube content with his brother, George. They first gained fame with their trick shots. There was nothing tricky about his 63, outside of

the chip-in for eagle on the par-5 fourth on the Corales course at Puntacana Resort & amp; Club, and his chip-in for birdie on the par-3 17th. Bryan also birdied the 18th

His 63 matched his low round on the PGA Tour. Bryan also shot 63 in the third round of the Genesis Open at Riviera in 2017.

"Got off to a good start, which was nice," Bryan said. "But I mean, I've been hitting it nice leading up to this week. It's fun to actually go out there and make some birdies, and had a couple chip-ins, which was nice as well.

Hoffman is 47 and already had a surprise start to his year with a playoff loss in the Phoenix Open. He's trying to build on that and added a trip to the Dominican Republic.

played bogey-free on a breezy day and finished with three straight birdies.

winner gets into the PGA Cham-

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pionship and receives a two-year a ton," Hoffman said. "Everyone exemption, which more than knows how important is it to get makes up for not getting a spot in that top 50, top 70 to get in the in the Masters. playoffs. I got off to a good start

"This year every event means this year, struggled a little bit —

I didn't struggle, just missed a couple cuts by a few shots.

"Late in my career every event means a ton and obviously trying to get a W is the most important thing this week, and then obviously put myself in position for the playoffs.

The group at 67 included Billy Horschel and Pierceson Coody, the twin brother of Parker. Their grandfather is Charles Coody, the 1971 Masters champion.

The RBC Heritage at Harbour Town is known for being a big exhale from the Masters. Perhaps the Dominican Republic had some of that vibe for Nicolai Hojgaard, though his scorecard looked like he was going through an emotional hangover five birdies, six bogeys, seven pars for a 1-over 73.

Hojgaard, a 23-year-old from Denmark, briefly had the lead on Saturday at the Masters until making five straight bogeys. He wound up in a tie for 16th.

Hojgaard is the only Masters participant playing at Puntacana. (AP)

He started on the back nine, As an opposite-field event, the

SPORTS

Rishabh Pant set for emotional homecoming in stern Sunrisers Hyderabad test for Delhi Capitals

NEW DELHI, April 19: He walked on crutches in one of his first public appearances at Feroz Shah Kotla last year, but when an emotional Rishabh Pant walks out as captain of Delhi Capitals, he will need to put on his 'out of box' thinking cap to stop a marauding Sunrisers Hyderabad in an IPL match here on Saturday.

Capitals have had a mixed season so far, but a couple of impressive wins against Lucknow Super Giants and Gujarat Titans have put them back in the mix with three wins and four defeats in seven outings so far. Placed fourth in the IPL points table, Sunrisers Hyderabad have set a different template altogether with two of the highestever totals of 277/3 and 287/3, which will require lot of heart and skill to counter.

Hence, 'Captain Pant' will have to use his resources with extreme caution and guile on a Kotla track which will have good bounce and carry, for a change

Travis Head (235 runs) — IPL's foreign flavour of the season will be keen to build on his 39-ball century and his partner Abhishek Sharma (211 runs) is no pushover



either, with his penchant for taking

aerial route during the powerplay. Head and Abhishek's intimidating strike rates of 199 and 197 respectively will pose a serious challenge for pace trio of Ishant Sharma, Khaleel Ahmed and

Mukesh Kumar. Adding to the threat is Heinrich Klaasen also striking at 199, who

is one of the best finishers in inter-

gives SRH's batting a scary look. But Kuldeep Yadav's (economy of 6.06) left-arm wrist spin could well prove to be a game changer

and in Tristan Stubbs, Pant has got an ideal third spin option alongside Axar Patel (6.75).

Pant, who is himself getting back to the top of his game, down to 210-220 which would be

national cricket with propensity to

hit balls out of the stadium, which

wouldn't mind if he can win the toss and opt to bat.

But David Warner's knuckle injury is a cause for concern for Pant and head coach Ricky Ponting although Jake Fraser-McGurk has impressed one and all in his first two matches.

While SRH's batting has been top-notch on belters, their bowlers have suffered a lot on those tracks with only skipper Pat Cummins (7.87) having an economy rate of less than 8 runs per over, which is considered good in today's day and age of T20.

However seasoned duo of Jaydev Unadkat (11.35) and Bhuvneshwar Kumar (10.45), have both been average while spinners wrist spinner Mayank Markande (11.23) and left-arm spinner Shahbaz Ahmed (ER 12.44) — have been sent on a leather hunt.

The best option for Pant would be to open the batting and go for the jugular against SRH, putting a scoreboard pressure on the rampaging Orange Army.

In case Capitals have to chase, the idea would be to keep SRH

chaseable against an attack which may not be able to hold its own on good batting tracks.

Teams (from): Delhi Capitals: Rishabh Pant (c&wk), David Warner, Abishek Porel, Ricky Bhui, Yash Dhull, Shai Hope, Prithvi Shaw, Tristan Stubbs, Kumar Kushagra (wk), 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.

Sunrisers Hyderabad: Pat Cummins (c), Abdul Samad, Abhishek Sharma, Aiden Markram, Marco Jansen, Rahul Tripathi, Washington Sundar, Glenn Phillips, Sanvir Singh, Heinrich Klaasen (wk), Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Mayank Agarwal, T. Natarajan, Anmolpreet Singh, Mayank Markande, Upendra Singh Yadav (wk), Umran Malik, Nitish Kumar Reddy, Fazalhaq Farooqi, Shahbaz Ahmed, Travis Head, Jaydev Unadkat, Akash Singh, Jhathavedh Subramanyan. Time: 7:30PM IST. (PTI)

unbelievable, our nerves were tested: MI skipper Hardik



Ashutosh Sharma was

MULLANPUR (PUNJAB), April 19: Punjab Kings' cricketer Ashutosh Sharma's exploits with the willow drew enormous praise from Mumbai Indians skipper Hardik Pandya as well as his team's stand-in captain Sam Curran, with the former terming it an "unbelievable" display.

Ashutosh and Shashank Singh have emerged as the unlikely heroes for Punjab Kings this IPL season but the failure of the top-order has seen the team slump to ninth spot in the IPL table despite the some breathtaking performances from the duo.

On Thursday, Ashutosh virtually took the game away from Mumbai Indians with his 28-ball 61 before PBKS lost by nine runs chasing 193

Ashutosh also executed a stunning sweep shot against pacer Jasprit Bumrah, something which has not been done quite often against India's pace spearhead. "Unbelievable, playing the way

he (Ashutosh) did and hitting the ball off the middle. (It is) great for his future. We did speak in the timeout about it, not about how we look, we will keep fighting and make sure (that) we don't bowl the soft balls. Batsmen played good shots but we were soft in certain overs," Pandya said at the postmatch presentation ceremony. The MI skipper heaved a huge

sigh of relief with a close win, stating that every player's nerves got tested in the game.

"(It was a) very good game. Everyone's nerves got tested. We spoke that the characters will be checked in this game. But (it is) natural (that) you (would) think you are ahead but IPL has a tendency to show that oppositions in Dagestan, Russia from April 2 can come back and how," Pandya added Punjab Kings' stand-in captain

The last chance to qualify for Paris will be World Qualifiers in Sam Curran said it was heartening to see youngsters like Ashutosh

been fined ₹ 12 lakhs for his team

maintaining a slow over rate during

their thrilling nine-run victory over

Punjab Kings in the Indian Premier

Mumbai Indians, thanks to Suryaku-

mar Yadav's blazing 78 off 53 deliver-

ies, posted a competitive 192/7 and

then dismissed PBKS, despite

Ashutosh Sharma's stunning 28-ball

61 and Shashank Singh's 41, for 183 in

tion on the points table following their

MI rose to seventh from ninth posi-

League.

19.1 overs.

and Shashank rising to the occasion, despite losing some close matches in the recent past

"Another close one, I think this team likes a close one, but unfortunately another loss. Another incredible knock from the young guy (Ashutosh), but another close loss," he said.

"It's very tough. We have lost a lot of wickets at the start, the way the younger guys have taken the team so close is heartening.

"They have incredible confidence, you see a guy like Ashutosh having the confidence to play the sweeps and the big hits against pacers, it's so great to watch them in action," Curran said.

The Englishman said there were a lot of positives to take from such close defeats.

"It's disheartening to lose close games, but there are a lot of positives in this team. We still have the belief in us, we believe we can turn this around, the sun will come up tomorrow and we will hopefully get on a winning run," Curran said.

The player of the match Jasprit Bumrah, who bowled a brilliant spell of 3/21 said it was a much closer game than he anticipated.

"(It was a) much closer game than what we thought. (I) want to make an impact early on. In this format, ball swings for two overs, and you want to make use of that,' he said.

Bumrah said the T20 format is cruel for bowlers and is tilted in favour of batters. "This format is a little difficult for the bowlers because the batsmanship is going over, plus the time restrictions and the Impact Player rule. What you can do is prepare your best and back yourself," he said.

"Go out there and give your best. I try to relay messages from wherever I am on the field. You don't want to give too many messages," Bumrah added. (PTI)

Taking Bumrah out of attack after 2 overs helped PBKS claw back: Moody

MUMBAI, April 19: Former Australian all-rounder Tom Moody feels Mumbai Indians did not use pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah optimally during the IPL clash against Punjab Kings which allowed them to fight back from a difficult position and come within touching distance of MI's total.

Bumrah was matchless in the game in Mullanpur on Thursday, taking the wickets of opener Sam Curran, Rilee Rossouw and the dangerous Shashank Singh to help MI win by nine runs. MI had set PBKS a target of 193.

The India mainstay bagged two wickets in the second over, dismissing Curran and Rossouw, but just when PBKS looked down and out, he was taken out of the attack, allowing the home team to claw back. "Again, Mumbai leaning on him so much to turn their fortunes around. He bowled two overs early on and had the Punjab Kings on their back. But, interestingly enough, he didn't bowl another over until the 13th," said the former Australian cricketer on Star Sports

Cricket Live.

"We want to see them (MI) close out games early by bringing Bumrah back or Coetzee. But then they have to depend on guys like Hardik to finish off, who hasn't been bowling as well of late and some of the other bowlers travelling like (Romario) Shepherd, they may struggle in the back end.

"Mumbai are in a situation now where they have to tactically figure things out, but they also need somebody to step up, their bowlers to step up and really help out Bumrah and Coetzee, because if they (MI) keep going the way they are, they might lose more points again.' Moody also felt that Suryakumar Yadav will have to play the entire duration of the league to regain full fitness after returning from an

ankle injury and a hernia surgery. 'Mr 360 degrees' struck a 53-ball 78 on Thursday as he guide MI to 192. With the middle-order batter vital to India's chances in the T20 World Cup in the West Indies and USA, Moody felt the cricketer needs to get his peak fitness back. "It's important that he slowly

works back into full fitness, he needs to be playing for the whole 40 overs and that would be great. Not that he bowls or anything but for his own peace of mind and fitness for that the preparation for what is beyond the IPL. It was a great innings today (from him). Steyn praised PBSK batter Ashutosh Sharma for the sweep shot he employed against Bumrah. something which has not been used against the India quick too often. "I mean, IPL never ceases to disappoint us with close games and creating new heroes... Bumrah bowls a no-ball, and the next thing Ashutosh goes down and plays that sweep that goes for six." (PTI)

Wresters Punia, Sujeet to miss Asian qualifiers after arriving late in Bishkek

NEW DELHI, April 19: In a huge setback for the Indian wrestling contingent at the Asia Olympic Qualifiers in Bishkek, two of the country's best wrestlers, Deepak Punia and Sujeet Kalakal, will miss the continental event as they could not report for the weigh-in on time as their flight arrived late in the Kyrgyzstan capital owing to bad weather in Dubai. While both Punia and Sujeet

eventually managed to reach Bishkek after being stranded at the Dubai international airport due to incessant rain and flooding, they could not report for the mandatory weigh-in on time, according to sources. The sources added that the organisers did not allow late weigh-in despite request from the Indian coaches.

Punia (86kg), who had come close to winning a medal at the Tokyo Games, and Sujeet (65kg), were on their way to Bishkek to participate in the Asia Olympic qualifiers — the second-last qualifying event for Paris Olympics when a majority of the flights



leaving Dubai got cancelled or dehands as they are scheduled to layed because of the flooding of compete tomorrow. They are not the airport. getting any flights to Bishkek. I am worried about them,"

The duo, accompanied by Russian coach Kamal Malikov and physio Shubham Gupta, were forced to sleep on the floor and had no access to proper food due to the rain-induced crisis in Dubai. "They were stuck at the Dubai

airport since April 16 and it seems the chance of qualifying for Paris Olympics is slipping out of their

"He's at the peak of his powers at the moment. And that's my point of where I think the Mumbai Indians let the Punjab Kings back into this contest. (Gerald) Coetzee and Bumrah for mine, and I'll be interested to hear what the other fast bowlers think on this show. Should (Bumrah) have bowled again to be able to put Punjab completely out onto the campus," he added. Former South African quick Dale Stevn opined that MI's frontline pacers Bumrah and Coetzee need support from other bowlers, given the rigours of the IPL. He hinted that an off-colour Pandya was not helping MI's bowling department.

'We are behind schedule in training, nobody knows who will go for Olympics'

NEW DELHI, April 19: Legendary pistol marksman Jaspal Rana has expressed grave concerns over the delay in naming the Indian shooting contingent for the Paris Olympics, saying it will leave the selected shooters with little time for the final phase of preparations.

Several countries, including the US and Italy, and many European powerhouses have announced their squads and their shooters are in the final phase of fine-tuning their skills and programs for the Olympics, even as India commenced its nearly month-long exercise on Friday.

The top-five ranked shooters in pistol and rifle category will undergo four trials -- April 19-27 (New Delhi, trial 1 & 2) and May 10-19 (Bhopal, trial 3 & 4) -- and the selection for Paris will be done after that, leaving precious little time for the last phase of training.

The Paris Olympics will commence on July 26.

The National Rifle Association of India (NRAI) has completed the trials in shotgun events, but they are yet to announce the squad in the hope that a few more shooters might secure Paris quotas in the Final Olympic Qualification Championship, which started in Doha on Friday.

We are not in the same category of training and preparation as other people are getting around the world. They (strong countries in shooting sport) have already selected their teams and started their training and we are behind schedule," said Padma Shri and Arjuna Awardee shooter Rana in harsh comments against the NRAI's policy.

'Nobody knows so far who is going and who is not going. That puts a lot of pressure on the players who have won quota places, while those who have not won the quota places there is a lot less pressure," added the four-time Asian Games gold-medallist, who is currently the personal coach of Olympian Manu Bhaker.

In shooting sport, shooters win quota places for the country and the federation decides the contingent based on their performance in trials, national and international competitions. Rana also flayed the ongoing trials at the Karni Singh Ranges, saying he had never seen a competition where only five shooters per event were short-listed. (PTI)

high-stakes knockout battle

MARGAO. April 19: With a direct qualification to the semifinals hanging in the balance, FC Goa host Chennaiyin FC in a high-stakes knockout battle of the Indian Super League here on Saturday. On recent form, FC Goa enters the fixture on the back of an impressive run (45 points from their 22 matches), having secured victories in four out of their last five matches.

Their commanding performance against Chennaiyin FC in their recent face-off, where they emerged triumphant with a 4-1 scoreline, underscores their current form and confidence.

Contrastingly, Chennaiyin FC, despite experiencing a setback in their previous fixture against FC Goa, have demonstrated resilience throughout the season. With wins in three of their last five matches, they are poised to bounce back and pose a formidable challenge to their opponents. FC Goa fare well against Chennaiyin FC, having won five of their last six matches against them, and keeping a clean sheet in four of those victories. The Gaurs have found the back of the net in each of their previous 14 matches against the Marina Machans, and only against Kerala Blasters FC do have a longer active scoring streak, i.e. of 19 games. FC Goa now have won four matches in a row, and their last longer run like this was a stretch of five matches from January-February 2020. Their 52 strikes against Chennaiyin FC is the most goals that a team has netted against any opposition

in the ISL. They put up an absolute show in the last match, and one can expect similar fireworks, or at least intent to pull off the same in the forthcoming fixture as well. (PTI)

for slow over rate against Punjab Kings

MULLANPUR, April 19: Mumbai while PBKS dropped a spot to ninth Indians skipper Hardik Pandya has after their fifth defeat.

"Hardik Pandya, the Mumbai Indians captain, has been fined after his team maintained a slow over rate during their Indian Premier League (IPL) 2024 match against Punjab Kings at the PCA New International Cricket Stadium, Mullanpur on April 18," said an IPL statement on Friday.

"As it was his team's first offence of the season under the IPL's Code of Conduct relating to minimum over rate offences. Pandva was fined ₹ 12 lakhs," the statement added.

Mumbai Indians next play Rajasthan third win in seven games in IPL 2024, Royals in Jaipur on April 22. (PTI)

It was my dream to play sweep shot against Jasprit Bumrah, says Ashutosh Sharma

Dayanand Kalakal, Sujeet's father,

Punia and Sujeet were training

to 15 and decided to fly from

Makachkala to Bishkek via Dubai.

FC Goa host Chennaiyin FC in Mumbai Indians skipper Hardik Pandya fined

had told PTI on Thursday.

Turkey in May. (PTI)

MULLANPUR (PUNJAB), April 19: Punjab Kings' batting sensation Ashutosh Sharma said he lived a "dream" when he swept "world's best fast bowler" Jasprit Bumrah during his team's IPL clash against Mumbai Indians here.

The 25-year-old Ashutosh put the Bumrah-led Mumbai Indians' bowling to sword here on Thursday when he hammered seven sixes and two fours to make 61 off a mere 28 balls, a knock which brought PBKS back from the brink after an early collapse.

PBKS were 17/4 inside the powerplay but courtesy the stunning fightback from Ashutosh and Shashank Singh (41), they were able to get close to MI's 193-run target before losing by nine runs.

It was in the 13th over of Punjab's chase when Ashutosh got down low on his front to convert an attempted yorker from Bumrah into a full toss and smack it for a six over backward square leg.

"It was my dream to hit a sweep shot against Bumrah. I was practising for that shot but it came against the best bowler in the world - it is a part of the game,' Ashutosh told the media here after the match. Ashutosh said he was confident of taking Punjab over the line.

"I had belief in myself that I would be able to win the game for the team," he said. Ashutosh credited former India player and coach Sanjay Bangar, head of cricket



development at PBKS, for his improvement this season.

"Sanjay sir told me that I am not a slogger and that I can play proper cricket shots. It was a small statement but carried a huge meaning for me. I am only following it – I am not a hard-hitter, I am playing proper cricketing shots and that is what has changed my game," Ashutosh said. "Back home, I was working with my

coach Amay Khurasiya who had told me that the longer you stay on the pitch, the more your team has a chance of winning,' he added.

The right-handed batter, who made some gestures towards the PBKS dugout after completing his fifty, said the celebrations were meant for his team management.

"That celebration was for our Sanjay (Bangar) sir, I have been working a lot with him and I keep asking him questions," Ashutosh said.

"He gave me a chance, and also the entire Punjab team which showed belief in me. Our head coach Trevor Bayliss, Ashish (Tuli) paaji, Shikhar (Dhawan) paaji, everyone believed in me, so it was for all of them." he added.

Punjab slumped to their fifth defeat in seven matches as well as to the ninth spot in the points table, but Ashutosh said his side has been playing well.

"Winning and losing are part of the game. How you are playing is something that matters and we are playing well as a team. If we will play well, we will win," he said.

Mumbai Indians' pacer Gerald Coetzee conceded his side was tense after Ashutosh's stunning onslaught.

"He really brought it to us. We just wanted to be really clear tactically what we wanted to do. We executed really well to him in the back end to shut it down and win the game," the South African bowler said.

"But it was tense, as I think everyone saw. But it was just all tactical discussions, he added. Coetzee conceded Mumbai Indians could've been better with their slower balls, something that PBKS used perfectly in the first half.

'We just really learned from their innings. We adapted our plans and I think it worked," Coetzee added. (PTI)

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