

# Himanta seeks vote to Poll fever yet to grip Manipur No political rallies, posters in strife-torn NE state

IMPHAL, April 6: Posters of political parties, mega rallies and visible movement of leaders -- the traditional elements of campaigning -- are conspicuously missing in violence-hit Manipur where polling for Lok Sabha elections is due in less than two weeks.

The only visible hint of the impending election is the hoardings put up by local election authorities, urging citizens to exercise their franchise.

Amid the muted election fervour, major party figures have refrained from visiting the conflict-ridden state to canvas for votes or make electoral pledges.

While the BJP has enlisted prominent figures like Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union home minister Amit Shah as star campaigners, the Congress line-up includes

a joint operation with the central

security forces in Bishnupur dis-

trict of strife-hit Manipur. The

recovered items were one sten-

gun carbine with two maga-

zines, one 9 mm pistol, one

modified 303 rifle, nine HE

hand grenade, three smoke

bombs, five 51 mm mortar

shells, one 2-inch mortar shell,

one detonator, four walkie talkie (WT set) of different company

along with two chargers, two

mobile phones, two smoke

shells, eight 7.62 mm ammuni-

tions, two 5.56 INSAS ammuni-

tions, two AK ammunitions, one

tube launcher, one helmet, three

pairs of jungle boots, three bullet

proof vests, one rucksack bag

and one sleeping bag, the po-

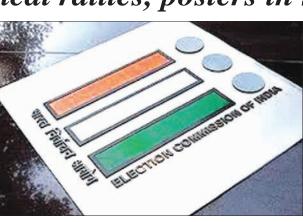
lice said. The items were found

in three different gunny bags

and recovered from the front

side of the Maibam Lotpa Ching

under Nambol police station of Bishnupur district on Saturday



Sonia Gandhi, Rahul Gandhi, and other key leaders. However, none of them have

any appearance in Manipur yet. Though the Election Commission of Manipur maintained that there are no official restrictions on campaigning activities, party representatives emphasised the need for sub-

dued campaigning to avoid aggravating the delicate situation in the state. "There are no restrictions

from the Election Commission's side on campaigning. Anything which is within the boundaries of the model code low-key," of conduct is allowed," chief electoral officer of Manipur,

Pradeep Jha told PTL To tackle the tricky situation, the candidates -- BJP's Thounaojam Basanta Kumar Singh, Congress' Angomcha Bimol Akoijam, Republican Party of India's Maheshwar Thounaojam and Rajmukar Somendro Singh who are backed by the Manipur Peoples' Party (MPP) -- have come up with a unique solution. They are reaching out to the voters in a non-conventional way which includes holding meetings at their residence or party offices and their supporters indulging in door-

to-door campaigns. "It would have been better if I addressed public meetings and held rallies, but I have decided to keep the campaign Maheshwar Thounaojam, who has deployed teams of volunteers for show. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

door-to-door campaigning, said.

"The voters know the importance of their vote in the current situation and will make an informed choice," he added. Basanta Kumar Singh, the sitting education and law minister of the state, who is contesting the Lok Sabha polls this time, is holding small meetings at his residence and the party office

Similarly, Akoijam, a professor at the Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi, mostly meets people at his residence. Posters of Rahul Gandhi's Bharat Jodo Yatra and those seeking voters for Akoijam have also been put up at the Congress office in Imphal. "Elections are important for us but we cannot rub salt in people's wounds by doing pomp and strengthen Modi's hand State govt's poll sops: 50,000 more jobs,

more benefits for ration card holders



#### HT Correspondent

JORHAT, April 6: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma rallied supporters in Jorhat, calling upon them to strengthen the hands of Prime Minister Narendra Modi by voting for the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)

Addressing election rallies at Titabar and Mariani Assembly segments, Sarma emphasised the need to continue the nation's journey of massive transformation under Modi's leadership. Expressing his aspirations for accelerated development, (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

#### Himanta's dance moves Congress manifesto completely bears HTBRIEFS Arms recovered imprint of Muslim League: PM Modi major draw at poll rallies IMPHAL: Manipur police on Saturday recovered a war-likestore of arms and explosives in

GUWAHATI, April 6: If his fiery to join, who readily obliged and speeches draw crowds to meetings, it's the 'dancing' skills of Assam chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma that literally get the public on their feet.

With electioneering heating up in this Northeastern state where polling for the 14 Lok Sabha seats is scheduled in the first three phases on April 19, 26 and May 7, the BJP's star campaigner is out with his dancing moves to attract voters.

As Sarma campaigned across Jorhat constituency on Saturday, he ended his meetings by dancing to the BJP's theme song 'Akou ebar Modi sorkar' (Modi's government, once more), inviting enthusiastic participation from the audience. Be it at the end of the rally in

Sivsagar or in Mariani, the CM sang and danced, while urging the public

joined their leader from the stands. Accompanied by clapping and occasional jumps with fists in the air, Sarma's trademark moves added energy to his campaign.

In his speeches, Sarma outlined the various welfare measures of the BJP-led governments both at the Centre and the state, and exhorted the public to vote for Modi for a third successive term.

Sharing a video of his lively campaign dance on X on Friday with the public joining him from the stands, he wrote: "We are #ModiKaParivaar. Of course we sing and dance in our rallies." Sarma's dance moves had garnered much attention during the 2019 parliamentary elections, when he had swung along the tunes of 'Akou ebar Modi Sorkar and other (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

TRANQUIL TRANSIT

SAHARANPUR (UP), April 6: Virtually equating the Congress with the Muslim League, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday said the grand old party's election manifesto reflects the same thought as that of the Muslim League at the time of the freedom movement

Prime Minister Modi said the Congress, which existed at the time of the freedom movement, has "ended decades ago"

"A number of great personalities were associated with the Congress. The name of Mahatma Gandhi was associated with the Congress. The Congress, which is left today, neither has policies in the interest of the nation nor vision for the nation's development," Prime Minister Modi said.



proved that today's Congress is completely cut off from the hopes and aspirations of today's India," he added addressing an election rally in

Sharpening his attack further, he said the Congress is not visible even remotely.

Prime Minister Modi also took a iibe at the Samajwadi Party, which is a member of the INDIA bloc and an election partner of the Congress

#### in Uttar Pradesh.

"The situation of SP (Samajwadi Party) in Uttar Pradesh is such that here they have to change their candidates every hour, whereas the situation of Congress is even more strange. The Congress is not getting candidates at all," Prime Minister Modi said.

"Even on the seats, which the Congress considered as its stronghold, it is not able to muster the courage to field candidates," he added apparently referring to the Congress strongholds of Amethi and Rae Bareli.

Prime Minister Modi said the "INDI alliance has become another name for instability and uncertainty". "That's why today the country is not taking seriously even a single thing said by them," he added. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

# Lurinjyoti Gogoi visits rival Sonowal's family home

DIBRUGARH, April 6: Lurinjyoti Gogoi, the candidate backed by the United Opposition Forum, Assam (UOFA) for Assam's Dibrugarh Lok Sabha constituency, visited the family of his BJP rival Sarbananda Sonowal at their residence in Muluk Gaon on Saturday. Gogoi paid his respects to the Union minister's elder brother Dipak Sonowal and other family members, including the widow of his eldest sibling Girish Sonowal. He sought their blessings and conveyed his regards, emphasising that his visit was not for seeking

votes 'I have not come here to seek votes but the blessings of the elders whom I have known since long', Gogoi said.

Dipak Sonowal said it is the 'people who will vote and decide the fate of a candidate but all our good wishes and blessings are with

Sonowal's elder brother's

widow also wished Gogoi success

manifesto was released, it has

"Yesterday, the kind of election



#### Foundation day

morning.

DIPHU: BJP Karbi Anglong District Community, East led president Roland Killing, Dima Hasao District Committee led by president, Golonjo Thasosen, and West Karbi Anglong District Committee Radip Ronghang and as many as 36 Mandal Committees as well as 1217 booth Committees under 6-Diphu (ST) Parliamentary Constituency celebrated the party 44th Foundation Day at their respective office on April 6, 2024 by hoisting the party flag. On the occasion, Amar Sing Tisso, party candidate from 6- Diphu (ST) Parliamentary Constituency attended the celebration held at Atal Bihari Vajpayee Bhavan, Diphu. All the party karyakartas of the constituency have erected the party's flag in front their respective residences.



'The British Asian civil rights movement is a forgotten piece of history'

# New UK documentary examines racist attacks on British Indians

LONDON, April 6: Driving around with hockey sticks in the boot of the car and stockpiling petrol bombs to defend themselves are among some of the gripping accounts that make up a new UK documentary chronicling racist attacks faced by British Indians in the 1970s and 80s.

'Defiance: Fighting the Far Right', a three-part series aired on Channel 4 from Monday, uses a cache of archive footage and compelling new testimony from the people who were there to tell the story of the fightback of Britain's South Asian community against a wave of brutal racist attacks and murders between 1976 and 1981.

The film highlights how the community stood in the face of a rising tide of anti-immigrant feelings and a campaign of violence and intimidation unleashed by notorious farright and racist groups such as the



"Ever since I was a child witness-

"I have had a burning desire to

National Front. "Back then, my heaval in west London. Ludhiana-born father would drive around with hockey sticks in the ing those events of the late 1970s boot of his car in case we ever ran and early 1980s, I have wanted to into far-right thugs as we went tell these stories of how we British about our daily business," said Ra-Asians fought back against the Najesh Thind, the British Punjabi ditional Front and other racist and fasrector of one of the three episodes cist organisations," he said. who grew up amid some of the up-

show the world that far from being meek and mild, as some Western stereotypes would portray South Asians, our communities were courageous, resilient and resourceful, drawing on decades of experience of anti-colonial struggles both in India and Africa," he said.

The series, created by BAFTAwinning Rogan Productions, Left Handed Films and GroupM Motion Entertainment, investigates seminal events in British South Asian history referred to as the Southall protests, the Battle for Brick Lane and the Bradford 12 -- events often overlooked by the press, the police and the government of the day.

"At a moment when we have a British Asian Prime Minister [Rishi Sunakl and an Asian First Minister in Scotland [Humza Yousaf], it is incredibly powerful to be able to tell the stories of everyday British Asians (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

# votes against Gaurav Gogoi in Jorhat: BJP MP

Will win by over 2 lakh

from Jorhat Lok Sabha seat, Topon Kumar Gogoi, on Saturday exuded confidence of retaining the constituency by trouncing his rival Gaurav Gogoi of the Congress by a margin of over two lakh votes.

In an interview to PTI, the BJP leader asserted that people of his constituency and the entire country want Narendra Modi elected as prime minister for the third consecutive term so that the "development journey continues"

He also claimed that the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019, which the opposition is "trying to make an election issue", is not at all a concern among voters.

"My campaigning is going on very well. Political meetings are being held in every panchayat of all the legislative assembly constituencies of Jorhat, and I am getting spontaneous reactions of people ir-

JORHAT, April 6: Sitting BJP MP respective of religion, caste and creed," the BJP MP said. Jorhat will vote in the first phase on April 19 along with four other seats in Upper Assam.

"We have done enough work in the tea gardens. Earlier, no initiatives were taken for the garden areas. While I was the power minister in the Assam government, I provided new connections to 24 lakh people. I gave individual electric meters to tea garden quarters instead of cluster meters. Ambulance service has also been started in the

tea garden areas," Gogoi said. Asserting that people have full faith in the BJP, he said there is no anti-incumbency in Jorhat as his "performance speaks about it", and there is a "hell and heaven differ-

ence" between pre and post 2016 Assam. The BJP assumed power in Assam for the first time in 2016 with alliance (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

and blessed him by saying 'Jai hok' (may you win) and may 'all your wishes be fulfilled'. Gogoi greeted the family members with the traditional Assamese

Gogoi'

gamosa', and Sonowal's wife presented him with a yellow-green gamosa' characteristic of the Sonowal-Kachari tribe.

Earlier, both Gogoi and the Union minister had met at Haldhibari Nagar Than, a place of worship in Dibrugarh, where they shared pleasantries over tea.

Both the candidates have their roots in the All Assam Students Union (AASU) with Sonowal having served as the president from 1992 to 1999 and Gogoi as the general secretary much later during the later part of the last decade.

The Dibrugarh constituency is going to polls in the first phase on April 19 with three candidates in fray, including Aam Aadmi Party's Monoj Dhanowar. (PTI)

# **CPI releases Lok Sabha election** manifesto, promises to scrap CAA

NEW DELHI, April 6: The Communist Party of India (CPI) released its manifesto for the Lok Sabha elections on Saturday, promising to scrap the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, remove the 50 per cent cap on reservations for SCs, STs and OBCs, and enhance the daily wage under MGNREGA to ₹ 700.

The Left party called for the defeat of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) to save secular democracy. It said the 10-year BJP rule has proven to be a disaster for the country. If elected to power, the CPI promised to scrap the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, remove the 50 per cent cap on reservations, conduct a caste census, introduce taxation measures such as wealth tax and inheritance tax, increase corporate tax, introduce reservation in the private sector, and raise the daily wage under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) ₹ 700.

"General elections for the 18th Lok Sabha are going to be very crucial and critical for our secular democratic republic, its future and to our constitutional ethos," the CPI manifesto stated.

After releasing the manifesto, CPI general secretary D Raja said, "The elections are very critical for the country and its future. (Prime Minister Narendra) Modi's rule has been disastrous for the country.'

"The Constitution is under attack. BJP being political



army of RSS is trying to change the Constitution and ultimately replace it," he alleged

The Left party said if voted to power, it will introduce measures to address the growing inequality.

The CPI also said it aims to bring central investigative agencies like the Enforcement Directorate (ED) and the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) under the purview of Parliament, and added it will "intensify its struggle for the abolition of Governor's Office to strengthen federalism by removing Union's interference." "Elected governments in states should be empowered to take major policy decisions...," the manifesto stated. The CPI said it will continue to fight politically and legally to remove the "arbitrary" cap of 50 per cent on reservations (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

#### BUSINESS

# China may misuse AI to target polls in countries like India, US: Microsoft

NEW DELHI, April 6: China is likely to deploy Artificial Intelligence-generated content via social media to sway public opinion to boost its geopolitical interests during elections in countries like India, South Korea and the US, tech giant Microsoft has warned.

Voting for 543 Lok Sabha seats in India will take place between April 19 and June 4, spread across seven phases. South Koreans will go to the polls in a general election on April 10 while the

US will hold the Presidential election on November 5.

"With major elections taking place around the world this year, particularly in India, South Korea and the United States, we assess that China will, at a minimum, create and amplify AI-generated content to benefit its interests," Clint Watts, General Manager, Microsoft Threat Analysis Center, said in a blog post.

Despite the chances of such content in affecting election results remaining low, China's increasing experimentation in augmenting memes, videos, and audio will likely continue and may prove



more effective down the line, he said. China will do it along with North Korea, he wrote

These are among the Microsoft Threat Intelligence insights in the latest East Asia report published on Wednesday by the Microsoft Threat Analysis Center (MTAC).

China is using fake social media accounts to poll voters on what divides them most to sow division and possibly influence the outcome of the US presidential election in its favour. China has also increased its use

of AI-generated content to further its goals around the world. North Korea has increased its cryptocurrency heists and supply

chain attacks to fund and further its military goals and intelligence collection. It has also begun to use AI to make its operations more effective and efficient. Beijing will celebrate the 75th

anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China in October, and North Korea will continue to push forward key advanced weapons programmes,

"Meanwhile, as populations in India, South Korea, and the United States head to the polls, we are likely to see Chinese cyber and influence actors, and to some extent, North Korean cyber actors, work toward targeting these elections,' it said.

China will, at a minimum, create and amplify AI-generated content that benefits its positions in these high-profile elections, it said.

'While Chinese cyber actors have long conducted reconnais-sance of US political institutions, we are prepared to see influence actors interact with Americans for engagement and to potentially research perspectives on US politics," the report said.

"Finally, as North Korea embarks upon new government policies and pursues ambitious plans for weapons testing, we can expect increasingly sophisticated cryptocurrency heists and supply chain attacks targeted at the defence sector, serving to both funnel money into the regime and facilitate the development of new military capabilities," it added. (PTI)

# India's exports register healthy growth to **European, Latin American nations in 2023**

NEW DELHI, April 6: Indian exporters made further inroads in European and Latin American nations in 2023, registering healthy growth in countries such as Romania, Montenegro, Austria, and Guatemala, an official said on Friday.

India's merchandise export rose 2.1 per cent to the European Union (EU) in 2023 despite headwinds being faced by large developed markets like the EU and the UK due to high cost of living, weak external demand, and monetary tightening, the commerce min-

istry official said. "India's export trade expansion has been impressive inspite of global challenges in 2023," the official said. India's merchandise exports have recorded healthy growth in European nations like Romania, Czech Republic, Montenegro, Finland, the Netherlands, Portugal, Luxemburg, Iceland, Ireland, and Austria. "The growth points towards India's trade resilience and growth despite prevailing uncertainties and deceleration of the economies in Europe," the official added. (PTI)

#### Contd. from Page 1...

#### Congress manifesto completely

Without taking the name of former Congress president Rahul Gandhi and Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav, Prime Minister Modi said, "You might remember here in Uttar Pradesh that the film featuring two boys ('do ladke'), which had flopped last time, the film of two boys has been re-released by these people.

"I do not understand how many times will these INDI alliance members put the wooden pot (on fire)?" he added. The Congress and the Samajwadi Party had also contested the 2017 Uttar Pradesh Assembly elections together.

According to the election schedule, eight parliamentary constituencies in Uttar Pradesh will vote in the first phase of the Lok Sabha polls on April 19. These are Saharanpur, Kairana, Muzaffarnagar, Bijnor, Nagina (SC), Moradabad, Rampur and Pilibhit. The counting of votes will be held on June 4. (PTI)

### Will win by over 2 lakh

partners, and subsequently formed the second consecutive government in 2021. Asked if he was worried over the fact that a united opposition has fielded Gaurav Gogoi against him, the BJP MP said: "Do I look like scared? I know what people want. I have been with them in their hour of need

"This time, the margin will increase dramatically. I will win by a margin of a minimum of two lakh votes. Following the delimitation exercise, the number of voters in Jorhat has increased with an electorate of 17.5 lakh." Gogoi had won by a margin of 82,653 votes in the 2019 Lok Sabha elections by polling 5,43,288 votes against 4,60,635 of Congress' Sushanta Borgohain, who later joined the BJP.

While campaigning in Majuli on Thursday, Gaurav Gogoi had expressed confidence that he will win the Jorhat Lok Sabha seat, asserting that Topon Gogoi will "definitely lose if the number of selfies clicked with him (Gaurav) by the people convert into votes". Gaurav Gogoi is the sitting MP from the Kaliabor constituency, which was rechristened as Kaziranga after delimitation. Following this, he was assigned the task of taking on the BJP in Jorhat, which has become a stronghold of the ruling party over the last 10 years.

Asked about his opinion on Gaurav Gogoi, the sitting Jorhat MP said: "I don't make any personal comment on anyone. I am a candidate of the NDA and all parties are giving me full support. I will win with a huge margin." On the Congress MP's repeated assertion that Topon Gogoi remained silent inside and outside Parliament during the last five years, the latter wondered if the opposition party even cared to look at the proceedings of the House.

"People elected me to work, solve the problems of the constituency and I am doing that. They did not elect me to create nuisance inside the House," the BJP MP said.

The BJP has 303 MPs of its own and the whip decides who will ask what in Parliament. "We are the soldiers of a disciplined party," he said. "There are hardly four-five opposition leaders who can speak well. So, they have to raise their voice on almost all issues," Topon Gogoi said. On the contentious CAA, he said nobody is concerned about the act as people know it will not impact the interests of Assam.

"I have been meeting people across the length and breadth of the constituency. Has anyone asked about it? There is no concern at all. Those who oppose the CAA will have to go to the court, as it was duly passed by Parliament and rules were framed accordingly," the BJP MP said. The Jorhat constituency was earlier held by Gaurav's father Tarun Gogoi, the charismatic late CM. Among the communities that have a significant population here are Ahom,

# Thengal-Kachari, Mising and the tea tribes. (PTI) New UK documentary

fighting to make their way in this country and to be heard," said Shaminder Nahal, channel 4 head of specialist factual, who commissioned the series.

"A comprehensive telling of the extraordinary experiences of a generation of Asian refugees and migrants who came to Britain and faced an unprecedented wave of racial violence, stood their ground and turned the tide, is long overdue," said James Rogan, executive producer for Rogan Productions.

The series starts with the killing of 18-year-old Gurdip Singh Chaggar on the streets of Southall, west London, and the chilling words of far-right leader John Kingsley Read: "One down, one million to go!"

What follows is a brutal battle between Britain's South Asian and black communities and the far-right activists. "The British Asian civil rights movement is a forgotten piece of history... These are stories of bravery in the face of violence and a refusal to let prejudice go unchallenged - they could not be more timely," said Riz Ahmed and Allie Moore from Left Handed Films. (PTI)

## CPI releases Lok Sabha

for SCs, STs and OBCs, and implement women's reservation immediately by removing the clause relating to delimitation and census. The party promised increasing the available work days under the MGNREGA to 200 in a calendar year as well as introducing an Urban Employment Guarantee Act and social security for gig-workers. "When the new government is formed, our party will play its role to raise people's issues," Raja said. (PTI)

#### Himanta's dance moves

#### realme Unveils realme 12x 5G **Rise n' shine biotech unveils breakthrough** HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, April 6: realme, known for its innovative and budget-friendly smartphones, has introduced the realme 12x 5G, setting a new benchmark in the entry-level 5G smartphone segment. The device, part of the renowned realme Number Series, showcases the company's commitment to providing advanced features at an accessible price point, aligning with its refreshed brand identity aimed at young consumers.

Positioned as the "Entry-Level 5G Killer," the realme 12x 5G boasts a host of cutting-edge features tailored to deliver an unparalleled user experience. It is the first smartphone in its segment to offer a 45W SUPER VOOC Charge and houses a massive 5000mAh battery, ensuring prolonged usage without frequent recharging. Additionally, the device introduces Air Gesture control, a first in its segment, along with a segment-leading 120Hz refresh rate and a vivid display with 800 nits brightness.

# Ather energy debuts Rizta

HT Bureau GUWAHATI, April 6: Ather Energy, a leading electric scooter manufacturer in India, unveiled its latest offering, the Rizta, during the second edition of the Ather Community Day in Bengaluru. Designed to cater to the needs of families, the Rizta prioritizes comfort, convenience, and safety while incorporating cutting-edge connected features to enhance the riding experience.

Priced competitively at ₹1,09,999 (Ex-showroom Bengaluru), the Rizta is positioned as an accessible option for the mass market. It is available in two models and three variants: Rizta S and Rizta Z, equipped with a 2.9 kWh battery, and a top-end model Rizta Z featuring a 3.7 kWh battery. The 2.9 kWh variants offer a predicted IDC range of 123 kms, while the 3.7 kWh variant ex-

<u>HT Bureau</u> markable yields, signaling promising GUWAHATI, April 6: In a landmark achievement, Rise n' Shine Biotech Private Limited has introduced the Blue Java Banana, a unique variant characterized by its distinctive taste and color, to the Indian market. The un-

blue Java banana variety

veiling ceremony, graced by Dr. Bhagyashree P. Patil, Founder & CMD of Rise n' Shine Biotech Private Limited, alongside esteemed dignitaries and local farmers, marked the inaugural harvest of this extraordinary fruit.

Engineer and farmer Abhijit Patil, renowned for his cultivation of unconventional fruits, including Red Banana and Dragon Fruit, led the successful cultivation of the Blue Java Banana on a 2-acre plot in Karmala Taluka, Solapur District. With comprehensive support and guidance from Rise n' Shine Biotech Private Limited, Patil and other farmers achieved reprospects for commercial cultivation. The Blue Java Banana, originating from

South-East Asia and colloquially known as the vanilla banana due to its ice cream-like taste, boasts significant nutritional value and health benefits. Its introduction has generated substantial interest among consumers, leading to high demand and premium pricing in urban markets and luxury establishments nationwide.

Dr. Bhagyashree P. Patil expressed pride in the groundbreaking achievement, emphasizing Rise n' Shine Biotech's commitment to supporting farmers and delivering innovative agricultural solutions. The successful collaboration between the company and local farmers underscores the potential for transformative advancements in India's agricultural landscape.

#### Bandhan Mutual fund launches innovation fund HT Bureau line platforms, or directly via the Bandhan

GUWAHATI, April 6: Bandhan Mutual Mutual Fund website.

Fund has unveiled its latest offering, the Band-The New Fund Offer (NFO) for the Bandhan Innovation Fund, designed to capitalize on han Innovation Fund kicks off on April 10, 2024, and runs until April 24, 2024. Interested India's burgeoning innovation ecosystem. The open-ended thematic fund is set to invest in investors can participate through licensed mucompanies leading the charge in groundbreaktual fund distributors, investment advisors, oning advancements across various sectors. With line platforms, or directly via the Bandhan a focus on firms exhibiting robust R&D in-Mutual Fund website. vestment, skilled employee costs, unique prod-

Vishal Kapoor, CEO of Bandhan AMC. highlighted the significance of innovation in propelling companies forward, emphasizing India's rising prominence in the global innovation landscape. The fund's strategic alloca-

tends up to 160 kms on a single charge. Tarun han Innovation Fund kicks off on April 10, tion across Leading Innovators, Rising Mehta, Co-Founder & CEO of Ather Energy, ex- 2024, and runs until April 24, 2024. Interested pressed the company's commitment to innovation investors can participate through licensed mu- its commitment to capturing diverse opportuand catering to diverse consumer segments.

tual fund distributors, investment advisors, on-

ucts/services, and non-linear business models,

the fund aims to harness the potential of India's

The New Fund Offer (NFO) for the Band

India better prepared than Pakistan to handle

innovation-driven growth story.

Innovators, and Emerging Innovators reflects nities within the innovation sphere

Ejaz Rao, a progressive farmer from Ba-hawalpur, said, "Pakistan's agriculture authori-

ties have failed to improve seed quality for over

20 years. The hybrid seeds from countries with

different climate present dual challenge i.e.

non-compatible with local agro-climatic condi-

BJP campaign songs on dais and during roadshows. The BJP has nine MPs in the outgoing Lok Sabha from Assam, which has been its best show in the state so far, with Sarma exuding confidence of winning at least 13 seats this time. The BJP is contesting in 11 seats, leaving two for its ally Asom Gana Parishad and one for United People's Party Liberal. (PTI)

# Poll fever yet to grip

Elections are also like a festival but we cannot celebrate the festival in a loud manner because of the current situation" BJP Manipur President A Sharda Devi told PTI. "People are living away from their homes, we want them to have faith in us but we are not campaigning," the BJP leader added.

A senior state government official asserted that any kind of loud campaign can be detrimental to the law and order situation in the state.

"Though the situation seems to be under control at the moment, any kind of loud campaign can be detrimental to the law and order of the state and no party wants to take that risk," the official said, requesting anonymity.

At least 219 people have been killed in the ethnic strife in the state that started on May 3 last year after a Tribal Solidarity March' was organised in the hill districts to protest against the Meitei community's demand for Scheduled Tribe (ST) status. A majority of over 50,000 internally displaced people are currently staying at relief centres across five valley districts and three hill districts.

Scheduled in two phases on April 19 and 26, the Lok Sabha elections in Manipur have garnered attention for the displaced population's voting arrangements. Special polling stations will be set up at relief camps to enable the displaced people to cast their votes. While the relief camps provide voting opportunities, candidates are yet to visit these facilities, where residents await resolution and peace amidst the prevailing unrest.

"Some workers from parties have come once or twice but none of the candidates. If they come they will get to see in what situation we are living in the camps with no sight of a resolution or peace in the state," said Dima, a mother of two living in a relief camp in the Kwakeithem area inhabited by the Meities.

Meanwhile, a similar lack of election activity is evident in regions like Moreh and Churachandpur, where Kuki communities predominate. Some Kuki factions and societal groups have even called for a boycott of the polls. Despite the semblance of normalcy in the Meitei-inhabited Imphal Valley, with businesses and institutions reopening, the pervasive presence of security forces underscores the lingering tensions and challenges the populace faces. As Manipur braves through these turbulent times, the subdued election climate reflects the region's earnest pursuit of stability and peace. (PTI)

#### Himanta seeks vote to

Sarma stated, "My prayer to the people of Jorhat is that if you vote for Hon'ble Shri Narendra Modi as Prime Minister once again, I will be able to do what I am doing for you faster. Support the BJP to ensure unhindered rogress for the country". Highlighting the benefits reaped by Assam from the Centre's initiatives, Sarma underscored the importance of backing BJP candidate Topon Kumar Gogoi to perpetuate the wave of development witnessed since 2014. He reiterated the significance of voting for the BJP to sustain the ongoing transformational journey. Sarma also lauded Modi's commitment to Assam and the Northeast, citing over 25 visits by the Prime Minister to the state since assuming office. The chief minister also emphasised Modi's symbolic gestures, such as wearing the traditional Assamese gamusa, as manifestations of his affection for the region.

In parallel, Gaurav Gogoi, the incumbent MP, intensified his campaign in the Jorhat Assembly seat, engaging with constituents and garnering support, particularly from women and youth.

Sarma's presence at the rallies, part of the 'Vijay Sankalp Yatra,' further underscored the BJP's determination to secure victory in the upcoming elections and continue the transformative agenda initiated under Modi's leadership. Meanwhile, Sarma also announced that his government will provide 50,000 additional jobs, besides the one lakh appointments it had promised people previously.

He also assured people that they would receive more benefits under ration cards as services would be expanded, and also more women beneficiaries would be added to the 'Orunudoi' scheme.

"We had promised people of giving one lakh jobs and the Congress had laughed at us then. But we kept our promise and gave employment to one lakh youths." "Now, in the next few years, we will give 50,000 more jobs, spread across different departments such as home and education," he said.

The CM said that more beneficiaries will be enrolled in different welfare schemes and the facilities will be further expanded. He said more beneficiaries would be added to Orunudoi scheme, under which Rs 1,250 is transferred every month to the bank accounts of women belonging to financially weaker households

Similarly, facilities for families with ration cards will be expanded soon, he added.

"We have not only ensured that more families have ration cards, but are now also going to provide more facilities for such families, from free foodgrains to healthcare to insurance, everything will be covered under it," the CM added. (With inputs from PTI)

climate shocks in wheat crop: Agri scientists NEW DELHI, April 6: Conducive weather conditions in both India and Pakistan are helping them to achieve record wheat output this year, but India is better prepared than the neighbour to handle climate change impact as it has developed many indigenous heat-resistant and short-duration seed varieties, according to agri-India is the second and Pakistan is the eighth largest wheat-producing country in the world.

While India is self-sufficient in wheat output, the latter imports 2-3 million tonnes. One of the reasons behind Pakistan still being dependent on imports to meet domestic require-

scientists.

ments is its failure to develop indigenous varieties of climate-resilient seeds.

Presently, the harvesting of wheat crops is underway in both countries. India has projected wheat output to touch a new record of 114 million tonnes in the 2023-24 crop year (July-June), while Pakistan has set an ambitious target of 32.2 million tonnes from an area of 8.9 million hectares.

While the two countries have been facing the adverse impact of climate change on wheat crop since 2010 onwards, the current year has been exceptionally favourable as there have been no events of terminal heat waves nor unseasonal rains affecting the crop.

"Climate has been favourable this year. During the crucial period of mid-January and February, there were no incidents of sudden heat waves, unseasonal rains, and lodging. We are expecting a bumper crop," ICAR-Indian Institute of Wheat and Barley Research (ICAR-IIWBR) Director Gyanendra Singh told PTI.

He highlighted that climate-resilient wheat varieties have been sown in more than 80 per cent of the total wheat area of 34.15 million hectares this year because of the availability of newer seed varieties and also greater awareness among farmers.

Out of 600 indigenous wheat varieties released so far in India, Singh said as many as over 100 climate-resilient varieties are in the seed chain now. Around 14 new varieties were released in the current year itself.

According to Naresh Kumar, Principal Investigator at ICAR's National Innovations in Climate Resilient Agriculture (NICRA), India is doing much better when compared to other



countries in taking various agronomic measures such as changing planting dates and short-duration varieties besides promoting raised bed cultivation, sprinkler irrigation, and soil-waternitrogen management.

Wheat crop is highly sensitive to temperature increases. Hot and unseasonal warm weather cut India's wheat output in 2022 and 2023, leading to a drawdown in state reserves.

It is reported a 5.5 per cent decrease in wheat yield during the past 30 years (1980-2010) occurred due to a decadal temperature increase of 0.13 degree Celsius.

With further predicted rise in temperatures, many studies have reported a decline in wheat production in the world.

Rajbir Yaday, wheat breeder and Principal Scientist at Indian Agricultural Research Institute (IARI), said the climate-smart seed varieties that India has developed can be easily grown in Pakistan, Bangladesh and Nepal.

"It can fit well in some areas as agro-climatic conditions are the same," he said. The situation of wheat farmers in Pakistan is different despite sharing similar agro-climatic conditions for growing wheat.

Since 2021, Pakistan's agriculture department has released as many as 31 wheat varieties through international collaborations to help cultivated fields become more productive, climateresilient and disease-resistant

While Pakistan Agriculture Research Council (PARC) has acquired over 4,000 wheat germplasm varieties from various international sources for evaluation and utilization in national breeding programmes, it has yet to indigenously produce quality seeds and species with the ability to absorb climate shocks.

tions and disease-carriers. "During late 20th century, a hybrid seed from US carried a pest, locally named as "Amrikan-Sundi", which could not be eradicated," Rao said. Stating that climate change has necessitated changes in sowing and harvesting seasons. he suggested adapting to new realities. "The availability of seeds, inputs, fertilizer and water must be ensured on time to ward off la ni a and elni o effects."

Dr Zahir A Zahir, Professor of Institute of Soil & Environmental Sciences, University of Agriculture, Faisalabad, said the University in collaboration with Washington State has developed and acclimatized germplasm, a hybrid seed variety, which requires less water and gives more yield.

"Pakistan has turned from net exporter of wheat to net importer of wheat in a short period of just five years, thanks to the formidable twin challenge of climate change and population explosion affecting in tandem," says Mushtaq Ahmad Gill, Chief Executive, South Asian Conservation Agriculture Network (SACAN). Highlighting the importance of water amidst raging global warming, Gill who is also former Director General of Water Management, Punjab, Pakistan said Pakistan sadly only has water storage capacity for 30 days.

"Half of the year, we face drought, the other half, floods," Gill said and called for increasing water storage and saving precious water worth billions of dollars from going into the sea every year. "We, the agricultural scientists and farmers from India and Pakistan, regularly stay in touch with each other and hold online/Youtube sessions to benefit from each other's experiences. We exchange technology, expertise and products to help each other get optimum yields," Gill said, while stressing on the need to maintain regular contacts.

Punjab's Minister for Agriculture Syed Ashiq Hussain Shah ruled out any climate impact on wheat crop. "We are expecting a bumper crop this year." (PTI)

#### SUNDAY, APRIL 7, 2024

#### Region

Das removed from BTC executive council for jeopardising alliance spirit with UPPL, BJP: Pramod Boro

# **EM Ghanashyam Das dropped** from BTC executive council

HT Correspondent KOKRAJHAR, April 6: The executive member (EM) of the Bodoland Territorial Region, Ghanashyam Das of Gana Suraksha Party (GSP) has been removed as executive member of the government of Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR) with immediate effect.

Governor, Gulab Chand kataria through a notification, has dropped Das as an executive member of the council with immediate effect. He was a member of Council Legislative Assembly. Notably, Ghanashyam Das, an

MCLA of Gana Suraksha Party

# **Country liquor** seized in city

HT Bureau GUWAHATI, April 6: In view of the ensuing Lok Sabha elections the city excise department seized 1,235 liters of country liquor in various parts of the district in the past two days. The liquor was seized from Bhootnath, Athgaon, Uzanbazar, Karbi Road 1, Noonmati and other places in the city. Two persons have been arrested under Section 53(1)(a) of the Assam Excise Act in this regard. Two persons were also fined under Section 61(b) of the Assam Excise Act for drinking alcohol in public places. The excise department also seized 22.5 liters of foreign liquor from a vehicle in Sonapur area. The liquor was planned to be taken to Meghalaya for sale.

#### NFR opens laundry care centres in Guwahati, Katihar, Alipurduar HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, April 6: The Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) has set up state-of-the-art laundry care centres in Guwahati, Katihar and Alipurduar in a bid to meet the escalating requirements of linens and provide quality service to passengers. The laundry at Guwahati has a production capacity of 16,000 bedroll packets per day. Similarly, Katihar and Alipurduar have a production capacity of 2,000 and 2,100 bedroll packets per day respectively. This will cater to the growing linen requirements of Guwahati based trains like Amarnath Express, Lokmanya Tilak Express, Avadh Assam Express etc. and Ka-

(GSP) and presently serving as

Executive Member BTC, for

general conference of the Karbi

Students Association (KSA- Ing-

longpho) is underway at Disama

No. 2 in Lumbajonglangso Aklam

began April 5 will conclude on

Sunday. A delegates' meet was held

on the second day of the confer-

Timung said that several resolu-

tions were taken during the annual

said, "We have taken several reso-

lutions. These include resolutions

on drug abuse and child marriage.

Drug abuse is rampant in Bokajan,

Diphu and West Karbi Anglong.

We have received reports on drug

abuse from our branches, sub-

branches and regional branches.

Based on the reports and our dis-

cussion we have communicated the

same to the district administration

Speaking to the media, Timung

The general secretary of KSA,

The three-day conference that

in Karbi Anglong.

ence on Saturday.

conference

ecutive Member of the Council with immediate effect. The chief executive member of Bodoland Territorial Region

(BTR), Pramod Boro said that the Governor has dropped Das from the executive member of Bodoland Territorial Region government Boro informed that the GSP

leader has jeopardised the alliance spirit with UPPL and BJP parties in the council, which is why he was dropped from the council. He said that the UPPL and BJP alliance government is committed

Agriculture department as an Exof the citizens in the Bodoland region and have initiated various mission and visions across the region

He has expressed his hope that the NDA alliance candidates across the state, including the Kokrajhar Lok Sabha constituency will win in the Lok Sabha elections with a massive margin of votes.

He said that peoples cutting across all communities are coming forward to extend their support to the NDA alliance candidates in the upcoming elections, which will be held during

to work for all round development the first three phases in the state. 51<sup>st</sup> annual conference of KSA-





and the police administration. After the Lok sabha elections are over we will hold awareness programmes on drugs abuse and child marriage with the Howraghat regional committee.

He further said, "The KSA will work for land protection taking into confidence the Karbi Rong Asar Amei. We held a meeting on the issue with Karbi Rong Asar Amei." On Article 144 (A) of the Indian Constitution he said it is not an

Committee formed in Kamrup (m) regarding confiscated cash

General public in case of complaints can contact election expenditure nodal officer

#### HT Bureau

**GUWAHATI, April 6:** A committee has been formed in Kamrup (m) regarding confiscated cash during prevalence of model code of conduct (MCC) due to ensuing Lok Sabha polls. The committee will look after matters regarding cash seized by police, special monitoring groups or flying squads in Kamrup Metropolitan District.

Police officer dismissed in minor's sexual assault case

**GUWAHATI, April 6:** An Assam Police Service (APS) officer has been dismissed from service and disqualified for future employment in a case related to the sexual assault and murder of a girl in Darrang district, of which he was the superintendent of police at the time of the incident, DGP GP Singh said on Saturday

"In pursuance of policy of zero tolerance towards malpractices in @assampolice, Sri Raj Mohan Ray APS, the then Superintendent of Police Darrang, has been awarded penalty of dismissal from service,

**EVM** randomisation process completed in Kamrup<sup>(M)</sup>

HT Bureau GUWAHATI, April 6: The first randomisation of EVMs and VVPATs in EVM management software for the constituencies of Kamrup (M) was held at the office of the district commissioner and district election officer of Kamrup (Metropolitan) on Saturday.

The EVMs have been distributed for 33rd Dispur, 34th Dimoria, 35th New Guwahati, 36th Guwahati Central and 37th Jalukbari constituencies in Guwahati parliamentary constituencies, Kamrup(Metropolitan) district commissioner and district election officer Sumit Sattawan said.

So far, 26% ballot units, 26 % control units and 40 % VVPATs have been reserved in each assembly constituency. Election officer Sekharan Phukan, nodal officer Bhaskar Pegu, EVM cell nodal officer Priyanshu Bhardwaj and representatives of various political parties were present on the occasion.

Topcem Cement distributes gifts marking Bihu celebrations



HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, April 6: Topcem Cement distributed gifts, pitha, laru at Ashadeep Rehabilitation centre at Boko marking Bihu celebrations on Saturday.

"Topcem Cement Bohag Bihu -2024 - Topcem Cement, a leading cement brand of Northeast India, is dress health issues in rural areas transforming its festive celebrations into a season of giving and

which shall ordinarily be disqualification for future employment on April 1st 2024 by @mygovassam," the Director General of Police posted on X. Rav was the SP of Darrang

when the sexual assault and murder of the 13-year-old girl, who was working as a domestic help in the house of one Krishna Kamal Baruah, in June 2022 created an outrage and led to allegations that the police displayed extreme dereliction of duty in collecting photographic and videographic evidence

of the incident.

Chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma had visited the girl's family two months later and, on his instructions, the body was exhumed and a second post-mortem conducted, which established sexual assault and murder of the victim.

Several people were arrested in the case subsequently, including Ray, employers of the victims, Darrang additional SP Rupam Phukan. Dhula police station officer-in-charge Utpal Bora and the three doctors who had conducted the first postmortem of the girl. (PTI)

college, inaugurated the pro-

gramme. Manoj Kr Saikia, founder

coordinator of the Advanced Insti-

tutional Level Biotech Hub was

the chief guest on the occasion and

Sanjeeb Kumar Nath, co-ordina-

tor of the biotech hub and head of

the department of botany, eluci-

dated the objectives of the work-

shop and hands-on training

activities. Apart from the inaugural

session, a series of technical ses-

sions followed by practical ses-

persons actively

delivered the keynote speech.

#### Workshop on microbiology based laboratory skills held at Dhing College

HT Correspondent NAGAON, April 6: A five day The main objective of the programme was to empower women entrepreneurs, who have been aflong workshop programme on 'Basic Laboratory Skills on Microfected by the pandemic, providing biology' was organized at the them with the necessary support, Dhing College in Nagaon recently. resources and skills to rebuild and The workshop was organised by thrive in the post-pandemic econthe Advance Institutional Level omy. Biman Hazarika, principal of the

Biotech Hub of Dhing College. The objective of the workshop was to equip students with foundational knowledge and practical proficiency essential for conducting laboratory experiments in the field of microbiology. Through hands-on training and theoretical instruction, students will develop competency in fundamental laboratory techniques, including asep-

tic techniques, microscopy, culturing and staining methods and biochemical assays. Similarly, a two-day post-Covid entrepreneurial prowomen gramme was also organized by the Advance Institutional Level

sions were held. Over 35 participants, comprising of students, faculty members and re-Biotech Hub in the college premsource participated in the event.

> **General observer** reviews poll preparedness in Cachar

HT Bureau GUWAHATI, April 6: Election general observer for Silchar LS constituency, Anil Meshram, on Saturday reviewed the preparedness for the upcoming parliamentary election, scheduled to be held on April 26.

Meshram reviewed the measures taken for conduct of elections in transparent and peaceful manner in the district.



issue that will be solved anytime soon. Discussion will be held on furthering the cause with intellectuals. The establishment of a reha-

bilitation centre in West Karbi Anglong will be mooted with the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Coun-

The KSA (Inglonpho) is ready for unification and the student organisation is ready without to becomet members of the unified KSA.

Army holds medical camp in Jagun

HT Correspondent MARGHERITA, April 6: The Spear Corps of Indian Army organised a medical camp on the eve of the 'World Health Day' on Saturday at Jagun in Tinsukia district.

makhya based trains like Northeast Express, Brahmaputra Mail etc.

Similarly, the laundry care centres will also cater to Alipurduar based train like Sikkim Mahananda Express and Katihar based trains like Amrapali Express, Champaran Humsafar Express etc.

The state-of-the-art laundry centre in Guwahati is a tunnel-based system, which has numerous features, including the capability to handle large volumes of linen while optimising usage of water, power, steam and chemicals along with automatic transfer to subsequent stages.

During the washing process, firstly soiled linens are weighed and fed to the automatic conveyor of the machine. After that, by computerised operations the linens are loaded in a tunnel batch washer for thorough washing and cleaning. Robotic feeding is used to transfer the washed linens from washer to dryer. Next water is extracted by way of a pressing system, which is equipped with a hydraulic press to facilitate maximum water extraction.

The three member committee comprising of chief executive officer of the Zila Parishad, the election expenditure nodal officer and the treasury officer will also look after difficulties faced by general public during this period, a PR stated.

General public in case of complaints can contact election expenditure Nodal Officer Tridip Konwar on mobile no 9957015681.

This committee can independently investigate the money seized by the police, special monitoring groups or flying squads. Furthermore, if no complaint or complaint has been registered regarding the seized funds concerned or if the seized cash doesn't belong to a candidate or politician, parties or political campaigns and so on, all steps will be taken immediately to release the seized cash to the person concerned on the basis of a speaking order as per the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP). The committee will investigate all the incidents of seized cash and reach a final decision. The application against the seized cash shall be mentioned in the seized information and the person concerned shall be notified at that time. The Nodal Officer for Election Expenditure shall mention in a register book the amount of money seized, from whom the money was seized and the date of release. If the amount of seized money to be released exceeds ₹ 10 lakh, the nodal officer of Income Tax shall be informed in writing before the release of the amount concerned. Any seizure of cash by the police, special monitoring group or flying squad shall be immediately reported to the committee and the committee shall take necessary action in this regard in accordance with the rules.

If the seized cash or other valuables remain in the warehouse or treasury for one week after the polling without filing a complaint, the returning officer shall bring it to the attention of the Appeals Committee and may release the seized money or valuables as directed by the Appeals Committee, a PR added.

lacking adequate medical facilities, aligning with the theme of 'Building a Fairer, Healthier World'.

The initiative was aimed to ad-

During the medical camp, a medical officer screened the participants for various health issues and distributed medicines among them.

The medical officer also advised the participants, including 100 villagers and students on preventive healthcare and ways to adopt healthier lifestyle.

The medical camp reflects Indian Army's dedication to serve communities and promote health awareness in conflict-ridden and rural areas

spreading joy among the inmates of old age homes, child care homes and specially abled children from various institutions. Topcem Bohag Bihu - 2024 started from April 6,2024, with the first activity being organized in Ashadeep Rehabilitation Centre- Boko, with distribution of gifts, Bihu delicacies – Pitha, Laru along with a Bihu cultural programme. Similar activities will also be organized at, Pramod Talukdar Memorial Home, Sishu Sarothi- Guwahati, Assam Shishu Kalyan Sadan, Ma Kamakhya Old Age Home, Privo

them and we will continue this association in the near future". The initiative is aimed at bringing genuine joy among the inmates of old age homes. Child Care Homes and specially abled children from various institutions. Topcem Cement has been spreading the joy of Bohag Bihu festivities among the inmates of these institutions every year since 2010. Topcem Cement, as a brand, is committed to the welfare of all segments of society and regularly organizes such community-oriented activities," a PR stated

Bondhu Bohumukhi Vidyalaya,

Kalyani Nivas, Amar Ghor, Seneh

and Santaneer, across the districts

of Kamrup(M) and Kamrup spread

over 5 days. Reflecting on the

event, Anil Kapur, president, sales

& marketing, Meghalaya Cements

remarked "It is a duty of every cor-

porate citizen to give back to the

society. I thank these institutions

for permitting us to associate with

Rohan Kumar Jha, returning officer cum district election officer stated that the district is all set to conduct the parliamentary election

in a fair and peaceful manner. Earlier on the day, the general observer visited the media certification and monitoring committee control room, strong room at ISTT, and SVEEP cell to oversee the activities and reviewed the functioning of all the cells and preparation made by the district to carry out the LS election in afree and fair manner.

# **BJP served notice for violating MCC**

HT Bureau GUWAHATI, April 6: Following a complaint from the CPI-M, the Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) of Assam sent a notice to the BJP for violating the Model Code of Conduct (MCC) of elections. The complaint stated that the ruling party had been conducting a socio-economic survey by distributing forms featuring pictures of the chief minister, Himanta Biswa Sarma, and Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The notice mentioned, "The Office of the

Chief Electoral Officer, Assam has received a complaint from Secretary, CPI (Marxist), Assam State Committee about an MCC violation by BJP, Assam regarding an alleged distribution of application forms (enclosed) in the name of conducting Socio-Economic survey with a promise to expand eligible families under Orunodoi." According to the CEO, form distribution and data collection make the design transactional and is in the nature of inducement of the electors which is a prohibited activity under tice further mentioned.

various statutory provisions and the Model Code of Conduct. "Whereas, on the basis of a prima facie scrutiny, it appears that these forms bearing the Symbol and Photographs of Star Campaigners of your party are violative of the Model Code of Conduct guidelines; and now, therefore, you are hereby called upon to show cause in writing as to why appropriate action for violation of Model Code of Conduct should not be taken against you," the no-

# Governor Kataria speaks on Indian knowledge system

Indian knowledge systems with strong foundations in Indian culture, philosophy, spirituality have evolved over thousands of years

#### HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, April 6: Governor Gulab Chand Kataria on Saturday said that India is the land of knowledge. The continuous stream of knowledge of this land has irrigated the entire world.

The Governor said this while speaking at the curtain raiser event of an international conference titled 'Unravelling Indian Knowledge Across Asia (UNIKAA 2024)' held at IIT- Guwahati on Saturday. He said that the Indian knowledge tradition has been very rich since ancient times. Its objective was to develop the complete personality of man by incorporating in its fold dharma, artha, kama and moksha

"When the entire world was wandering in the darkness of ignorance the sages of India spread the highest knowledge, freed humans from animalistic behaviour and made them perfect human beings with noble values. India gave culture and civilization to the world. When many communities were living as forest dwellers about 5000 years ago, the Harappan culture was born in the Indus Valley Civilization in India," said Gulab Chand Kataria.

He said that the world's first university was established in Taxila in 700 BC, with more than 10,500 students from around the world studying more than 60 subjects. Nalanda University, built in the 4th century BCE, was one of ancient India's greatest achievements in the field of education.

The Governor also said that India gave the world the divine language Sanskrit, which is the purest and most suitable language in the world. Sanskrit is the mother of all languages. He said that realizing the importance of Sanskrit, studies and research are being done all over the world to know its usefulness.

"When Atomic theory was not known about 913 years ago, Rishi Kanad had propounded the atomic theory on the basis of the formulas written in the Vedas. India's astronomical calculations were much more advanced. Bhaskaracharya had correctly calculated



the time taken by the earth to revolve around the sun hundreds of years before other astronomers," he said. The Governor pointed out that India is

the father of mathematics. India's great mathematician Kanka gave the knowledge of numbers to the world, and gave the concept of zero to infinity. Algebra,

trigonometry and calculus also originated from India. Quadratic equations were created by Sridharacharya in the 11th century. He also said that the value of "pi" was first calculated by Budhayana, who also explained the concept known as the Pythagorean Theorem. The place value system, the decimal system, was developed in India in 100 BC. The great mathematician Aryabhata has also made invaluable contributions to mathematics.

He also said that the Indian knowledge systems have a strong foundation in Indian culture, philosophy and spirituality and have evolved over thousands of years. These knowledge systems, including Ayurveda, Yoga, Vedanta and Vedic science are still useful in the modern world. In the National Education Policy 2020, multidisciplinary education of Indian knowledge tradition, holistic development, from root to world, from human to humanity has been included. This education policy is meant to upgrade the entire Indian education system, including both learners and teachers.

Applauding the Centre for Indian Knowledge System and IIT Guwahati for organizing the curtain raiser event on this important topic, Kataria said that the initiative will strengthen the ecosystem in connecting students as well as teachers of universities and higher educational institutions with the roots of knowledge tradition. The Governor also said that the conference has a vision to provide an education system that will provide high quality education to the youth and inspire them to make India a global superpower. He also said that he is glad that IIT Guwahati is making a significant contribution in reviving and promoting India's rich knowledge tradition.

Director of IIT, Guwahati, Rajeev Ahuja, noted scholar Diganta Bishwa Sarma, Suvrokamal Dutta, head of the Centre for Indian Knowledge System, U.S. Dixit, organizing secretary Lalit Mohan Pandey along with a host of other dignitaries were present on the occasion.

#### **Editor's pick**

## Soft power as comparative advantage for India

#### By: Kajleen Kaur

oft power is a persuasive approach to international relations, typically involving the use of economic or cultural influence. India has the potential to create its credibility using this non-tangible power. India is sometimes labelled a "soft power by default" (Wagner, 2010), and is believed to have substantial potential in this field. It was one of the first countries to pursue a soft power strategy, under the leadership of Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, long before the term was coined.

However, after the defeat in the 1962 war with China, India gradually shifted towards a hard power approach, and its foreign policy became more pragmatic and driven by realpolitik.

The Chanakya Niti of non-aggressive settlements; Gandhi's non-violence movement; the Panchsheel pact of peaceful advancement and a good friendly policy towards its neighbours all exemplify India's comparative advantage in soft power. The notion of soft power for Indians dates back to the Upanishads with the thought of 'VasudhaivaKutumbakam'. We can still vouch for our soft power assets in terms of the widespread acceptance of Buddhism; the popularity of yoga and Ayurveda; and belief in ancient universities which draws scholars and learners to India.

To date, our rich, diverse yet united, and vibrant culture, topography, cuisine, architecture and history attract heavy tourism. Not to forget, Indian cinema has helped popularize not just Indian actors but also the vibrant culture and craze for ethnic clothes. Besides, the only common religion of India 'Cricket' has empowered the dreams of every voungster in India and has helped create India in the international sports arena

Our present prime minister Narender Modi has recognised soft power as an asset and has instigated several of these which have helped in the popularization of our nation abroad. The huge success of India's tenure as G-20 president has been well-acknowledged the world over. Modi's catchphrases like 'now is not the time for war', drew international applause.

Similarly, Atmanirbhar, Make in India and Swachh Bharat have become national slogans and have been able to redefine and give better meaning to the age-old Pleonasm policies, and have also popularized India across the world. Besides he has played a major role in increasing the number of embassies abroad and also reviving ties with regional groups ASEAN BIMSTEC, and SAARC along with strengthening and intensifying with Eastern and South Asian countries through the East Policy Act, and the Neighborhood First Policy Act. These have helped draw commercial and strategic benefits for India.

Ironically, even after recognizing the huge potential and benefits of soft power, we have several limitations in deriving maximum advantages from it.

There is a lack of formal inclusion of soft power in foreign policy or its nature and scope. It takes a back seat to other important economic and security concerns or the hard power components. Moreover, soft power has only drawn limited attention from scholars and policymakers. Even after a rich and diverse diaspora, culture and media, we have not made noteworthy efforts to formalize any policies in literature.

India being an emerging economy, will take time to stand tall against other developed nations in terms of hard power. But recognizing its strengths in soft power in varied forms, it should work towards further enriching its assets and using it for international trade, thus creating a niche for itself. (Courtesy: The Pioneer)

# Decoding Congress' Nyay Patra: Promises vs. practicality

s the political pendulum the Constitution to curb party general elec-

swings towards the up- defections appears to be a thinly veiled attempt to consolidate power and stifle dissent within its own ranks. While defection may indeed undermine the democratic process, the proposed solution automatic of disqualification raises concerns about the erosion of political autonomy and the stifling of dissenting voices. Perhaps the most contentious proposal in the Nyay Patra is the plan to split the Supreme Court of India into two divisions – a Constitutional Court and a Court of Appeal. While the idea of streamlining the judicial process and ensuring swift justice is laudable, the feasibility and implications of such a drastic restructuring merit thorough deliberation and scrutiny. The Congress party's promise to amend the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution to include Ladakh and its commitment to enforcing the Women's Reservation Bill



right of every individual to par-

ticipate in the government of

their country, directly or through

freely chosen representatives,

while emphasizing that this right

should be exercised through pe-

riodic and genuine elections

with universal suffrage and

equal suffrage. Significantly, the

UDHR also underscores the

right to freedom of thought, con-

science, and religion, which in-

herently encompasses the right

to abstain from participating in

political activities based on per-

Similarly, the ICCPR, a bind-

ing international treaty adopted

by the United Nations General

Assembly in 1966, reaffirms in

its Article 25 the right of every

citizen to take part in the con-

duct of public affairs, including

the right to vote and to be

elected, without unreasonable

restrictions. Importantly, the

ICCPR also underscores that the

exercise of these rights should

be based on the free expression

of the will of the electors, thus

recognizing the validity and le-

gitimacy of abstention as a legit-

imate expression of political

choice. Moreover, both instru-

ments emphasize the principle

of non-discrimination, ensuring

jected to adverse treatment or

repercussions for exercising

In essence, the UDHR and

ICCPR serve as international

benchmarks, underscoring the

intrinsic value and significance

of the freedom to abstain from

involvement in the political

sphere as an integral component

of broader democratic principles

and human rights protections on

Nagaland Peoples Organization"

(ENPO)'s resolution to abstain

from engaging in election-re-

lated activities until the fulfill-

ment of their demand for a

Frontier Nagaland Territory, it is

imperative to discern the legal

validity of such a stance within

ENPO's decision reflects a

deep-seated political grievance

stemming from historical mar-

ginalization and blatant viola-

tion of constitutional rights of

the people in the region. The de-

mand for a "Frontier Nagaland

Territory" is emblematic of

ENPO's quest for complete

"Constitutional Justice" within

the framework of Indian democ-

In the context of the "Eastern

their right to abstain from polit-

ical participation.

a global scale.

that individuals are not sub-

sonal beliefs or convictions.

regarding the upcoming Lok Sabha elections scheduled to

take place in our region on the 19th of April, 2024. We regretfully inform you of the Eastern Nagaland people's collective decision to abstain from participating in this election. We humbly and respectfully beg to inform you that, people of EasternNagaland in the State of Nagaland under the aegis of Eastern Nagaland Peoples' Organization had on 19th March, 2024 reaffirmed

its commitment to the "Chenmoho Resolution", wherein it was further reaffirmed and resolved not to participate in any Central and State elections against the failure to settle the creation of Frontier Nagaland Territory as offered and assured by the MHA on 7th December, 2023, i.e., to be settled before the announcement of MCC to the Lok Sabha 2024 by the Election Commission of India."

Excerpts from Eastern Nagaland People's Organization's Letter to the Hon'ble Election Commission of India dated 1st April, 2024.

In the Indian context, the entitlement to refrain from engaging in election-related activities, encompassing abstention from voting in general elections, stands as an indispensable facet of democratic liberty and individual self-determination. The Constitution of India, while affirming the citizens' right to exercise their franchise freely, equally recognizes the prerogative to refrain from such exercise without apprehension of retaliation or legal repercussion. This entitlement finds manifestation in various provisions of the Constitution, such as Article 19(1)(a) which guarantees freedom of speech and expression, thereby encompassing the right to abstain from voting as a fundamental aspect of freedom of expression.

Additionally, Article 21, guaranteeing the right to life and personal liberty, has been interpreted expansively by the judiciary to include the right to make choices regarding political participation, including the decision to abstain from voting. Notably, the Supreme Court's rulings in cases like PUCL v. Union of India have underscored the intrinsic link between the right to vote and the right not to vote, affirming that any attempt to coerce citizens into voting would contravene their

fundamental rights. Furthermore, India's commit ment to international human rights norms, as articulated in instruments like the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), further reinforces the right to abstain from participating in the political process as a component of free-

We are writing to you dom of opinion and expression. Consequently, the recognition of the right to abstain from voting as a fundamental aspect of democratic freedom is firmly entrenched within the Indian legal framework and resonates with the principles enshrined in international human rights law, thus affirming the importance of individual autonomy and freedom of choice in the democratic ethos of the nation.

Article 19(1)(a) of the Indian Constitution unequivocally guarantees to all citizens the freedom of speech and expression, embodying within its purview the right to abstain from verbal/non-verbal (through bodily action) articulation or expression, hence, the privilege to maintain silence or refrain. This fundamental right serves as a cornerstone of democratic principles, recognizing the inherent dignity and autonomy of individuals in their choices concerning political engagement. The freedom to abstain from voting is not merely a passive act but a proactive exercise of one's conscience and **DEGREE OF THOUGHT** 

democratic process. It signifies the recognition of diverse perspectives and dissenting voices within the fabric of democracy, fostering a culture of pluralism and inclusivity.

beliefs in the

By affording individuals the right to abstain from voting, the Constitution acknowledges the multifaceted nature of political participation and the importance of individual agency in shaping the course of governance. Moreover, abstention from voting serves as a powerful tool for protest and dissent, allowing citizens to express their discontent with the prevailing political landscape or policies. It is a form of political expression that is as potent as casting a ballot, as it communicates a deliberate choice to withhold endorsement from any candidate or party.

In essence, the right to abstain from voting is not a passive disengagement from the democratic process but an active assertion of one's autonomy and political consciousness in the spirit of the Constitution of India. It underscores the principle that democratic participation is not confined to the act of voting alone but encompasses a spectrum of actions and expressions that contribute to the vibrant exchange of ideas and values in a democratic society. Therefore, the right to abstain

sonal liberty, has been a cornerstone in affirming individuals' autonomy in making decisions regarding their political engagement. Through a series of judicial pronouncements, the judiciary has underscored that this constitutional provision extends beyond mere physical existence of citizens and encompasses the right to lead a life of dignity, which inherently includes the right to make choices regarding political participation. In the landmark case of PUCL v. Union of India, the Supreme Court elucidated on the intrinsic link between the right to vote and the right not to vote, unequivocally affirming that the latter is a corollary of the former

The Court expounded that any attempt to coerce citizens into voting would constitute a grave infringement upon their fundamental rights, highlighting the importance of respecting individuals' autonomy in exercising their electoral franchise. This precedent serves as a bedrock in affirming the principle that abstention from

voting is not

By: Dr. Aniruddha Babar merely a passive act but a legitimate exercise of one's right to freedom of expression and political choice.

Furthermore, the judiciary's interpretation of Article 21 has been instrumental in recognizing the multifaceted nature of personal liberty, acknowledging that political participation is not just a privilege but a fundamental aspect of human dignity. By upholding the right to abstain from voting, the judiciary has bolstered the democratic ethos enshrined in the Constitution, emphasizing that true democracy necessitates not only the freedom to vote but also the freedom not to vote.

The principle of "voluntary" political participation finds solid grounding and extensive reinforcement in a multitude of international human rights instruments, significantly amplifying its significance and universality. Both the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) stand as pillars of global human rights standards, firmly recognizing the inherent entitlement to freedom of opinion and expression as fundamental rights of every individual.

the federal structure of India. Within this expansive frame-The organization's resolve to abstain from election-related activwork of human rights, lies the unequivocal recognition of the ities is not merely a tactical

Furthermore, the legal validity of ENPO's stance finds resonance in the principles of democratic governance and constitutionalism, which recognize the rights of deprived, invisible communities living in the dense jungles and rugged mountains of Eastern Nagaland to articulate their grievances and pursue redress through peaceful and democratic means. The ENPO's abstention from "ALL" election-related activities serves as a non-violent mechanism to draw attention to their demands and compel the government to engage in dialogue and negotiation.

Furthermore, the decision reflects ENPO's commitment to the democratic process itself, as it exercises its right to engage in political discourse and action within the bounds of legality and constitutionalism. In adopting this approach, ENPO seeks to challenge the status quo and stimulate constructive dialogue aimed at addressing the underlying grievances and aspirations of the constitutionally deprived Eastern Nagaland community. Thus, while abstaining from election-related activities may seem counterintuitive to conventional notions of political participation, it serves as a potent tool for amplifying marginalized voices and catalyzing meaningful change within the democratic framework.

As custodians of justice and guardians of constitutional principles, the judiciary has demonstrated a nuanced understanding of the nuances of Indian federalism, recognizing the imperative of accommodating diverse political aspirations within its ambit. In landmark pronouncements, the courts have underscored the inherent right of deprived, marginalized communities like Eastern Nagas to articulate their grievances through peaceful and democratic channels, without fear of reprisal or marginalization. This judicial acknowledgment serves as a beacon of hope for disenfranchised communities seeking to assert their rights within the democratic framework.

By embracing the ethos of inclusivity and democratic pluralism, the judiciary has not only safeguarded the constitutional guarantees of freedom of expression and political participation but has also reinforced the foundational principles of justice and equality enshrined in the Indian Constitution.

Therefore, ENPO's pursuit of Frontier Nagaland Territory and

tions, the Congress party has unfurled its electoral sail, touting promises of change and progress. However, beneath the veneer of lofty pledges lies a collage of contradictions and questionable intentions, casting a shadow over the party's manifesto – Nyay Patra.

The Congress party's strategy of pointing accusatory fingers at the BJP for purportedly attempting to 'change the constitution' while simultaneously proposing significant constitutional amendments in its own manifesto is akin to a theatrical performance of political hypocrisy.

While Congress leaders, led by Mallikarjun Kharge and Rahul Gandhi, cry foul over BJP's alleged constitutional transgressions, their own manifesto reveals a laundry list of proposed constitutional alterations.

In the Equity section of the Nyay Patra, Congress vows to shatter the 50% cap

on reservations for SC, ST, and OBC communities, ostensibly in the pursuit of social justice. While the intent behind this promise may be noble, the feasibility and repercussions of such a drastic measure remain shrouded in ambiguity. Additionally, the promise of a nationwide Socio-Economic and Caste Census raises questions about the practicality of conducting such a mammoth exercise and its potential impact on governance and resource allocation.

Furthermore, the manifesto's commitment to amending Articles 15 and 16 of the Constitution to prohibit discrimination based on disability, impairment, or sexual orientation is commendable in principle.

However, the devil lies in the details, and the implementation of such amendments poses significant challenges in a diverse and complex society like India.

The Congress party's proposal to amend the Tenth Schedule of

raise pertinent questions about regional representation

> gender equality. However, the timing and motivation behind these proposals raise doubts about their sincerity

and

and efficacy. In conclusion, while there is merit in amending the constitution and enacting laws to reflect changing societal norms and needs, the Congress party's manifesto raises more questions than answers. From contradictory rhetoric to questionable proposals, the Nyay Patra paints a picture of a party grappling with its own identity and intentions. As voters navigate the political landscape, it is imperative to approach such promises with a critical eye and hold politicians accountable for their actions. For in the labyrinth of electoral politics, discernment must prevail over deception, and substance must triumph over spectacle. (The author can be reached at

shashankadas0007@gmail.co m)

mental aspect of freedom of expression, encapsulating the essence of democratic governance and individual liberty in India's constitutional framework.

from voting emerges as a funda-

Furthermore, the expansive interpretation of Article 21 of the Constitution, which safeguards the right to life and per-

freedom to abstain from involvement in the political sphere, thereby emphasizing the autonomy and agency of individuals in determining their level of engagement with political processes. The UDHR, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948, articulates in its Article 21 the

maneuver but a strategic assertion of their political agency and collective rights.

While ENPO's decision may appear confrontational to some, it is rooted in a legitimate desire for equitable representation and socio-economic development within the framework of Indian democracy.

its decision to 'abstain' from "ALL" election-related activities represent a legitimate assertion of their political agency and democratic stand, deserving of constitutional protection and judicial recognition within the framework of Indian democracy. (...to be continued in the next edition)

# NCERT's changes in class 11-12 political science textbooks are biased

#### By: Dr. Gyan Pathak

e in India teach contemporary politics to our Class 11-12 students, who are considered grown enough to begin understanding what is happening in the political arena of the country. India gives voting rights at the age of 18, and hence certain level of understanding of contemporary politics is required to be imparted, not only to political science students of this age, but also others, so that they may become responsible and informed voters. Information and education given to them therefore must be neutral, free of bias and complete for their age. However, the changes in textbooks that the National

Council of Education Research and Training (NCERT) is bringing about smacks an effort of indoctrination on behalf of BJP, putting quality of education at stake

NCERT has dropped the references of demolition of Babri Mosque in Ayodhya but keeps mention of Ramjanmabhoomi, the very mention of Muslims killed in post-Godhra Gujarat riots has been removed, certain text regarding Manipur has been left out, and changes have been made in reference to Jammu and Kashmir. All these issues have changed the course of politics in India, and hence our students, going to exercise their voting rights for the fist time must not be kept ignorant of these factors or injected certain bias or slant into their mind. Students have right to have neutral education, so that we may make them analytical and free of bias in their understanding.

NCERT has planned to publish updated textbooks soon. While giving rationale for revising the contents in the textbooks, it said, "Content is updated as per latest development in politics.'

In Class 12 political science textbook, there is a chapter titled "Recent Develop-

ments in Indian Politic". In this Chapter 8, on page 139 the existing version reads. "Fourth, a number of events culminated in the demolition of the disputed structure at Ayodhya (known as Babri Masjid) in December 1992. This event symbolised and triggered various changes in the politics of the country and intensified debates about the nature of Indian nationalism and secularism. These developments are associated with the rise of the BJP and the politics of 'Hindutva'." The changed version, according to NCERT, will now read, "Fourth, the centuries old legal and political dispute over the Ram Janmabhoomi Temple in Ayodhya started influencing the politics of India, which gave birth to various politi-

cal changes. The Ram Janmabhoomi Temple Movement, becoming the central issue, transformed the direction of the discourse on secularism and democracy. These changes culminated in the construction of the Ram Temple at Ayodhya following the decision of the Constitutional Bench of the Supreme Court (which was announced on November 9, 2019).'

In the same chapter on page 136, the current version reads "What is the legacy of the Ram Janambhoomi movement and the Avodhva demolition for the nature of political mobilisation?' Now the revised text will read 'What is the legacy of the Ram Janmabhoomi movement?

Text on Ayodhya issue has been thoroughly revised, the NCERT says, "because of the latest changes brought by Supreme Court's Constitutional Bench verdict and its widespread welcoming reception," adding that the change is being made "to bring the initial questions in synchronisation with internal latest changes made in the chapter.'

Still, the decision of the dropping the reference to Babri Mosque demolition is questionable since giving no information

amounts to keeping students ignorant about one of this most important information, that changed the course of contemporary politics in India.

In Chapter 5 of Class 11 political science textbook Democratic Politics - I, page 86, the current text reads, "Do you notice references to the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) in the news collage on this Page? These references reflect the growing awareness of human rights and struggles for human dignity. Many cases of human rights violations in diverse fields, for instance, Guiarat riots, are being brought to the public notice from across India." In the revised version, it has been changed to "Many cases of human rights violations in diverse fields are being brought to the public notice from across India.

It is a serious matter of concern, since violation of human rights in the country has been on the increase and the country needs to sensitise its younger generation so that such violations stop. In place of improving the text, the new version deteriorated that may desensitize our students regarding human rights.

The clarification given by NCERT for such revision is not acceptable, which reads, "The news collage and content refer to an incident that is 20-years-old and has been resolved through the judicial process.'

The change in Class 11 political science textbook titled "Political Theory", chapter 8, title Secularism, page 112smacks communal Hindutva politics, since in the new version of the text the reference of Muslims killed in post-Godhra riots is removed.

"More than 1,000 persons, mostly Muslims, were massacred during the post-Godhra riots in Gujarat in 2002," the existing version of the chapter read, while in the changed version it will read, "More than 1,000 persons were killed during the post-Godhra riots in Gujarat in 2002." NCERT's clarification for this change reads, "In any riots people across communities suffer. It cannot just be one community.'

Manipur has been in the limelight for about a year now for the continued ethnic violence under the double engine BJP governments in the state and the Centre. In Class 12, chapter 1, page 18, there is a passage, "The Government of India succeeded in pressurising the Maharaja into signing a Merger Agreement in September 1949, without consulting the popularly elected Legislative Assembly of Manipur. This caused a lot of anger and resentment in Manipur, the repercussions of which are still being felt." It has now been changed to "The Government of India succeeded in persuading the Maharaja into signing a Merger Agreement in September 1949."

The Chapter 7 titled "Regional Aspiration" of the same book refers the sensitive issue of border dispute between India and Pakistan. There is a passage on page 119 which reads, "India claims that this area is under illegal occupation. Pakistan describes this area as 'Azad Pakistan'.' This passage has been changed to "However, it is the Indian territory which is under illegal occupation of Pakistan called as Pakistan occupied Jammu and Kashmir (POJK).'

On this change NCERT says it has been brought in complete concurrence with the latest stand of the government of India in regard to Jammu and Kashmir. If it is so, why should students not be informed about this?

NCERT must not hamper the quality of education to serve any political purpose of the ruling establishment. , In the present case, BJP government led by PM Narendra Modi, and the politics of the RSS-BJP clan are getting the advantage. (IPA Service)



#### SUNDAY SPECIAL

conflicting perspectives on his be-

1) When the age is in, the wit is

**Quotes by Shakespeare:** 

#### **By: Sahil Sharifdin Bhat**

SUNDAY, APRIL 7, 2024

Hifazat-e Asrar ka fitrat ko hai soda aisa, Razdan phir na karegi koi peeda aisa. (Allama Iqbal on Shakespeare)

According to Guinness World Records, Shakespeare remains the world's best-selling playwright, with sales of his plays and poetry believed to have exceeded four billion copies in the almost 400 years since his death. He is also the third most translated author in history. [The first and the second are Agatha Christie and Jules Verne, respectively.] He is undeniably the greatest writer in the English language. He is the national poet of England

The biography of William Shakespeare is based mostly on conjectures and guesswork. However, he devoted himself assiduously to his art and wrote more than a million memorable words preserved in 38 plays, 154 sonnets, two long narrative poems and several other poems.

The parish register of Holy Trinity Church in Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwickshire, shows that he was baptized there on April 26, 1564; his birthday is traditionally celebrated on April 23. His father was John Shakespeare and his mother was Mary Arden. He was probably educated at the King Edward VI Grammar School in Stratford, where education was free where he learnt rhetoric, logic, classical literature, arithmetic, music Latin and Classical Greek.

He did not go to university. At the age of 18, he married "Anne Hathaway" a woman who was eight years older than he and had three kids with her - Susanna, Judith and Hamnet. His only son, Hamnet died in 1596 at age 11. Little is known about Shakespeare's activities between 1585 and 1592. He may have taught at school during this period. He was about to get arrested for stealing a deer of a local magnate, sir Thomas Lucy, that is why, he left for London, where he became a poet, playwright and actor. When he moved to London at some point between 1585 and 1592, he did not take his family with him.

In 1592, a writer named Robert Greene insulted Shakespeare in a pamphlet, calling him an inexperienced upstart in the literary world. Although the exact meaning of Greene's words is unclear, it's evident he was mocking Shakespeare. After Greene's death, someone apologized to Shakespeare in another book, praising his talent and influential friends. Despite the general disapproval of theaters in London at the time, Shakespeare had noble supporters, including Henry Wriothesley, the 3rd Earl of Southampton. Shakespeare dedicated his first published poems, Venus and Adonis and The Rape of Lucrece to Southampton, highlighting his growing reputation and connections in the literary

world. How his career in the theatre began is unclear, but from roughly 1594 onward he was an important member of the Lord Chamberlain's company of players (called the King's Men after the accession of James I in 1603). They had the best actor, Richard Burbage; they had the best theatre, the Globe (finished by the autumn of 1599); they had the

best dramatist, Shakespeare. Shakespeare died on April 23, 1616 and was buried in Holy Trinity Church in Stratford.

His tomb bears the following epitaph:

Good friend, for Jesus' sake forbear

To dig the dust enclosed here. Blest be the man that spares these stones

And curst be he that moves my bones

Dark Lady?

The "Dark Lady" refers to a mysterious figure in William Shakespeare's sonnets, particularly in Sonnets 127 to 154. She is described as having dark features, such as dark hair and dark eyes. Some scholars speculate that the Dark Lady may have been a real person, while others argue that she could have been a literary invention. There is no definitive evidence to conclusively prove whether Shakespeare was romantically involved with the Dark Lady or whether she was purely a poetic creation. The true identity and nature of Shakespeare's relationship with the



Dark Lady remain open to interpretation.

Fair Youth? The interpretation of Shakespeare's sonnets as evidence of his bisexuality is based on the romantic and affectionate language used in the poems addressed to the Fair Youth. However, it's essential to note that while these interpretations are plausible, they are not definitive proof of Shakespeare's sexual orientation, as the sonnets are works of literature that can be interpreted in various ways.

The sonnets were first published in 1609 and many of them are addressed to a young man referred to as the "Fair Lord" or "Fair Youth." It is commonly believed that this person may be the same individual to whom the sonnets are dedicated, referred to as "Mr W.H". The identity of "Mr W.H." remains uncertain. but two popular candidates are Henry Wriothesley, 3rd Earl of Southampton and William Herbert, 3rd Earl of Pembroke. Both men were known for their physical attractiveness during their youth and were also patrons of Shakespeare's work. His influence on English language:

William Shakespeare's impact on the English language is profound and far-reaching. Beyond his contributions to theater and literature, Shakespeare's influence permeates everyday language with countless words and phrases he either coined or popularized. From commonplace terms like "manager" and "eyeball" to evocative descriptors such as "gloomy" and "lonely," Shakespeare's linguistic innovations have become integral parts of our lexicon.

Remarkably, Shakespeare's linguistic prowess extended beyond English; he often incorporated quotations from seven languages into his works. With a staggering vocabulary of 40,000 words, unparalleled in his time and enduring to this day, Shakespeare's linguistic legacy remains unparalleled, shaping the very fabric of the English language for centuries to come. Some scholars claim that he knew approximately 66,534 words. including the 31,534 words he used and the 35,000 words he probably knew but didn't use.

Shakespeare as a Poet:

Shakespeare's legacy as a poet is profound and enduring. His mastery of language, depth of emotion, and keen insight into the human condition are evident in his sonnets and longer narrative poems. With 154 sonnets to his name, Shakespeare explored themes of love, beauty, mortality and the passage of time with unparalleled eloquence and complexity. His sonnets, characterized by their intricate rhyme schemes and poignant imagery, have captivated readers for centuries, offering glimpses into the complexities of romantic relationships and the enduring power of poetry to convey deep emotional truths

Additionally, Shakespeare's narrative poems, such as "Venus and Adonis" and "The Rape of Lucrece," showcase his ability to weave compelling stories that blend mythologelements with rich ical characterizations and moral dilemmas, solidifying his reputation as one of the greatest poets in the English language.

Shakespeare as a dramatist: William Wordsworth: In addition to his contributions to

poetry, Shakespeare's impact on the world of drama is immeasurable. As a playwright, he revolutionized the English stage, elevating theater to new heights of sophistication and artistic expression. With an extensive body of work that includes tragedies, comedies, histories and romances, Shakespeare demonstrated remarkable versatility and insight into the human experience. His tragedies, such as "Hamlet," "Macbeth" and "Othello" delve into themes of ambition, betrayal and the complexities of moral choice, showcasing his ability to create unforgettable characters grappling with profound existential dilemmas.

Similarly, Shakespeare's comedies, such as "A Midsummer Night's Dream," "Twelfth Night" and "Much Ado About Nothing" offer audiences moments of levity and laughter while exploring themes of love, mistaken identity and the foibles of human nature. Through his enduring dramas, Shakespeare continues to captivate audiences worldwide, reminding us of the timeless relevance and enduring power of his theatrical vision.

His acting career:

William Shakespeare's role as an actor is a subject of much speculation and debate among scholars. While there is evidence to suggest that he likely participated as an actor in his own plays and possibly those of others, the extent of his acting career remains uncertain. Some scholars argue that Shakespeare's intimate knowledge of the stagecraft evident in his plays indicates firsthand experience as an actor. References within his works to acting techniques, stage directions, and the portrayal of characters lend credence to this theory. **Tributes to Shakespeare:** 

**Ben Jonson:** 

"He was not of an age, but for all time!"

**Thomas Carlyle:** 

"If I say that Shakespeare is the greatest of intellects. I have said all concerning him. But there is more in Shakespeare's intellect than we have yet seen. It is what I call an unconscious intellect; there is more virtue in it that he himself is aware of." speare's religious leanings, conclusive evidence remains elusive, with

"Scorn not the Sonnet; Critic, you interpretations of his works offering

have frowned. Mindless of its just honours; with this key

Shakespeare unlocked his heart." William Hazlitt: "If we wish to know the force of human genius we should read Shakespeare. If we wish to see the insignificance of human learning we may study his commentators.' George Bernard Shaw: "Hamlet's experience simply could not have happened to a plumber.'

T. S. Eliot: "We can say of Shakespeare that never has a man turned so little knowledge to such great account." D. H. Lawrence:

"When I read Shakespeare I am struck with wonder that such trivial people should muse and thunder in such lovely language." Ralph Waldo Emerson: "He breathed upon dead bodies

and brought them into life. Nor sequent centuries could hit Orbit and sum of Shakespeare's wit." Religion

Shakespeare outwardly adhered to the official state religion, yet his personal religious convictions have remained a topic of debate. His will reflects Protestant sentiments and he was a confirmed member of the Church of England, where he exchanged vows, baptized his children and found his final resting place. Despite this, some scholars suggest that Shakespeare's familial ties leaned towards Catholicism, a faith practiced clandestinely during a time of religious persecution in England. For instance, his mother, Mary Arden, hailed from a devout Catholic lineage. The discovery of a purported Catholic declaration signed by his father, John Shakespeare, once lent credence to this theory, although the document has since gone missing, leaving its authenticity in question. Historical records reveal instances where members of Shakespeare's family, including his father and daughter, skirted church attendance, citing various reasons. While debates persist among scholars regarding Shake-

[Antony and Cleopatra] 10) Society is no comfort To one not sociable. [Cymbeline] Night. enduring characters have left an indelible mark, shaping literary traditions and inspiring generations globally. Allama Iqbal said in a poem titled 'Shakespeare' that Na-

ture would never create another man

akin to Shakespeare. (The author

can be reached at sahilsharifdi-

nenglish@gmail.com)

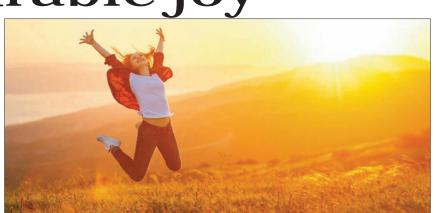
[Much Ado About Nothing] 2) Et tu, Brute! [Julius Caesar] 3) When we are born, we cry that we are come To this great stage of fools. [King Lear] 4) Neither a borrower nor a lender be: For loan oft loses both itself and friend. [Hamlet] 5) How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is To have a thankless child! [King Lear] 6) Self-love, my liege, is not so vile a sin As self-neglecting. [Henry V] 7) Cowards die many times before their deaths: The valiant never taste of death but once. [Julius Caesar] 8) One may smile and smile and be a villain. [Hamlet] 9) I will praise any man that will praise me. Some notable works of Shakespeare include: Romeo and Juliet. Hamlet, Macbeth, Othello, King Lear, Julius Caesar, A Midsummer Night's Dream, The Tempest, Much Ado About Nothing and Twelfth To sum up, William Shakespeare, the eminent playwright and poet, revolutionized world literature with his unparalleled works. His insightful exploration of the human condition, mastery of language and

Your feedback The enigma of quantifying the matters! immeasurable joy

#### **By: Dipak Kurmi**

efining and measuring happiness is inherently complex due to its subjective and individual nature. Attempting to generalize the happiness levels of large populations, such as entire countries, is bound to be controversial and reflect the biases of those conducting the measurement. Despite the challenges in defining and quantifying happiness, the United Nations has designated March 20<sup>th</sup> as the International Day of Happiness for the past seven years. On this day, the New York-based Sustainable Development Solutions Network releases the annual World Happiness Report, ranking countries based on their perceived happiness levels. In the 2024 edition, India was ranked a disappointing 126<sup>th</sup> out of 143 countries, trailing behind nations like Saudi Arabia (28<sup>th</sup>), China (60<sup>th</sup>), Russia (72<sup>nd</sup>), Venezuela (79th), Senegal (99th), Iran (100<sup>th</sup>), Palestine (103<sup>rd</sup>), Ukraine (105<sup>th</sup>), Pakistan (108th), and even Myanmar 118th). This ranking, which could potentially influence investors and donors. raises questions about the methodology and accountability of such global happiness assessments. Many nations face dire circumstances that jeopardize the fundamental rights and well-being of their citizens. Some are embroiled in violent conflicts or wars, rendering the basic security of human life a perilous notion. Others are governed by oppressive regimes and autocratic rulers who mercilessly crush civil liberties, with women often bearing the brunt of this repression. Furthermore, numerous countries grapple with unrelenting crises that undermine their democratic institutions, political stability, and economic prosper-The methodology employed in this exercise raises legitimate inquiries due to the peculiar outcomes it has yielded. Finland has consistently secured the top position in the rankings each year thus far, while the top 10 countries have largely remained unchanged - Finland, Denmark, Iceland, Sweden, Israel, the Netherlands, Norway, Luxembourg, Switzerland, and Australia. A common thread interlaces these nations a high per capita income. Similarly, other countries with elevated per capita incomes also rank higher on the list, such as New Zealand (21st), the United Kingdom (20<sup>th</sup>), the United States (23<sup>rd</sup>), Germany (24<sup>th</sup>), and France (27<sup>th</sup>). This outcome is unsurprising, as the materialistic Western culture, deeply entrenched in conspicuous overconsumption, regards money as the primary, and often the sole, source of happiness, in stark contrast to Asian and other continental cultures It is noteworthy that only one Asian nation, Kuwait, secured a position in the top tier of the list at 13th place. The next highest-ranked Asian country is Saudi Arabia at 28th, followed by Singapore at 30th. Surprisingly, Japan, renowned for its excep-

tionally high life expectancy, finds itself languishing at a modest 51st rank, trailing nations like Uzbekistan (47th) and Kazakhstan (49th). This disparity raises pertinent questions about whether the index inadvertently reflects an inherent Western bias - a remnant of the colonial era when subjugating and diminishing the significance of Asian societies was commonplace. The case of Bhutan, a nation that has enshrined the pursuit of happiness as a governmental responsibility through its pioneering Gross National Happiness (GNH) Index, further underscores this potential prejudice. Despite being a trailblazer in adopting a multidimensional, non-income-based development metric encompassing nine parameters, Bhutan was ranked a mere 95<sup>th</sup> in 2019 and has been omitted from the rankings entirely in the current year. This omission casts doubt on the index's ability to adequately capture and appreciate alternative perspectives on well-being and societal progress. Attempts to quantify and measure happiness are inherently flawed. Happiness is a transient state of being, a feeling rather than a fixed condition that can be objectively achieved and assessed. Such metrics conflate happiness with "well-being," which results from a complex interplay of external factors like income, health, education, freedoms, choices, relationships,





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#### **By: Kamal Baruah**

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he origin of NPS dated back to December 2003 from Harvard Business Review article "The one number you need to grow" by Frederick F. Reichheld. NPS – Net Promoter Score is a way of measuring customers' satisfaction and loyalty by asking how likely they're to recommend a brand to others.

However, companies spend lots of time and money on complex tools to assess customers' satisfaction. The best predictor of top-line growth can usually be captured in a single survey question by Frederick, "Would you recommend this company to a friend"? And many of us (customers) deal with it now and then. Customers always consider reviews before making a purchase decision and a feedback SMS message followed to capture customers' insights.

I had witnessed a time of harsh incident the other day, when I was asked to respond a feedback from one SMS. The tales of suffering were putus in great distress. Soon after boarding the chartered bus, our daughter had experienced the unavailability of mobile network. Alas! It seemed to be a network glitch from the outset. It was later confirmed through helpline that the SIM was blocked by network provider for want of KYC. It was a shock to face such hostile attitudes from a leading mobile network provider, albeit the SIM issued at my name after verification of OVD eight long years back and being used by our daughter.

Imagine a day without a cellular phone, when we're totally dependent on a mobile network supporting digital wallet service. Little could anybody at the time see that your only SIM is no longer active, when every financial transaction and social media is linked with a mobile number? Facing such kind of military action all of a sudden was insane

We rushed to the store very next able feedback of yours matters.

day to air our grievances against the operator and found the tiny store was crowded by hundreds of aggrieved users. While waiting our turn at E-token, our mind was beginning to wander. A tiny bench offered little help to accommodate up toall and many senior citizens stood tirelessly in the doorway for hours. Our queries went unanswered

feedback

and our arguments unheard. It was shocking that nothing is possible before 45 days at least for further notification as the network provider is to abide by the telecom regulatory authority. We made one last desperate attempt to retrieve it by issuing another SIM for instant access to her phone but the original number was still blocked. There was a long pause during which we all wondered what will happen without that one and only mobile number that she possesses and get linked with every activity in day to day work and study.

After a month, I was jubilant over a call to visit the store. Capturing my fingerprint biometric data from Aadhaar was really tough. Finally, the SIM retrieved and a request from the store representative came by surprise to respond a feedback SMS for overall experience. Definitely a feedback matters for them while purchasing a product which is crucial for the success of their marketing efforts. Should I tick Five-Star for NPS? Probably negative, while facing after that juncture. I spared a moment to share my thoughts about the harrowing story of how they treated us. They don't deserve happy feedback from customers. We had had a harsh experience. The mobileoperator didn't even bother to convey other than sending SMS for need of KYC. We had suffered a great deal since blocking the SIM. We can't praise them enough – they did a senseless job by deactivating a cellular mobile in haste and failed to elevate our satisfaction. After all, a valu-

and physical/social security. However, even well-being is essentially a subjective sense, a personal perception that defies straightforward measurement or quantification. The intrinsically ephemeral and subjective nature of happiness renders it resistant to the reductive approaches used to evaluate more tangible phenomena.

The World Happiness Report ranks countries based on six factors that contribute to subjective well-being. These include economic productivity measured by income per person, overall health and longevity, the strength of social networks and support systems, the degree of personal freedom people enjoy, charitable behavior and generosity within a society, and public perceptions around government transparency and corruption levels. The happiness scores are calculated

from "life evaluation" survey data collected by the Gallup World Poll. Respondents are asked to rate their current life situation on a 0 to 10 scale, with 10 being the highest level of happiness or life satisfaction. Gallup polls a sample of around 1.000 people in each country, regardless of population size, and the rankings use a three-year rolling average of these life evaluation scores from each nation.

While India is a vast and multifaceted nation, the sample size employed in this study may not adequately capture the breadth of its diversity and intricacies. The data pertaining to per capita GDP on a purchasing power parity (PPP) basis has been sourced from the World Development Indicators (WDI) compiled by the World Bank. Subsequently, a natural logarithmic transformation has been applied to the data, as it aligns more closely with the observed patterns.

The data on healthy life expectancy at birth, sourced from the WHO Global Health Observatory data repository, along with the indicators of social support, freedom to make life choices, generosity, and perceptions of corruption, are all derived from responses to various questions posed by the Gallup World Poll (GWP). These indicators, while attempting to capture different aspects of societal well-being, are inherently linked to the economic status of a nation.

The social support indicator is based on a binary question inquiring whether individuals have relatives or friends they can rely on for assistance during times of need. Similarly, the freedom to make life choices indicator reflects the average response to a question about satisfaction with personal autonomy. Generosity is calculated as the residual from a regression analysis of charitable donations on log GDP per capita, while perceptions of corruption are derived from responses regarding the prevalence of corruption in government and businesses.

Therein lies the crux of the matter: these indicators, despite their varied domains, are inextricably intertwined with a nation's income or wealth. It is a well-documented phenomenon that affluent nations tend to score higher on such measures, while their less affluent counterparts often lag behind. This inherent bias towards wealthy nations raises questions about the true representativeness of these indicators in capturing the multifaceted nature of societal well-being across diverse economic contexts.

The notion that wealth directly translates to happiness is a widespread misconception that lacks factual substantiation. Equating prosperity with contentment oversimplifies the complex interplay between socio-cultural influences and our perception of what constitutes happiness. The questions posed and their framing profoundly shape our responses, unveiling the limitations of such assumptions. For instance, inquiring about the weekly time dedicated to parental interaction or the duration of one's current marital union may reveal surprising perspectives that challenge the supposed superiority of affluent Western societies in attaining fulfillment.

Cultures with a collectivistic mindset, prevalent in many Asian societies, view happiness through a communal lens – a shared experience within social groups rather than mere individual fulfillment.

In contrast, individualistic societies, commonly found in Western nations, tend to perceive happiness as a personal state of contentment and life satisfaction. The contagious nature of positive emotions implies that joyful individuals radiate happiness onto those around them, fostering stronger bonds within families and social circles, thereby amplifying collective happiness

However, the framing of questions in the Global Wellbeing Project (GWP) survey may inadvertently favor individualistic interpretations of happiness, potentially skewing scores in favor of Western nations that align more closely with such perspectives.

While economic indicators may rank India lower on the prosperity scale, the true essence of contentment lies within the cultural fabric that binds its people. From time immemorial, Indian society has placed greater emphasis on cherishing values, nurturing relationships, and embracing a life of simplicity over the pursuit of material wealth. This mindset, ingrained in generations, has fostered a deep sense of fulfillment that transcends the confines of materialistic measures.

Even as the nation's economy continues to evolve, the fundamental values that have long defined the Indian ethos remain steadfast. The profound bonds shared within extended families and communities provide a source of strength and solace, rendering the notion of happiness as a mere statistical metric irrelevant. Rather than succumbing to the superficial allure of such indices. Indians can take pride in their ability to find contentment in the richness of their cultural heritage and the depth of their interpersonal connections.

In essence, the true wealth of a nation lies not in its ranking on arbitrary scales but in the resilience of its people's spirits and the unwavering commitment to upholding the timeless virtues that have shaped their collective identity. (The writer can be reached at dipakkur*miglpltd@gmail.com*)

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#### World

#### CHINA HAS REFUSED TO PARTICIPATE IN THE ARBITRATION, REJECTED THE RULING AND CONTINUES TO DEFY IT

# US, Japan, Australia and the Philippines to stage military drills in disputed South China Sea

MANILA, April 6: The United States, Japan, Aus-tralia and the Philippines will hold their first joint naval exercises, including anti-submarine warfare training, in a show of force on Sunday in the South China Sea where Beijing's aggressive actions to assert its territorial claims have caused alarm.

The four treaty allies and security partners are holding the exercises to safeguard "the rule of law that is the foundation for a peaceful and stable Indo-Pacific region" and uphold freedom of navigation and overflight, they said in a joint statement issued by their defence chiefs on Saturday.

China was not mentioned by name in the statement, but the four countries reaffirmed their stance that a 2016 international arbitration ruling, which invalidated China's expansive claims on historical grounds, was final and legally binding.

China has refused to participate in the arbitration, rejected the ruling and continues to defy it. The Philippines brought its disputes with China to international arbitration in 2013 after a tense sea standoff.



There was no immediate anti-submarine warfare traincomment by China. ing and other military maneu-Last year, the Chinese Forvers.

"Japan believes that the eign Ministry warned against military exercises involving issue concerning the South the United States and its al-China Sea is directly related lies in the disputed waters to the peace and stability of the region and is a legitimate harming its security and terriconcern of the international torial interests. "We stand with all nations community including Japan, in safeguarding the interna-

Australia, the Philippines, and the United States," tional order based on the rule of law that is the foundation Japan's Defence Minister Mifor a peaceful and stable noru Kihara said in the state-Indo-Pacific region," the four ment. nations said but did not pro-"Japan opposes any unilatvide specific details of the

eral changes to the status quo military drills, called the by force, such attempts as Maritime Cooperative Activwell as any actions that increase tensions in the South China Sea," he said. Japan said in a statement,

US Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin said in a separate statement the exercises "underscore our shared commitment to ensuring that all

countries are free to fly, sail, and operate wherever international law allows.

Australian Defence Minister Richard Marles said "respect for national sovereignty and agreed rules and norms based on international law underpin the stability of our region

Defence Secretary Gilberto Teodoro Jr. said the military drills on Sunday would be the first in a series of activities to build the Philippines' "capacity for individual and collective self-defence."

Aside from China and the Philippines, the long-simmering disputes in the South China Sea, a key global trade route, also involve Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei and Taiwan. But skirmishes between Beijing and Manila have particuarly flared since last year.

Washington lays no claims to the strategic seaway but has repeatedly warned that it's obligated to defend its longtime treaty ally the Philippines if Filipino forces, ships and aircraft come under an armed attack, including in the South China Sea.

China has warned the US not to intervene in the disputes, which have sparked fears of an escalation into a

volve the two world powers. Japan has separate territorial disputes with China over East China Sea islands. Increasing tensions in the dis-

puted waters would be high on the agenda when President Joe Biden hosts his Japanese and Philippine counterparts in a summit at the White House next week.

major conflict that could in-

In the latest hostilities last month, the Chinese coast guard used water cannons that injured a Filipino admiral and four of his navy personnel and heavily damaged their wooden supply boat near the Second Thomas Shoal

The cannon blast was so strong it threw a crewman off the floor but he hit a wall instead of plunging into the sea. Philippine military officials said

The Philippine government summoned a Chinese embassy diplomat in Manila to convey its "strongest protest" against China. Beijing accused the Philippine vessels of intruding into Chinese territorial waters, warning Manila not to "play with fire" and saving China would continue to take actions to defend its sovereignty. (AP)

**Russian missile strikes** on the Ukrainian city of Kharkiv kill 6 and wound 11



**KYIV, April 6:** Russian forces overnight attacked Ukraine with drones and missiles, killing at least six people and wounding 11 more in Kharkiv, Ukraine's second largest city, officials said on Saturday.

Governor of the Kharkiv region Oleh Syniehubov said missile strikes on the city damaged residential buildings, a gas station, a kindergarten, a cafe, a shop and cars.

Overall, Russia fired 32 Iranian-made Shahed drones and six missiles at Ukraine overnight, according to the air force commander. Ukrainian air defense forces shot down three cruise missiles and 28 drones, Lt. Gen. Mykola Oleshchuk said in a statement. "Russian killers continue to terrorize Ukrainians and attack Kharkiv and other peaceful cities," he said.

The Russian military has not commented on the strikes, but said that Ukraine on Saturday morning fired Vampire rockets at Russia. All 10 of them were shot down over Russia's border region of Belgorod by air defense systems, the Russian Defense Ministry said.

On the ground in Ukraine, Russian forces were advancing, and pushing back against them was "difficult," said Oleksandr Syrskyi, commander of Ukraine's armed forces

Syrksyi said the situation in the Bakhmut area in the partially occupied eastern Donetsk region was particularly challenging. He said Russian forces are carrying out offensive operations day and night, using assault groups with the support of armored vehicles, as well as assaults on foot.

Fierce battles are taking place east of the town of Chasiv Yar, which Ukraine still controls and which is located near the occupied city of Bakhmut.

Russian forces are trying to break through defensive lines there, Syrskyi said on the messaging app Telegram, adding that "Chasiv Yar remains under our control, all enemy attempts to break through to the settlement have failed."

Near Avdiivka, another city in the Donetsk region held by the Russians, the fiercest battles were occurring in Pervomaiskyi and Vodyanyi, according to the official. He also said the situation is tense on the southern and northeastern parts of the front line. (AP)

# US and China plan talks on economic growth including manufacturing overcapacity' issue, Yellen says

issued by its embassy in

Manila, that it would deploy

its destroyer, the JS Akebono,

for the South China Sea exer-

cises, which would include



GUANGZHOU (CHINA), April 6: The US and China agreed to hold talks that will address a key American complaint about China's economic model, Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said on the second day of an official visit to China.

The two sides will hold more talks and creat

China's policies and continue to express our concerns, as I have done in my meetings with Vice Premier He.

Earlier state media coverage of her trip had dismissed U.S. concerns about overcapacity as a pretext for tariffs. The official Xinhua News Agency wrote Friday night that while Yellen's trip is "a good sign" that the world's two largest economies are maintaining communication, "talking up Chinese overcapacity' in the clean energy sector also smacks of creating a pretext for rolling out more protectionist policies to shield U.S. companies."

Yellen told reporters during an Alaska refueling stop en route to China that the U.S. "won't rule out" tariffs to respond to China's heavily subsidized manufacturing of green energy products.

Chinese government subsidies and other policy support have encouraged solar panel and EV makers in China to invest in factories, building far more production capacity than the domestic market can absorb.

in Taiwan. Death toll rises to 13 TAIPEI, April 6: The demolition of a building that is leaning precariously after an earthquake in Taiwan was halted on Saturday because of aftershocks that made it

lean even more, media reports said. The red building, about 10 stories tall and inclined over a street in the city of Hualien, has become an iconic image from the magnitude 7.4 earthquake that also buried people under boulders at nearby Taroko National Park, a popular hiking destination about 25 kilometres (15 miles) northwest of Hualien

The death toll rose to 13 after a third victim was found on the park's Shakadang Trail. Six other people are still missing, including three on the same trail. More than 400 people remained stranded three days after the quake in locations cut off by damage.

Most are at a hotel in Taroko park. Hundreds of aftershocks have struck the area since the Wednesday morning quake off Taiwan's east coast, including a magnitude-5.2 earthquake shortly before noon on Saturday. Survivors have told harrowing tales of rocks tumbling onto roadways, trapping them in tunnels until rescuers arrived to free them

The relatively low number of deaths from the powerful has been attributed to strict construction and widespread public education campaigns on the earthquake-prone island. The quake was the strongest to hit Taiwan since a magnitude 7.7 earthquake in 1999 that killed 2,400 people.

Action ordered against sr Pak police officials for 'negligence' in attack on Chinese nationals: Min

LAHORE, April 6: Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has ordered disciplinary action against four senior police officials for their "negligence" after an inquiry committee probing the suicide attack which killed five Chinese engineers and their Pakistani driver submitted its report, the information minister said on Saturday.

Last Tuesday, a vehicleborne suicide bomber targeted the convoy of Chinese engineers in the remote Besham area of the restive Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province when they were being driven to a construction site of the Dasu Hydroelectric power station in Kohistan district of the same province.



quote

the report

the regional police officer arrangements for the Chinese (RPO) Hazara Division; disnationals working on various trict police officer of Upper projects in the country.

Kohistan and Lower Kohistan; According to an official statement, the prime minister director security, Dasu Hysaid he had decided to "perdropower Project and commandant special security unit sonally review the meetings Khyber Pakhtunkhwa within with respect to the overall sethe country, cially the security of the Chinese citizens" Meanwhile, China has also expressed concern about last Tuesday's attack and demanded the safety of their nationals working on various projects in Pakistan.

Earthquake aftershocks halt the demolition of a leaning building

two new economic groups dedicated to growth in domestic and global economies as well as antimoney laundering, according to a U.S. statement about the creation of the groups.

Yellen, who started her five-day visit in one of China's major industrial and export hubs, has focused thus far on what the U.S. considers to be unfair Chinese trade practices in talks with senior Chinese officials.

In her statement, Yellen said she and her counterparts "agreed that the US and China will hold intensive exchanges on balanced growth in the domestic and global economies. These exchanges will facilitate a discussion around macroeconomic imbalances, including their connection to overcapacity, and I intend to use this opportunity to advocate for a level playing field for American workers and firms.<sup>2</sup>

The announcement of the groups come after two days of extended meetings between Yellen and Vice Premier He Lifeng on Friday and Saturday. Yellen said "these exchanges on balanced growth in the domestic and global economies are key to allowing us to deepen our understanding of

The massive scale of production has driven down costs and ignited price wars for green technologies, a boon for consumers and efforts to reduce global dependence on fossil fuels. But Western governments fear that that capacity will flood their markets with low-priced exports, threatening American and European jobs.

The U.S. has made efforts through legislation and executive orders to wean itself off certain Chinese technologies in order to build out its domestic manufacturing capabilities. Many members of the White House and Congress view the actions as important to maintaining national security.

The \$280 billion CHIPS and Science Act passed in 2022 to boost the semiconductor industry and scientific research in a bid to create more hightech jobs in the United States and help it better compete with China. Additionally, last August, U.S. President Joe Biden signed an executive order to block and regulate high-tech U.S.-based investments going toward China.

Yellen moves onto Beijing on Saturday afternoon for more meetings over the weekend with senior officials, economists and the nation's central bank governor. (AP)

Rescuers were planning to bring in heavy equipment to try to recover two bodies pinned under boulders on the Shakadang Trail. The three dead and three missing on the trail include a family of five. Search and recovery work had been called off Friday afternoon because of aftershocks.

In Hualien, a city official said that experts would discuss how to proceed with the demolition of the leaning building. Offerings were made at a ceremony before the demolition began the previous day. (AP)

uays, their Pakistani driver were Tarar as saying. killed in the attack. "We want peace in the re-

gion, but our desire should not Information Minister Attaullah Tarar said that Prime be misconstrued as a weak-Minister Sharif directed action ness. We are taking the matter against senior Khyber of the security of the Chinese very seriously," he said. Pakhtunkhwa officials after the inquiry committee formed "Prime Minister Shehbaz is to probe the March 26 attack himself overseeing the secuand identify the lapses in security of the Chinese projects and engineers," he added. rity protocol submitted its re-

port, Geo News reported. On Friday, Sharif directed "The prime minister has diall Pakistani security agencies rected to take action against to ensure foolproof security

Thousands of Chinese personnel are working in Pakistan on several projects under the aegis of the USD 60 billion China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. (PTI)

**US** National Secy Mexico's president says his country is breaking Advisor speaks diplomatic ties with Ecuador after embassy raid with Sri Lankan

# counterpart

COLOMBO/WASHINGTON, April 6: The US has expressed support for Sri Lanka's security and sovereignty and its ongoing efforts to complete the fiscal, monetary, and governance elements of its IMF bailout programme.

This was conveyed by US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan during telephone conversation with Sri Lanka's National Security Advisor Sagala Ratnayake on Wednesday, the White House said in a brief statement on Friday.

'Their discussion has covered areas of bilateral engagement, including US support to Sri Lanka's security and sovereignty," the statement said.

Sullivan and Ratnayake also discussed Sri Lanka's ongoing efforts to complete the fiscal, monetary, and governance elements of its International Monetary Fund (IMF) programme, and future opportunities for cooperation, the release said. The IMF on March 21 said it has reached a staff-level agreement with Sri Lanka for the next phase that would enable it access to USD 337 million from the nearly USD 3 billion bailout approved in 2023 for the cashstrapped country. Two tranches of USD 330 million each were released in March and December 2023.

The global lender also praised Colombo as it said macroeconomic policy reforms are starting to bear fruit.

*Reclusive Taliban leader releases Eid message* urging officials to set aside their differences

ISLAMABAD, April 6: The Taliban's reclusive supreme leader Hibatullah Akhundzada urged his officials to set aside their differences and serve Afghanistan properly, according to a written statement released Saturday ahead of the Eid al-Fitr holiday marking the end of Ramadan.

Public dissent within the Taliban is rare, but some senior figures have expressed their disagreement with the leadership's decision making, especially the bans on female education.

Akhundzada, an Islamic scholar who almost never appears in public, rarely leaves the Taliban heartland in southern Kandahar province. He and his circle have been instrumental in imposing restrictions on women and girls that have sparked an international outcry and isolated the Taliban on the global stage.

His message was distributed in seven languages including Uzbek and Turkmen — the Taliban are courting cash-rich Cenmessage said security did not tral Asian countries for investcome from "being tough and ment and legitimacy — and it touched on diplomatic relations, the economy, justice, charity, and the virtues of meritocracy. Akhundzada said Taliban officials should "live a brotherly life among themselves, avoid disagreements and selfishness.' He said the war against the Soviet invasion and communism failed due to disagreements within the Taliban and that they could not implement Shariah in Afghanistan as a re-

sult of these divisions. While he mentioned education, he said nothing about reschools opening and universities for girls and women. Nor did he refer to recent unconfirmed reports about him saying there would be a resumption of stoning Afghan women to death for adultery, a punishment previously carried out during the Taliban's first pe-

killing more; rather, security is aligned with Shariah and justice." Hassan Abbas, a professor at the National Defence University in Washington D.C. and author of the "Return of the Taliban," said Akhundzada's message sounded "largely reasonable" and was focused on governance and anti-corruption matters. "I believe this message is carefully crafted to dispel the

negative impression created by a recently released audio of his that gives a very dogmatic and regressive message, especially about public punishments and women rights," Abbas told The Associated Press. "I think this new message is also intended as damage control." Also on Saturday, the Tal-

iban-controlled Supreme Court said six people, including a woman, were publicly flogged riod of rule in the late 1990s. on adultery charges in eastern Akhundzada in Saturday's Logar province. (AP)



QUITO, April 6: The Mexican Glas

president has quickly moved to break off diplomatic ties with Ecuador after police broke into the Mexican Embassy to arrest a former Ecuadorian vice president who had sought political asylum there after being indicted on corruption charges.

Andrés Manuel López Obrador made the announcement on Friday evening after Ecuadorian police forced their way into the embassy in the capital, Quito, to arrest Jorge Glas who has been residing there since December. Glas, arguably the most wanted man in Ecuador. has been convicted on bribery and corruption charges and Ecuadorian authorities are still investigating more allegations against him.

Police broke through the external doors of the Mexican diplomatic headquarters in the Ecuadorian capital and entered the main patio to get

"This is not possible. It cannot be. This is crazy," Roberto Canseco, head of the Mexican consular section in Quito, told local press while standing outside the embassy. "I am very worried because they could kill him. There is no basis to do this. This is totally outside the norm."

Defending its decision, Ecuador's presidency said in a statement: "Ecuador is a sovereign nation and we are not going to allow any criminal to stay free.

López Obrador fired back, calling Glas' detention an "authoritarian act" and "a flagrant violation of international law and the sovereignty of Mexico."

Alicia Bárcena, Mexico's secretary of foreign relations, posted on the social platform X that a number of diplomats suffered injuries during the break-in, adding that it violated the

Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations. Diplomatic premises are consid-

ered "inviolable" under the Vienna treaties and local law enforcement agencies are not allowed to enter without the permission of the ambassador.

WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange lived inside the Ecuadorian Embassy in London for seven years because British police could not enter to arrest him.

Bárcena said that Mexico would take the case to the International Court of Justice "to denounce Ecuador's responsibility for violations of international law." She also said Mexican diplomats were only waiting for the Ecuadorian government to offer the necessary guarantees for their return home.

Ecuador's Foreign Ministry and Ecuador's Ministry of the Interior did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The Mexican Embassy in Quito remained under heavy police guard late Friday.

A day earlier, tensions between the two countries escalated after Mexico's president made statements that Ecuador considered "very unfortunate" about last year's elections, won by Ecuadorian President Daniel Noboa.

In reaction, the Ecuadorian government declared the Mexican ambassador persona non grata. (AP)

#### NORTHEAST

*CPI(M)* state secretary appealed to people to vote for INDIA bloc candidates

# **Tipra Motha befooling** 'Tiprasa' people: Chaudhury

AGARTALA, April 6: Tripura Leader of Opposition Jitendra Chaudhury on Saturday alleged that the Tipra Motha was befooling the 'Tiprasa' (indigenous) people in the name of 'greater Tipraland'.

SUNDAY, APRIL 7, 2024

In last year's Assembly election, the Tipra Motha secured tribal votes by attacking the BJP-IPFT government and now they have joined hands with the saffron party to fight the Lok Sabha elections, Chaudhury alleged while addressing an election rally in South Tripura's Birchandra Manu.

'The party (Tipra Motha) which had secured tribal votes by launching a scathing attack on the BJP-IPFT government in last year's Assembly elections has now teamed up with the saffron party.



The move of joining hands with Tipraland) was compromised", he the BJP has angered the Tipra said Motha leaders and workers be-

Chaudhury who is also the cause their aspiration (greater CPI(M) state secretary appealed to people to vote for INDIA bloc candidates - Asish Kumar Saha (Congress) for Tripura West Lok Sabha constituency and Rajendra Reang (CPIM) for Tripura East Lok Sabha constituency.

Chaudhury alleged the BJP-led government has been trying to put potential opposition leaders into jail to win the Lok Sabha elections.

"Jharkhand Chief Minister Himanta Soren and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, who have emerged as a threat to the BJP, have been sent to jail for their alleged involvement in money laundering cases. This is nothing but a desperate attempt to suppress the opposition parties because the saffron party is scared," he said. (PTI)

Cremation ceremony

of Major M Pritam

Singh held

in Manipur

HT Bureau GUWAHATI, April 6: The

mortal remains of Major M

Pritam Singh arrived at Im-

phal Airport on Friday. The

body of the officer was re-

ceived by the senior mili-

tary officers. As a mark of

respect and military tradi-

tions, all present paid floral

tributes at the airport. The

mortal remains were then

taken to the officer's resi-

dence in Luker, Imphal

West district of Manipur.

The cremation ceremony

was held with full military

honours, in presence of sen-

ior military officials, repre-

administration and family

Maj M Pritam Singh left

for his heavenly abode on

April 3 while deployed in

an operational area, due to

climatic hazards. The offi-

cer was commissioned into

Indian Army on December

9 2017, after successful

training at Army Cadet Col-

lege and Indian Military

Academy, Dehradun. The

officer was an avid sports-

man and enjoyed love and

respect by all ranks of his

battalion.

members, at around 4 pm.

sentatives of

civil

# *VPP releases 24-point manifesto*

Further, the party also assured to

review and reconsider the border

laya and Assam besides seeking

central government intervention to

It also speaks about the need to

promote transparency, accountabil-

ensure that the needs and aspira-

tions of the people are met effec-

On the other aspects of develop-

ment, the VPP promised that it

would work to improve the human

development index in the state and

promote herbal medicines practiced

by the people to ensure holistic

It also promised to advocate for

increased salaries and government

support for accredited social health

workers (ASHA), to improve the

working conditions of the Angan-

wadi centres in the state and uplift

the living standards of the Angan-

wadi works, to seek central support

to build more road infrastructure to

improve connectivity within

Meghalaya and with neighboring

states and advocate for the develop-

ment of digital technology to en-

hance communication networks

and access to information technol-

on building ropeways in feasible lo-

cations, especially in areas where

road infrastructure is impractical, to

improve connectivity and trans-

The VPP also said it would focus

ogy services across the state.

ty and efficiency in governance to

ated issues.

Block I and 2

tively

**SHILLONG, April 6:** The opposition Voice of the People Party (VPP) has released its 24-point manifesto focusing on advocating the need to include Meghalaya under Article 371 for protecting the state from the application of central laws.

The 14-page manifesto was officially released by vice president Dr Kara H Shen along with other party leaders during a press conference held in Shillong on Friday.

The VPP is fielding its general secretary Dr Ricky AJ Syngkon as its candidate from Shillong parliamentary seat. The party said it would advocate for putting Meghalava under Article 371 to protect the state from the application of central dispute resolution between Meghalaws affecting the customs and traditions of the people. resolve the border dispute over

It also assured to press for the inclusion of the Khasi language in the 8th Schedule of the Indian Constitution and promote its learning in the state besides opposing the imposition of Hindi language and uphold English as the medium of instruction in schools and colleges and as the official language of the state

The VPP has also taken a firm stand against the Uniform Civil Code Bill introduced by the BJP government healthcare and well being.

Opposing the implementation of the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) in Meghalaya, the party also promised "to reinstate the names of Khasi and Jaintia Hills in the preamble of the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation Act 1873, as it was removed in the Adaptation of Laws (Amendment) Order 2019."

It also assured for implementation of the inner line permit (ILP) in the state of Meghalaya to regulate the entry of outsiders and protect the interests of indigenous communities

Also saying no to mining of uranium in Meghalaya, the VPP also said, "We oppose the establishment of railway lines especially in the Khasi and Jaintia Hills unless adequate safeguard measures are implemented to address concerns

office is examining minutely if

there is any case of violation of

election Model Code of Conduct re-

garding the gathering of a large

number of people, mostly women at

the chief minister's secretariat in

Imphal following a complaint

The CEO conveyed this while

lodged by a political party.

# Manipur CEO examines probable MCC violation

IMPHAL, April 6: Chief electoral Sabha elections. officer (CEO) of Manipur, Pradeep Kumar Jha on Friday said that his

With the enforcement of the same, all the concerned authorities including the political parties and candidates were aware of dos and don'ts, he said.

Recently a complaint was filed by a political party urging the election authorities to look into the alleged violation of the Model Code of Conduct as groups of people, mostly women, gathered at the chief minister secretariat in Imphal

addressing the media at his office in Imphal as a part of launching of a on a daily basis. The CEO was a cent complaint lodged by the Manipur Pradesh Congress Committee (MPCC) to his office to look into the convergence of a large number of people at the chief minister's secretariat if it amounted to violation of the MCC. Jha said that his office has directed the concerned DEO to furnish a report regarding the matter. His office is yet to receive the report. To a query raised by the reporters, the CEO said that there were instances of some pressure groups restricting election campaigns and hoisting of flags of the parties and candidates through social media posts. However, his office received no complaint from any political party or candidate so far in

related to influx and other associportation options.

"Additionally, explore opportunities for constructing flyover roads where feasible to alleviate traffic congestion and enhance transportation efficiency in the state.

Additionally, the party will advocate towards the relocation of select central government offices from the congested areas of the state capital to mitigate traffic congestion and ensure smoother mobility," it said. It also seeks to implement meas-

ures to modernize and expand airway infrastructure across the state. ensuring better connectivity and accessibility for residents and visitors alike. This includes upgrading existing airports, developing new airstrips in underserved areas, and promoting regional air travel to boost economic growth and tourism.

Also, the party said it would champion the rights of individuals with disabilities and endorse the manifesto proposed by the national centre for promotion of employnent for disabled people.

"We also commit to enhancing the implementation of centrally sponsored schemes in Meghalaya by fostering better coordination between state and central authorities, allocating resources efficiently, and ensuring timely execution to maximize the benefits for the people of the state," it said while further asserting the need to provide infrastructure facilities for sports, scholarships for meritorious sports persons, and establish sports academies for football and other games. (NNN)

Rio appeals to vote for PDA candidate for strong representation in Lok Sabha



HT Correspondent DIMAPUR, April 6: Nagaland to the electorate of the state to cast their vote in favour of the People's Democratic Alliance (PDA) consensus candidate from the Nationalist Democratic Progressive Party (NDPP) Dr Chumben Murry in the upcoming elections for the Nagaland Lok Sabha seat so that the people of the state can have a strong representation in the lower house of the Parliament. Addressing two separate rallies in Mokokchung and Wokha district on Friday, Rio, who is a senior NDPP leader, said he was confident that Murry would represent the people of Nagaland in the Lok Sabha effectively. The rallies also saw the participation of Naga People's Front Legislature Party leader Kuzholuzo Nienu, MLAs Nuklutoshi and Imkong L Imchen, among others. PDA chairman PDA and NDPP president Chingwang Konyak and PDA candidate Murry delivered campaign speeches at the two rallies

#### HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, April 6: The University Law College, Gauhati University team has won the first edition of the Dr BR Ambedkar National Moot Court Competition 2024 on Saturday while the Christ University Bangalore became runner-up. With the participation of 16 prestigious institutions from various parts of India and the region, this National Moot Court Competition was successfully organised by the University School of Law and Research, University of Science and Technology Meghalaya (USTM) in collaboration with the Meghalaya State Legal Services Authority from April 4-6

The final round of the competition on Saturday was graced and judged by Justice Sanjay Kumar Medhi, Judge, Gauhati High Court; Justice Prasanta Kumar Deka, former judge, Gauhati High Court and Hasibur Rahman, Sr advocate, Gauhati High Court. The delegates, along with Prof GD Sharma, vice USTM campus, and happy that the

chancellor USTM graced the valedictory session and handed over the awards to the winners of the com-

National Moot Court Competition-2024 concludes successfully at USLR

petition The champion, University Law College, Gauhati University was awarded a cash prize of ₹ 25,000, trophy, citation, and certificate and the runner-up team from Christ Bangalorereceived University ₹ 15,000, trophy, citation, and certificate. The Best Speakerprize went to Agastya Kashyap from JB Law College, Guwahati, the Best Researcher prize was awarded to Cordelia Lyngdoh from NEHU, and the Best Memorial prize was awarded to the team from Symbio-

sis Pune, each awarded with a cash prize of ₹ 7,000, trophy, citation, and certificate. In the valedictory session, Justice Sanjay Kumar Medhi said that those who take law as a profession and become an advocate must be aware that their priority is to serve

society. "I am amazed to see the

which the proceedings have been

the august gathering and shared his views. cance of the event.

made by Prof GD Sharma, vice chancellor, USTM. The participating teams in this

College, DHSK Law College.

here", he said. Addressing the gathering, Justice Prasanta Kumar Deka congratulated USTM for organising this national-level competition. He appreciated the manner in

University has organised this Com-

petition which is the first of its kind

organised and said that the standard of debate by the competitors have been as good as real courtroom proceedings. Advocate Mr Hasibur Rahman also addressed

Mahbubul Hoque, chancellor of USTM extended gratitude to the delegates and the participants and said that the presence of such distinguished personalities in the National Moot Court competition at USLR has amplified the signifi-

Earlier, the welcome address was

prestigious competition were Symbiosis Pune, Christ (Deemed to be) University Bangalore, North Bengal University, NEHU Shillong, Techno India University West Bengal, NERIM, University Law College, Gauhati University, JB Law College Guwahati, Dhubri Law College, The Assam Royal Global University, Jorhat Law College, Goalpara Law College, NEF Law College Guwahati, Nowgong Law

## ICAI recognises Shillong based accountant

SHILLONG, April 6: The Eastern consulted extensively with govern-India Regional Council of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI) has recognised a Shillong based chartered accountant Shruti Pradhan for her contribution in the field of accountancy.

It was this year that ICAI recognized seventy-five women from Eastern India for their contributions in the field.

Since 2010, Pradhan has been working hard to usher in financial literacy in the state – especially amongst entrepreneurs.

Shruti said that in her fourteen years in Meghalaya, wherever she goes, be it towns or villages, she sees mostly women engaged in small businesses and local livelihoods. "It could be a small corner shop, a tea and "jadoh" stall or every-day supplies - they're mostly run by women", she states. "The problem is that a lot of them are not officially recognized as part of the workforce.'

As for her journey as a chartered accountant, Shruti recounts, "If I remember correctly, when I came to Shillong in 2010 there were eight chartered accountants in the whole state.

"There were no women CAs and people were not that enlightened about this important aspect of their lives. There was a need for financial literacy. For the indigenous people in Meghalaya, while tax exemptions are a benefit, there is a sense of ignorance when it comes to savings and investments.'

Shruti identified this huge gap that exists in terms of financial literacy and funds management and decided to do something about it. She started by participating as a financial expert in workshops organized by various government departments and private organisations. This marked the beginning of her professional relationship with the entrepreneurial community in the state. She works as an advisor with many entrepreneurs, but she is especially proud of her association with women led enterprises. Over the course of her career, Shruti has

ment agencies within the state and outside to ensure best practices are set up for financial management of flagship programmes at various levels

"Whatever career a woman chooses, she will be multi-tasking." Shruti points out. "Every working woman puts in double the effort, because her work does not end at the work place, it continues as the primary caregiver at home. And because of how our upbringing wires us, we feel this need to prove our

worth which a man does not." Shruti strongly believes that every woman should be given an opportunity to be financially independent. She works very closely with women entrepreneurs in the state because she believes that they are more motivated and have little or no room for failure.

"No matter what community you belong to, men get more second chances than women." Shruti says, "So when a woman starts something, she will give it her all."

In her experience working with entrepreneurs in the state, she firmly believes that there is this immense resource that has been tapped and that can be propelled forward with knowledge in terms of marketing and financial literacy. There are Self Help groups all over the state that are bringing many products to the table but depend on the government to take it to market. And while the state government has created avenues for these products, it is just a starting point. "These groups must now scale up and choose to be less dependent on the state when

it comes to market linkage." "While the government has filled critical gaps and built an efficient ecosystem, these self-help groups must now come together as recognized legal entities - Private Limited or LLP units." Shruti says. "They need to delegate and have a marketing team in place. Someone from among themselves, not an external agency because they need to have more control on pricing and any partnerships they enter." (NNN)

# MPCC releases manifesto for upcoming LS polls

IMPHAL, April 6: Manipur Pradesh Congress Committee (MPCC) on Friday released its manifesto for the ensuing Parliamentary elections. The manifesto was released by MPCC president K Meghachandra in the presence of leaders and workers of not only the Congress party but also other parties of INDIA bloc Manipur unit at Congress Bhavan, Imphal.

Among others, the manifesto promised to resolve the crisis of Manipur. Talking to the media after releasing the manifesto, MPCC president K Meghachandra said that the situation in Manipur has gone from bad to worse due to the neglect of the BJP/NDA government.

He said that in the manifesto, the party pledged swift action, including the removal of the present state government, establishment of a reconciliation commission to foster unity among communities, and ensuring compensation and redress for victims of the conflict.

He said that if Congress comes to power at the Centre after the elections, integration of youths who are defending the villages into the state force will be considered. An inquiry commission to hold individuals accountable for past atrocities will also be constituted, he said.

The MPCC president informed that INDIA bloc has filed a complaint with the Election Commission of India regarding the alleged distribution of money to voters and also congregation of large numbers of people near the residences of MLAs of the ruling parties including at the official residences of incumbent chief minister. (NNN)

ampaign on el participation in connection with the ensuing Lok Sabha elections in the state. Jha said that his office had received a complaint from a political party regarding the gathering of a large number of people, mostly women at the chief minister's secretariat after the announcement of the poll schedules.

Regarding the matter, the CEO office has sought a report from the concerned district election officer (DEO) and his office is yet to receive the report.

The action to be taken up by the CEO will depend on the report to be furnished by the concerned DEO. Once the report is received, necessary action, if there was any violation of the Model Code of

Conduct of the ensuing elections, will be initiated, he said. He reminded that the election

Model Code of Conduct (MCC) has been enforced in the entire state from the very day of announcement of the schedules for the 18th Lok

this regard. Regarding the recent incidents of firings at the election campaign venues in Ukhrul district, the CEO said that the district police and the police station concerned were directed to enhance the security measures. (NNN)

# HEC-hit women from WGH provided yarn as livelihood support

Women were earlier provided special training to hone their handloom skills

#### HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, April 6: Aaranyak, the region's foremost biodiversity conservation organisation, along with British Asian Trust, has distributed yarn among human-elephant conflict affected women in West Garo Hills district of Meghalaya to help them supplement income.

Twenty-six such women received yarn with support from the Darwin Initiative (Biodiversity Challenge Funds).

These women were earlier provided special training to hone their handloom skills under the aegis of Aaranyak and British Asian Trust with support from Darwin Initiative.

During the training programme, community women were helped to enhance their handloom skills so that they can improve the quality of their products and sell those in the competitive market. The focus of the training was on creating unique designs that can add more value to their products and in-



handloom training, will empower them eco-

nomically by providing them with the re-

sources to create marketable products. As a

crease their profitability. "We hope that the yarn provided to these marginalised women who have received our

facilitated through an alternative livelihood option. This also marks our contribution towards the development of communities in HEC-hit areas in the interest of coexistence," said Dr Bibhuti Prasad Lahkar, a senior conservation scientist in Aaranyak.

result, their economic independence will be

In West Garo Hills of Meghalaya, escalating HEC poses a constant threat to both community members and wild elephants. Encroachment on elephant habitats and expansion of agricultural land compels wild elephants to enter villages resulting in crop raids and human casualties.

On April 3, Aaranyak sent a team of experts led by Anjan Boruah and comprising Nipul Chakma, Subash Chandra Rabha. Ripunjay Nath, and Rupam Goyari to Bordubi to engage in interaction with the women of the community to know how the current human elephant conflict situation affects them, as well as to distribute yarn among them as a livelihood support.

#### NATION

#### SUNDAY, APRIL 7, 2024

#### **BJP India's preferred party, people will elect it again: PM on its foundation day** Taking name of Ram, BJP spreading agenda of Nathuram: Cong's Kanhaiya Kumar Sabha and assembly elections in the

NEW DELHI, April 6: Hitting out at the BJP, Congress leader Kanhaiya Kumar says that by taking the name of Ram, the ruling party is spreading the communal and divisive agenda of Nathuram as a "political ploy".

In an interaction with PTI editors at the news agency's headquarters here, he also said there was an effort to belittle the contribution of the Gandhi-Nehru family and claimed that "vyaktivaad" (individualism) was more "dangerous" than "parivarvaad" (dynasticism).

Kumar also claimed that the BJP was making an attempt to reduce the greatness of the Hindu religion, asserting that in Ram's concept there is no scope of hatred towards anyone.

Asked how the Congress and the INDIA bloc would deal with what many perceive as a wave over the Ram temple construction in Ayodhya that could benefit the BJP in the Lok Sabha polls, he said, "What is the need for the Congress to deal with it? There is nothing wrong if there is a wave of Lord Ram in the country, it would have been wrong if there would have been a wave of 'Nathuram (reference to Mahatma Gandhi's assassin Nathuram Godse)' in the country.'

"I think what the BJP is propagating, it had no role in it. Ram ji was in Treta Yug, the BJP was formed in 1980. The BJP is engaged in how to dupe those people who believe in Ram, so,



one." he said.

forms, he noted.

He said the whole Ramayan is

about the way of life and explains

what is ethical and what is uneth-

ical. Ram and Ramyana are not

just in one form but in several

is Tulsidas ji's Ramayan and

Valmiki's Ramayan and there are

many tales that our different in

them, there are hundreds of other

Ramavans in this country...This

country's culture and history is

associated with Ram. The only

concerning thing is that by taking

"If you talk of Ramayan, there

Ram's name (naam) is taken but said, slamming the BJP. actions (kaam) are of Nathuram. "Attempts are being made to This game benefits the BJP," the reduce the greatness of the reli-Congress leader said gion. In Ram ji's concept there is no scope of hatred towards any-

This is against the history, culture and the future of the coming generation of the country, he added.

Kumar said the concept of Ram is ingrained in the country with people and places named after him.

You cannot reduce him to a place. In other religions, a particular place is very important but in Hindu religion all places are important and all Gods are important. Ram is as important as Shiva, Vishnu and Brahma. So Hindu religion is different from other religions," he said.

What has happened is that Ram's name, Nathuram's comthose who believe in the Hindu munalism and divisiveness on religion are being duped for the the basis of identity is being spread as a political ploy which sake of political gain, Kumar

is dangerous," Kumar alleged. Ram's name has been there since Treta Yug, it has been there before BJP's birth and it will continue till bevond BJP's end. Kumar asserted.

On allegations of the Congress being a dynastic party, he said there was an inherent bias in such a statement.

"There is a bias and a deliberate attempt to ridicule the background of a particular family," he said

"On the allegation of 'parivaarvaad' on the Congress, I would like to ask that is it just limited to the Gandhi-Nehru 'parivaar' or it is applicable to other leaders as well? If it is applicable to other leaders as well then I have a direct question – Till the time Jyotiraditya Scindia was in Congress, he was 'parivaarvadi' but as soon as he crossed over to the BJP, he has become 'rashtravadi, samajwadi and sanghvadi'?" Kumar said.

"Be it any sector, from business to film industry to academia (it is there), so either we are all 'parivaarvadis' or if it is wrong, it should wrong for everyone. It can't be that Congress' parivarvaad is wrong and BJP's is right," Kumar said.

He cited the examples of BJP leaders Ravi Shankar Prasad, Piyush Goyal, Anurag Thakur and BCCI secretary Jay Shah, pointing out that with their fathers having been or in politics, it amounts to dynasticism. (PTI)



NEW DELHI, April 6: On the 44th foundation day of the BJP, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday said it has become India's preferred party and expressed confidence that people will elect it for another term at the Centre, allowing it to build on the "ground covered in the last decade

Greeting members of the BJP, he said the youth of India see it as the party which can fulfil their aspirations and provide leadership to the nation in the 21st century.

Modi asserted the BJP has freed India from the culture of corruption, cronyism, casteism, communalism and vote bank politics, which was the "hallmark" of those who ruled the nation for the longest time.

In today's India, emphasis is on clean and transparent governance which ensures the fruits of development reach the poor without any discrimination, he said.

"Be it at the Centre or states, our party has redefined good governance. dented electoral successes in Lok

Our schemes and policies have given strength to the poor and downtrodden. Those who were left on the margins for decades found a voice and hope in our party," PM Modi said on Х

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has worked towards providing allround development which has boosted ease of living for every In-

dian, Modi said. "I also recall with great reverence the hard work, struggles and sacrifices of all those great women and men who built our party over the years. I can say with great confidence that we are India's preferred party, which has always served with the motto of 'Nation First'," he said. It is a matter of great joy that the BJP has made a mark for its develop-

ment-oriented outlook, good governance and commitment to nationalistic values, said the party's preeminent leader under whose stewardship it has achieved unprecelast decade. PM Modi said, "Powered by our karyakartas, our party embodies the aspirations and dreams of 140 crore Indians. The youth of India see our party as one which can fulfil their aspirations and provide leadership to India in the 21st century."

The PM said, "We are also proud to be an integral part of the NDA, which manifests a perfect harmony between national progress and regional aspirations. The NDA is a vibrant alliance that encapsulates India's diversity. We cherish this partnership and I am sure it will get even stronger in the times to come.

Referring to the upcoming general elections, he said, "India is all set to elect a new Lok Sabha. I am confident that the people are going to bless us with another term so that we can build on the ground covered in the last decade.

The BJP was founded in 1980 by leaders of the erstwhile Bharatiya Jana Sangh, a party which has merged with other opposition parties to form the Janata Party to take on the Congress in the post-Emergency 1977 polls. It won only two Lok Sabha seats in the first national election it fought in 1984.

However, it rose rapidly later under the leadership of Atal Bihari Vajpayee and L K Advani, coming to power in the 90s as the head of a coalition, before Modi led the party to its maiden majority in 2014 and then to a bigger mandate in 2019.

Most political experts have tipped the BJP as the favourite to retain power for a third term in the seven-phase polls starting from April 19. (PTI)

# NIA officials attacked villagers in Bengal, not other way round: Mamata

BALURGHAT (WB), April 6: West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Saturday accused NIA officials of attacking villagers at Bhupatinagar in Purba Medinipur district and not the other way round

Claiming that officials of the central probe agency had barged into several houses in the early hours over an incident of "bursting of crackers in 2022", she defended the villagers' response as self-defence.

"The attack was not perpetrated by the women of Bhupatinagar, but rather by the National Investigation Agency (NIA) team," she said at an election rally in Dakshin Dinajpur district's Balurghat.

Will the women sit back if they (NIA) go to their houses at night? They will try to defend themselves?" she asked.

The NIA on Saturday arrested

introduced by her government for various categories of people such as Kanyashree, Sikshasree, agricultural produce insurance, old age pension, Lakshmir Bhandar for women, among others.

In an oblique reference to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's personal guarantees on different issues, Banerjee said, "my guarantee is people." "The guarantee of Ma, Maati, Manush is Lakshmir Bhandar, Kanyashree, Sabuj Sathi and Sasthya Šathi schemes," she said.

Maintaining that there was some unrest in Sandeshkhali over land grab issues, Banerjee said the state police and administration have arrested the accused and are returning land to the villagers.

BJP has fielded Rekha Patra from Basirhat constituency, where Sandeshkhali is situated.

Banerjee accused BJP's

JAIPUR, April 6: The Congress on Saturday accused Prime Minister Narendra Modi of tearing apart the country's dignity and democracy and claimed that various tactics were being used to force opposition leaders to join the BJP.

Addressing an election event of the party here, Sonia Gandhi claimed that for the last 10 years, the country has been in the hands of a government that left no stone unturned to promote unemployment, inflation, economic crisis and inequality.

"Today our country's democracy is in danger. Democratic institutions are being destroyed and a conspiracy is being hatched to change our Constitution," she alleged, adding, "This is a dictatorship and we all will give a reply to this."

"Considering himself great, Modi ji is tearing apart the dignity of the country and its democracy. Fear is being installed in the entire system" the former Congress chief said. Asserting that the country "is



**Congress accuses Modi of tearing** 

apart country's dignity, democracy

policy under the BJP government and claimed that China encroaching on Indian land and changing the names of Indian villages but PM Modi was not talking about it.

Kharge said, "He (Modi) claims that he has a 56-inch chest.... whether it is 56 inch, 55 or 54, (we) will call a tailor, measure it and see what it is."

"PM Modi, his people and the RSS say that if you give two-thirds majority, we will change the constitution of this coun-

ments," he said. Kharge also accused the PM of stealing the word 'guarantee' and said that Congress governments fulfilled guarantees in states where it was in rule.

Addressing the event earlier, the party's national general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra referred to Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and former Jharkhand CM Hemant Soren's arrest by federal agencies to claim that the opposition was under attack under the BJP rule at the Centre.

"They are taking corrupt people into their party fold. Such people become clean by joining the party and no one raises the matter anymore," she said.

Privanka Gandhi claimed that the BJP government was favouring a few industrialists and handing over the properties of the nation to them. However, many industrialists create jobs and favouring a few industrialists was an injustice to others, she claimed.

You see how big industrialists live

Former police commissioner NEW DELHI, Apri 6: Former Delhi Police commissioner Neeraj Kumar, who also served as DG (prisons), said VVIP inmates have to be kept with "great caution" in Tihar since there is always a threat of them getting

VVIP inmates have to be kept

with 'great caution' in Tihar:

attacked or threatened. Several high-profile people, including Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, his former cabinet ministers Satyendar Jain and Manish Sisodia, are lodged in Tihar jail. In an interaction with PTI editors at the agency's headquarters here, Kumar said he had the privilege of "taking care of the maximum number of VVIPs" during his tenure at Tihar jail.

"I have the unique privilege of taking care of the maximum number of VVIPs. It was the time when Commonwealth Games scandal was there. Right from Suresh Kalmadi, Kanimozhi, A Raja (2G spectrum scam), people from Reliance, CWG, Amar Singh were there, IAS officers, IPS officers," he said.

Elaborating on the routine of a VVIP inmate, Kumar, who served at Tihar for nearly one-and-a-half years, said they have to follow the same routine as any other undertrial. "When a VIP is housed, a lot of care is taken in lodging the person. Unfortunately or fortunately Mr Kejriwal is inside. He will not be kept in any barrack or any cell and will be kept in a place chosen very carefully keeping the security aspect in mind. "Because a lot of things like bladebaazi could take place. If you do not take care, he can be attacked. People cannot only attack him, but even threaten him or extort money," he added. Kumar said he has learnt through media reports that Kejriwal has been kept in the convicts' jail. "He has been kept at a far safer and calmer place than (where) undertrials are kept. The trial has happened in case of convicts and they know have to spend the rest of their life there," he said. (*PTI*)

two key conspirators in a 2022 blast case amid an attack on the probe agency's team by a crowd in East Medinipore district, an official said.

An NIA officer was injured and a vehicle belonging to the probe agency was damaged in the attack, a spokesperson of the federal investigating agency said.

Later, the NIA team lodged a complaint at Bhupatinagar police station, an official said.

Alleging a political motive in the NIA action and an attempt to intimidate TMC workers, she questioned why the agency was arresting people days before the polls in a case dating back to December 2022.

The Trinamool Congress chief accused the BJP government at the Centre of trying to use the central agencies to win the elections.

'We want the Election Commission to work impartially, not turn into a BJP-run commission," she said. Questioning the transfer of state's police officers by the EC, she asked why ED, CBI and IT officers have not been changed.

'NIA, CBI are brothers of BJP; the ED (Enforcement Directorate) and Income Tax are funding boxes of BJP," Banerjee said.

Stating that while the state police looks after law and order throughout the year, central forces like the BSF, CRPF and CISF are brought in during the elections, she added.

"If you (BJP) have the power, win the election by fighting in a democratic manner. Don't arrest my booth-level workers and election agents," she said at the rally.

She condemned the arrests of Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Keiriwal and former Jharkhand CM Hemant Soren by central agencies over cases related to excise policy and an alleged land scam, respectively.

'There must be a level-playing field in the elections," she said.

The chief minister said why should she introduce Ayushman Bharat scheme in Bengal when she is providing healthcare facilities to nine crore people under her pet 'Sasthya Sathi' programme, claiming that the central healthcare scheme will benefit only one crore people with equal share of funding from the state government.

She said several schemes were

Bengal state president Sukanta Majumdar, the party's candidate from Balurghat for a second consecutive term, of not doing anything for the people of Bengal and speaking against releasing central funds to the state. Addressing the rally in favour of TMC candidate Biplab Deb, the chief minister claimed that

those accused of atrocities on women in BJP-ruled states were not brought to book. At another gathering in Raiganj

(Uttar Dinajpur), Banerjee voiced her concerns, stating, "During his rally in Cooch Behar. Modi threatened to 'hunt down every opponent' using central agencies. Does he imply he's the only virtuous one, while everyone else is a wrongdoer?

She labeled the BJP as a party of "traitors, thieves, and cheats," accusing them of manipulating agencies like the CBI and NIA for their agenda instead of delivering justice. Banerjee demanded an impartial Election Commission, criticising its alleged bias towards the BJP's directives

"We want an independent EC. Not the one which will follow BJP's diktats," the TMC supremo said. She highlighted the targeted harassment faced by the TMC from central agencies, suggesting collusion between the BJP, CPIM, and Congress in West Bengal.

On the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), she questioned the BJP's authority to decide citizenship and urged them to lead by example. "Who are you (BJP leaders) to decide on anyone's citizenship when that person is a citizen already? Why you (BJP) don't set an example yourself? Why don't you classify yourself as a foreigner and apply for citizenship under CAA

first," she said. Accusing the Modi government of distorting the Constitution and twisting the country's history, she said, "You (BJP) have violated the ideals of poet Kazi Nazrul Islam, Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose and your men had vandalised the bust

of Iswarchandra Vidyasagar." Banerjee warned against BJP's alleged strategy to stoke communal tensions ahead of elections and cautioned people against falling into their traps. (PTI)

not the property of a few people and it belongs to everyone", she said, "Our ancestors have shed blood for it."

Sonia Gandhi also alleged that various tactics were being used to intimidate opposition leaders and force them to join the BJP. In his address at the event, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge described PM Modi as a "leader of liars" and sought to know what steps he has taken to fulfil the guarantees given by him earlier. He questioned the country's foreign

NEW DELHI, April 6: Writer

Rajat Chaudhuri's new novel

"Spellcasters" is a part psycholog-

ical thriller and part climate adven-

ture with a twist of the occult as it

tells the story of a journalist who

gets caught up in a case of a bil-

lionaire tycoon and chocolates

On writing this dark and grip-

ping story, Chaudhuri says, "Re-

cently, industry captains have been

talking about a '70-hour work

week' and how we should work

harder to beat other nations. Mean-

while, cautionary voices that flag

the need to slow down because of

'planetary limits' get drowned

He then adds: "Limitless growth

is an addictive dream, stronger

than the most potent drugs, but the

addict doesn't care about the dam-

age it inflicts. Think of the poi-

soned air, the Himalayan

landslides or the summer temper-

atures that broke all records, aren't

these clear signs of a raging ill-

ror to this diseased time, when per-

suasive hogwash rules over mind

and matter, affecting and trans-

forming people and the living

A dragonfight with the shadows

is inevitable for everyone, at some

planet in unimaginable ways.

"Spellcasters", he says, is a mir-

nal simultaneously.

laced with a secret drug.

out.

ness?"

try," the Congress president said.

Referring to the prime minister's public address in Churu on Friday, Kharge said Modi talked about Article 370 abrogation at a place where he should have talked about the works he did for farmers.

In its rule for 55 years, the Congress worked for the development of the country. It built infrastructure and created institutions such as the IITs and IIMs. But Modi is taking credit just by flagging off trains on tracks laid by Congress govern-

'Limitless growth is an addictive dream, stronger than the most potent

drugs, but the addict doesn't care about the damage it inflicts'

the country's property is handed over, their loans are waived while farmers commit suicide," she said.

Addressing the event, Priyanka Gandhi said, "You are not getting correct information. The time has come to recognise what the reality is. All you hear is 'Abki baar 400 Paar' (This time, 400-plus seats), and you see Modi in the sea and travelling abroad. That is what is visible. It is not clear what the condition of the country is." (PTI)

#### PM Modi holds roadshow in Ghaziabad

GHAZIABAD (UP), April 6: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday held a roadshow in Uttar Pradesh's Ghaziabad in support of BJP candidate Atul Garg.

In his first roadshow in the state since the announcement of the Lok Sabha polls last month, the prime minister was joined by Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath and Garg in an open jeep as Modi waved at the enthusiastic lot of supporters.

The roadshow started from the Maliwad Chowk and will culminate at Chaudhary Mod

The district administration has made elaborate security arrangements for the event including the deployment of large number of personnel and enforcing traffic diversions.

This is the prime minister's first roadshow in Uttar Pradesh after the announcement of Lok Sabha elections.

Braving the harsh sun, the supporters had been waiting on the road since the afternoon as drums and bands kept them engaged.

As the prime minister's vehicle moved slowly on the road, people lining on the both sides of the road showered flowers on him and raised slogans.

Paintings were installed at various points on the way including one of his mother Hiraben blessing him. A tableaux of Lord Ram and Sita was also exhibited. (PTI)

who is intent on abducting a bilstage or another, in one lifetime or lionaire another. And it is time for such a fight for the protagonist Chanchal Mitra inadvertently becomes the

Mitra. Sometimes the dragon is inmost integral part of the plot from ternal, other times, external, and thereon. Soon enough, they are joined by the mysterious, darkyet other times, internal and extereved and raven-haired woman Mitra is a business reporter by named Sujata and then an exday, dreamcatcher by night; he sailor, who limps on a crutch and wakes up in some unknown desert has a weapon on him; a gun, to be town where he is supposedly sharprecise.

ing a shady hotel room with the In the smog-laden capital city of flamboyant character, Kapoor, Aukatabad, an organic chemist

Rajat Chaudhuri's 'Spellcasters': Part psychological, part climate adventure funded by a sinister corporation to design a mind-altering drug is found dead from an overdose. In another scenario, the billionaire industrialist's chocolate production line is contaminated by salmonella.

As abnormal weather patterns close in on cities and towns and Kapoor ventures out with his posse to abduct the billionaire, everything reality is composed of starts to dissolve slowly but surely.

The story has characteristics of postmodern pastiche as the author brings in characters or names from other texts like Caligari, Nine Unknown Men and LJ (Long John Silver)

Will Mitra and Sujata escape the sinister forces that are battling for the control of minds? Will they make it alive, with their sanity intact and purpose fulfilled? As dreams, desires and rough weather coalesce. the landscape of the entire novel leaves one with raised heartbeats and adrenaline.

Blending elements of thriller and fantasy, it delves into the shared concerns of Indian metropolitan cities struggling with the impact of consumerism that's growing at breakneck speed and he conflicting cultural and spiritual values of its ancient past, civilization. (PTI)

CHAUDHURI

5'

#### SUNDAY, APRIL 7, 2024

#### NATION

setup - only to mop up revenue.

"The BJP will not agree to any-

thing on cooperative federalism as it

is opposed to it. The BJP is following

RSS teaching of reducing the states

# BJP using Katchatheevu issue only as a tool, will harm Tamils in Sri Lanka: P Chidambaram

'They (the BJP) want only one government and one election and like in British rule'

CHENNAI, April 6: BJP's attempt to use the resolved Katchatheevu issue as a political tool in the forthcoming general elections will not work and it would only result in that party's defeat at the hustings, senior Congress leader and former Union minister P Chidambaram said on Saturday.

He accused BJP of using the Katchatheevu islet issue, resolved 50 years ago, for political mileage and sought to know why Union Ministers Nirmala Sitharaman and S Jaishankar did not contest from Tamil Nadu and raise this issue if they were so concerned about Katchatheevu or Tamils.

"If Nirmala Sitharaman and S Jaishankar claim they are Tamils, then let them contest in Tamil Nadu like Tamilisai Soundararajan, L Murugan and K Annamalai and raise the Katchatheevu issue during the elections. Why did they not contest? Why are they hiding behind Prime Minister Narendra Modi and raising the issue?" Chidambaram asked.

Speaking to reporters here, the former Union Minister asked them to exercise caution while making statements on the subject as this would cause great harm to 35 lakh Tamils



and 10 lakh Indian Tamils living in Lanka. The Central Ministers' stateshould not be reopened. ments would only lead to confrontation between the Lankan government

Centre

that "Katchatheevu island was neither acquired nor ceded and lies on the Sri Lankan side of the India-Sri International Maritime Reminding that it was Narendra Modi who was the Prime Minister in

tion, he added. Referring to the RTI if the party comes to power at the

His party did not believe in "bulldozer justice" but in federalism to which the BJP-led government at the Centre was opposed, he said and accused the Centre of reducing the states to the stature of regions -

2015 when the RTI reply was issued, he opined that the "closed issue

Turning to other issues, he said Congress will formulate a common minimum programme and implement its poll manifesto, Nyay Patra,

reply issued by the MEA in 2015, Chidambaram said the reply stated

Palayakkarars, under a feudatory BJP seeks CBI probe into allegations of phone tapping during BRS regime

into Palayakkarars. They want only one government and one election and like in British rule they want the states to collect taxes," Chidambaram said. He said unemployment was a serious problem in the country and this was indicated in the latest report of

> the International Labour Organisation and the Institute of Human Development which stated that India's youth accounted for 83 per cent of unemployed workforce, and 30 per cent of those who graduated from the Central institutes like the IITs were unemployed. "How can the students pay back the education loan if they remain jobless," the senior Congress leader asked.

The Congress election campaign will hinge on its poll manifesto, he said and added "we welcome comments on our manifesto. We will ensure full statehood to Jammu and Kashmir, and make centrally-conducted qualifying examinations such as NEET and CUET optional, if elected to power," he said. (PTI)

LEH, April 6: Accusing the administration of turning Leh into a "war zone" ahead of its march to the China border on April 7, the Leh Apex Body (LAB) on Saturday said it is withdrawing the proposed event to "avoid any sort of confrontation with the law-enforce-

ment agencies" Addressing a press conference here, LAB leaders, including its chairman Chering Dorjay and climate activist Sonam Wangchuk, said they have already achieved their objective of creating awareness among the people of the country about the plight of farmers, who are allegedly losing prime pasture land to huge industrial plants in the south and to "Chinese encroachments" in the north.

The LAB, along with the Kargil Democratic Alliance (KDA), is spearheading an agitation to demand statehood for Ladakh and its inclusion in the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution. The LAB leaders said they will continue with their struggle in a peaceful manner through chain hunger strikes and protests.

"Looking at the prevailing situation (in Leh), this government acts like a mad elephant having no care for national security or people's sentiments and their problems. Its

and it can stop people from marching even at the cost of using violence

Leh Apex Body calls off border march in

Ladakh, says peaceful agitation to continue

'We are concerned about national security and the peaceful atmosphere. Secondly, our aim to generate awareness in the country bout the ground situation in Ladakh has been achieved, so we are withdrawing the proposed border march in the interest of people and to avoid confrontation with the law-enforcement agencies, Wangchuk told reporters.

The LAB had announced the "border (Pashmina) march" to Changthang, near the China border, to highlight the condition of graz-In a move apparently aimed at

countering the march, Leh District (DM) Magistrate Santosh Sukhadeve said on Friday that prohibitory orders issued under section 144 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) would be in force on April 7 and directed that no procession, rally or march should be taken out without his prior approval.

The DM said the senior superintendent of police has reported about reliable inputs indicating a possible breach of peace and public tranquillity in the district. one shall use vehicle-"No

only concern is winning elections mounted or other loudspeakers without prior approval from the competent authority. No public gathering without prior approval of the competent authority shall be allowed. No one shall make any statements which have the potential to disturb communal harmony and public tranquillity and which may lead to law-and-order problems in the district," the DM's order said.

"All persons shall ensure that they follow the Model Code of Conduct and that all the activities are according to the law," it added. In a separate order, Additional Director General of Police S D Singh Jamwal ordered the scaling down of the speed of internet and mobile data services of 3G, 4G and

5G connections and public 5G Wi-Fi facilities to 2G within a 10-kilometre radius of Leh city for 24 hours from 6 pm on Saturday. In another order, the DM prohibited the posting or sharing of such

messages on social media that have the potential to disturb communal harmony, peace and tranquillity and may lead to a law-and-order situation in the district.

"It shall be the responsibility of the admins of WhatsApp groups or social media platforms to monitor and filter such content immediately," the order read. (PTI)

# Fire at Bokaro Steel Plant, 23 workers hospitalised



BOKARO, April 6: A fire broke out at SAIL's Bokaro Steel Plant (BSP) in Jharkhand on Saturday morning, following which 23 workers were hospitalised for exposure to smoke, officials said. The incident happened when scheduled maintenance work was underway in the mixed gas pipeline through which gas is supplied to the re-heating furnace of the hot strip mill, a statement issued by Steel Authority of India Limited (SAIL) said.

The pipeline was under shut and hence, there was no gas in it, it said. "As part of the maintenance work, a compensator in the pipeline was also to be changed and during this work in the morning on 06/04/24, residual naphtha, sulphur, tar etc inside the pipeline, which are all highly inflammable, caught fire resulting in a lot of smoke which spread through the pipeline," it said. The fire was extinguished, it added.

Twenty-three people, including some contractual workers, who were working in the re-heating furnace area of the hot strip mill, came in

HYDERABAD, April 6: BJP and, on the other, breach of the on Saturday petitioned Telangana Governor C P Radhakrishnan seeking a CBI investigation into the alleged phone tapping during the previous BRS regime. The BJP appealed to the Gov-

and the Tamils living in the island na-

Lanka

Boundary Line.'

ernor to seek a report from the state in order to apprise the Union Home Ministry since the matter falls under the concurrent jurisdiction of both the governments and in the ambit of Election Commission, "therefore warranting a thorough CBI investigation".

In a memorandum submitted to the Governor by a BJP delegation led by MP K Laxman, the party pointed out that ever since Telangana police registered a case, evidence has been emerging in the public domain about the alleged deposition of senior police officers "who master-

minded the entire operation." So far, four senior officers of the rank of ACP and DCP have been arrested. BJP said.

"The facts that are coming out in the public domain are indeed very serious, for they, on the one hand, raise serious questions about the security of the nation

safety and liberty of the individuals. Such a deliberate and mischievous intrusion into private lives by state-sponsored machinery is unprecedented apart from

being pernicious," it said. From media reports and FIRs filed by the police, it came to light that during the 2018 Assembly elections, 2019 Lok Sabha elections and the subsequent by-elections in the state. some of these police officers took recourse to telephone tapping of the opposi-

tion parties, BJP said. "The former police officers who were arrested now reportedly confessed to this extent and gave statements about how they had tapped the phones of (BJP candidate in Dubbak bypoll) M Raghunandan Rao during the bye-elections to Dubbaka in 2020, Huzurabad in2021, and Munugodu in November 2022," it said in the memorandum.

It is also reported that they

have monitored the calls of senior leaders of the opposition parties to know their political strategies, the party said.

While one aspect in the tapping of phones of political leaders belonging to opposition parties was to gain political advantage, the manner in which police offi-

cers tapped the telephones of affluent businessmen, especially jewellers shocking, claimed. Further, some chunks of the conversation that had

murkier content was used as a leverage to extort money, it claimed

"All these had happened at the behest of, in fact, the proactive connivance of senior leaders of the BRS, including the ministers and the CM himself." BJP said in the memorandum, citing media reports and FIRs.

It further said the arrested former/serving officers reportedly confessed that they had transported the money in police vehi-

(murder) and 34 (common intention)

at Kherki Daula Police Station on

been arrested from Pataudi, police

said. "We are questioning the ac-

cused and are conducting raids to

nab the third accused who is still

absconding. Further probe is un-

derway," said Sub-Inspector Lalit

Kumar, the investigating officer.

Two of the three accused have

Thursday, police said.

cles during the elections to supply to the ruling party candidates.

This confession, if found true, is a blatant attempt to hoodwink the Election Commission itself and is tantamount to brazen fraud. Using the state machinery for such illegal, fraudulent and sinister projects is an illegal practice, BJP said.

The nature of the allegations, the sequence of events, and the reports that are in the public domain warrant the Governor's in-18 tervention "since the matter threatens the safety of the nation and the privacy of its citizens", it said.

"It is a case where the state has facilitated brazen extortion," it said.

#### Four police officers have so far been arrested in connection with the case of phone tapping and destroying certain computer systems and official data after a police complaint was lodged on March 10.

BRS Working President K T Rama Rao on Wednesday said he had nothing to do with the alleged phone tapping during the previous BRS regime. (PTI)

# Four arrested in connection with blast in Kerala's Kannur

KANNUR (KERALA), April 6: Four persons were arrested on Saturday in connection with the blast near Panur here a day ago that claimed one life and caused injuries to three others, police said. Police said that the arrested accused, the three injured persons and the one who died, all of them were CPI(M) workers or supporters, a claim that has been denied by the Left party.

A senior officer of Panur police station said that they have arrested Shebin Lal, K Atul, K K Arun and Sayooj all of whom were allegedly present when the country-made bomb being made had exploded. Sayooj was caught from Palakkad while allegedly trying to escape to Coimbatore in neighbouring Tamil Nadu, police said.

Three others -- Vineesh, Vinod and Ashwanth -- who were also injured in the blast are undergoing treatment, it added.

CPI(M) state secretary M V Govindan said that the party has no connection with those involved in the incident as they had attacked party members in the past. He said there was no need for the party to make weapons during the election time and such allegations against the CPI(M) were false propaganda. Govindan was apparently referring to the Congress-led UDF allegations that the bomb was being made by CPI(M) workers to disrupt the election process. Congress MLA Shafi Parambil, who is contesting from the Vatakara Lok Sabha seat and RSP MLA K K Rema, together carried out a peace march during the day in Vatakara in protest against the blast incident. They both alleged that CPI(M) workers made the bomb on the directions of the party. The blast on Friday in this north Kerala district had stirred up the political waters in the state with both the Congress and the BJP blaming the CPI(M) for it, while the Left party denied any involvement in the incident. Sheril, a resident of Kaivelikkal, succumbed to his injuries while undergoing treatment at a private hospital in Kozhikode. The other injured person, Vineesh, lost one palm, according to the police. (PTI)

contact with the smoke, the statement said

As a precautionary measure, they were kept under observation at the Bokaro General Hospital, officials said, adding that there was no report of any fatality.\ "Investigation was also done using a gas analyser and it was found that there was no incident of any kind of gas leakage," the statement said.

BSP's Executive Director (Works) BK Tiwari and other senior officials went to the spot and took stock of the situation. Executive Director (Personnel and Administration) Rajan Prasad visited the hospital and inquired about the health of the workers who were all found to be in stable conditions. Meanwhile, senior officials of the Bokaro district administration also visited the plant and the hospital.

"SAIL-Bokaro Steel Plant is fully committed to ensuring the safety and well-being of its workers. Workers are regularly apprised of safety protocols and all efforts are being made to ensure compliance with safety rules," the statement said. (PTI)

GURUGRAM, April 6: City police arrested two men for allegedly beating their relative -- a Rajasthan native -- to death here on Holi in the Kherki Daula area following a drunken brawl, police said on Saturday.

On a zero FIR by Rajasthan Police, an FIR was registered by Gurugram Police at Kherki Daula Police Station on Thursday, they said.

According to police, the two en were identified as Pradhan and Teenu alials Siyaram, both from Sarsunda village in Ajmer district in Rajasthan. A Manesar crime unit team arrested both the accused from near the bus stand in Pataudi Friday night, they added. The incident happened when the man and his family were staying in a tent near Rampura village here on March 24, they said.

#### Two arrested for killing relative after drunken brawl in Gurugram Navy chief awards unit citation to INS Sharda for anti-piracy ops she alleged.

According to police, Padma, a resident of Tantoti village in Kekri district of Rajasthan, filed a complaint at Sarana Police Station alleging that her husband, Sonu Bagaria, was beaten to death by their relatives near Rampura

"I was living with my husband and children in a tent near Rampura village for the last two months. In the evening of March 24 on Holi, my husband Sonu Bagaria brought some liquor while she had prepared mutton curry," Padma said in her complaint. Padma said both of them consumed liquor and around 8 pm, their relatives -- Pradhan, Ramkishan, Teenu alias Siyaram -- reached their tent. After they too drank alcohol, a brawl broke out and Sonu was brutally thrashed by the three relatives,

NEW DELHI, April 6: Navy Chief Admiral R Hari Kumar has awarded an 'On-the-spot Unit Ci-"When we were taking him to our tation' to INS Sharda for successful conduct of native place in the car he succumbed to injuries on the way," Padma said. anti-piracy operations at sea, officials on Saturday said. The ship was involved in the safe release of Rajasthan Police registered a zero all 19 crew members (11 Iranian and 8 Pakistani) FIR at Sarana Police Station and forof Iranian fishing vessel "Omari" which was held warded it to Gurugram police. An hostage by pirates off the east coast of Somalia, the FIR was registered against all three accused under IPC sections 302 Indian Navy said in a statement issued by its

spokesperson. Admiral Kumar, during his visit to Southern Naval Command, Kochi, awarded the 'On-the-spot Unit Citation' to INS Sharda for successful conduct of anti-piracy operations, it said.

The ship was tasked to investigate the Iranian fishing vessel "Omari" that was likely hijacked by pirates, the Navy said.

"Based on surveillance inputs of naval RPA, the ship intercepted the vessel and maintained a covert trail throughout the night. During early morning hours of February 2, the ship's integral helo and

subsequently Prahar team was launched," the statement said.

The ship's "aggressive posture" coerced the pirates to safely release the crew and boat. The swift and decisive actions of the ship resulted in the rescue of hijacked fishing vessel and its crew from Somali pirates, the statement said.

The relentless effort of the ship, mission deployed for anti-piracy operations saved precious lives at sea upholding the Indian Navy's resolve to enhancing the security and safety of seafarers in the Indian Ocean Region, it added.

The Navy chief interacted with team INS Sharda and commended them for "responding to piracy attack with alacrity leading to safe and successful conduct of operations at sea under challenging conditions"

During his address, he complimented the professional approach of its crew which resulted in recognition and acclaim of the Indian Navy as the preferred security partner in the region, it said. (PTI)

# Bengal 2022 blast case: NIA arrests 2 amid attack by crowd; officer injured



NEW DELHI, April 6: The National Investigation Agency on Saturday arrested two key conspirators in a 2022 blast case amid an attack on the probe agency's team by a crowd in West Bengal's East Medinipore district, an official said here. An NIA officer was injured and a vehicle belonging to the probe agency was damaged in the attack, a spokesperson of the federal investigating agency said.

Saturday's incident brought back memories of January 5 when three officials of the Enforcement Directorate were attacked by a mob in North 24 Parganas district's Sandeshkhali during a search on the premises of then Trinamool Congress leader Shajahan Sheikh in connection with alleged irregularities in the public distribution system.

A spokesperson of the NIA on Saturday said, "In a major breakthrough in West Bengal's Bhupatinagar blast case, in which three persons were killed in December 2022, the NIA arrested two key conspirators amid stiff resistance from an unruly crowd in the state's East Medinipore district."

The duo -- Balai Charan Maity and Manobrata Jana --

were arrested after extensive searches at five locations, including the house of Jana, where locals tried to obstruct the NIA team

The crowd tried to stop the NIA team and its security component from moving towards the Bhupatinagar police station to complete the arrest formalities. The NIA has lodged a complaint at the local police station in this regard. The NIA spokesperson said Jana and Maity were found

to have conspired to manufacture and explode crude bombs to spread terror. Three persons were killed when an explosion ripped apart the kutcha house of Rajkumar Manna in Bhupatinagar on December 3, 2022. Rajkumar Manna, Biswajit Gayen and Buddhadeb Manna were grievously injured in the blast and later died.

The state police initially registered an FIR on December 3, 2022, against the three men killed in the explosion but the provisions of the Explosive Substances Act were not applied. Subsequently, a writ petition was filed before the Calcutta High Court with a prayer for transferring the case to the NIA.

The NIA took over the case on June 4, 2023, on the high court's order dated March 21, 2023, and re-registered a case under various sections of law, including the Explosive Substances Act. During the investigation, the NIA uncovered the role of several other accused in the case, including Manobrata Jana of Naruabila village and Balai Charan Maity of Ninaruya Analberia.

The two men had actively participated in the conspiracy to make crude bombs and extended support for the same, the NIA found in its probe, which led to searches and arrests on Saturday. The two arrested will be produced before the Special NIA Court in Kolkata. A probe into the case was underway, the spokesperson said. (PTI)

Kolkata Metro to begin special drives to stop littering station premises

(PTI)

KOLKATA, April 6: Kolkata Metro is initiating special drives and enforcing fines to tackle the issue of daily commuters littering station premises, particularly in the newly inaugurated stretch from Howrah Maidan to Esplanade

Despite the Metro's efforts to provide fast, affordable transportation and reduce pollution, a section of commuters have been littering the premises with plastic bottles, betel juice, and gutkha.

"Though the Metro is constantly thriving for providing fast, smooth and cheapest mode of transport to commuters, these commuters have been constantly making the premises untidy and filthy by throwing plastic bottles, spitting betel juices and gutkha specially in the newly inaugurated stretch of Green Line from Howrah Maidan to Esplanade," the Metro Railway said in a statement.

The special drive at both Green (Esplanade-Howrah Maidan and Sealdah-Sector Five) and blue lines (Dakshineswar-New Garia and New Garia-Ruby) is aimed at preventing "any such nuisance activities on station premises in a firm manner," the statement added. (PTI)



NEW DELHI, April 6: An artificial intelligence-powered diabetes management programme aimed at empowering people in making informed decisions to reverse chronic metabolic diseases, especially during fasts, has received endorsements from experts who have termed it revolutionary.

TWIN Health's Whole Body Digital Twin technology uses artificial intelligence and machine learning to create a "digital twin" of a person's unique metabolism, offering precise nutrition guidance with tailored meal plans for opti-

mal blood sugar control during religious fastings.

AI-powered anti-diabetes programme provides customised

advice to reverse chronic metabolic diseases

According to experts, the technology has been scientifically validated to provide personalised and precise guidance in nutrition, sleep, activity, and breathing to manage and reverse chronic metabolic diseases.

Dr Mohsin Wali, Senior Consultant at Sir Ganga Ram Hospital in Delhi, said, "The potential of the Whole Body Digital Twin in managing diabetes during religious fastings is truly revolutionary." "The personalized approach and

data-driven insights offered by TWIN Health's solution have the power to transform the lives of individuals with diabetes, especially during the fasting period, empowering them to make informed decisions about their health," he said.

Dr Shashank Joshi, a Mumbaibased endocrinologist and Chief Scientist at Twin Health said research and clinical outcomes demonstrate that the technology has the potential to facilitate diabetes remission and support individuals, especially during Ramadan, in safely reducing or

"This has a profound impact on the overall health and wellbeing," the doctor said, adding that personalised sleep recommendations, adjusted exercise routines, and stress management techniques further enhance metabolic health.

by signing up for an account on its website, completing an initial health assessment, and using the platform's various tools and features to improve their overall health and lifestyle, Dr Joshi added. (PTI)

eliminating medication usage.

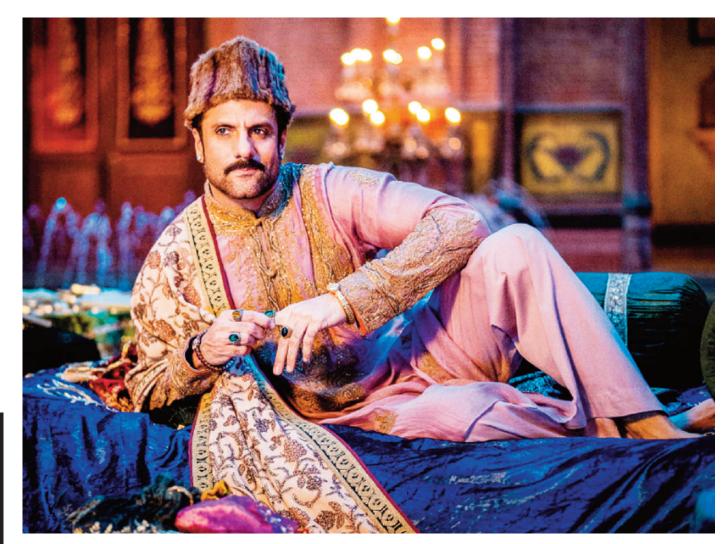
People can access Twin Health

#### ENTERTAINMENT

Netflix unveils first look of Fardeen Khan from Sanjay Leela Bhansali's OTT series 'Heeramandi'

# Prithviraj Sukumaran-starrer 'The Goat Life' crosses ₹ 100 crore mark globally





NEW DELHI, April 6: Streaming service Netflix on Saturday shared the first look of actor Fardeen Khan from "Heeramandi: The Diamond Bazaar", the upcoming period drama series that marks filmmaker Sanjay Leela Bhansali's OTT debut.

The streamer also unveiled the character posters of senior actor Shekhar Suman and his son Adhyayan Suman as well as Taha Shah from the show, set during the freedom struggle movement in India.

With "Heeramandi", Khan is making a return to acting after a gap of nearly 15 years. He was last seen in 2010's "Dulha Mil Gaya".

The 50-year-old actor, known for movies such as "Jungle", "Pyaar Tune Kya Kiya", "Bhoot", "Dev" and "No Entry", plays the character of Wali Mohammed in the show.

"Caught in a whirlwind struggle of love and duty, Wali Mohammed attempts to reconcile his heart's desire with his royal responsibilities. Fardeen Khan makes his spectacular return to the screen as Wali Mohammed," Netflix India posted on its social media handles along with Khan's character poster.

Billed as an epic saga of love, power, revenge and freedom, the series explores the cultural reality of 'Heeramandi', a dazzling district, through the stories of courtesans and their patrons set against the tumultuous backdrop of the Indian freedom struggle of the 1940s. Set to be released on the streamer's platform on May 1, "Heeramandi" stars Manisha Koirala, Sonakshi Sinha, Richa Chadha, Sharmin Segal, Aditi Rao Hydari, and Sanjeeda Shaikh in the lead roles. Suman, who has appeared in movies such as "Utsav" and "Sansar" as well as cult classic comedy series "Dekh Bhai Dekh", is essaying the role of Zulfikar.

"Laying his allegiance at Mallikajaan's (Koirala) feet, only one thing stands between Zulfikar and his shimmering ambition- Heeramandi," Netflix said while sharing his character poster.

His actor-son Adhyayan plays Zoravar. The actor has previously featured in movies like "Raaz – The Mystery Continues", "Jashn" and most recently "Chup: Revenge of the Artist". "Zoravar's affection for Lajjo (Chadha) is a scorching embrace where passion burns bright- but when love calls, will he be able to answer?" the streamer said in the character description.

Shah, best known for starring in "Baar Baar Dekho" and "Luv Ka The End", is playing the role of Tajdar in "Heeramandi". "A nawab's son torn between tradition and love, Tajdar seeks purpose through liberation," Netflix said.

"Heeramandi: The Diamond Bazaar" is based on the concept by Moin Beg. The series is created and directed by Bhansali. He also serves as a producer on the show. (PTI)

# ADVANCE BOOKINGS OPEN FOR AKSHAY AND TIGER'S 'BADE MIYAN CHOTE MIYAN'

NEW DELHI, April 6: The advance booking for "Bade Miyan Chote Miyan", starring Akshay Kumar and directed by Siddharth Anand, is now open, the makers announced or Wednesday. The action film, directed by Ali Abbas Zafar of "Sultan" and "Bharat" fame, will be released in theatres on the occasion of Eid on April 10. It is produced by Pooja Entertainment in association with AAZ. "Our #BadeMiyanChoteMiyan are all geared up to double your dose of entertainment and action. Bade Miyan Chote Miyan advance bookings open now... Experience it in 3D and IMAX IN CINEMAS this Wednesday," read a post by Pooja Entertainment. "Bade Miyan Chote Miyan" will see Akshay and Tiger perform death-defying stunts as they play two elite soldiers who embark on a mission to recover a stolen AI weapon. Actor Prithiviraj Sukumaran plays the role of the antagonist Kabir in the movie. The film also features Manushi Chhillar and Alaya F. At the box office, "Bade Miyan Chote Miyan" will have a clash with "Maidaan", a period sports drama headlined by Ajay Devgn. The film, also releasing on April 10, is directed by Amit Sharma and produced by Boney Kapoor. (PTI)



**NEW DELHI, April 6:** Survival drama "The Goat Life", starring Prithviraj Sukumaran, has collected over Rs 100 crore in worldwide gross collection, the makers announced on Saturday. Directed by Blessy, the movie is based on the 2008 bestselling novel "Aadujeevitham" by Benyamin. It was released in theatres on March 29.

"Achieving a great milestone, 'The Goat Life' has crossed the Rs 100 crore mark at the worldwide box office within nine days of its release," the makers said in a press note.

The Malayalam film follows the real-life story of Najeeb (Sukumaran), a Malayali immigrant labourer who finds himself forced into slavery as a goatherd in the secluded farm of Saudi Arabia. Blessy said the film's team is ecstatic and grateful by the response to the movie, and they now hope that it continues to cross borders and reach as many people as possible.

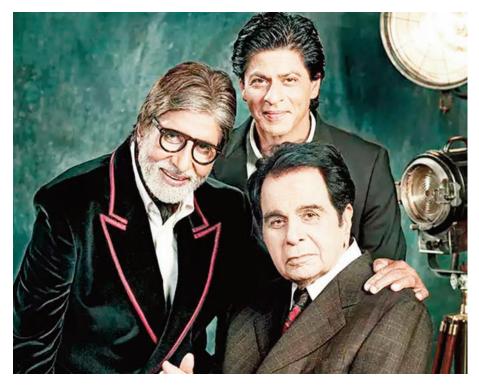
"The entire team of the film has put in over a decade of their hard work and blood, sweat, and tears into making this dream a reality. The film has stayed with me for over sixteen years and it is a blessing to see it finally being out in the world and being accepted so wholeheartedly by audiences worldwide," he added.

Sukumaran, who has distributed "The Goat Life" in Malayalam through Prithviraj Productions, also celebrated the film's milestone moment in a post on Instagram.

"(Rs) 100 Cr and counting at the Global Box Office! Thank you for this unprecedented success," the 41-year-old actor posted.

Produced by Visual Romance, "The Goat Life" also features Amala Paul, K.R. Gokul, as well as Hollywood actor Jimmy Jean-Louis and Arab actors Talib al Balushi and RikAby in pivotal roles. Academy Award winners A R Rahman and Resul Pookutty have given music and sound design, respectively. (PTI)

# Book profiles famous practitioners of cinematic art



**NEW DELHI, April 6:** Dilip Kumar along with Amitabh Bachchan formed the twin peaks of Hindi cinema and though he did not have a "Chini Kum" or a "Black" to his credit, he created a space which was ably exploited by the Big B, says a new book that profiles some famous practitioners of cinematic art.

Author Dhiraj Singh says his book "Modern Masters of Cinema" is an ode to one of his enduring passion - cinema.

He credits Dilip Kumar with laying down the grammar of Hindi film acting, saying the actor rescued Hindi film acting from the hyperbolic style of earlier times.

Dilip Kumar's contribution was more far reaching than the others, he asserts.

"He went on to become a complete actor by adding comedy, action, romance and even dance to his performances. Some of the most hilarious moments of the Indian screen are created by this 'tragedy king' and if you hold a poll on the most romantic moment in a Hindi film, the socalled 'feather scene' from 'Mughal-e-Azam' will figure very high," Singh writes.

"While he does not have a 'Chini Kum' or 'Black' to his credit, he created a space which was ably exploited by Amitabh Bachchan, perhaps the only complete actor that can be compared to the senior thespian," the book says. The author says Bachchan can be credited with "creating a rest superstar system in the Hindi film scenario".

The Dilip-Ray-Dev triumvirate was great, but Bachchan's mega popularity resulted in a very focused dependence on one factor or art of filmmaking - the star, he

The book also profiles non-Indian actors Al Pacino, Marcello Mastroianni, Kevin Spacey, Marlon Brando, Clint Eastwood, and Michael Douglas, and filmmakers Martin Scorsese, Quentin Tarantino, Federico Fellini, Bernardo Bertolucci, Alfred Hitchcock and Woody Allen among others.

Singh also argues that selection of a creative universe does not give a free pass to the filmmaker. He cites the recent uproar over the film "Animal" for its misog-

He says he too found it a problematic movie but not due to its choice of taking up a subject that involved a sick protagonist, many alpha male types of situations and a contrived effort to portray inner strength of some female character which fell short.

"This choice firmly stays in the ambit of the creative universe of the filmmaker. He chose to focus on these pathologies and no one can say that these pathologies do not exist in real life," Singh says. He adds that "Animal" can be blamed for having an eye that glorifies all these negativities.

"A movie can be about bravado and fetishtic devotion to male swagger but there is a fine line beyond which the camera becomes unintentionally voyeuristic and sensationalist," he writes. Singh also claims that cow-belt sensibilities were not adequately represented earlier but this has changed as a new breed of directors and cinema personality has emerged from the Hindi heartland bringing a lived-in experience.

"Anurag Kashyap has given a very realistic Bihar in 'Gangs of Wasseypur' and Delhi and Punjab in 'DevD'. Tigmanshu Dhulia is true to the local cultural connotations in 'Haasil' and 'Paan Singh Tomar'. He displayed his grasp over the atmospherics in the 'Sahib Bibi and Gangster' series too. Dibakar Bannerjee talked of very authentic Delhi in 'Khosla Ka Ghosla' and 'Lucky oye Lucky'...," he writes. (PTI)

#### SUNDAY, APRIL 7, 2024

#### SPORTS

# Rishabh's form is fantastic, let a few IPL matches go: Ganguly on cricketer's T20 WC selection

MUMBAI, April 6: Former India skipper Sourav Ganguly said on Saturday that Rishabh Pant is "fully fit" but added that the wicketkeeper-batter should be given some more time to prepare himself for India team selection for the upcoming T20 World Cup in the West Indies and USA.

Pant, the Delhi Capitals skipper seems to be hitting his strides in the ongoing IPL with consecutive half-centuries after returning to professional cricket following a harrowing car crash in December 2022.

Asked if he thinks Pant is ready for selection in the India squad, Ganguly, who is DC's director of cricket, said after a team training session that: "Let a few more matches go. He is doing

very well. As you all must have ment but the team, which has lost seen, you know, (wicket) keeping, batting. He has held up well.

"His form has been fantastic, especially the way he has batted in the last two games. Let another week go, and I'll be able to answer that question... provided the selectors want to pick him -that's most important. He's fit,

fully fit," Ganguly added. Pant is currently the fourthhighest run-getter in IPL 2024, having scored 152 runs in four matches at a strike rate of nearly 160.

DC will take on the embattled five-time IPL champions Mumbai Indians at the Wankhede Stadium on Sunday. Ganguly added that he was sat-

isfied with the bowling depart-

three of its four matches so far this season, could do with an extra batter. "We have used the bowling

part of it well in terms of Mukesh (Kumar), who's developed under Delhi Capitals, Khaleel (Ahmed) and Ishant (Sharma).

"Prithvi Shaw ... he's come back into good form this season. Obviously, Rishabh is a domestic Indian talent. Abhishek Porel has started out well this season. We need to find one more batsman who can do it. The legendary cricketer added

that the likes of young players such as Ricky Bhui, and Kumar Kushagra could get opportunities to play as the tournament progresses.

Young Jharkhand batter Kushagra was bought by DC for a mindboggling Rs 7.2 crore in the IPL auction but is yet to play an IPL match this season

"It's about opportunities at this level. Hopefully with the young players like (Ricky) Bhui, (Kumar) Kushagra, we can give them opportunities and see how it goes. It's also on the balance of the

side, whether you want to go the bowling way or the batting way," said Ganguly.

"Of course, he (Kushagra) will also doing well for Punjab," he

play. We're looking for an opportunity for him to play. We saw "There are a lot of young tal-

(Sameer) Rizvi play for Chennai, ents around in the IPL and that's he also got a very high price tag." the way it has been over a period The stylish former batof time. It's a platform for young ter felt that Indian taltalent to come and play well. And, the more opportunities they ent will flourish in the IPL as it is are given, they will play well as getting lots of the tournament progresses." opportunities. Ganguly does not want to read 'There's a lot too much into Mumbai Indians' of Indian talent dismal performance so far. The who's doing five-time champions have lost all well in IPL. three games so far this season. "Mumbai is a good side. We (We) saw (Riyan) Parag do are a good team as well. We won

well for Rajasthan one game against Chennai. We expect Mumbai to play well beso far. Then there is cause they've been a great fran-(Kings') Shashank Singh, he did well in chise over a long period of time. the last game. Prabhsimran is They have some quality players in the squad," he said.

"But T20 is such a format that sometimes you get into this situation where you lose a couple of games (or) three games and then you have to find a way to get back," Ganguly added.

Ganguly said chinaman bowler Kuldeep Yadav will undergo a fitness test to determine his availability for the match against ML

"He'll undergo a fitness test today. He has a little bit of groin stiffness (and) that's why he missed the last two games. By the end of the day, we'll get to know whether he's available tomorrow or not," Ganguly said.

Ganguly added that DC will also have to look for a replacement for Mitchell Marsh, who got injured while playing against Sunrisers Hyderabad. (PTI)

Indian men's hockey team suffers 1-5 thrashing at hands of Australia in first Test



PERTH, April 6: The Indian ion. men's hockey team was expected to put up at least a de- same vein after the change of cent fight but was hammered ends as Rintala was in the right 1-5 by Australia in the first Test of the five-match series here on Saturday. The Australians controlled the tempo of the match from start to fin-The Indian team ish. showed some sparks in the final quarter but it was too late by then. Tom Wickham (20th, 38th minute) scored a brace, while Tim Brand (3rd), Joel Rintala (37th) and Flynn Ogilvie (57th) were the other goal-getters for the winners. India's lone goal was scored by Gurjant Singh in the 47th

The hosts continued in the

# Candidates Chess: Vidit Gujrathi dumps Nakamura; Gukesh downs Praggnanandhaa

TORONTO, April 6: Indian Grandmaster Vidit Gujrathi crashed through the defences of world number three Hikaru Nakamura of United States, while R Praggnanandhaa went down to compatriot D Gukesh in the second round of Candidates chess tournament here.

four draws in the first round. all the four games in the second round ended decisively on Saturday. Top seed American Fabiano Caruana was impressive in cruising past Nijat Abasov of Azerbaijan and Russian Ian Nepomniachtchi outfoxed Firouza Alireza of France.

In the women's section, R Vaishali went down fighting against Zhongyi Tan of China, while Russian Aleksandra Goryachkina proved superior than Ukrainian Anna Muzychuk.

In the other games in this section, Koneru Humpy played out a draw with Kateryna Lagno of Russia and Nurgyul Salimova signed peace with Tinjie Lei of China. Gujrathi along with Caruana, Nepomniachtchi and Gukesh emerged as the early coleaders of the event with 1.5 points apiece while Nakamura, Praggnanandhaa, Abasov and Alireza share the fifth spot on half a point each. In the women's section, Tan remained in sole lead with her second victory on the trot and Goryachkina was



Salimova, Humpy and Lagno share the third spot with one point in their bags and Lei, Vaishali and Muzychuk share the sixth spot with half a point to their credit.

A total of 12 rounds still remain in the biggest competition of the year that will decide the challengers for the next world championships matches.

For the second day running, Gujrathi stole the show. It is the best way but Nakamura de-

launched a king side attack soon and wrapped the issue in just 29 The Opening choice was a Berlin by Vidit who played his moves for a remarkable triumph. second black in a row. Nakamura Gujrathi's dominance was certified by Nakamura, who was the was facing a finely crafted new idea as early as on move eight first to say "good game" to the and the American was on his Indian. Asked about summing own. It was just three moves up the game, the Indian said that later that Gujrathi stunned his it was a day when everything opponent with a Bishop sacriworked for him.

"Your prep comes in, he Accepting the sacrifice was makes a mistake and you get a brilliant attack, cant add much to

yet extremely complex position in the opening. Gukesh, black, had to find things on the board and once he steered the game in to unchartered waters Praggnanandhaa was the first to err.

Punjab

Gukesh could have been on top if he could find the best machine-like moves. However that did not happen and it was a wild position on board wherein Praggnanandhaa blundered amidst tactical complications. The game lasted 33 moves.

Caruana opened with the Rossolimo variation against Abasov's Sicilian defense. The American got a tangible advantage in the middle game after a dubious pawn sacrifice by Abasov and technical part was handled quite well by the American.

Nepomniachtchi also faced the Berlin defense and parted with a pawn early in the middle game. While the compensation remained it was never clear till Alireza failed to find the best continuation in the middle game. The Russian, who is playing under the FIDE flag, pounced on his chances and scored his first victory. In the women's section, Vaishali was outdone by a notso-regular queen pawn opening. Playing black, the Indian equalized quite easily trading off both Bishops early and slow manoeuvring ensued by both players

ist half a point

clear that the Indian has gotten clined it and his position wors-past his last below-par perform-ened slowly but surely. Vidit Catalan opening yielded a decent after the black king. (PTI)

# Bazball is fine, but England Test team needs common sense: Boycott

BENGALURU, April 6: Batting legend Geoffrey Boycott on Saturday reiterated his aversion for England's 'Bazball' way of cricket, and exhorted the coaching staff to instill a dose of "common sense" to their methods.

The root of Boycott's criticism was England's failure to emerge winners in two most important series -- in the Ashes against Australia in 2023 and in the series against India earlier this year.

"There are some amazing decisions under Brendon McCullum (England Test head

coach), as he has changed the (team's) mindset into more positive. But they have gone a bit too far with it.

"They want to save England cricket, the whole of Test cricket. But no Sir, the objective is to win a Test match or series," said Boycott here during the cricket talk show. Midwicket Stories, which also featured batting legend Sunil Gavaskar and former New Zealand pacer Simon Doull. Boycott said the England team should learn to respect opposition players and conditions.

"We lost two Ashes Tests and with it the

series, playing stupid cricket, and the same happened against India. They came to the series saying we have done practice in Abu Dhabi and all. But Players like (Ravichandran) Ashwin, (Ravindra) Jadeja and Kuldeep (Yadav) got their wickets not without talent.

"Heavens! Those three have some 900 wickets among them in Tests. And we have a captain (Ben Stokes) who does not bowl. So, play with aggression, which is fair, but have that bit of common sense too," said Bovcott

The Yorkshire great, who made 8112 runs at an average of 47.72 with 22 hundreds as opener, also derided England's obsession with veteran pacer James Anderson, who recently completed 700 Test wickets. "To be fair to Jimmy, he was a great bowler, I mean he is still good. But he is not what he used to be as a bowler. When was the last time he bowled 20 overs or more in an innings, he bowled 12 or 14 overs per innings, and that puts pressure on other bowlers," noted Boycott. (PTI)

# Bhullar sets record for lowest winning total to lift Chandigarh Open trophy

CHANDIGARH, April 6: Star golfer Gaganjeet Bhullar lived up to his billing, carding a solid fourunder 68 on the final day to clinch the Chandigarh Open title with a record total here on Saturday.

Bhullar (67-67-65-68), a 12time international winner who was playing at his home course this week, set a record for lowest winning total at the Chandigarh Golf Club en route the title.

Bhullar bagged his 25th career title and 13th win on the PGTI after taking his week's tally to 21under 267, which happened to be the lowest winning total at the Chandigarh Golf Club.

Bhullar's third win at the Chandigarh Golf Club saw him eclipse the previous best 72-hole total at the venue which was 20under 268 achieved by Ajeetesh Sandhu and Rashid Khan at the Jeev Milkha Singh Invitational 2019. Ajeetesh went on to win that event in a playoff.

"I knew about the 72-hole course record being within my grasp but the target in my mind was 25-under for the week," said Bhullar, who took home the winning cheque of Rs. 15 lakh to be placed seventh on the TATA Steel PGTI Ranking.

"The way I was playing, I thought I could achieve it. I came close and had those few putts fallen on the back-nine, it was well within my reach. Nonetheless, 21-under is a great score.

"I could not start off well this year, so I needed a really solid week here at home to give me a boost for the rest of the season. A win in the first half of the year is just what I was looking for.

"The key for me was hitting most of the fairways this week. I missed just one fairway today and about four to five through the week." Angad Cheema (66-67-66-72), another Chandigarh-based pro who was the overnight joint leader along with Bhullar, shot a 72 in round four to finish runnerup at a total of 17-under 271 at the Rs 1 crore tournament.

Bhullar's ball-striking was on point once again as he found all



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fairways except one in the final round. His hitting coupled with his good wedge shots and one long conversion on the 15th earned him seven birdies on Saturday at the expense of three bogeys. The 35-year-old Gaganjeet, a winner on the DP World Tour, established a three-shot lead by the 11th hole and never looked back thereafter.

Cheema's card featured two birdies and two bogeys. His runner-up finish earned him a prize money cheque worth Rs. 10 lakh and lifted him from sixth to fourth place in the TATA Steel PGTI Ranking.

Mysuru's Yashas Chandra (72) ended the week in third place at 15-under 273, while Abhinav Lohan (68) of Faridabad finished a further shot back in fourth place.

Karandeep Kochhar (68) was the third Chandigarh player to finish inside the top-10 as he took tied-fifth place at 13-under 275.

Indian golfing great Jeev Milkha Singh finished tied 42nd at one-under 287. (PTI)

minute. The Kookaburras showed positive intent from the start and took the lead as early as the third minute through Brand, who shocked India early with brilliant individual skills from the left flank.

He received a long pass from the deep and outfooted Jarmanpreet Singh with his stick work and pushed the ball past veteran India goalkeeper PR Sreejesh.

Australia continued to press hard on the Indian defence and secured their first penalty corner in the eighth minute but could not breach Sreejesh's de-

fence this time. Sreejesh made a reflex save with his extended right leg to deny Joel Rintala. A minute later, an alert Sreejesh used his razor-sharp reflexes to again keep Rintala out of target from Australia's second penalty corner.

India secured their first penalty corner in the 10th minute but failed to utilise the chance. Soon, Jake Whetton's reverse shot was parried away by Sreejesh. Australia was at their attacking best as their moves outwitted the Indian defence. The home team increased its lead just five minutes into the second quarter through Wickham, courtesy some sloppy defending by the Indians.

settle into a rhythm with their ternational Festival of Hockey, attacking hockey and relentless pressure to go into the halfway break with a 2-0 cush-

place at the right time to get a neat deflection off Ky Willott's reverse hit seven minutes into the third quarter.

The Indian defence was caught napping by the ever-attacking Australians as Wickham scored his second of the day with a fierce shot from the right corner past Sreejesh's extended right foot.

Down by four goals, the Indians showed urgency thereafter but lacked ideas as they failed to create clear cut chances from field play.

Twice in the third quarter India came close to registering goals but on both occasion Australia goalkeeper Andrew Charter easily kept the rivals at bay. Australia continued to play high-press hockey and secured another penalty corner just at the start of fourth quarter but failed to cash in on the opportunity. In turn, the Indians made quick counter-attack and reduced the margin through Gurjant, who scored with powerful strike from the top of the D after receiving an inch-perfect pass from Mohammed Raheel.

India made some terrific incisive moves through the midfield to expose Australian defence in fourth quarter but failed to create any scoring chances as the Australian defence stood tall.

The Indians earned back-toback penalty corners in the 51st minute, but on both occasion skipper Harmanpreet Singh failed to get past Charter in front of Australian goal.

Australia secured another penalty corner three minutes from the final hooter. Jeremy Hayward's initial flick was saved by second Indian goalkeeper Krishan Bahadur Pathak but Ogilvie sounded the board from the rebound to register the comfortable win for the hosts. The two teams will meet again on Sunday in Australia denied India to the second Test of the Perth Inconsidered as a preparation for the upcoming Paris Olympics. (PTI)

#### SPORTS

# Rookie pacer Mayank Yadav in focus as LSG eye third consecutive win in IPL

**LUCKNOW, April 6:** New pace sensation Mayank Yadav will be closely followed by all and sundry after his match-winning performances as Lucknow Super Giants eye a hat-trick of wins when they take on an inconsistent Gujarat Titans in the Indian Premier League here on Sunday.

Yadav has caught everyone's attention in the ongoing IPL with his raw pace and razor-sharp control, winning back-to-back player-ofthe-match awards.

In his debut match against Punjab Kings, the 21-year-old returned impressive figures of 3/27, stunning England batter Jonny Bairstow with his searing pace.

He followed that performance with 3/14 figures against Royal Challengers Bengaluru, blowing away Australian all-rounder Glenn Maxwell with a 151kmph delivery, and then cleaned up his teammate Cameron Green.

His spectacular performances have led to debates within the cricketing community whether he should be fast-tracked into the Indian team

But only two games can't be a parameter for a place in the Indian team. For Yadav, the crucial factor would be his consistency, which the national selectors will be closely following.

On the batting front, LSG boast



of a solid opening pair of Quinton de Kock and KL Rahul. The South African has been in prime form after a rare off day in the team's opener but the skipper needs to get his act together as he hasn't been able to capitalise on starts.

The big-hitting Nicholas Pooran has been LSG's go-to-man in the finishing overs while Krunal Pandya was also handy in the last game.

Smith admits he needs to turn it

around as Australia's Test opener

Lucknow outfit remains the form of Devdutt Padikkal and Australian all-rounder Marcus Stoinis. In bowling, Yadav needs more

support from the likes of Naveenul-Haq, Yash Thakur, Mohsin Khan, Stonis, and leg-spinner Ravi Bishnoi. LSG, who are placed fourth with

two wins out of three games, would also look to keep a clean slate at home and cash in on famil-But the major concern for the iar conditions to register the third

successive win this season.

GT, on the other hand, have had a mixed bag campaign so far under new captain Shubman Gill, winning two and losing two games to occupy the seventh spot on the points table. Gill, who scored an unbeaten 89 off 48 balls, found some much-needed runs in the previous game and would look to continue in the same vein.

B Sai Sudharsan has looked in good touch but would be on the

lookout for a big score. However, the likes of Wriddhiman Saha and Vijay Shankar need to rise to the occasion

Mohit Sharma has been the stand-out performer for GT, but he needs more support from the likes of Azmatullah Omarzai, Umesh Yadav, Rashid Khan and Noor Ahmad.

#### Teams (from):

Gujarat Titans: Shubman Gill (c), David Miller, Matthew Wade, Wriddhiman Saha, Robin Minz, Kane Williamson, Abhinav Mandhar, B Sai Sudarshan, Darshan Nalkande, Vijay Shankar, Azmatullah Omarzai, Shahrukh Khan, Jayant Yadav, Rahul Tewatia, Kartik Tyagi, Shshant Mishra, Spencer Johnson, Noor Ahmad, Sai Kishore, Umesh Yadav, Rashid Khan, Joshua Little, Mohit Sharma and Manav Suthar.

Lucknow Super Giants: KL Rahul (c), Quinton de Kock, Nicholas Pooran, Ayush Badoni, Kyle Mayers, Marcus Stoinis, Deepak Hooda, Devdutt Padikkal, Ravi Bishnoi, Naveen-ul-Haq, Krunal Pandya, Yudhvir Singh, Prerak Mankad, Yash Thakur. Amit Mishra, Shamar Joseph, Mayank Yadav, Mohsin Khan, K. Gowtham, Arshin Kulkarni, M. Siddharth, Ashton Turner, Matt Henry, Mohd Arshad Khan.

Match starts at 7.30 PM. (PTI)

# **RCB** should try to chase targets to revive fortunes: Gavaskar

urday that the embattled Royal Challengers Bengaluru should try to chase targets more to revive their fortunes in the ongoing Indian Premier League (IPL)

RCB are currently languishing at eighth place with two points from four matches, and in their fifth match they will face Rajasthan Royals in Jaipur on Saturday.

nities, they should chase targets as batting is their strong point. I think that will give them a better chance at winning matches," said Gavaskar here during the cricket talk show, Midwicket Stories, which also featured England batting legend Geoffrey Boycott and former New Zealand pacer

> Simon Doull. asked to.

While chasing, the Bengaluru outfit has managed to eke out one win against Punjab Kings and went down against Lucknow Super Giants in the

Talking in general

Suryakumar back in mix as faltering Mumbai Indians, Delhi Capitals desperate to arrest slide in IPL



MUMBAI, April 6: A fit-again Suryakumar Yadav will be expected to immediately deliver the goods when faltering Mumbai Indians and Delhi Capitals lock horns in a bid to arrest their slide in their Indian Premier League clash here on Sunday.

With three losses in a row, MI are languishing at the bottom whereas Delhi Capitals have spiralled down to the ninth spot in the 10-team points table following a 106-run hammering in their last

match. If MI have once again made a characteristic start of falling into a hole with a string of defeats, the misfiring Delhi Capitals have had a similar fate suffering three losses from four outings and are under pressure to bounce back.

Suryakumar's potential return to action will keep him at the cynosure since the T20 World Cup follows this iteration of IPL immediately and his form and fitness will be crucial for the Indian campaign.

Having spent the last three months nursing an ankle injury and recovering from a surgery for sports hernia, the world's premier T20 batter Suryakumar hit the ground running with his first training session here at the Wankhede Stadium on Friday.

Along with strength and mobility exercises, Suryakumar batted without any visible discomfort to get back in the groove and gear up to come to the rescue of his struggling teammates, who have collectively failed in all departments. At the top, both Rohit Sharma and Ishan Kishan have looked

promising but neither has notched up a big score yet. The same can be said about the other Indian batters such as Tilak Varma and Naman Dhir, who, irrespective of how appealing they have looked in the middle, are yet to deliver a match-winning performance. Even the embattled captain Hardik Pandya has not been able to inspire his side. However, for someone who has been subjected to brutal reaction from fans inside the stadiums so far, there could be some respite as the contest on Sunday afternoon will be attended by more than 20,000 children. Akash Madhwal's three-for in

their last match was the only positive from the bowling front, wherein MI changed the way they used Jasprit Bumrah by giving him three overs in the powerplay but did not have enough runs to challenge Rajasthan Royals.

For DC, comeback star Rishabh Pant (152 runs) has found consistency with two consecutive fifties but he needs support from the others.

Enduring the worst outing so far with the ball wherein DC bowlers kept erring with the line and lengths to allow Kolkata Knight Riders pile up a humongous 272/7, the Pant-led side was short of spunk in reply with the bat to be bowled out for 166.

David Warner (148 runs) and Tristan Stubbs have been marginally better than the other batters but Delhi will hope get the more out of swashbuckling Prithvi Shaw, for whom the Wankhede Stadium is a homeground.

Mitchell Marsh has featured in each of Delhi's four matches so far but the burly Australian has not been able to impose himself on the opposition. Like a few others in his camp, Marsh too will be desperate to get a big score under the belt.

#### Squads:

Mumbai Indians: Hardik Pandya (c), Rohit Sharma, Suryakumar Yadav, Dewald Brevis, Jasprit Bumrah, Piyush Chawla, Gerald Coetzee, Tim David, Shreyas Gopal, Ishan Kishan (wk), Anshul Kamboj, Kumar Kartikeya, Akash Madhwal, Kwena Maphaka, Mohammad Nabi, Shams Mulani, Naman Dhir, Shivalik Sharma, Romario Shepherd, Arjun Tendulkar, Nuwan

# fifties.

MUMBAI, April 6: Australia batter Steve Smith has admitted finding it 'challenging' as an opener in Test cricket but is eager to turn it around after going through a rough patch since taking up the role.

four Tests against his career average of 56.97 and nearing 10,000 runs

"I'm not reading too much into it. You know, I feel like I've still been batting well," Smith, a member of the Star Sports Incredible

right-handed batter has enjoyed success with 1,258 runs in 19 Tests at 57.18 with four centuries and six

In his defence, Smith pointed out that while the pitches he batted on as opener were tricky, the opposition batters did not flourish on them too until the ball had lost its sheen

"It's been challenging so far. We've played with some tricky wickets, particularly new-ball wickets that have done quite a bit. It has been challenging. I'd love to sort of turn it around and score some runs up there, that's for sure," he said.

"(You) can't sort of underplay how difficult the wickets have been. A lot of the top orders that we've played against haven't scored a great deal of runs, and it hasn't been until the 30-40 oversmark that we've seen the wickets get a little bit better and the lower order score some runs," he added. Former captain Tim Paine suggested Australia will be playing in India's hands if Smith is persisted at the top of the order and not moved back to his usual No. 4 slot. The two teams are set to face-off in a five-Test series for the Border-Gavaskar Trophy later this year and Smith, who remained noncommittal about his future, said it

BENGALURU, April 6: Legendary batter Sunil Gavaskar said on Sat-

"Of course, the toss is not in your control. But at all possible opportu-

Gavaskar was hinting at the out of form bowling unit of RCB that failed to defend totals on both the occasions they have been

other

about the impact of

SUNDAY, APRIL 7, 2024

Smith put his hand up to fill in the spot vacated by David Warner after he retired from Tests last Australian summer, but the former has had his share of troubles in his new batting position.

The move was indeed surprising since it diverted from the policy of appointing the specialists for the opening role including Cameron Bancroft, Matthew Renshaw and Marcus Harris.

The promotion in the batting order certainly has not worked for the 34-year-old Smith, considered one of Australia's best-ever, since he has averaged a mere 28.50 in

Star Cast, told PTI in an exclusive interaction at the channel's studio here

"A few things I'd like to fix up a little bit technically, but I've had that going throughout my whole career, and it doesn't really matter where I'm at in that respect. We'll wait and see," he added.

Smith has spent the majority of his Test career at No. 4 garnering 5,966 runs at 61.50 with 19 centuries and 26 fifties, while at No 3. he has made 1,744 runs at 67.07 with eight hundreds and five halfcenturies.

For that matter, even at No 5, the

was exciting to play that many games in the series. "We really enjoy playing against each other. There's that sort of ri-

valry there now and it's going to be five Test matches for the first time, which is exciting. I'm looking forward to this summer; it is going to be a great contest," he said. (PTI)

cricket.

balls are being left and a lot more shots are being played - switch-hits, reverse scoops etc. The concept of taking the shine of balls is not followed as it was the norm in our times," he said.

the longest format would not fade away as many have been fearing.

"Test cricket is not dying, it will survive. Perhaps, three or four nations will play five-match series against each other while the rest will play the three-match series. I think that is going to be the way forward for that format." Gavaskar noted. (PTI)

T20, Gavaskar emphasised on the entertainment quotient it has brought to modern

"Modern cricket is hard but entertaining. These days not many

That brought the talk to the future of Test cricket, and Gavaskar said

Thushara, Tilak Varma, Vishnu Vinod, Nehal Wadhera, Luke Wood

Delhi Capitals: Rishabh Pant (c&wk), David Warner, Prithvi Shaw, Yash Dhull, Abishek Porel, Axar Patel, Lalit Yadav, Mitchell Marsh, Pravin Dubey, Vicky Ostwal, Anrich Nortje, Kuldeep Yadav, Jake Fraser-McGurk, Khaleel Ahmed, Ishant Sharma, Mukesh Kumar, Tristan Stubbs, Ricky Bhui, Kumar Kushagra, Rasikh Dar, Jhve Richardson, Sumit Kumar, Swastik Chikara, Shai Hope.

Time: 3:30PM IST. (PTI)

# Sumit Nagal beats 63<sup>rd</sup>-ranked Flavio Cobolli

MONTE CARLO (FRANCE), April 6 : Ace Indian tennis player Sumit Nagal was off to a winning start in Monte Carlo Masters as he defeated world number 63 Flavio Cobolli of Italy in straight sets in the qualifiers here on Saturday.

The unseeded 95th-ranked Indian registered a 6-2 6-3 win over eighth-seeded Cobolli.

Nagal will now be up against the winner of the two Argentinians --Facundo Díaz Acosta and Diego Schwartzman -- in his final qualifier fixture.

While Acosta is ranked 55th and seeded third, Schwartzman is ranked 124th and is a wild card entrant in the tournament.

Seven qualifiers will be granted entry into the main round.

Nagal has been in the headlines since making it to the main draw of the Australian Open in January, where he had beaten Alexander Bublik of Kazakhstan before bowing out in the second round.

He then emerged triumphant in the Chennai Open before playing two more Challenger competitions, along with an ATP 500 competition (Dubai Championship) and two ATP 1000 Masters (Indian Wells and Miami).

Since his Chennai victory, Nagal has reached the semi-final only on one occasion, during the Bengaluru Challenger. (PTI)

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Anupama, Tharun win Kazakhstan International Challenge



ASTANA, April 6: Indian shuttlers Anupama Upadhyaya and Tharun Mannepalli emerged champions in the women's and men's singles competition at the Kazakhstan International Challenge tournament in Uralsk on Saturday.

The 19-year-old Anupama from Almora, who won the Polish International challenge last month, claimed her second successive title with a 21-15 21-16 win over compatriot Isharani Baruah in a 41-minutes final.

The 22-year-old Tharun, who was runner-up at the senior national championships in Guwahati last December, beat eighthseeded Malaysian Soong Joo Ven 21-10, 21-19 to register his maiden international title.

In mixed doubles final, the Indian pair of Sanjai Srivatsa Dhanraj and Maneesha K lost 21-9, 7-21, 12-21 to Malaysia's Wong Tien Ci and Lim Chiew Sien to sign off with a runner-up finish.

Anupama, the former senior national champion, has been in good form this week as she defeated fellow Indian Harshitaa Rout, Czech Republic's fifth seed Tereza Svabikova, compatriot Devika Sihag and Japan's Sorano Yoshikawa en route to the final.

Anupama, a former junior world No 1. has won the India International Challenge in 2021, Polish Open (2022 and 2024) and Tajikistan International Series in 2023. Tharun also recorded some fine wins on

way to the summit clash, defeating compatriot Gagan Balyan, 2022 World junior championships silver medallist S Sankar Muthusamy, fourth-seeded Dmitriy Panarin of Kazakhstan and seventh seed Le Duc Phat of Vietnam. (PTI)

# Fans shouldn't boo Hardik Pandya, not his fault if named Mumbai Indians captain: Ganguly

MUMBAI, April 6: Former India captain Sourav Ganguly on Saturday reprehended the fans booing Mumbai Indians skipper Hardik Pandya, saying it is not the fault of the player if he has replaced much-loved Rohit Sharma, who shepherded the team in previous seasons.

Pandya has been at the receiving end of the fans' anger ever since Mumbai Indians announced that he will captain the five-time champions.

The India all-rounder was booed in the first game that he played as MI skipper upon his return at the home ground of his previous franchise Gujarat Titans in Ahmedabad.

The trend continued when Pandya went to Hyderabad to face the Sunrisers Hyderabad and much to the surprise of many, the 29-year-old was booed when Mumbai Indians played their first home match of the season against Rajasthan Royals.

"I don't think they should boo Hardik Pandya. It's not correct," Ganguly told the media here during Delhi Capitals' training session at the Wankhede Stadium on Saturday.

"It's not correct. The franchisee has appointed him as captain. That's what happens in sport. Whether you captain India or you captain a state or whether you captain your franchise, you are appointed as captain



"He's (been) appointed captain. Obviously, with Rohit Sharma he's a different class. His performance for this franchise, his performance for India has been at a different level as captain and as a player," the Director of Cricket for

"But then it's not Hardik's fault that he's been appointed as captain. All of us need to understand that," he added. Mumbai Indians will take on Delhi Capitals on Sunday afternoon here. (PTI)

Delhi Capitals said.