Russia declares federal emergency in the flood-hit Orenburg

Int'l leaders condemn Ecuador after police break into Mexican Embassy

'Cong hostile towards Sanatan Dharma, its manifesto bears imprint of Muslim League'

 PM wants to end corruption, Indi alliance wants to save corrupt people, says Nadda



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Sonowal-Kacharis outfit boost for oppn forum

Sonowal Kachari Gana Mancha joins UOFA in presence of Bhupen Borah, Akhil Gogoi



HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, April 7: A regional political outfit of the Sonowal-Kachari community on Sunday joined the United Opposition Forum, Assam (UOFA), a coalition of various parties

The Sonowal Kachari Gana Mancha formally joined the UOFA in the presence of the forum's president and Congress' state unit chief Bhupen Kumar Borah and MLA Akhil Gogoi

at Dibrugarh.

Borah, in a post on X, said leaders of the Sonowal Kachari Gana Mancha, a regional political party, that has fought the election to the Sonowal Kachari Autonomous Council earlier, held a meeting with him and Gogoi, who heads

"A team led by Mancha General Secretary Gopal Sonowal discussed the political situation Lakhimpur, Dibrugarh, Jorhat and Kaziranga-and promised their support. This marks their formal entry into the United Opposition Forum - Assam," the state Congress chief wrote on the micro-blogging site.

The UOFA was formed as a 16-party forum last year to fight the Lok Sabha elections unitedly against the BJP-led coalition in the state.

However, the member parties have now pitted candidates against each other in several constituencies. PM visit: Prime Minister Narendra Modi is slated to address a public rally in the Nalbari district on April 17, as per reports.

The upcoming rally holds significant importance, marking Prime Minister Modi's first public appearance in the Nalbari district since the announcement of poll dates

Earlier, Assam chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma's statements indicated that Modi is expected to attend at least three public meetings

Meanwhile, the eagerly anticipated visit of Union home minister Amit Shah to Assam for a public rally for the upcoming Lok Sabha election has been postponed. (With inputs from PTI)

Issue of D-voters of Bengali Hindus to be resolved in 6 months after polls: CM

HOJAI/ DERGAON, April 7: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Sunday asserted that the issue of 'Doubtful' (D) voters of Bengali-Hindus of the state will be resolved in six months after the elections

He termed the Congress, as an 'old note' which is no longer accepted by anyone.

Addressing an election rally in Hojai under the Kaziranga Lok Sabha constituency, Sarma said that the issue of D-voters of Bengali-Hindus will be permanently resolved in six months after the elections

D-voters are those who could not provide evidence in favour of their Indian nationality. The issue of Dvoters is one of the most contentious topics in Assam's political and social sphere.

The concept of D-voters was introduced in $\bar{A}ssam$ in 1997 by the Election Commission. It does not exist anywhere else in India.

There are 96,987 D-voters in the state as per the information given in the state assembly in February this vear. Several elections have been fought over this single issue of ille-

gal Bangladeshi immigrants, who are initially marked as D-voters if

their names are found in the electoral rolls. Sarma also maintained that Assam has been witnessing peace and development in the BJP-led NDA rule at the Centre and in the state, and multiple problems like unemployment and poor road network are being addressed by his

government. Sarma alleged that there was "no peace in the state under the Congress rule, and blasts, shootings and strife among different communities

were common'

"But now, all communities irrespective of language, religion and aste are living peacefully," he said. He likened the Congress to an "old note that no one is ready to accept". Sarma also claimed, "Someone who had been thinking of supporting the Congress will not do

so if the person sees Rahul 'baba'." Earlier addressing another rally at Dergaon, Sarma emphasised that his government is focused on inclusive development of all areas. The government will provide 50,000 more jobs (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

HTBRIEFS Officials injured

were seriously injured in an accident when their car was crashed into by an unidentified dumper truck last night at around 9 pm. The dumper truck ran away from the site. The accident occurred on Diphu-Manja road. Member of Autonomous Council (MAC), Shraban Telenga who was on his way to his home in Deopani came at the site called an ambulance to help out the accident victims. However, as the ambulance took time to arrive the MAC took the

BOKAJAN: Two forest officials

Arms recovered

cials are being treated.

injured duo in his car. The offi-

BOKAJAN: The evening of April 6 in the police in Karbi Anglong set up multiple naka checking in NH 39 and recovered several fire arms. Acting on secret information the police set up naka checking on NH 39 of Biliian area under Khatkhati police station in Karbi Anglong. During the operation a car bearing registration number AS 26 F 5554 was intercepted and checked. Two pistols were recovered from the car along with magazines and 13 ammunitions. In this connection 2 persons namely Manzil Narzary, resident of Amguri, Chirang district and Sibiston Islary, resident of village Dwikhorgurim, Chirang district were apprehended. Further investigation is going on.

Central Observer

BOKAJAN: Central Observer, Lok Sabha Election 2024 visited Bokajan LA in Karbi Anglong. The Central Observer, Jaideep Mukhapaidya arrived in Bokajan at around 3 pm and met Bokajan ADC Debahuti Borah. ADC Borah took him to visit Bokaian Higher Secondary School where the Strong Room is. Then the Observer met the various officers involved in the Lok Sabha election at Bokaian CCI Guest House.

Myanmar nationals

AIZAWL: Four people, including two Myanmarese nationals, were apprehended in south Mizoram's Siaha district with a huge amount of unaccounted cash, the Assam Rifles said on Sunday. Acting on a tip-off, personnel of the Assam Rifles intercepted five mini trucks, on which 16 people were travelling, at the Zawngling village on Friday, it said.

the Raijor Dal

in five Lok Sabha constituencies--Sonitpur,

FIR, magisterial probe against 3 polling personnel for issuing extra ballots in home voting the postal ballot polling process for

14 electors as per the list given to

"However, when they submitted

the polled postal ballots and the

booklet containing counterfoil and

unpolled postal ballot papers, it was

noticed that 16 counterfoils were

them, he said.

TINSUKIA, April 7: An FIR has been lodged and a magisterial inquiry ordered against three polling personnel in Assam's Tinsukia district over allegations of issuing extra ballot papers during home voting, a top official said on Sunday.

Tinsukia district commissioner Swapneel Paul said the allegations were labelled against the personnel deployed for home voting through postal ballots in Doomdoma assembly constituency in Lakhimpur Lok Sabha seat on Saturday.

A team of three polling personnel, accompanied by one videographer and two policemen, were sent for the purpose in the morning.

The polling party reported in the evening that they could complete

used for 14 voters," the DC, who is also the district election officer, said.

paper for him. also started raising the same de-

voter had objected to the poll procedure and demanded another ballot Family members of another 86-

year-old voter in the neighbourhood

Asked about the anomaly, the three polling personnel claimed that family members of an 88-year-old A magisterial enquiry by

extra postal ballot papers to both persons "owing to pressure of the public and fearing their safety", Paul said. "Taking cognizance of the fact

The polling personnel issued

that issuance of postal ballot twice to single voter is a gross negligence of duty which may tantamount to corrupt practice as one person can only vote once, an FIR against the personnel was lodged on Saturday,'

Lakhimpur Lok Sabha constituency Assistant Returning Officer Jabed Arman has been ordered, while the polling personnel have been debarred from all kinds of election duties for (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Cong tally in this election to fall below 25 seats: Sonowal

HT Bureau GUWAHATI, April 7: Accusing Congress of failing to turn the richness country into to a great nation, Minister Sarbananda Union Sonowal on Sunday said that former tally in this election will fall below

25 seats.

Sonowal said that since 2014, the good governance by the Modi government has provided so many opportunities that have enabled the people to live a life of dignity, honour and respect.

"Congress failed to turn the richness of this vast country to turn into a great nation. The Congress must pay the price for this betrayal of trust by the people. The tally of Congress members will come down to 20 to

WILD BEAUTY

A view of one horn Rhino at Charigharia Beel in Majuli on Sunday. UB photos

25 in this election, as people have now realised how they were betrayed for six decades," Sonowal said while addressing multiple public meetings to soar up support for the BJP in the forthcoming elections in Tinsukia

The union minister bowed down to women power saying they are playing the most important role to build a society of character.

"Our great country, where Mother Nature has blessed us with so many resources, is on a journey towards a vision of 'Viksit Bharat' under the dynamic leadership of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modiji. With your enthusiastic presence in support of the third term of Modi government, I bow down (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Cong launches distribution of its **'guarantee card**

GUWAHATI, April 7: The Assam unit of the Congress on Sunday launched house-to-house distribution of its 'guarantee card' from Guwahati. Congress general secretary in-charge of Assam Jitendra Singh launched the programme as several leaders and workers of the party visited houses in the Panjabari area of the city to distribute the cards. Lok Sabha MP Abdul Khaleque, the party's candidate in the Guwahati seat Mira Barthakur Goswami, Congress spokesperson Mahima Singh and several MLAs were also present on the occasion. The 'Congress Guarantee Card' speaks of the promises made by the party in its manifesto. Congress presdent Mallikarjun Kharge had launched the initiative in New Delhi on April 3. (PTI)

Cong manifesto reflection of people's aspirations: Jitendra

GUWAHATI, April 7: The Congress manifesto was a reflection of the aspirations of the people, the party's in-charge for Assam Jitendra Singh said on Sunday as he launched the house-to-house distribution of the 'guarantee card' in the state.

Singh said that Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's interaction with the people during his two Yatras crisscrossing the country was reflected in the party's manifesto, named 'Nyay Patra'

"The 'Nyay Patra' is a reflection of the aspirations of the people. One can say that the people have

written it," he stated. He alleged that the BJP has failed to fulfil the promises it made

to the people, and indulged in corruption. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

'That's the pain of leaving our families we bear while on duty'

It's job call, can't vote in LS polls: Jorhat-Majuli ferry operators

NIMATI GHAT, April 7: At a time when the Election Commission of India is leaving no stone unturned to ensure maximum participation in the upcoming Lok Sabha elections, a few people whose job is to run the daily ferry service in the world's largest river Island of Majuli, will miss the voting as they cannot leave their work for a single day.

On these 25-odd people's expertise, the entire communication to the river island is dependent as they are the only ones who drive the ferries between Jorhat's Nimati Ghat and Majuli every day. The ferry service connects the river island to the mainland.

Though these nine twin-engine ferries are run by the Inland Water Transport (IWT) Department of



ters and drivers from a private firm in West Bengal neighbouring state.

One such ferry, MV Lohit, has Tahidul Molla as Master and Mus-

tak Ahmed as Driver, both hailing from Diamond Harbour in the

"My vote is in Kolkata. I want to go, but I don't think it will be possible to get leave in those days." Molla told PTI while sitting behind the helm enroute to Kamalabari ghat in Majuli.

He said every vessel has six employees, of which three are IWT staff and the rest are from the Kolkata-based Ali Enterprise.

"We go to our homes once every three months. We will not be able to go in this coming Eid festival also. That's the pain of leaving our families we bear while on duty,' Molla said with a choking voice.

Back at home, he has a wife and two minor sons -- one is in Class 5 and the other is just three years old.

Asked about postal ballot facilities for voting as they are engaged in an essential service with the government, Molla said nobody has ever (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Oppn missed chances, BJP to gain in east, south, may win over 300 seats: Prashant Kishor

NEW DELHI, April 7: Validating the BJP's claims, eminent political strategist Prashant Kishor said the ruling party will add significantly to its seats and vote share in south and east India, the two regions where its hold is weak-to-non-existent, barring Karnataka.

In an interaction with PTI editors, Kishor also said despite the BJP's apparent dominance, neither the party nor Prime Minister Narendra Modi is invincible, pointing out that the opposition had three distinct and realistic chances of stopping the BJP juggernaut but frittered away the opportunities because of laziness and misplaced strategies.

'They (BJP) will either be first or second party in Telangana which is a big thing. They will be number one in Odisha for sure. You would be surprised as, in all likelihood, to my mind, the BJP is going to be the number one party in West Bengal," he said. In Tamil he said, BJP's vote share may hit

double-digit percentage. Telangana, Odisha, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Bihar and Kerala together account for 204 seats in the 543-member Lok Sabha but the BJP couldn't cross 50 seats in all these states put together either in 2014 or 2019 when it won 29 and 47 constituencies respectively.

He, however, asserted that the BJP is unlikely to win 370 seats, its target set for the polls.

In Andhra Pradesh, where assembly polls will be held alongside the Lok Sabha elections, he said chief minister Jagan Mohan Reddy will find it "very difficult" to come back. Kishor had worked for Reddy in 2019 when his YSRC party had vanguished the incumbent Telugu Desam Party, now a BJP ally

Sabha polls (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Reddy, like former Chhattisgarh

cash transfer to people but has done little to provide jobs or boost the stagnating development of the state, he said. Speaking of the Lok

chief minister Bhupesh Baghel, has gone into a "provider" mode for his constituents, instead of being a fulfiller of people's aspirations. He likened the situation to the yesteryear monarchs who took care of their people with doles and largesse but nothing more. Similarly, Reddy has ensured

SDF promises 50 per cent quota for women in higher education in its poll manifesto

GANGTOK, April 7: The opposition Sikkim Democratic Front (SDF) on Sunday released its manifesto promising 50 per cent reservation for women in government jobs and higher education among various sops for all sections of the society in the state. SDF president Pawan Kumar Chamling said that his

to women in jobs and higher education was aimed at empowering nearly half of the population. "The SDF will provide 50 per cent reservation for women in jobs and higher education," the former chief minister said while releasing the manifesto in Namchi

party's commitment to provide 50 per cent reservation

district's Rangang-Yangang assembly constituency. The party's Lok Sabha candidate PD Rai and the

nominee for the Rangang-Yangang assembly seat, MK Subba, were also present on the occasion. Notably, the SDF has not nominated any woman in

the state's lone Lok Sabha seat and 32 assembly con-In its manifesto, the SDF has also promised to provide dearness allowance to all government employees

and restore the old pension scheme (OPS) in Sikkim. The indigenous Bhutia and Limboo communities will be recognised as ancient ('Aadhim janjati') tribes, while all state languages will be taught at college and university levels, the opposition party's manifesto said, adding that a state holiday will be declared to honour the first Mount Everest climber (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

THE HILLS TIMES

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Adani to invest ₹ 2.3 lakh cr in renewable energy, manufacturing capacity

JARAT), April 7: Adani Group will invest about ₹ 2.3 lakh crore through 2030 in India's most ambitious renewable energy expansion and solar and wind manufacturing capacity addition ever as it shrugs off a short-seller attack to pursue its trademark rapid growth plans.

Adani Green Energy Ltd, India's largest renewable energy company, will invest about ₹ 1.5 lakh crore in expanding capacity to generate electricity from solar energy and wind power at Khavda in Gujarat's Kutch to 30 gigawatts from 2 GW currently and another ₹ 50,000 crore in 6-7 GW of similar projects elsewhere in the country, a top company official said.

Adani New Industries Ltd (ANIL), a unit in the group's flagship Adani Enterprises Ltd, will invest close to ₹ 30,000 crore in expanding solar cell and wind turbine manufacturing capacity at Mundra in Gujarat.

AGEL, which currently has an operating portfolio of 10,934 megawatts (10.93 GW), is targeting 45 GW of renewable energy capacity by 2030. 30 GW of this will come up at just one location at Khavda - the world's largest re-

newable energy project. "We have just now commissioned 2,000 MW (2 GW) of capacity at Khavda and plan to add 4 GW in the current fiscal (financial year ending March 2025) and 5 GW every year thereafter," said Vneet S Jaain, Managing Director,



To support these plans as well as meet requirements of other domestic renewable players and export market, ANIL plans to expand its cell and module manufacturing facility at Mundra to 10 GW by 2026-27 from current 4 GW, Jaain, who is also a director on the board of ANIL, said.

Crystalline silicon is turned into cells capable of converting sun rays into electric current and mounted on modules before being placed in high radiation areas such as Khavda. Electricity thus generated is wired to the transmission grid for onward movement to customers

Besides solar manufacturing, ANIL is also doubling capacity to make windmills that generate electricity from wind, to 5 GW in three-and-a-half years, he said.

Adani Group which spans from seaports to electricity generation and transmission, natural gas distribution, mining, copper produc-

AGEL's existing operational portfolio comprises 7,393 MW solar, 1,401 MW wind and 2,140

MW, which will power more than 5.8 million homes and avoid about 21 million tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions annually, represents around 11 per cent of India's installed utility-scale solar and wind capacity, contributing over 15 per cent of the nation's utility-scale solar installations.

The renewable energy push comes as the apples-to-airport conglomerate shrugs off the impact of Hindenburg Research that in Janu-

tions, which caused the combined market capitalisation of its listed companies to fall by USD 150 billion at their worst point. Its chairman Gautam Adani has in recent months stated that the group's balance sheet was "healthier than ever

In the immediate aftermath of the short-seller report, Adani has reassured investors and bondholders by slowing some investment plans, paying down share-backed debt and selling stakes to outside backers, including Florida-based investment firm GQG Partners. But now it is back to its breakneck speed expansion, switching backto-back deals including one with Reliance Industries Ltd of rival bil-

MW wind-solar hybrid capacity. Its current portfolio of 10,934

ary last year published allegations that Adani companies had engaged in share price manipulation and accounting fraud.

The group has refuted all allega-

Credo launches fashion incubation centre in Kolkata

KOLKATA, April 7: Credo Centre of Excellence, in partnership with the Apparel Skill Council, has unveiled the "first" fashion incubation centre in the country in Kolkata to boost the ₹ 40,000 crore textile industry of West Bengal, an official said. "This is the first fashion incubation centre in India and the first PPP model centre approved by the Apparel Made Ups Home Furnishing Sector Skill (AMHSSC) Council under the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship. The council has three more centres in Gurugram, Guwahati, and Tripura, which carry out basic tailoring training and are fully owned by the government," Pinaki Roychowdhury, trustee of the Credo Foundation, said.

West Bengal has a huge number of MSMEbased garment manufacturing but exports are less due to a lack of modern manufacturing, design and supply chain ecosystem.

Speaking on the occasion, Padmashree awardee and chairman of AMHSSC, A Sakthivel, said, "The goal of this programme is to support innovation and skill development in home furnishing and apparel manufacturing sectors."

"The primary responsibility of the centre of excellence is to improve the abilities of workers in the clothing, makeup, and home furnishings industries by offering top-notch training. We hope to close the skill gap in the sector and provide employees with the know-how needed to flourish in their positions," Sakthivel said.

Roychowdhury claimed that Credo will offer incubation support, which includes incorporating a firm, assisting in designing, manufacturing, and market access support for at least 2-4 years to the entrepreneurs until they reach a critical mass to move on their own.

"Credo's multiple hybrid fashion design and entrepreneurship programmes combine online studies with hands-on offline skilling, providing a modern and relevant medium for skill acquisition followed by industrial internship and entrepreneurship through its fashion business incubation programme," said Dominic Savio, principal of St. Xavier's College Kolkata. (PTI)

solar and 4 GW of wind capacity. Irdai raises concern over Hinduja Group-led IIHL's bid for Reliance Capital

tion, airports, data centre and com-

modities business, has a capital ex-

penditure outlay of ₹ 1.2 lakh crore

for 2024-25 fiscal (April 2024 to

The group's renewable energy

plans are the most ambitious by

any corporate in the country which

is targeting to generate 500 GW of

electricity from non-fossil sources

by 2030 as part of a broader plan

of achieving net-zero emissions by

2070. Khavda, spread over 538

square kilometres which is the

equivalent of five times the area

that the city of Paris does, will at

peak generate 81 billion units that

can power entire nations such as

Belgium, Chile and Switzerland.

AGEL's other project sites are in

ation park is located in barren land

Jaain said the 30 GW planned at

Khavda would comprise 26 GW of

close to the border with Pakistan.

The massive clean power gener-

Rajasthan and Tamil Nadu.

March 2025).

NEW DELHI, April 7: Insurance regulator IRDAI has expressed some reservations over Hinduja Group firm IndusInd International Holdings' (IIHL) resolution plan for debt-ridden Reliance Capital, which is also in the insurance business, including non-life, sources said.

Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) in a recent communication to Nageshwara Rao Y, the administrator of Reliance Capital has said that the resolution plan submitted by IIHL is not in line with insurance regulations

The regulator has sought clarification regarding equity capital that IIHL, the proposed buyer of insolvent Reliance Capital is willing to put in. It has expressed reservations about debt that IIHL plans to raise to fund the Reliance Capital takeover, sources said. The sector regulator is of the opinion that promoters should invest their own capital as insurance companies deal with the money of policyholders and as a regulator protection of

policyholders is the top priority. It has also sought clarifications on the structure of the company's borrowing plans, including the rate of interest, the instruments to be issued and the proposed subscribers etc.

Besides, it has sought the proposed structure for the acquisition of Reliance Capital's insurance subsidiaries, IIHL's ability to meet future capital requirements of insurance ventures.

The regulator also expressed apprehensive over the exceeding FDI following the transfer of the stake of Reliance Capital to IIHL. (PTI)

Stock markets to track global cues, macro data in holiday-shortened week

NEW DELHL April 7: Global trends macro- Investment Ltd economic data announcements and the start of the earnings season would be the major drivers for the equity markets in a holiday-shortened week, analysts said. Equity markets will remain closed on Thursday for Eid-Ul-Fitr.

Trading activity of foreign investors, rupeedollar trends and crude oil prices would also guide trends in markets.

"Indian companies are set to enter a new corporate earnings Q4 season this week. Leading the pack is IT services giant TCS, set to kick off the earnings season for the quarter ending March 2024.

"Its results for the fourth quarter of FY24 Santosh Meena, Head of Research, Swastika

Investors will closely monitor the movement of the rupee against the dollar, crude oil prices, and investment activities of Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) and Domestic Institutional Investors (DIIs), Meena added.

Last week, the BSE benchmark climbed 596.87 or 0.81 per cent. It hit an all-time high of 74,501.73 on April 4.

"The outlook for the market will be guided by major global and domestic economic data, India's CPI data and IIP, US consumer inflation, US business optimism index, US initial iobless claims and ECB (European Central Bank) interest rate decision," Arvinder Singh

will be on the IT majors to start with. (PTI)

will be announced on April 12, 2024, after Nanda, Senior Vice President, of Master Capmarket trading hours. Apart from that India's ital Services Ltd, said. Ajit Mishra, SVP - Technical Research, Reindustrial production data will also be announced on 12th April 2024. On the same day, ligare Broking Ltd, said this week marks the beginning of the earnings season and the focus inflation for March will be declared," said

Maruti Suzuki eyes export of 300,000 units in FY25, 800,000 by 2030

NEW DELHI, April 7: On the back of record exports last fiscal, Maruti Suzuki India is confident of its overseas shipments crossing 3 lakh units in FY25 as part of gradual scaling up to meet the target of up to 8 lakh units by 2030, according to a senior company official.

The company plans to launch more models in its various export markets that span over 100 countries while also enhancing distribution network, having taken best practices from India such as making bank finance available at dealerships, strengthening service facilities and parts availability to the export markets.

"Till about three years ago our exports were in the range of 1 to 1.2 lakh cars a year. Both as a national vision and as a business ambition, we decided to scale up drastically and from those levels and in 2022-23 we reached about 2.59 lakh units exports and in 2023-24 we completed 2.83 lakh," Maruti Suzuki India Executive Director Corporate Affairs Rahul Bharti told PTI.

He further said, "The interesting part of this is that it bucked the trend of industry. While the rest of the car industry exports actually shrunk by 3 per cent, Maruti



Suzuki was able to grow by about he noted. On the road ahead for ex-9.3 per cent to 2.83 lakh units a year. With this 42 per cent of all cars exported from India are from Maruti Suzuki.

Bharti said the company's strategy is aligned with the government's vision under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to step up India's exports for the country to capture a larger share of the global trade to meet the ambitions of 'Viksit Bharat'.

"We are not only doing this with existing models. Even for the EV, the start of production of which will be in FY25, we would start export, and export it to advanced markets like Japan and Europe,"

ports, he said, "We hope to keep improving it steadily and by 2030 we have a target of 7.5 lakh to 8 lakh units total exports.

When asked if the company can cross the 3 lakh units mark in exports in FY25, Bharti said. "Yes certainly. It is possible barring any major surprises.'

Sharing the company's strategy for increasing exports, Bharti said, 'We don't have all the models in all the 100 markets now. Therefore, the way to enhance exports is more model launches in more countries of the world and at the same time more distribution network.'

On the qualitative side, he said, "What we are doing is taking a lot of best practices from India to these export markets."

He cited examples of making bank finance available at the dealerships, how to give confidence to the customer once the car is sold by providing after-sales service. making easy availability of parts and setting up of customer complaint handling system in order to have more buyers in the overseas markets. "So all these best practices help in giving more confidence to the customer and it reflects in the number of exports," he said.

In FY24, Maruti Suzuki posted record exports of 2,83,067 units, up from the previous best of 2,59,333 units in FY23. In FY22 its exports were at 2.38.376 units.

Prior to that in FY21 the company's overseas shipments were at 96,139 units, while in FY20 it was at 1,02,171 units and in FY19 it stood at 1,08,749 units.

In FY24, Maruti Suzuki's top ten export markets were South Africa, Saudi Arabia, Chile Mexico, the Philippines, Indonesia and Ivory Coast. Its top export models were Baleno, Dzire, Swift, S Presso, Grand Vitara, Jimny, Celerio and Ertiga. (PTI)

Contd. from Page 1...

Issue of D-voters of Bengali

along with one lakh previously promised, Sarma said. He said a call centre employing 400-500 youths for 102 toll-free number of the state police will come up in Dergaon. Under the 102 service, people will be able to report crimes in their residences over the phone and the police personnel will visit the house of the aggrieved and take a complaint on the spot. In another rally in Golaghat, the chief minister said the government is working with a special focus on the development of tea tribes in the state. (PTI)

FIR, magisterial probe

the current elections in Tinsukia district with immediate effect, the official said.

The departments from which the polling personnel were deployed have also been intimated and asked to initiate proceedings through a departmental enquiry, the DC added. Lakhimpur will go to the polls in the first phase on

Cong tally in this election

to the Nari Shakti, who are playing the most important role to build a society of character - which is compassionate, kind, strong, inclusive and yet benevolent," he said.

Commenting on society, the minister said that harmony, not conflict, is the mantra to build a powerful society, adding, "Narendra Modi ji has given the country a vision to aspire and achieve to become a Viksit Bharat, Atmanirbhar Bharat". With inclusive governance and welfare of the people, your support to elect Narendra Modi ji as the Prime Minister of India for the third consecutive term so that this historic journey towards greatness of our beloved country, he said.

During the campaign meeting at Laipuli village, the Union minister of state of petroleum and natural gas, Rameswar Teli remarked that the people acknowledge the good work done by the Narendra Modi government.

"It is evident that the people of Dibrugarh Lok Sabha constituency will elect Sarbananda Sonowal with a record margin of 5 lakh votes, claimed the BJP leader," he added. Further assailing the Congress for their failure of six decades, the BJP candidate for Dibrugarh Lok Sabha constituency, Sonowal said, "People gave the Congress repeated opportunities to govern India for sixty years. But, the people was let down by the inept, inefficient and corrupt governments led by the Congress.

"Congress has failed the people, the country and, as a healthy democracy that we are, it is evident that the people will answer decisively to vote Congress from any future significance," he stated. Besides this, Sonowal also addressed the tea community at the Mahakali Tea Estate in their mother tongue Chadri. Acknowledging the community's commitment in preserving the rich culture and the spirit of workmanship, Sonowal sought the support of the community in continuing the journey towards 'Viksit Bharat.' Sonowal was accompanied by the Teli; the minister of Government of Assam, Sanjay Kishan, the minister of Assam, Bimal Borah among other notable leaders of the BJP and its NDA allies.

Cong manifesto reflection

 $Lok\ Sabha\ MP\ Abdul\ Khaleque,\ the\ party's\ Guwahati\ candidate\ Mira\ Barthakur\ Goswami\ and\ several\ MLAs$ were present on the occasion. Explaining the concept of 'guarantee card', Congress spokesperson Mahima Singh said, "It is a document which contains some parts of our manifesto. Through the 'guarantee card' we are empowering the people to hold us accountable when we form the government.

The party leaders and workers visited several houses in the Panjabari area of the city to distribute the 'guarantee cards' and interacted with the people. Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge had launched the initiative in New Delhi on April 3. (PTI)

Oppn missed chances

starting from April 19, he said the BJP will feel the heat only if the opposition, especially the Congress, can ensure that it loses at least around 100 seats in its strongholds of north and west India. And that's not going to happen, he says. "By and large, the BJP will be able to hold its ground in these regions," he said.

The BJP has made a major and visible push to expand in south and east India over the years as its top leaders like Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah have frequented these states. On the other hand, the opposition has made little effort in these states.

"Count the number of visits the prime minister had made to Tamil Nadu in the last five years versus Rahul Gandhi or Sonia Gandhi or any other opposition leader for that matter made in battleground states. Your fight is in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh but you are touring Manipur and Meghalaya. Then how you will get success," he said in an apparent swipe at Rahul Gandhi.

Asked about his take on Rahul Gandhi's reported reluctance to contest from his family's pocket borough Amethi after losing the seat to Smriti Irani in 2019, he said the opposition party cannot win the country by winning Kerala alone. "If you do not win in UP, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh, there is no benefit if you win from Wayanad. Strategically, I can say that letting that space (Amethi) go will only send a wrong message,' Kishor said. He noted that Modi had chosen to contest from Uttar Pradesh in addition to his home state Gujarat in 2014 "because you cannot win India unless you win the Hindi heartland or have a significant presence in the Hindi heartland.

With opposition parties coming together to form the INDIA bloc to take on the BJP, he said an alliance is neither desirable nor effective to defeat the ruling party as there is already a one-on-one contest in nearly 350 seats. The BJP has been winning because parties like the Congress, Samajwadi Party, RJD, NCP and Trinamool Congress are unable to take it head-on in their own turfs, he said.

They have no narrative, face or agenda, he said.

Kishor, though, rejected suggestions that a third straight win will clear the path for a long era of BJP domination, noting that the decline of the Congress began after it registered its biggest win in 1984 and has since been unable to come to power on its own. "This is a big illusion," he said of the BJP's perceived unstoppable march under Modi, while noting that opposition parties, especially the Congress, failed to capitalise whenever the ruling party was on the backfoot after 2014.

He said the BJP had a long barren phase electorally in 2015 and 2016 when it lost several assembly polls except in Assam but the opposition allowed it to make a comeback. The party again had a poor run post-demonetisation after its win in the Uttar Pradesh assembly polls in 2017 when it almost lost power in Gujarat and was defeated in several states in 2018, but the Congress "blundered" in the 2019 Lok Sabha polls.

Modi suffered from a dip in his approval ratings following the Covid outbreak in 2020 and the BJP lost badly in West Bengal. Instead of mounting any challenge, opposition leaders sat at their homes, allowing the prime minister to make a political comeback, he said.

"If you keep dropping catches, the batter will score a century, especially if he is a good batter," Kishor said. As a political observer, he is more focused on the post-poll scenario as to what will happen if Modi gets another big mandate, more so as the prime minister has frequently spoken about "big decisions" to be taken in his third term. While BJP supporters are happy about "fundamental changes" coming, he said, those opposed to the party ideologically or otherwise are worried if the big decisions will adversely impact the Constitution or democracy. People in the middle are also genuinely concerned, he said.

Kishor has worked for many major parties, including the BJP, Congress and regional satraps, of different ideological moorings since 2014 but has dedicated himself to his Jan Suraj Yatra in his home state Bihar since October 2022 with a stated goal to usher in a new politics in the state. (PTI)

SDF promises 50 per cent

Tenzing Norge. An International Gurung study and heritage centre will be established in Sikkim, the manifesto said, apparently seeking to woo a sizable Gurung community for votes. The SDF also promised to provide free electricity to all Sikkimese households and make it the first carbon-negative state in the world.

The opposition party also proposed to make MGNREGA workers as regular government employees with their wages to be raised to ₹ 500 and man days extended to 200 days. In a bid to woo the educated unemployed youths, the SDF manifesto proposed job-related examinations to be conducted by the Sikkim Public Service Commission (SPSC) every two years, while the interviews for clerical and teacher jobs will be held every two months.

The SDF also promised to double the salaries of all government employees. It further promised to declare all Saturdays as holidays for government employees. With the special status and old laws of Sikkim being emotive issues in the Himalayan state, the SDF promised to safeguard the sanctity of Article 371(F) of the constitution. Stating that the SDF was fighting the assembly polls on the theme of "Save Sikkim", Chamling, the five-term former chief minister, urged the youths to exercise their franchise with great care as their future as well as that of

the state rides on their decisions at the polling booths on April 19. (PTI) It's job call, can't vote

told them about it although officials keep visiting them regularly. The government machinery extensively uses these ferry services as there is no other mode of communication at present. These large vessels even carry vehicles, goods and thousands of people every day from both sides.

The irony is the Election Department too used such vessels in transporting voting equipment and people to Majuli, but the very people who ferried them will not be able to vote. Ahmed said they live in the ferry itself all the time, while the local staff go to their homes once in a month.

"We have a small kitchen and a room to stay. It has a capacity for four persons. The local staff also stay here. When we cannot go to family functions and festivals, then we miss those moments a lot," he added. Besides his wife, Ahmed has two daughters -- the 19-year-old is studying nursing and the 11-year old is in Class 6. "There are around 25 people from our company who are engaged as masters and drivers of these nine vessels,

which can carry 100 people," he added. The ferry service of these large twin-engine vessels began between Nimati and Kamalabari on Thursday after a gap of three months due to drying up of Brahmaputra in winter. However, it was continuing between Nimati and Aphalamukh in Majuli.

The locals -- Achyut Das, Rupak Bharali and Pranab Taye -- said they will go to their respective places to cast their votes on April 19, when the first phase of polling will take place in Jorhat constituency. "The government has not arranged any postal ballot for us. So, we don't have any option but to go for voting. We will go on rotation on that day," said Das, a resident of Jorhat. After he returns, Taye and Bharali will go to Sivasagar and Dergaon respectively, they said.

All three of them are Lascars in the ship and their services are essential while anchoring the vessel after reaching its destination. The government is presently constructing a bridge between Majuli and Jorhat. In November 2021, Assam chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma had launched the construction works of the bridge over Brahmaputra. For construction of the 8.25 km Majuli-Jorhat bridge, including immediate approaches over Brahmaputra on NH-715K at Dakshinpat in Majuli, the Union Ministry of Road Transport and Highways had sanctioned ₹ 925.47 crore.

The state government had constituted a cabinet committee to regularly monitor the progress of the project, which is likely to be commissioned by November 2025. To connect Majuli with the mainland, Union minister Nitin Gadkari had in February 2016 laid the foundation of a bridge over the Brahmaputra connecting Jorhat in south bank and Lakhimpur in north bank via the river island.

For the same project, Prime Minister Narendra Modi in February 2021 again laid the foundation stone for the eight-km long Jorhat-Majuli bridge, to be constructed at Rs 925 crore, before the Assembly polls. (PTI)

Home voting via postal ballot commences ahead of LS elections

Electoral teams deployed to facilitate the voting for AVSC and AVPD

HT Correspondent

TEZPUR, April 7: Home voting for Absentee Voters Senior Citizens (AVSC) and Absentee Voters Person with Disability (AVPD) through postal ballot paper commenced on Sunday in the Sonitpur Election District of 11-Sonitpur Parliamentary Constituency for the upcoming general election to Lok Sabha 2024. The polling teams designated for this purpose started off for their different destinations from the venue of Darrang College, Tezpur.

Around 92 teams comprising some 600 polling and security personnel have been set up to cover the 5 legislative constituencies in Sonitpur Election District namely, 65-Dhekiajuli, 66-Barchalla, 67-Tezpur, 68-Rangapara, and 69-Naduar. The home voting exercise is scheduled to be completed within two days, i.e., by April 8, 2024. In Sonitpur Election District, around 2400 (AVSC and AVPD) voters are scheduled to cast their vote from home through a postal ballot. It is to be noted that for the entire 11-Sonitpur Parliamentary

ITANAGAR, April 7: Even after

the passage of the Constitution

(128th Amendment) Bill aimed at

bolstering women's participation

in electoral politics, the ground re-

ality speaks of a different narra-

tive in Arunachal Pradesh. Only a

few women are taking part in the

simultaneous polls to two Lok

Sabha seats and 50 assembly con-

stituencies to be held in this north-

Toko Sheetal, a greenhorn rep-

resenting the Gana Suraksha

Party, is the only woman among

the total 14 contestants for the two

Lok Sabha seats – Arunachal East

Only eight women filed nomi-

nations for 50 assembly seats. The

ruling BJP has fielded four, the

opposition Congress nominated

three, while there is one independ-

eastern state on April 19.

and Arunachal West.



Biswanath, Gohpur, and Lakhimpur along with Sonitpur, around 2900 home voting through postal ballot is scheduled.

District commissioner cum district election officer, Sonitpur and returning officer of 11-Sonitpur HPC Deba Kumar Mishra accompanied by chief executive officer of Sonitpur Zila Parishad cum cell in-charge of Postal Ballot Paper Cell Karabi Saikia Karan reviewed the entire exercise in Darrang College until all designated teams had left for their destinations and also

Arunachal struggles with low

representation of women in polls

ent candidate. Only one woman

represented the state in the Rajva

Sabha to date, while 15 women

were elected to the assembly since

Arunachal Pradesh graduated to a

full-fledged state in 1987 from

North East Frontier Agency

(NEFA). Of the eight, BJP nomi-

nee from Hayuliang constituency,

According to women activists

and political analysts, several fac-

tors such as cultural barriers,

socio-economic constraints and

lack of awareness could con-

tribute to the low participation of

female participants in electoral

Chairperson of the Arunachal

(APSCW) Kenjum

Pradesh State Commission for

Pakam said, "Women should be

politics.

Women

Dasanglu Pul, won uncontested.

took stock of the overall process and the preparation for the EVM Commissioning scheduled on April 9, 2024.

Our Nagaon correspondent adds: Election officials of Barhampur assembly constituency conducted voting via postal ballot papers at the doorstep of 163 PWD voters as well as voters aged 85 and above for the Kaziranga Parliamentary Constituency on Sun-

These octogenarians and PWD

vote and be voted for. This will

allow them to occupy political of-

fices and contribute to the devel-

Expressing dismay at the low

participation of women in elec-

toral politics she said addressing

these issues requires concerted ef-

forts from both the government

and civil society organisations to

create an enabling environment

that promotes women's involve-

is investing in a stronger, more vi-

brant nation," the APSCW chief

asserted. President of a prominent

women's organisation in the state,

the Arunachal Pradesh Women

Welfare Society, Kani Nada Mal-

ing, urged voters to elect leaders

committed to women's empower-

"Investing in women leadership

ment in the political process.

opment of the nation.'

Constituency cast their franchise on Sunday to elect their representative in the Kaziranga constituency

Over 163 such PWD as well as voters aged 85 and above applied for postal ballot papers, and election officials started the distribution as well as the collection of postal ballots at their respective doorsteps on April 6 and concluded on Sunday afternoon, as stated in an official press note.

Our Margherita correspondent adds: The first day of home voting for Absentee Voters Senior Citizens (AVSC) and Absentee Voters Person with Disability (AVPD) was conducted on Saturday through postal ballots, following all ECI guidelines in the 83-Margherita Legislative Assembly segment under the 13th Parliamentary Constituency.

Several teams comprising officers in charge, assisting officials, security personnel, and micro observers were assembled by the district election officer, Margherita Election District, to carry out the home voting in a successful man-

Comprehensive details on political printing

HT Bureau

DIPHU, April 7: Following the directives issued by the Election Commission of India, Madhumita Bhagwati, ACS, district election officer cum district commissioner, Karbi Anglong, has formally notified all political parties and candidates regarding the obligation to furnish comprehensive details concerning the printing of pamphlets, posters, and other associated materials. Simultaneously, all printing presses are mandated to provide necessary information on any political printing activities conducted within their premises. The provided information must include a meticulous account of the quantity printed, content of material, date of printing, and other relevant particulars. All political parties, candidates, and printing presses are urged to promptly furnish the requested details to facilitate compliance with the Election Commis-

AJP secretary calls for UOF's campaign in Margherita constituency

HT Correspondent
MARGHERITA, April 7: Assam Jatiya Parishad (AJP), Central Committee secretary Sanjay Kumar Deb held a press conference at the office of Assam Jatiya Parishad situated at Changlang Tiniali, Margherita.

While briefing media persons in Margherita, Sanjay Kumar Deb stated that on Monday, Lurinjyoti Gogoi, the United Opposition Forum (UOF) candidate for the 13th Dibrugarh Lok Sabha Constituency, accompanied by Raijor Dal president and MLA of Sibsagar LAC Akhil Gogoi, members of Margherita Block Congress Committee, and all leaders of the United Opposition Forum, will conduct an election campaign at 8 places under the 83rd Margherita Constituency. More than 500 peo-

ple under Jagun Gaon Panchayat are expected to join Assam Jatiya Parishad during this campaign. Through this press conference, Deb requested all people of the 83rd Margherita Constituency to attend the meeting of Lurinjyoti

During the press conference, Sanjay Kumar Deb criticised the BJP-led government both at the Union and state levels for failing to fulfill their promises made before the assembly and Lok Sabha elections. He highlighted issues such as price inflation of essential commodities, unemployment problems, border issues, and alleged corruption related to electoral bonds Deb emphasised that Assam

Jatiya Parishad was formed to safeguard the interests of Assam's people, culture, and land. He asserted that Assam and Assamese people will never accept the controversial Citizenship (Amendment) Act at any cost, and if the INDIA Bloc Government comes into power, their first duty will be to scrap the Citizenship (Amendment) Act.

Deb also expressed concerns about the Northeastern Coalfields Coal India Ltd. in Margherita, stating that it is the largest 'Maharatna' company in the country but is now facing difficulties. He attributed this to rampant illegal coal mining, which has led to the cessation of coal production in several collieries. Deb emphasised the need for legal extraction of coal through scientific methods and the closure of illegal mining operations to generate employment and revenue for the region.

CPI(M)'s Manik Sarkar urges comrades to vote for ally Congress in LS Polls



AGARTALA, April 7: CPI (M) politburo member Manik Sarkar has urged party workers and supporters to vote for the Congress candidate contesting from the Tripura West constituency in the Lok Sabha elections.

Sarkar, a former chief minister of the state, made the statement following persistent criticism by Chief Minister Manik Saha and BJP candidate for the Tripura West Lok Sabha seat, Biplab Kumar Deb, during their election cam-

Ashish Kumar Saha, the Tripura Pradesh Congress Committee president, is the INDIA Bloc nominee for the Tripura West Lok Sabha seat and former CPI(M) MLA Rajendra Reang is contesting from the Tripura East Lok Sabha seat as INDIA Bloc candidate.

"This election is more important than the Assembly elections. We the change is not made in Delhi. I appeal to the party leaders, workers and supporters to vote for INDIA bloc candidate, Ashish Kumar Saha, in the Tripura West Lok Sabha constituency in Congress symbol," he said during an election rally on Saturday.

"There shall not be any hesitation to vote in Congress symbol even as you have been casting vote in CPI(M) symbol. If you miss the occasion, you will be detached from society. This is the demand of time to work jointly to defeat the BJP," Sarkar said.

Claiming that the Congress leaders, workers and supporters will also vote for the CPI(M) in Tripura East Lok Sabha constituency, Sarkar said the CPI(M) has already published a booklet urging the people to vote for INDIA bloc candidate Ashish Kumar Saha.

The distribution of the booklet has already begun, he said.

"If Congress leaders, workers and supporters can vote for CPI(M) candidates, why will the comrades not do it to save the country? Reach out to the voters with folding hands to vote for INDIA bloc candidates in the Lok

AC special train scheduled



HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, April 7: In a bid to

cope with the escalating rush of passengers during summer, it has been decided to operate an AC special train between Jagiroad and Sealdah for twelve trips in both directions each from April 12 to June 29, 2024. Waitlisted passengers of other trains traveling on this route can avail themselves of the opportunity to travel with comfort during this summer in this AC special train.

Accordingly, special train no 03105 (Sealdah – Jagiroad) will depart from Sealdah at 09:00 am every Friday from April 12 till June 28. 2024 to reach its destination Jagiroad at 06:30 am the next day. In the return direction, special train no 03106 (Jagiroad - Sealdah) will depart from Jagiroad at 01:00 pm every Saturday from April 13 till June 29, 2024 to reach its destination Sealdah at 01:00 pm the next day.

Consisting of 16 numbers of AC-3 tier coaches, the special train will run via Guwahati, Goalpara Town, New Bongaigaon, New Alipurduar, New Jalpaiguri, Kishanganj, Malda Town, Jangipur Road, Azimganj, Bandel, Naihati during its both-way journey

Konyak Union summons NDPP president to explain his 'remark' on FNT LGBRIMH celebrates 'World Health Day'

HT Correspondent

DIMAPUR, April 7: The Konyak Union, on behalf of the Konyak civil society organisations, issued a summon notice to ruling Nationalist Democratic Progressive Party (NDPP) president Chingwang Konyak for allegedly violating its directive to all its citizens not to engage in comments/remarks on the Eastern Nagaland People's Organisation (ENPO) Frontier Nagaland Territory (FNT) matter.

Konyak was summoned to appear at the Konyak Union's office at Mon headquarters within 48 hours of receiving the notice to address the alleged violations and explain his actions. The notice was issued on Saturday night.

Asking the NDPP president to treat the notice with utmost seriousness, the union warned that failure to comply with this summon will leave the Konyak civil society organisations with no option but to initiate stern disciplinary action against him. In the notice, the union said it has come to its attention that Konyak made "adverse remarks" at an election rally in Wokha

on April 5. He reportedly said the ENPO's decision to abstain from participating in the forthcoming Lok Sabha elections

would be their "own loss". The ENPO resolved not to participate in the elections for failure on the part of the Government of India to fulfill its offer to create Frontier Nagaland Territory before announcement of the Lok Sabha elections 2024.

"You have also, on multiple occasions, made unfavorable comments regarding the FNT issue. Your repeated disregard to the eastern Nagaland community and the Konyaks in particular is totally unacceptable," the summon notice to Konyak

The union said his actions not only defied the authority of the Konyak civil society organizations, but also brought disgrace and humiliation to the entire eastern Nagaland community, particularly the Konyak people whom he represents.

"Your conduct is unbecoming of a responsible citizen and a



HT Correspondent

TEZPUR, April 7: The Lokopriya Gopinath Bordoloi Regional Institute of Mental Health (LGBRIMH) has celebrated the 'World Health Day' by organising a variety of programmes at its campus in Tezpur in Sonitpur

Vijay Gogoi, associate professor of psychiatry delivered the welcome address during the event on Saturday, emphasizing the concept and significance of the right to health. This was followed by a panel discussion, moderated by Diptarup Chowdhury, associate professor of clinical psychology of the hospital. Esteemed panellists Tanya Seshadri, assistant director, Institute of Public Health, Bengaluru, Vijay Anand Ismavel, paediatric surgeon and co-founder of Makunda Christian Leprosy General Hospital, Karimganj,

has been completed.

and Yogesh Jain, paediatric oncologist and co-founder of Jan Swasth Sahyog, Chhattisgarh joined the discussion online. Kangkan Pathak, professor and head of the

psychiatry department of LGBRIMH, Arunjyoti Baruah, professor and head of psychiatric nursing department were present as panellists. The panellists shared inspiring stories of serving marginalized communities. Despite challenges, they emphasized the nower of collaboration and ture. Their narratives showcased resilience and a commitment to effecting positive change, highlighting the importance of col-

lective action in addressing health disparities. Furthermore, a debate competition among the participants was also held as part of the celebrations, which was moderated by Gaurangi Maitra, a biologist and member of the National Academy of Sciences, India. The topic of the debate competition was 'In pursuit of Universal Healthcare, we are sacrificing high-quality care.' Pinaki Chakravarty, professor at the pharmacology department of the Tezpur Medical College and Hospital, Anjuman Borah, assistant professor of the department of mass communication and journalism of the Tezpur University and Anil Kumar Bhattacharya, retored teacher were the judges in the competition.

LOST

I have lost the society registation certificate (No 238/42 -2012-13) of Ganasilpi Moghai Oza kalakhetra, Hatigorh, Jorhat, PO Chowtang bearing number 238/42 -2012-13 at Jorhat town on March 9, 2024.

Please contact: Ratul Charan Borah Ganasilpi Moghai Oza Kalakhetra, Assam. Roseswar Boruah Road. Hatigorh. PO Chowtang, Jorhat

Phone number: 9101246903

Kokrajhar celebrates GI registration of 13 Bodo cultural products ABSU, BSS, and DBHA host grand ceremony to commemorate milestone

HT Correspondent KOKRAJHAR, April 7: The All Bodo Students Union (ABSU), in association with Bodo Sahitva Sabha and Dularai Bodo Harimu Afad, conducted a grand celebration and thanksgiving ceremony on Saturday following the successful registration of Geographical Indication (GI) tags for 13 Bodo traditional and cultural products across the country. Thousands of participants from different places attended the event wearing traditional Bodo attire such as dhokona, jwmgra, gamcha, and aronai. The event took place at the Govt HS & MP School playground in Kokrajhar. The chief executive member of Bodoland Territorial Region, Pramod Boro, state cabinet minister Urkhao Gwra Brahma, Rajya Sabha MP Rwngwra Narzary, Bodo Sahitya Sabha president Dr Surath Narzary, several leaders representing various social organisations, parties were present at the event, which was chaired by ABSU president Dipen Boro. CEM Boro said that Bodos had fear and apprehension if their language, culture, and traditions would assimilate into others and die down in the course of time, but the great revolution launched by Bodofa UN

Brahma under the banner of

ABSU saved the Bodos from

losing their status and identity.

He said Bodos were warriors

and hardworking in nature,



and they love their culture and tradition very much, for which they are surviving with their identity and status. "Now, we have got a stamp over our 13 traditional items for GI registration, and now no one will be able to claim or misuse our traditional products," he said, adding that out of 21 traditional items and products, 13 have been registered under the GI tag, and 8 more ethnic products are likely to get GI registration as early as possible. He expressed that the entire Bodo community feels proud of the successful registration of Geographical Indication (GI) for 13 Bodo traditional and cultural prod-

"In connection with the great news of 13 GI recognition, I am very happy to participate in the grand celebration and thanksgiving ceremony organized by All Bodo Students Union - ABSU, Bodo Sahitya Sabha, and Dularai Bodo Harimu Afad,' Boro said.

In his speech, ABSU president Dipen Boro stated that the 13 traditional and cultural articles of the Bodos have been certified under Section 16(2) of the Geographical Indication (GI) Registry, Government of India. The awarding of prestigious GI tags to Bodo jotha, gongona, gamsa, sifung, serja, khardwi, kham, gongar dunjia, thorka, keradapini, jwmgra, dokhona, and eri silk are fruits of the ceaseless efforts of the BTR government. He emphasised that this achievement gives them and all people of the world cause to celebrate the rich and beautiful Bodo culture. He mentioned that this renewal of effort aims to foster and promote peace, unity, and harmonious co-existence among all communities in the Bodoland Territorial Region and to preserve their culture and glorious heritage. Boro acknowledged the strong ini-

tiatives of the GI Tag Board

headed by EM Reo Reowa

Narzihary and his members

for the successful registration of the GI tag of 13 traditional State cabinet minister

Urkhao Gwra Brahma stated that the Board of GI Tag of the Bodos applied for the registration of 21 traditional items and ethnic food items, of which 13 items received the GI tag. He emphasised that after getting GI Registration, the 13 traditional products of the Bodos would be the sole copyrights of registered items. Brahma also mentioned that more items, including the traditional aronai, will receive registration soon. He highlighted the competition between handloom and powerloom products of traditional dresses and expressed concern over the downgrading value of traditional garments due to increasing powerloom products in neighboring Assam. He stressed the importance of enhancing handloom products and emphasised that after GI tag registration, traditional dresses would not be produced by businessmen on a

commercial basis. During the ceremony, ABSU, BSS, and DBHA felicitated various individuals including the CEM of BTC Pramod Boro, head of GI Tag Board EM Reo Reowa Narzihary, and professors of GMGC Ganesh Hingmere and Rashmi Hingmere, who played key roles in the GI tagging of 13 Bodo traditional

OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT COMMISSIONER AND DISTRICT ELECTION OFFICER KARBI ANGLONG: DIPHU MEDIA CERTIFICATION AND MONITORING COMMITTEE

6-DIPHU (ST) PARTLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCY KARBI ANGLON ELECTION DISTRICT

PUBLIC NOTICE

This is to inform all concerned that three special Observers, appointed by the Election Commission India are currently stationed at Circuit House New Building, Diphu, Karbi Anglong, for the upcoming General Election-2024 of the 6-Diphu (ST) Parliamentary Constituency, to take stock of the election preparations and other poll-related issues.

| nri Jaydip Mukhopadhay, IAS | General Observer | 6900570986 | Evening 5 PM to 7 PM |
|-----------------------------|---|--|---|
| nri Shankar Lal Verma, IRS | Expenditure Observer | 6900570681 | Morning 10 AM to 10:30 AM |
| nri T.Uniel Kichu AO, IPS | Police Observer | 6900571167 | Morning 10 AM to 11 AM |
| 1 | ri Shankar Lal Verma, IRS ri T.Uniel Kichu AO, IPS | ri Shankar Lal Verma, IRS Expenditure Observer ri T.Uniel Kichu AO, IPS Police Observer | ri Shankar Lal Verma, IRS Expenditure Observer 6900570681 |

For any grievances, election-related issues, or queries any Organization, Political Parties and individuals may contact and meet personally according to the designated time schedule until the election process

> Sd/-DEO & DC Karbi Anglong, Diphu Chairperson Media Certification and Monitoring Committee Karbi Anglong Election District

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QUOTE OF THE DAY

Live life to the fullest, and focus on the positive.
- Matt Cameron

Unemployment crisis

In the backdrop of mounting concerns over youth unemployment in India, political manifestos are emerging as the battleground for addressing this pressing issue. As the country gears up for the Lok Sabha elections in 2024, parties are vying to capture the attention of the nation's youth, who have borne the brunt of a decade marked by job scarcity and soaring education costs. Under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the past decade has witnessed a disturbing trend of rising unemployment and inaccessible education, leaving millions of young Indians disillusioned and disenfranchised. Recent reports from the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the Indian Human Development (IHD) Joint Report have painted a grim picture, with an alarming 83% of the unemployed comprising youth. The Modi government's failure to implement a National Employment Policy, despite recommendations from the Indian Labour Conference, has only exacerbated the crisis.

In response to this dire situation, opposition parties, particularly the Indian National Congress, have seized the narrative, placing youth unemployment at the forefront of their manifestos. Congress's "Nyay Patra" promises a comprehensive approach to justice, with a specific focus on addressing the plight of India's youth through initiatives such as the Yuva Nyay program. Central to their agenda is the introduction of a new Right to Apprenticeship Act, aimed at providing valuable skills training and job opportunities for millions of young diploma holders and graduates. Moreover, Congress has pledged to fill nearly 30 lakh vacancies in the central government, ensuring equitable representation across all levels of governance. The party's commitment to abolishing application fees for government exams and posts addresses a critical barrier faced by youth from marginalized backgrounds in accessing employment opportunities. Similarly, the Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI(M)) has articulated a robust plan to combat youth unemployment, advocating for the constitutional recognition of the Right to Work and the expansion of employment guarantee schemes. Emphasizing the need to safeguard India's demographic dividend, the CPI(M) manifesto underscores the urgency of reversing current policies that prioritize job loss over growth.

As political parties vie for the support of the electorate, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has embarked on a digital campaign to solicit inputs from the country's youth for its manifesto. Despite Prime Minister Modi's assertion that Indian youth are transitioning from job seekers to job creators, the BJP faces mounting pressure to address the systemic barriers hindering youth employment. Beyond the national stage, regional parties such as the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) are tailoring their manifestos to address statespecific concerns while echoing the broader sentiment of discontent with the Modi government's failure to deliver on its promises of job creation. DMK's proposal for an urban employment guarantee law mirrors the success of the rural employment guarantee scheme, signalling a recognition of the need for targeted interventions to alleviate youth unemployment. As the political landscape evolves in the run-up to the elections, the spotlight remains firmly fixed on the plight of India's youth. With manifestos serving as the battleground for competing visions of economic prosperity and social justice, the onus is on political leaders to translate rhetoric into tangible solutions that offer hope and opportunity to a generation on the brink. In this critical juncture, the electorate awaits concrete proposals that address the root causes of youth unemployment and offer sustainable

INDIA bloc's TMC candidate Laliteshpati Tripathi is on a strong wicket in Bhadohi seat



By: Pradeep Kapoor

aliteshpati Tripathi, great grandson of former chief minister Kamlapati Tripathi India block candidate contesting on TMC ticket from Bhadohi Lok Sabha constituency is all set to challenge BJP in this prestigious constituency in eastern Uttar Pradesh.. Known for exclusive carpets all over the world Bhadohi Lok Sabha constituency will see direct fight between Laliteshpati Tripathi and BJP candidate yet to be announced.

Laliteshpati Tripathi had been Congress MLA from Madiaon assembly segment of Mirzapur Lok Sabha constituency in 2012 polls. Then he contested 2019 Lok Sabha and 2022 assembly polls but lost both the elections. Because of differences with Congress leadership, Laliteshpati Tripathi left Congress in 2021 and joined TMC after meeting Mamata Banerjee at Kolkata.

The manner in which Laliteshpati Tripathi ended his relationship with Congress shocked the brahmins in eastern UP. He ended the relationship of four generations starting with Pandit Kamlapati Tripathi his son Lokpati Tripathi and grandson Rajeshpati Tripathi. As per the reports Mughal prince Dara Shikoh learnt Sanskrit from ancestors of Pandit Kamlapati Tripathi living in Varanasi.

As per the understanding between Akhilesh Yadav and Mamata Banerjee, Samajwadi Party left one seat for TMC to enable Laliteshpati Tripathi. With the backing of Congress and Samajwadi Party as an INDIA block candidate Laliteshpati Tripathi is expected to give good fight to the BJP.

It would be worth mentioning here the BJP won this seat in 2019 polls when party candidate Ramesh Chand defeated Ranganath Mishra by a margin of 43,619 votes. Similarly in 2014 Lok Sabha polls also, BJP candidate Virendra Singh defeated Rakesh Dhar Tripathi of BSP by the huge margin of 1,58,141 votes. This Lok Sabha came into existence in 2009 when Gorakhnath of BSP defeated Chotelal Bind of Samajwadi Party by a small margin of 12,963 votes.

Bhadohi is poised for interesting fight as BJP may give ticket to former Congress MP from Varanasi Rajesh Mishra who recently joined saffron brigade. Being very close to Varanasi Lok Sabha seat won by PM Narendra Modi, Bhadohi Lok Sabha is very important for BJP. Bhadohi Lok Sabha constituency has five assembly segments. Out of these segments three we're won by Samajwadi Party and one each by BJP and

alliance partner Nishad Party.
The caste combination in this Lok Sabha constituency is such that Brahmins and backward bind community decide the fate of the candidate followed by the Muslim community which has good presence. (IPA Service)

The transformative journey of Northeast India

PM Narendra Modi's Visionary Leadership

he northeastern states of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim, and Tripura are intricately woven with the borders of neighboring nations like Bhutan, China, Myanmar, and

Bangladesh. This unique geographical positioning has bestowed upon the region a diverse and vibrant cultural heritage, often depicted as 'Suvarnabhumi' in ancient scriptures, symbolizing a land of immense wealth and prosperity.

As history's pages find their stillness, an extraordinary saga unfolds, chronicling the transformation of India's Northeast under the enlightened guidance of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Central to this story is the rejuvenation of a region once relegated to the sidelines, now experiencing a rebirth through comprehensive development initiatives and the promotion of social cohesion.

In the latest literary offering titled "Modi's North East Story," authored by Tuhin A. Sinha, the national spokesperson of BJP, and Aditya Pittie, an angel investor, a guiding light shines upon the transformative path embarked upon. This literary creation isn't merely finding acclaim within India but is striking a chord deeply within the Indian diaspora. It stands as a testament to the rise of 47 million

citizens from Northeast India as the forefront of India's revival.

Under the stewardship of the Modi administration, a profound respect and sensitivity towards the culture, identity, and dignity of the Northeastern populace have been demonstrated. Through a framework of dialogue, development, and democratic engagement, the government has diligently addressed the grievances and aspirations of the region's people. Various peace talks and accords have facilitated the surrender of militants, leading to their rehabil-

itation. Moreover, the establishment of autonomous councils for different tribal groups, alongside the strategic removal of the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA) from several districts, signifies tangible progress. Additionally, concerted efforts have been made to mitigate border conflicts, exemplified by the successful signings of significant peace accords such as the Karbi. Assam Adivasi, Dimasa, and Bodo Peace Accords, underscoring the government's enduring impact on the region.

Fueled by a commitment to peace and progress, the Northeast region is experiencing an unprecedented surge in infrastructure development, catalyzing a remarkable improvement in living standards. Rapid infrastructure expansion along

border areas has significantly uplifted remote districts. Notably, the Northeast has seen a substantial increase in airports, rising from nine to 16, with flight num-

bers nearly doubling since 2014. Moreover, some states in the region have been integrated into India's railway network for the first time, with efforts underway to enhance waterway transportation. Concurrently, efforts to resolve longstanding conflicts and enhance law enforcement have attracted a record influx of tourists. Prime Minister Modi's strategic shift from the 'Look East Policy' to the proactive 'Act East Policy' has unlocked new avenues for trade and collaboration, positioning the Northeast as a vital gateway to Southeast Asia.

With improved connectivity and strategic partner

ships, the region emerges as a key driver of regional integration and economic prosperity. Notably, Prime Minister Modi's unparalleled engagement with the Northeast, marked by approximately 60 visits in nine years, has ushered in a remarkable transformation, earning acclaim as a model of development under his leadership.

In addition to prioritizing infrastructure and economic growth, Prime Minister Modi has shown a steadfast commitment to preserving and showcasing the

rich cultural heritage of the Northeast. By championing the diverse traditions, languages, and customs of the region, he has not only reinforced social cohesion but has also elevated the Northeast's profile on the world stage. Through his frequent visits to the region and strategic endeavors, Prime Minister Modi has laid the foundation for sustained progress and prosperity, ensuring that the

continues to flourish.

The Northeast's economic resurgence is underscored by notable indicators, including a significant rise in GDP and trade, alongside a notable reduction in insurgency and improved connectivity. The collective GDP of Northeastern states has more

unique identity of the Northeast

DEGREE OF THOUGHT

Dipak Kurmi

than doubled, soaring from 2.97 lakh crore to 6.81 lakh crore, while their contribution driver of reto India's GDP has climbed from

2.6 percent to 2.9 percent between 2013–14 and 2021–22.

Remarkably, the region has witnessed several long-awaited milestones in recent years. After nearly six decades since Nagaland gained statehood, the national anthem echoed within the Nagaland Assembly for the first time on February 21, 2021. Similarly, the playing of the national anthem in the Tripura Assembly on March 23, 2018, marked a historic occasion following the

formation of the BJP government in the state.

Furthermore, for the first time since independence, Prime Minister Modi's administration has prioritized development and employment generation in the remotest border villages through the innovative Vibrant Village Programme, symbolizing a paradigm shift towards inclusive growth.

In contrast to previous Indian orime ministers who maintained the status quo, Prime Minister Modi consistently ventures into uncharted territory. Social justice and rectifying historical injustices are paramount for the Modi administration, whether at the individual or regional level. The Northeast region now boasts its highest-ever representation in the Union Council of Ministers, with two cabinet ministers and three ministers of state, including the first-ever inclusion of a Member of Parliament from Tripura.

Over time, flagship cultural events like Nagaland's Hornbill Festival and Manipur's Sangai Festival have evolved into national attractions, drawing visitors from across the country. These initiatives embody a commitment to inclusivity and progress, aligning with Prime Minister Modi's vision of 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas' (Together with all, Development for all). (The writer can be reached at dipakkurmiglpltd@gmail.com)

In defence of Eastern Nagaland people's organisation- A legal discourse

By: Dr. Aniruddha Babar

(...continued from previous edition)

oreover, ENPO's decision to abstain from election-related activ-Lities resonates with a rich fabric of historical precedents within the annals of Indian political discourse. Throughout the country's democratic journey, various social and political movements have strategically employed the tactic of complete election boycotts or abstention from voting, along with refraining from all associated activities, as a potent mode of dissent and a means to highlight their pressing demands. These instances span diverse regions and contexts, ranging from movements advocating for regional autonomy, linguistic recognition, tribal rights, to those protesting against perceived injustices, socioeconomic disparities, or systemic discrimination.

For instance, the Telangana movement in the 1950s, the Assam Movement in the 1980s, and the ongoing struggles for tribal land rights and environmental conservation across different states stand as poignant examples of movements leveraging abstention from electoral processes as a tool for amplifying their grievances and asserting their identities. In each case, the decision to abstain from election-related activities served as a strategic assertion of dissent, a symbolic rejection of mainstream political narratives, and a rallying cry for the acknowledgment of marginalized voices within the constitutional, democratic framework.

Consequently, ENPO's adoption of this strategy aligns with a broader tradition of democratic protest and political mobilization in India, reflecting a nuanced under-

standing of the power dynamics inherent in electoral politics and the efficacy of nonparticipation as a means of political expression and advocacy.

In light of the foregoing analysis, it is unequivocally discernible that ENPO's resolution to abstain comprehensively from participating in all election-related activities until their demand for the recognition of a Frontier Nagaland Territory is unequivocally realized stands as a legally legitimate stance within the intricate fabric of Indian democracy. This decision embodies not only a poignant expression of dissent but also reflects a conscientious assertion of their political aspirations, echothe deep-seated socio-political grievances inherent within the region. By opting for abstention, ENPO signifies its commitment to pursuing its objectives through peaceful and democratic channels, thereby adhering to the foundational principles enshrined in the Constitution of India. Moreover, this stance finds resonance with international human rights norms, which emphasize the right of individuals and communities to advocate for their rights and grievances through non-vi-

Thus, ENPO's decision stands as a testament to the resilience of democratic values and the efficacy of constitutional mechanisms in accommodating diverse political aspirations within the framework of Indian federalism. It underscores the fundamental principle that dissent, when expressed peacefully and within the bounds of the law, serves as a cornerstone of democracy, fostering dialogue, and facilitating the redressal of grievances. In essence, ENPO's resolution embodies the spirit of democratic participation, reinforcing the notion that political engagement encompasses not only active participation

but also the conscious decision to abstain when deemed necessary to uphold principles of justice, equality, and self-determi-

However, it is paramount to underscore that while the entitlement to abstain from voting epitomizes a fundamental facet of democratic liberty, it ought to be exercised judiciously and in consonance with the principles of constitutionalism and the rule of law. The sanctity of the democratic process demands that abstention from voting be motivated by reasoned deliberation and a sincere commitment to advancing the collective welfare.

Moreover, the exercise of the right to abstain from voting should be accompanied by active participation in other democratic processes, such as civil discourse, community engagement, and advocacy for social change in the spirit of the Constitution of India. By channeling dissent and grievances through constructive avenues of civic activism, individuals can uphold the integrity of the democratic system while effecting meaningful progress towards addressing societal concerns.

Furthermore, it is incumbent upon political leaders and institutions to foster an inclusive and participatory political environment that respects and accommodates diverse viewpoints, thereby mitigating the likelihood of disenchantment and disaffection among the electorate. In essence, while the right to abstain from voting is an integral component of democratic governance, its exercise necessitates a nuanced understanding of civic duty and a steadfast commitment to upholding democratic norms and values.

It is imperative to underscore the paramount importance of the entitlement to abstain from engaging in election-related activities a guintessential hallmark of

democratic liberty and individual autonomy enshrined within the Indian ethos. The decision of the Eastern Nagaland Peoples Organization (ENPO) to withhold their participation in such endeavors until the realization of their demand for a Frontier Nagaland Territory resonates as a clarion call for justice within the hallowed halls of Indian democracy. This stance epitomizes not only a legally legitimate assertion but also a fervent cry for recognition, a resolute stand against the tide of historical injustices, systemic as well as systematic marginalization and deprivation. It represents the unwavering spirit of a people unwilling to be silenced, a testament to the enduring resilience of the human spirit in the face of adversity.

In the annals of democratic discourse, ENPO's resolution stands as a beacon of hope, illuminating the path towards a more inclusive and equitable future. It signifies the power of collective action, the unyielding determination to forge a better tomorrow against all odds.

Thus, in embracing this stance, ENPO embarks upon a journey fraught with challenges yet buoyed by the promise of a brighter tomorrow, where every voice is heard, and every aspiration is honoured. It is a testament to the indomitable spirit of Indian democracy, where the power lies not in the hands of the few, but in the collective will of the people to chart their own destiny. As such. ENPO's "historic" resolution stands not only as a legal imperative but also as a moral imperative, a clarion call to uphold the principles of justice, equality, and liberty upon which the edifice of Indian democracy rests. (The author is the Director, Project Constitutional Justice, Tuensang and a Senior Faculty, Dept of Political Science, Tetso College, Naga-

Narendra Modi campaigns in style, Rahul Gandhi does it with substance

By: Sushil Kutty

ge has made a difference to Congress leader Rahul Gandhi. He stands "surer" at the podium than on the eve of the 2019 campaign. But, 10 years on the trot, and age hasn't taken the edge off Prime Minister Narendra Modi's campaigning style. The Prime Minister's outgoing personality is his hallmark. In contrast, Rahul Gandhi comes out more intense from behind the staccato style of delivering speech.

There is an age difference of roughly 20 years. But politicians are practically ageless. And when a caustic tongue is the norm, age never comes in the way. Both Narendra Modi and Rahul Gandhi are at each other's throats as they woo voters. But while Gandhi has to keep a lookout for the Election Commission, and a hold on his tongue, besides the various courts, Modi does not have the same handicap. Modi often gets away with the outrageous during his campaigning.

geous during his campaigning.

So, the campaigning is getting closer to voting and the rivals are picking up steam, attacking each other with barbs and bellows, neither quarter given, nor quarter sought, which is how it should be, but it isn't. Rahul Gandhi, being the challenger, is colourful in his depiction of Modi, which often lands him in trouble; using words such as "pickpocket" and "panauti" is Rahul Gandhi's style while playing the "victim card" is

the old man's prerogative, so we're told.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi quite naturally and effortlessly plays the victim card, with the ease that comes with practice. For example, he will be addressing a choc-a-bloc public rally and suddenly, right in the middle, he will break into, "Wo Mujhe Gaali Bhi Denge", and everybody knows who the "Wo" is when he switches to "Shahzada". Modi, it appears, is given the benefit of doubt and a clean chit because of his status.

Prime Minister Modi's campaigning style rests on such ultraspecial grants. Rahul Gandhi doesn't enjoy such perks and, therefore, often breaks "rules", giving Prime Minister Modi the chance to "hit out". For instance, at the recent INDI-Alliance "maharally" in Delhi's Ramlila Maidan, held to highlight AAP Chief Arvind Kejriwal's arrest, Rahul Gandhi said "India will burn if BJP wins" and Modi bristled. "The Shahzada of Congress's 'shahi' family has said if the country chooses BJP for a third time, the country will be in flames. It shows their desperation...they are speaking of setting the country on fire." Modi's campaign and speeches are shaped by Rahul Gandhi's words and, to a lesser extent, by alleged Gandhi deeds; indeed, misdeeds - current, present or dug out of history's dustbin.

The Prime Minister's narrative writers are archeologists, with

pick and axe, when Rahul Gandhi's speeches, on the other hand, sound more like coaching, than spontaneous and off the cuff. For example, "India will burn if BJP wins a third term" appears to be inspired by Donald Trump's analogy of "bloodbath if the Democrats win". That said, Modi is the master of reverse osmosis. He picks on Rahul's remarks and turns those utterances into questions, such as "Will you allow the country to be set on fire?"

Simple answer is "No", but there you have it, the hero and the villain. Modi scores off such "no balls" lobbed at him by the sometimes clueless Rahul Gandhi. The problem for Rahul Gandhi is the "pappu image" built around him. Modi has an upper-hand. Modi can question Rahul Gandhi's motives, Rahul's language; Rahul's commitment to democracy. Modi straightaway asks voters to "punish Rahul" for "saying such things", leaving people to guess "what things".

"what things".

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's campaign-style is marked by this wide margin of freedom of expression. Not Rahul Gandhi, that fellow doesn't get grace marks for challenging the Prime Minister. Just like AAP convenor Arvind Kejriwal doesn't. The day Rahul Gandhi lands in the slammer, Kejriwal's jail-woes will pale in comparison and Congress workers will have to give a new meaning to "behind the bars".

Rahul Gandhi's campaign style pitches him dangerously close to

getting hauled to "behind the bars" because of the content of his addresses. The challenger has no other option but to attack, attack, attack, and attack...to drive home the point to the voter, which is why Prime Minister Narendra Modi is often with his back to the wall, sagging at the ropes. But this is when Modi's age and his experience come into play. So far, in more than five years, Modi has been successful in taking Rahul hits on the chin.

rin taking Rahul hits on the chin.

That is the Modi style of campaigning and his victim card still has credit to show. Every time Prime Minister Narendra Modi is targeted, he encashes the victim card. Does Rahul Gandhi care? The simple answer, "No". Rahul Gandhi says what he wants to and he is not bothered by how BJP reacts. He is more clued to shaping people's reactions, and perception management. Both Rahul and Modi are playing the same game, deceiving voters into "believing".

It is as old as democracy. It works, too. In Rahul Gandhi's case, in recent times, it worked in Karnataka, and in Telangana. But it did not work in Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Rajasthan where Narendra Modi's campaign style of "I, Me, Myself' carried the day. So much so, Narendra Modi is so impressed he is applying the same template to his 2024 Lok Sabha election campaigning style, which is an extension of "Mai Akela Sab Pe Bhaari", now burnished with "Abki baar, 400

paar" on "June Chaar".

The simple fact is, the Prime Minister has the advantage of playing on the front foot, when Rahul Gandhi has to be on the "backfoot" with a moribund campaigning style, limited to calls for "protecting the Constitution and save democracy", and hoping that the message finds the bullseye, and percolates down to the last voter in the queue.

Rahul Gandhi has been crying 'save democracy" at scores of 'Loktantra Bachao' rallies, the latest held under the INDIA bloc umbrella. His analogy linking a Modi win to "match-fixing" could even mean that the Congress has conceded victory. But the warning that, given a third term, Modi would alter the Constitution is a dog-whistle to those who are concerned about where India is going. Rahul Gandhi's 2024 election campaign-style cannot be divorced from the realities on the ground.

Modi's campaigning style is more about personal attacks couched in politically-correct language. The most Modi stoops to is "Shahzade" whereas Rahul Gandhi goes with "pickpocket" and "panauti". Modi also uses his army of Rahul-baiters to keep sniping at the Congress leader's heels. Union minister Smriti Irani, for instance, whose entire political life appears to be dedicated to "attacking" Rahul Gandhi on Modi's behalf, and for Modi's political benefit. (IPA Service)

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How and why does gut health What can you eat when influence heart health?

popular adage has it that "you are what you eat." And every year new research continues to suggest that this idea may,

Recently, scientists have been focusing on a potential link between the health of the gut and that of the heart.

Doctors already recommend eating hearthealthy foods, and medical professionals agree that much of the correlation between heart and gut health has to do with the gut microbiome, including its composition, and a toxic byproduct it creates when metabolizing certain foods.

Medical News Today spoke with five experts to get to the bottom of how much gut health truly impacts cardiovascular health.

What is the gut microbiome?

All the experts we spoke to agreed that the gut microbiome can have a profound impact on heart

"The gut microbiome is a complex community of trillions of microorganisms, including bacteria, viruses, fungi, and protozoa, that reside in the human digestive tract, primarily in the large intestine (colon)," Dr. Nathaniel E. Lebowitz, a cardiologist with Hackensack University Medical Center in New Jersey explained to MNT.

"These microorganisms can be healthy or unhealthy depending on what we feed them. If they are unhealthy, all of our body's systems can go haywire. Just like we depend on the microbiome for our health, it depends on us for its health," he detailed

"Keeping the microbiome healthy is increasingly found to be critically important for all of our organs — including the heart and arteries," Dr. Lebowitz continued. "We know that inflammation is possibly the main driver these days when it comes to so many health problems, especially with the heart. The microbiome plays a big role in counteracting inflammation."

In turn, Dr. Cheng-Han Chen, a board-certified interventional cardiologist and medical director of the Structural Heart Program at MemorialCare Saddleback Medical Center in Laguna Hills, CA, told MNT that:

There's more and more research coming out that there is a connection between the composition of someone's gut flora or the microbiome. There's a connection between the type, distribution, and relative composition of gut bacteria that someone has and an association with their risk factors for heart disease — that includes high blood pressure, high cholesterol, [and] obe-

Past research has linked an unbalanced gut microbiome to an increased risk for several cardiovascular diseases, including coronary heart disease, heart failure, stroke, heart attack, hypertension, and atherosclerosis.

What is TMAO?

Another way in which the gut microbiome can potentially have harmful effects on the heart is through the production of trimethylamine-Noxide (TMAO).

"When gut microbes feed on choline — found in red meat, poultry, eggs, [and] certain fish they make trimethylamine (TMA), which is absorbed into the body and goes to the liver where it is changed into TMAO," Dr. John P. Higgins, a sports cardiologist at McGovern Medical School at The University of Texas Health Sci-

ence Center at Houston (UTHealth) explained. cholesterol and artery narrowing plaque in important arteries in the body, especially the coronary arteries which supply blood to the heart. So people with high levels of TMAO are at increased risk of heart attacks or stroke," he noted.

"Studies have associated TMAO with aspects of inflammation and blood vessel dysfunction," Dr. Chen added. "It also promotes foam cells in

the blood vessels. All of these different things end up promoting different types of heart disease, such as atherosclerosis, and they can also lead to different aspects of cardiovascular risk factors such as high blood pressure."

A study published in October 2019 linked TMAO to disease severity and mortality rate in people with peripheral artery disease.

Research published in March 2023 reported an increase of TMAO in blood plasma was an independent predictor for major adverse cardiac and cerebrovascular events in people who experienced acute myocardial infarction (heart at-

And a study published in March 2022 correlated elevated TMAO levels with large artery atherosclerotic ischemic stroke.

Why is a well-balanced gut microbiome important?

As the gut microbiome influences not only heart health, but the well-being of the entire body, experts agree that it must be well-balanced for optimal function.

"An easy way to think about the gut microbiome is like a beautiful farm garden," Monique Richard, a registered dietitian nutritionist and owner of Nutrition-In-Sight explained to MNT.

'The various gut bugs, or microbiota, are like the components of the garden, each having their own job function to contribute to a bountiful harvest. The garden needs components like healthy soil, clean water, proper nutrients, structure, and tender love and care," she continued the analogy. According to Dr. Lebowitz:

"If we eat foods that feed the good bacteria an alkaline diet high in fruits and veggies — we will be fostering the health of a healthy microbiome. Eating foods that contain too much refined carbohydrates, sugar, and processed foods can have the opposite effect and feed bad bacteria which can trigger inflammation that causes disease — and the arteries and the heart are no exception to this. If there is inflammation in the arteries, as an example, cholesterol will stick to

Richard said it is also important to note that each person's gut microbiota has its function in helping process what we eat and supporting various functions of digestion and systemic func-

"One example includes our gut microbes breaking down compounds into what are called short-chain fatty acids (SCFAs) like butyrate,"

"Butyrate has many known benefits which include being anti-inflammatory and cardio-protective. The better equipped our gut is with benefits to nurture the components of our internal 'garden,' the more robust the rest of our systems will be since it is all connected and work

together," explained Richard. Why is fiber heart-healthy?

In addition to following a heart-healthy diet, medical experts agree that getting enough dietary fiber is also required to keep the gut-heart connection thriving.

"Foods that contain fiber are pretty heart healthy — low in saturated fats, low in sodium." Dr. Chen explained. "And fiber itself is actually food for the gut bacteria. So the more fiber you have, the healthier they will be. They process the fiber and break it down.

"Fiber-rich foods definitely lower the risk of heart disease and stroke by quite a bit," Dr. Rudolph Bedford, a board-certified gastroen-Center in Santa Monica, CA, told MNT. "Fiber in itself will help to not only take away many of the bad toxins but will also lower the cholesterol

"High fiber diets are great because the microbiome breaks fiber down into beneficial things like short-chain fatty acids which are associated with improved blood pressure, blood sugar, less

can boost [cardiovascular] health," Dr. Higgens added.

Past studies have linked higher dietary fiber intake with lower long-term cardiovascular disease risk, as well as reduced incidence and mortality from heart disease.

Should you take probiotics or prebiotics? While eating the right foods can help keep the gut microbiome healthy, there has been a lot of talk over the past few years about taking prebiotic and probiotic supplements to aid with gut

In the most basic terms, probiotics are bacteria beneficial to the gut microbiome, while prebiotics are food for those bacteria

Some foods are natural prebiotics — these include oats, bananas, onions, artichokes, spinach, and chia seeds.

'The problem with probiotics is that they're a 'food supplement,' and much of this is strain-dependent —in other words, what type of strains are within those probiotics," Dr. Bedford explained. "There's no doubt that certain strains of probiotics may certainly aid in gut health and may even help in decreasing your risk of cardiovascular disease.

"But the fact of the matter is that there are just so many different probiotics out there and none of this is regulated by any government agency,' he continued. "It's somewhat of a challenge to recommend probiotics to patients, depending upon what it is that they're actually getting. You should definitely speak to your physician before you start a probiotic or prebiotic.

Healthy gut, healthy heart

With so much evidence pointing to a link between the gut microbiome and cardiovascular health, following a healthy diet rich in foods that aid the good bacteria in the gut is important.

"The gut microbiome itself may cause elevations of cholesterol levels or decreasing cholesterol levels, increasing in other types of chemicals [...] such as TMAO, which may increase the risk of heart attacks and strokes and even kidney disease," Dr. Bedford said. "Gut health is eminently connected to the heart."

"It appears that having a healthy gut is important to heart health, through indirect effects improving cardiovascular disease risk factors and direct effects — TMAO-promoting artery-blocking plaque," Dr. Higgins said. "[It] also boosts [the] immune system.

Dr. Lebowitz advised:

"If your diet is healthy then your diet will promote good health. Eating the right foods, for example, fruits, veggies, and cold water fatty fish like salmon, pacific herring and sardines can help to reduce inflammation and your risk of heart disease. The right nutrition can work wonders — it can even reverse some of the damage already done."

'The quality of what we consume is important, but so is the environment we consume it from," Richard said. "Be sure to take time to sit at a table in an inviting environment as often as

"Take time to slowly chew your food, use your senses to observe, and enjoy the experience of eating. When we are enjoying a meal together around a table — away from technology and convenience — we are feeding so much more than our bodies and gut. These practices are critically more important to the heart, mind, and body than we can measure in a study," she em-

"It is also important to remember that all things are interconnected," added Richard. "Nurturing our 'internal garden' also requires other ways the heart can thrive and be protected like exposure to nature and fresh air, loving relationships, activities that bring joy and happiness, regular activity, and sunshine." (Courtesy: Med-

you're feeling bloated?

By: Kavita Devgan

e're all familiar with the uncomfortable stabbing pain and fullness of feeling bloated. You can't sit, you can't stand, you can't sleep, and worse of all, you can barely stomach the thought of eating anything, let alone actually eat.

Why does this happen? How does your body go from feeling just fine to feeling like a balloon with no release?

Bloating: Why does it happen?

Bloating is a condition where your gastrointestinal (GI) tract gets filled with air or gas from what you eat, your lifestyle, or for medical reasons, making you feel

full and tight in your belly. Food: The most common reason for bloating is a buildup of gas in your gut.

This is most commonly caused by particular foods and drinks like lentils and fizzy drinks. It can also be caused if you eat too fast

and gulp too much air while swallowing

Some people may also have digestive issues that can cause bloating after meals such as:

- Constipation
- Food allergies · Coeliac dis-

ease

Irritable bowel syndrome (IBS)

 Gynecological conditions

Medication Effects: Sometimes some medicines. particularly those with steroids may cause the kidneys to hold on to sodium. The body often tries to combat stress with an excessive

production of the hormone estrogen. This prevents normal excretion of salt from the kidneys, adding to fluid retention.

Say no to excess salt

Stick to the one-teaspoon-a-day (most doctors agree on an intake of 2,400 mg; about a little more than a teaspoon) whether it's in soups, salads, pickles, rotis, vegetable, fries, rice, dals and anything else you may consume.

So go easy on the saltshaker but also ban the other likely triggers - junk and processed food. Watch out for MSG (Mono Sodium

Glutamate) - a kind of salt - found in Chinese food and processed food. Also read your labels for "MSG" or "hydrolysed vegetable protein, which contains MSG, and avoid these foods as much as possi-Switch up your diet

According to Johns Hopkins University, people who frequently experience bloating can benefit from a low fermentable oligosaccharides, disaccharides, monosaccharides polyols (FODMAP) diet.

The diet basically entails avoiding fermented, gas-producing food ingredients, such as:

- · Refined flour
- Onions
- Garlic
- Legumes and beans • dairy products with lactose

- · Certain fruits like apples, plums and
- Certain vegetables like cauliflower On the other hand, foods like tomatoes, bananas, turmeric and ginger can help ease bloating.

Identify food allergies

If you constantly feel congested, with puffy eyes and a headache, food allergy could be a suspect too. Usually allergies are associated with hives, stomach pain and headaches. Now just add bloating to that list also.

Dairy products, wheat, fish, eggs and nuts are common allergy-causing foods. Some people notice that cutting out dairy products for 4 weeks helps them reduce weight and puffiness and feel energetic, weed out possible food allergies.

Try eliminating one suspect food item from your diet at a time for a couple of weeks and see if it helps to keep the swelling down. You will then know the culprit.

Your other buddies

Potassium is very important as foods high in potassium help offset the sodium load. Calcium and magnesium also play an important role in the fluid balance in the body.

Where to get these?

For potassium, eat at least five servings of fruit and vegetables. Nuts and seeds are good sources

For magnesium, depend on nuts (spl. almonds), legumes, wheat grains, green vegetables, potatoes, apples, jamun, phalsa, mangoes, amla, guava and ba-

Also check up if you are getting enough calcium daily?

Some vitamins play a role too. Vitamin B6 (pyridoxine) is thought to help in cases of mild fluid retention. Good sources of vitamin B6 include brown rice and red meat.

Vitamin B5 (pantothenic acid), calcium and vitamin D help the body to excrete excess fluids.

Finally, check your water meter

You could be retaining water if you are dehydrated. That's because just like when on a crash diet the body responds by going into starvation mode and clings to fat, your body begins to hold on to fluid when it's dehydrated.

So a bloated stomach could actually be a signal to gulp some water down. In fact drinking plenty of water will actually help your kidneys to flush out excess fluid. Although caffeine (too much coffee,

tea) and alcohol are both diuretic, con-

suming these in excess will only dehydrate you and worsen fluid retention. • Avoid aerated drinks as the bubbles in

hese lead to more gas formation - so ever more discomfort. • Say no to alcohol. Alcohol does act as

a diuretic at first, making you lose excess water. But this loss of fluid can progress to the point of dehydration. • Drink at least eight glasses of water a

day to help flush out the salt. (Courtesy:

The Quint)

Autism: A need for a new approach

By: Samir H. Dalwai

Doctor, my child was diagnosed with autism at two and a half years. I moved from a small town to a metropolis for therapies not available in my town. I did all that was advised and my child is now reciting rhymes, writes alphabets and small words and attends school with a shadow teacher. But I can never send him to school without the shadow teacher nor leave him on his own with my relatives. He now has a routine that he refuses to change – he screams at the smallest change in routine. He is 'better' at numbers and alphabets but I struggle to teach him social behaviour and that embarrasses me no end. People call us names and worse, no one wants to invite him over.

What went wrong?" Autism is far more common than imagined. With a worldwide estimated prevalence of approximately 2.5% of the population, only a small minority is identified before three years of age. Many are diagnosed beyond six years of age, especially those with minor symptoms. However, in spite of greater awareness and interventions, the recovery is far from satisfactory. As a developmental paediatrician who has led teams in the field for over two decades, I have come to realise that we have failed to truly understand autism. We are confusing the symptoms for diagnosis. Worse, are we treating it symptomatically, which is why the improvements are not eventually enough. Absence of speech is the most commonly recognised presenting feature and treatment is sought for it. However, this is just one aspect of the spectre that an autistic child is facing. Do we need a new look, a paradigm

How is autism recognised?

Lack of engaging eye contact and

meaningful social smiles are the earliest signs. Absence of reciprocating non-verbal gestures, like running into mother's arms or stretching out one's arms in response to the mother's outstretched arms for a hug (I call this the SRK sign after the actor's distinctive arms-outstretched pose), or even not taking cognisance of the parent entering or leaving the room can be picked up in infancy and toddlerhood. Poor response to the caregiver pointing to something that the child otherwise may enjoy, or absence of pointing to the parent something that s/he wants, may be noticed. The child may prefer to reach out to the biscuits she wants or may bring the box to the parent or drag the parent to the box – thus indicating her wants, way past the age when she should have been pointing at things or even speaking.

The child may "hear" the sound on the TV or the doorbell, but may fail to respond to her own name being called out. Parents may attribute it to the child being in her own "mood"; persistence of failure to respond to name-call over weeks should ring an alarm and necessitate an immediate hearing assessment by a trained professional. If the hearing assessment is normal, it indicates that the child can hear but does not understand human speech as well as she should at that age. Delay in understanding other's speech leads to a consequent delay in the child speaking herself. Speech delay is thus a symp-

tom rather than the malaise. Interestingly, the child is able to recall words, phrases, sometimes entire rhymes or the alphabet. This may lull the parent for a long time into assuming that the child is speaking well. However, one soon realises that the child utters these words or phrases at unexpected times, places or situations. It is almost as if a cassette is playing a meaningless repetition of sounds.

called "echolalia". The child also starts displaying repetitive behaviours like flapping of hands or spinning, especially when excited. The wheels of a toy car are more engrossing to the child than the car as a whole. The child may show preference towards or may abhor certain sensations like movement, the touch and feel of certain textures, loud sounds like firecrackers, particular visual designs or patterns of music. Eating may be a problem - the child prefers only a particular type of consistency or taste. He may resist attempts at toilet training and may have constipation. Sleep disturbances emerge as a troublesome symptom. Some parents may notice that the child regresses from what he was able to do earlier.

Every child may not show each of the symptoms nor display equal severity across symptoms. Most often, the child is completely normal in terms of facial features and motor development as well as physical growth parameters. What really is autism then?

Autism is the absence of normal development in the social behaviour and communication domain of development, rather than the presence or emergence of a novel disease. Our work at our institute makes us believe that the definitive clinical cause of autism is the genetic predisposition for excessive object engagement and the absence of human engagement that children display since birth.

Early signs are related to the absence or paucity of social engagement between the child and the caregivers. Everything post that is perhaps a consequence of this deficiency rather than independently occurring symptoms. This absence of human engagement disrupts the onset of the social behaviour and communication sequence (human engagement-human behaviours-non verbal communication-vercommunication-reading and

typically. Delay in speech, one believes, is a consequence of this early failure rather than an independent

We have seen that helping parents target the cause (poor human engagement, excessive object engagement we call it 'ati vastu magnata-kam manushya magnata') and working with the child along the sequence leads to sequential attainment of goals. We do not focus directly at the beginning on attaining speech or reading and writing, because this sometimes encourages echolalia and repetitive behaviours. The child will pick up speech and academics once the earlier milestones are in place. Work on the basics first, the rest will follow

Having worked with hundreds of families at multiple centres and online, we have seen far better improvements. Parents are the cornerstone of this recovery. They need to be coached on the way ahead (the sequence) step-by-step and they need to implement the same at home. The improvements need to be tracked monthly by the medical team and the therapy and coaching has to be dynamic, as per the child's attainment of typical milestones. The children need understanding and support from everyone – cantankerous uncles, loving aunts, vibrant cousins, disciplining grandparents, involved neighbours, patient teachers, smiling shopkeepers, caring security guards and supportive doctors – each one helps the child learn the diversity of human behaviour and communication. It takes a village to help a child with features of autism to be able to develop better and almost like any other child. A village that allows the child to enter each household,

and learn how to behave and speak. Unfortunately, ever since the western world started seeing these cases, the needle keeps swinging between trying to find an organic cause (organophosphorous poisoning or vaccines) and intervention focused only symptomatic therapies. While the for-

mer has proved to be elusive (and even disastrous, as the incorrect implication of vaccines was) the latter has succeeded in spawning interventions running over years of repetitive, pattern-oriented teaching. Both the government and private sectors have focused on 'providing' the 'approved' therapies. However, provision of a medicine is not equivalent or enough to curing the disorder – in fact, the concept of health now encompasses wellbeing and not just cure. There is no outcome monitoring of the eventual benefits to children and families. Neither is there any guideline to suggest the duration and the 'dosage' of these

interventions. It is the norm to deny the time taken for betterment, or to even provide documented reports or plans or programmes, and there is almost no monitoring. Hapless parents are offered a disclaimer to begin with: "Autism is an enigma, the cause is not known, we don't know if he will get better, these interventions may help, try and see," etc. 'Diagnosis' is very often, scoring the symptoms on standardised scales – if you score, say 8 on 10, there is a high probability you have autism, if you score 7 on 10, you have a low probability of the same. Interestingly, the interventions that follow for both (7/10 and 8/10) are largely the same and still focus on the symptoms. The scores are used to classify the child as mild, moderate or severe – but there is no definite intervention method that offers a definite plan for mild and differs from another for severe, nor tagged with

outcomes that have appropriate results. Providing one session a month to every child (without any documented plan, programme, belief of adequacy and zero monitoring of outcome) and then to claim that we are 'offering treatment', is not only wrong but perpetuates the wrong. The institutionalisation of certain interventions has in fact prevented creative research in the field. It is unquestionably and socially a necessity for all of us to celebrate Autism Days to be supportive and inclusive for individuals and families with autism. It is questionable how this has led to the professionals joining in the chorus of calling it an 'enigma' or a 'mystery' yet not hesitating to prescribe billions of dollars' worth of these interventions internationally.

I wonder whether we as medical professionals have abdicated the urgent need to find a cause of autism by being satisfied with symptomatic interventions and finding relief in the disclaimer that autism can never get normal. Unfortunately, this has led to mushrooming of doubtful and outright unindicated interventions that promise to give the parent magical relief ozone therapy, hyperbaric oxygen, stem cell transplants have only thrived in this situation, much to the detriment of children with autism.

Finally, it is a myth that a child with autism does not get better. A combination of early and correct intervention can lead to tremendous improvement in the child. Although things may look difficult, and may take some time, in most cases they are not as difficult as one has assumed them to be. We need to have a new perspective towards autism. One that is simple and makes sense to the common man, rather than tossing out impressive jargon. For which, the medical and para medical profession has to perhaps decide to take the road less travelled. Let this be our call on World Autism Awareness Day 2024 - to break the stereotypes in our own minds about autism. (Courtesy:



Entry by force into the Embassy of Mexico in Quito constitutes a violation of the 1961 Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations

International leaders condemn Ecuador after police break into the Mexican Embassy in Quito

QUITO (ECUADOR), April 7: International leaders have condemned Ecuador after police in the country's capital broke into the Mexican Embassy to arrest a former vice president who had been granted political asylum.

The raid late Friday prompted Mexican President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador to break off diplomatic relations with Ecuador, while his government's foreign relations secretary said the move will be challenged at the World Court in

Police broke through the external doors of the embassy in Quito to arrest Jorge Glas, who had been residing there since December. He had sought asylum after being indicted on corruption charges and it had been granted hours earlier.

The break-in was widely condemned.

The Organisation of American States in a statement reminded its members, which include Ecuador and Mexico, of their obligation not to "invoke norms of domestic law to justify non-compliance with their international obligations".

The Spanish foreign ministry, in a statement on Sunday, said that "The entry by force into the Embassy of Mexico in Quito consti-



tutes a violation of the 1961 Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations. We call for respect for international law and harmony between Mexico and Ecuador, brotherly countries to Spain and members of the Ibero-American community."

US State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said that "the United States condemns any violation of the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations, and takes very seriously the obligation of host countries under international law to respect the inviolability of diplomatic missions". He called on both countries to resolve their difference.

Castro, writing on X, characterised the raid as "an intolerable act for the international community" and a "violation of the sovereignty of the Mexican State and international law" because "it ignores the historical and fundamental right to asy-

Diplomatic premises are considered foreign soil and "inviolable" under the Vienna treaties and host country law enforcement agencies are not allowed to enter without the permission of the ambassador. People seeking asylum have lived anywhere from days to years at embassies around the world, including at Ecuador's in London.

Julian Assange for seven years as British police could not enter to arrest him

Alicia Barcena, Mexico's secretary of foreign relations, on Friday posted on the social media platform X that a number of diplomats suffered injuries during the break-in.

Barcena said Mexico would take the case to the International Court of Justice "to denounce Ecuador's responsibility for violations of international law". She also recalled Mexican diplomats.

On Saturday, Glas was taken from the attorney general's office in Quito to the port city of Guayaquil, where he will remain in custody at a maximum-security prison.

People who had gathered outside the prosecutor's office yelled "strength" as he left with a convoy of police and military vehicles.

Glas' attorney, Sonia Vera, told The Associated Press that officers broke into his room and he resisted when they attempted to put his hands behind his back. She said the officers then "knocked him to the floor, kicked him in the head, in the spine, in the legs, the hands," and when he "couldn't walk, they dragged him out".

Vera said the defense team was

UK PM Sunak reiterates call for

'humanitarian pause' in Israel-Hamas conflict

while he was at the prosecutor's office, and it is now working to file a habeas corpus petition.

Authorities are investigating Glas over alleged irregularities during his management of reconstruction efforts following a powerful earthquake in 2016 that killed hundreds of people. He was convicted on bribery and corruption charges in other cases.

Ecuador's Foreign Minister Gabriela Sommerfeld on Saturday told reporters that the decision to enter the embassy was made by President Daniel Noboa after considering Glas' "imminent flight risk" and exhausting all possibilities for diplomatic dialogue with Mexico. Mexico granted Glas asylum hours before the raid. Sommerfeld said "it is not legal to grant asylum to people convicted of common crimes and by competent courts".

Noboa became Ecuador's president last year as the nation battled unprecedented crime tied to drug trafficking. He declared the country in an "internal armed conflict" in January and designated 20 drug-trafficking gangs as terrorist groups that the military had authorisation to "neutralise" within the bounds of interna-

Russia declares federal emergency in flood-hit Orenburg region

MOSCOW, April 7: Russia's launched to investigate suspected government has declared on Sunday flood-hit areas in the Orenburg region a federal emergency, state media reported.

The floods, caused by rising water levels in the Ural River, forced over 4,000 people, including 885 children, to evacuate, the regional government said. State news agency Tass said that a further 2,000 homes were flooded, bringing the total to nearly 6,300 in the region.

Russia's emergency situations minister Alexander Kurenkov arrived in Orsk — one of the most hard-hit cities — on Sunday to supervise rescue operations.

"I propose classifying the situation in the Orenburg region as a federal emergency and establishing a federal level of response," the minister said, according to RIA Novosti.

Orsk, less than 20 kilometers (12.4 miles) north of the border with Kazakhstan, suffered the brunt of the floods which caused a dam to break on Friday, according to Orsk mayor Vasily Kozupitsa. By Sunday morning, 4,500 residential buildings in the city of 200,000 were flooded and evacuation efforts were still ongoing, Tass

A criminal probe has been

Yellen says US-China relationship on 'more stable footing'

BEIJING, April 7: US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen met Sunday with Chinese Premier Li Qiang in Beijing and sent a message of mutual cooperation despite the nations' differences. Yellen came to China top of mind with trade practices that put American companies and workers at an unfair competitive disadvantage.

In the ornate Fujian room of Great Hall of People building just west of Tiananmen Square, she told Li: "While we have more to do, I believe that, over the past year, we have put our bilateral relationship on more stable footing."

"This has not meant ignoring our differences or avoiding tough conversations," she said. "It has meant understanding that we can only make progress if we directly and openly communicate with one another.

Li said media interest in Yellen's visit "shows the high expectation they have and also the expectation and hope to grow" the US-China relationship. The meeting comes after the US and China on Saturday agreed to hold "intensive exchanges " on more balanced economic growth, according to a US statement issued after Yellen and Chinese Vice Premier He Lifeng held extended meetings over two days in the southern city of Guangzhou. (AP)

construction violations that may have caused the dam to break. Local authorities said the dam could withstand water levels up to 5.5 metres (nearly 18 feet).

On Saturday morning, the water level reached about 9.3 metres (30.51 feet) and rising, Kozupitsa said. On Sunday, the level in Orsk reached 9.7 metres (31.82 feet), according to Russia's water level information site AllRivers.

Officials in Orsk reported Sunday that four people had died, but said their deaths were unrelated to the flooding.

Officials in the regional capital (also called Orenburg) some 250 kilometers (155 miles) away from Orsk, wrote on Telegram Sunday that the situation in the city was "getting worse", as water levels increased by 28 centimeters (11.02 inches) centimeters compared to the previous day. Over 1,300 homes flooded and 428 people evacuated, they said.

Footage from Orsk and Orenburg showed water covering the streets dotted with one-story houses. The Ural River, about 2,428 kilometers- (1,509 miles) long, flows from the southern section of the Urals into the north end of the Caspian Sea, through Russia and Kazakhstan. (AP)

Vehicle carrying Chinese nationals in northwest Pakistan was not bullet, bomb-proof: Report

PESHAWAR, April 7: The vehicle carrying Chinese engineers, who were killed in a suicide attack last month in northwest Pakistan, was neither bullet nor bomb-proof, according to a police report.

A vehicle-borne 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 on March 26. Five Chinese nationals and their Pakistani driver were killed in the attack.

The police report, which has been sent to the federal government, said that the bus targeted in the attack was travelling at a distance of 15 feet from the other bus and fell into a 300-feetdeep ditch after the suicide bomber crashed his explosives-laden vehicle into the vehicle carrying the victims on the Karakoram Highway, Geo News reported on Sunday.

The report said that the vehicle carrying Chinese nationals was neither bullet nor bomb-proof. The report, the second of its kind, added that the buses part of the convoy carrying Chinese nationals was equipped with close circuit television cameras (CCTV). The development comes a day after Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif ordered disciplinary action against senior police officers for 'negligence" in light of an inquiry report over the incident.

"The prime minister has directed to take action against the regional police officer (RPO) Hazara Division; district police officer of Upper Kohistan and Lower Kohistan; director security, Dasu Hydropower Project and commandant special security unit Khyber Pakhtunkhwa within 15 days," Information Minister Attaullah Tarar said. On Friday, Sharif directed all Pakistani security agencies to ensure foolproof security arrangements for the Chinese nationals working on various projects in the country.

Meanwhile, China has also expressed concern about last Tuesday's attack and demanded the safety of their nationals working on various projects in Pakistan. (PTI)

Imran Khan says some of his party leaders in touch with establishment

ISLAMABAD, April 7: Pakistan's jailed former prime minister Imran Khan has said that some of his party leaders are in contact with the powerful establishment, as he expressed willingness to hold a dialogue with anyone amidst the crackdown on his party.

Khan's remarks came as he spoke to reporters after the hearing of the Al-Qadir Trust corruption case on Saturday, the Dawn newspaper said.

Khan, 71, said that he was ready to hold a dialogue with anyone for the sake of the country.

The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder said if he could hold talks with former army chief Qamar Javed Bajwa, who he later accused of being instrumental in the fall of his government in April 2022, then he could meet anyone since the country was passing through a difficult phase.

Khan said that a few leaders in the PTI "are still in contact with the establishment", apparently for negotiations. However, he did not

He also claimed that the mandate of the PTI had been stolen and "efforts were being made to take over the party"

Since falling out with the powerful military, Khan's party has been facing a crackdown. The party faced pressure in the form of arrests and desertions in the wake of the May 9 violence that broke out after Khan's arrest last year.

Since his removal from power in a no-confidence motion in April 2022, the cricketer-turned-politician has been convicted in at least four cases.

Khan said his spouse Bushra Bibi was being allegedly targeted to exert pressure on him and added that those pointing fingers at her were doing so in a bid to 'dismantle' the party.

Khan said he had never entered into a confrontation with the military. He claimed that the ex-army chief 'backstabbed' him, adding he could have de-notified him but he exercised restraint.

ouster and claimed that the latter was involved in a US-backed conspiracy to remove him from office.

Khan during the media talk on Saturday claimed that he had also conveyed a message to Chief of Army Staff Gen Asim Munir through former president Arif Alvi that he knew about the so-called 'London Plan' to keep him behind

Khan alleged that police entered his bedroom on Aug 5 last year to detain him, and confiscated his passport and the chequebook, adding that Bushra Bibi had moved her valuables to a secure location. The ex-premier alleged that intelligence agencies had asked his staffers to turn 'approver' against

According to Khan, the country was facing a 1970s-like situation.

About the incumbent government, Khan claimed that the "king is sitting behind and [interior minister] Mohsin Naqvi is at the forefront as his viceroy"

Khan claimed that Shehbaz Sharif had no authority.

Meanwhile, the accountability court continued recording of testimony of the witnesses, as five prosecution witnesses had been cross-examined by the defence counsel on Saturday. The case will resume after the Eid holi-

The Ali-Qadir Trust case is about the settlement of 190 million pounds, about Rs 50 billion, which the UK's National Crime Agency sent to Pakistan after recovering the amount from a Pakistani property tycoon.

Khan, being the prime minister then, instead of depositing in the national treasury, allowed the businessman to use the amount to partly settle a fine of about Rs 450 billion imposed by the Supreme

Court some years ago. Reportedly, the tycoon, in return, gifted about 57 acres of land to a trust set up by Khan and his wife to establish the Al-Qadir University in the Sohawa area of the Jhelum district of Punjab. (PTI)

LONDON, April 7: The UK on Gaza, the toll on civilians contin-Sunday marked six months since the Israel-Hamas conflict with a new package of military and civilian support to set up a maritime aid corridor to Gaza, as Prime Minister Rishi Sunak reiterated his call for

The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) announced the deployment of a Royal Navy ship to the Eastern Mediterranean and committed up to 9.7 million pounds for aid deliveries; logistical expertise and equipment support to the corridor, such as forklift trucks and storage units; and expertise, to maximise the levels of aid reaching those people who desperately need it.

a "humanitarian pause" for the

sake of the innocent children of the

"Today marks six months since the terrorist outrage of 7th October the most appalling attack in Israel's history, the worst loss of Jewish life since the Second World War. Six months later. Israeli wounds are still unhealed. Families still mourn and hostages are still held by Hamas," said Sunak in a statement from Downing Street. "And after six months of war

ues to grow – hunger, desperation, loss of life on an awful scale...The children of Gaza need a humanitarian pause immediately, leading to a long-term sustainable ceasefire. That is the fastest way to get hostages out and aid in, and to stop the fighting and loss of life," he

The FCDO said the establishment of an international humanitarian maritime corridor from Cyprus to Gaza, supported by partner governments and the United Nations, is expected to be operational in early May. Writing in 'The Sunday Times', Foreign Secretary David Cameron said Britain's support for Israel is "not unconditional".

It follows three British aid workers among seven killed while delivering crucial supplies on behalf of the World Central Kitchen organisation, described by Israel as a 'grave accident" before it sacked two senior military officials.

"On this occasion, there is no doubt where the blame lies: Israel's inquiry has already enumerated the inadequate processes and the unacceptable conduct of the

remain committed to getting aid to those who so desperately need it. Along with the US, Cyprus and other partners, we are setting up a new temporary pier off the coast of Gaza to get aid in as quickly and securely as possible," he said in a statement on the UK's latest aid ef-UK Defence Secretary Grant

IDF (Israel Defence Forces) per-

sonnel involved. This must never

happen again," writes Cameron.

"The situation in Gaza is dire and

the prospect of famine is real. We

Shapps added: "A Royal Navy ship is now en route to the Eastern Mediterranean to support international efforts to get life-saving aid "The Armed Forces are playing

a central role in delivering aid, with the Royal Air Force recently completing five airdrops of food supplies for the people of Gaza. We are now going further, working with international partners to set up a humanitarian maritime corridor from Cyprus to Gaza. A new temporary pier on the coast of Gaza will be critical to supporting these efforts, by hosting cargo ships to deliver aid by sea." (PTI)

A close ally of populist PM tops a pro-Western diplomat to become Slovakia's president

BRATISLAVA, SLOVAKIA, April 7: A close ally of populist Prime Minister Robert Fico beat a pro-Western career diplomat to become Slovakia's new president, and succeed Zuzana Caputová, the country's

first female head of state. Parliamentary speaker Peter Pellegrini received 53.85 per cent of the vote with the ballots from over 98 per cent polling stations counted by the Statistics Office in Saturday's runoff election, topping former Foreign Minister Ivan Korcok who had 46.14 per cent.

Korcok conceded the defeat and congratulated the winner.

"I'm disappointed," he said. Pellegrini becomes Slovakia's sixth president since the country gained independence after the split

Caputová, a staunch backer of neighboring Ukraine in its fight against Russia's invasion, didn't seek a second term in the largely ceremonial post.

Pellegrini's victory cemented Fico's grip on power by giving him and his allies control of major strategic posts.

The president of the nation of 5.4 million people picks the prime minister after parliamentary elections, swears in the new government and appoints Constitutional Court judges. The president can also veto laws, though Parliament can override the veto with a simple majority, and challenge them at the Constitutional Court. The head of state also

has the right to pardon convicts. The government, led by the prime minister, possesses most executive

Fico's leftist Smer (Direction) party won Sept. 30 parliamentary elections on a pro-Russian and anti-American platform.

Pellegrini, 48, who favours a strong role for the state, heads the left-wing Hlas (Voice) party that finished third in the vote and joined a governing coalition with Fico and the ultranationalist Slovak National

Critics worry Slovakia under Fico will abandon its pro-Western course and follow the direction of Hungary under populist Prime Minister Viktor Orbán.

The new government immediately halted any arms deliveries to Ukraine. Thousands have repeatedly taken to the streets across Slovakia recently to rally against Fico's pro-

Russian and other policies, including plans to amend the penal code and take control of the public media. Korcok was critical of the govern-

ment's moves that the protesters fear could undermine the rule of law while Pellegrini backed the new government and didn't question its policies. Korcok is the former ambassador

to the United States and Germany, who also served as the country's envoy to NATO and the European Union. He firmly supports Slovakia's EU and NATO memberships. Pellegrini, who was Fico's former

deputy in Smer, became prime minister in 2018, after Fico was forced to resign following major anti-government street protests over the killing of journalist Ján Kuciak and

'Incredible India': UNGA President Dennis Francis lauds digitalisation, infrastructure investment in India

UNITED NATIONS, April 7: UN General Assembly President Dennis Francis has lauded India's use of digitalisation that has helped achieve financial inclusion and poverty reduction, underlining that this gives the country a "comparative advantage" and its lessons can be shared with the global community.

"Let me say first of all that since I've been to India, every time I think of India, I think 'Incredible India'. And I mean this in all earnestAnd I saw it when I was there. The specific example to which I can refer is India's use of digitalisation," Francis, President of the 78th session of the UN General Assembly, told PTI in an exclusive interview here. He referred to the country's tourism

tagline of 'Incredible India. Francis was in India from January 22-26 this year on an official visit, during which he held a bilateral meeting with External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar in New Delhi and also travelled to Jaipur and Mumbai.

During the visit, his interactions with government officials, civil society members and think tanks focused on issues such as sustainability, multilateralism,

accessibility, and digital public infrastructure.

The UN leader lauded India's use of digitalisation to alleviate poverty and bring millions of people into the formal economic system "simply through the use of a handset and a digitalisation

He underscored that digitalisation is important because it is "productive, it drives cost down, makes economies more efficient, makes things cheaper."

He cited the example of digitalisation helping Indian women, and farmers across the length and breadth of the country and in far-flung places to negotiate their prices, deal with banks and make payments without having to leave their homes, farmlands or areas.

"All of this is helping to make the economy of India much more competitive. So I think this is an area in which India clearly has a comparative advantage and has lessons that can be shared with the international community."

Francis also pointed out that during his visit to India, he was impressed with the level of investments being made in infrastructure development across the



He stressed that infrastructure is one of the areas of economic activity known to boost growth in any economy because it creates huge demands for materials,

labour, and inputs and provides jobs.

"Because of the multiplier effect, growth literally gallops," he said. "I noted when I was in your country

recently, India and I was really quite impressed with this - the extent of investment being made in infrastructure in India, not just highways but even rail and monorails," he said. He said that countries invest heavily

in infrastructure because infrastructure integrates markets, and brings people together but it also has an immediate and consequential impact on growth. Francis however stressed the need for

building infrastructure sustainably in the current times of extreme climate events. "If the infrastructure is built in a sus-

tainable way, if it is resilient and can therefore withstand external shocks and stresses, it means that the economy is able to bounce back more quickly from that event, less jobs are lost and it requires less in the way of investment to get things working and moving again in the economy," he said.

It makes sense to use sustainable materials and methods, and invest in sustainable infrastructure because it minimizes the overall disruption in the economy, he said.

Francis will convene the UN's firstever 'Sustainability Week' April 15-19 at the world body's headquarters that will feature dedicated events focused on sustainability in critical sectors such as tourism, infrastructure connectivity, transport, energy and debt.

He has said that the goal of the week will be "to unleash progress across the 2030 Agenda towards a more sustainable future - as we also ready ourselves for the Summit of the Future" to be held in September 2024 during the high-level General Assembly session.

Last year, India's Permanent Representative to the UN Ambassador Ruchira Kamboj highlighted at the world body the impact of financial inclusion on the social and economic empowerment of people in India. She had noted that in 2009, only 17

per cent of adults in India had bank accounts, 15 per cent used digital payments, one in 25 had a unique ID document, and about 37 per cent had mobile phones. These numbers grew exponentially

93 per cent, over a billion people have a digital ID document, and more than 80 per cent have bank accounts. As of 2022, over 600 crore digital pay-

and today, tele density has reached up to

ment transactions were completed per

Cong hostile towards Sanatan Dharma, its manifesto bears imprint of Muslim League: Modi

'INDIA bloc talks a lot about the Constitution, their leaders should tell the people why they could not implement the Samvidhan of Baba Saheb Ambedkar fully in J&K

NAWADA (BIHAR), APRIL 7: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday launched a blistering attack on the opposition Congress, charging that its poll manifesto bore the imprint of Muslim League and utterances of its leaders betrayed hostility towards national integrity and Sanatan Dharma.

Addressing a rally in Nawada district, his second in Bihar in 72 hours, Modi also recounted the 'jungle raj' that prevailed when the state was ruled by the Congress-RJD combine, showering praises on his ally Nitish Kumar and ailing BJP colleague Sushil Kumar Modi for turning things around as chief minister and deputy chief minister respectively

'The manifesto that the Congress has released bears the imprint of the Muslim League. It has not released a poll manifesto but a declaration of appeasement (tushtikaran patra)," alleged Modi. The Prime Minister also came down heavily on AICC president Mallikarjun Kharge, without mentioning him by name, who recently objected to raising the issue of abrogation of Article 370, by BJP leaders, during poll campaigns in states like Rajasthan.

"The post of the national president of the Congress is not a small thing. And the leader thinks Article 370 has nothing to do with Ra-



jasthan. Is Jammu and Kashmir not an integral part of the country? His thinking betrays the mindset of

tukde-tukde gang," alleged Modi. He pointed out that security personnel from all over the country, including Rajasthan and Bihar, have laid down their lives fighting terrorists in Jammu and Kashmir, and "their bodies have reached their na-

tive places wrapped in tricolour". "The INDIA bloc talks a lot about the Constitution. Their leaders should tell the people why they could not implement the Samvidhan of Baba Saheb Ambedkar fully in Jammu and Kashmir. Why did it take a Modi to do so?" asked the PM. In an apparent reference to controversial remarks of Karnataka MP D K Suresh, the PM said, "You can understand the Congress' mindset from the statement of one of its very senior leaders who openly called for making south India a sep-

arate nation.' Modi, who was in the Bihar district to campaign for BJP candidate Vivek Thakur, said, "I wonder what hostility the Congress has towards popular sentiments. Its leaders did not turn up at pran pratishtha even though the temple at Ayodhya was constructed with donations made by the common people, not with

government funds. "When some of the Congress leaders came out in favour of the Ram temple at Ayodhya, they were slapped with expulsions," said the PM, in a veiled reference to Acharya Pramod Krishnam, who was sacked by the party after he criticised it for skipping the event.

The PM also said that while his government boldly acted against 'anti-women" practices like 'triple talaq', the Congress and its allies were busy denigrating Sanatan

"The festival of Ram Navami is approaching. Do not forget the sins of these people," said Modi, who also claimed there was "sir futavval (infighting)" within the INDIA bloc in which "one senior leader has refused to take part in campaign unless he is projected as the Prime Ministerial candidate"

Modi also lauded Nitish Kumar, the JD(U) president, and Sushil Kumar Modi, who is battling with cancer and has excused himself from poll-related activities, for their efforts in pulling Bihar out of the 'jungle raj', a term often used to denote the lawlessness that prevailed when Bihar was ruled by the RJD-Congress combine.

"In those days, our mothers and sisters were fearful of venturing out of homes," alleged Modi, taking forward the declamation of Kumar who spoke before him, that "people did not go out of their homes after dusk" in Bihar until the change of guard in 2005. (PTI)

AAP leaders hold collective fast in Delhi's Jantar Mantar to protest against Kejriwal's arrest



NEW DELHI, April 7: Top Aam Aadmi Party leaders held a day-long fast at Jantar Mantar here on Sunday to protest against the arrest of Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and accused the BJP of resorting to dictatorship.

Several party volunteers and supporters took part in the fast in the national capital, singing patriotic songs and waving posters showing an image of Keriwal behind bars

Similar protests were held in other states as well as by Indians abroad, including at Harvard Square in Boston, the Hollywood Sign in Los Angeles, outside the Indian Embassy in Washington DC, in New York Times Square and Toronto, London and Melbourne among others, party leaders said.

Senior AAP leaders, including Delhi Assembly Speaker Ram Niwas Goel, Deputy Speaker Rakhi Bila, ministers Gopal Rai, Saurabh Bharadwaj,

Kailash Gahlot and Imran Hussain attended the daylong 'Samuhik Upwas' at Jantar Mantar from 11 am.

Addressing the protesters at Jantar Mantar, the AAP's Rajya Sabha MP Sanjay Singh, who was recently granted bail by the Supreme Court in the Delhi excise scam case, asserted "Kejriwal was, is and will remain honest.'

He questioned Kejriwal's arrest by the Enforcement Directorate, claiming the AAP national convener's name was mentioned by just four of 456 witnesses of the CBI and ED probing the case. "People know very well under what situation these witnesses named Kejriwal," Singh said.

He called upon AAP volunteers to work harder to ensure the victory of party candidates and those of the INDIA bloc in the Lok Sabha polls to pave the way for the exit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah from power.

Delhi Minister Atishi accused the BJP of resorting to dictatorship and claimed the fast by the AAP will give "sleepless nights" to the saffron party. There was anger among people over Kejriwal's arrest and it will prove to be the "final nail in the coffin" of the BJP, she claimed.

Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann and several ministers in AAP-ruled Punjab joined a collective fast at freedom fighter Bhagat Singh's village Khatkar Kalan, party leaders said.

The AAP's Delhi unit convener Gopal Rai had appealed to people to join the fast to protest against Keriwal's arrest. He alleged that Kejriwal's arrest by the Enforcement Directorate in a case linked to the Delhi excise policy-linked scam case was part of the BJP's conspiracy to finish the AAP.

Kejriwal, arrested on March 21, is in judicial custody till April 15. (PTI)

PM wants to end corruption, Indi alliance wants to save corrupt people, says Nadda

ARIYALUR (TAMIL NADU), April 7: BJP national president J P Nadda on Sunday charged that the INDI Alliance leaders, who are either on bail or in jail, were keen on protecting the corrupt people whereas Prime Minister Narendra Modi was striving hard to end corruption in the country. Those leaders such as Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, were in prison while Congress leaders including Sonia Gandhi and her son Rahul were on bail, Nadda said and claimed the opposition leaders presented a contrasting picture compared to the Prime Minister who is an epitome of development and determined to end corruption.

the corrupt people. That is their

DMK, which stands for Dynasty Money Swindling and Katta Panchavat and its ally the Congress are corrupt. All of them are trying to save their families and dynasties and themselves from their corruption," Nadda said addressing a rally here. The opposition leaders across the country were mere family parties and were trying to save their dynasty and family parties. "So, development is at stake even in Tamil Nadu under the corrupt DMK regime and people should throw out the DMK and its allies

From the enthusiasm, vigour and vitality that he could see at the meeting here, he was confident that people will send the BJP candidates to Parliament, he said.

working style. In Tamil Nadu, the Tamil culture, tradition and customs, and this could be gauged by their opposition to the installation of the Sengol in the Parliament by Modi. "In this fight against them, we are here to revive the Tamil culture but on the other hand they are trying to destroy the Tamil culture. You should understand this,' the BJP president said.

He claimed that the country

under Prime Minister's dynamic leadership, took "a long leap for development." India which was 11th economic power in the world for a corrupt-free India," he said. in 2019 became 5th largest economy under Modi's leadership. When he becomes the Prime Minister for third time, the country would rise further to become the third largest economy in the world.

from Odisha jail BHAWANIPATNA (ODISHA), April 7: and Congress of going against the Two prisoners, who were facing trial under the POCSO Act, escaped from Kalahandi district jail in Odisha on Sunday, an official said.

The two were in the jail garden this morning and they somehow managed to break the security in the prison which has high walls and watchtowers, he said.

Two undertrials escape

The two men, who were facing trial under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, managed to scale the wall of the jail in Bhawanipatna, the official said.

The jail authorities filed an FIR at Bhawanipatna Town Police Station and did not disclose further details of the inci-

Bhawanipatna Town inspector-incharge Jasobanta Hial said an investigation has been initiated to nab the undertrials and ascertain how they broke the security cover inside the jail. (PTI)

PDP names candidates for 3 Valley seats, fields Mehbooba against Ghulam Nabi in Anantnag

SRINAGAR, **April 7**: Peoples They said the PDP will support the Democratic Party president Mehbooba Mufti will contest the Lok Sabha polls from the Anantnag-Rajouri seat against DPAP president Ghulam Nabi Azad, making the newly carved out constituency the most high-profile contest in Jammu and Kashmir in these elections.

The National Conference has fielded influential Gujjar leader Mian Altaf Ahmad from the seat and the Apni Party has named Zaffar Iqbal Manhas. The BJP has not announced its candidate so far.

PDP Parliamentary Board Chief Sartaj Madni on Sunday announced the party candidates for the three seats of Kashmir. The party's youth wing president Waheed Parra will contest the polls from Srinagar and former Rajya Sabha member Mir Fayaz from Baramulla.

The candidates were announced by the party at a press conference addressed by Mufti and Madni. Congress on two Jammu region seats of Udhampur and Jammu.

Asked if the Congress will reciprocate in Kashmir, the PDP president said she was not extending support to the national party on quid pro quo basis. "We have decided to support the Congress for the larger fight to save the Constitution and democracy.'

"But I would appeal to not only Congress workers but NC workers also to support me so that we can take the voice of the people of Jammu and Kashmir to Parliament," she said.

"My appeal to all people of the constituency -- from Anantnag to Rajouri and Poonch -- is to come together as we are passing through a critical stage. People cannot talk. Talking has become a crime. If someone raises voice, he is labelled as anti-national," she added.

On her party contesting against INDIA bloc partner National Con-challenge," she said. (PTI)

ference, Mufti said she had left the ball in NC president Farooq Abdullah's court.

"We had left the decision to Farooq Abdullah. We would not mind even if they had contested all the seats but they should have at least consulted us. They should not have demeaned our party and workers by saying they will see our behaviour in Lok Sabha polls before deciding on alliance for Assembly elections,

In response to a question, the PDP president said her party's manifesto will take the genuine voices of people to Delhi. She alleged that the Centre was using all its might against her in the south Kashmir

"Delhi is pushing all might into the south Kashmir constituency. They have directly put up some candidates and some others indirectly. I have been a fighter all along and I decided to take on the

"Prime Minister Narendra Modi says I will finish corruption, but the INDI alliance leaders say save Also, Nadda accused the DMK

NEW DELHI, April 7: The Election Commission on Sunday said its Suvidha portal has received over 73,000 applications since the Lok Sabha polls were announced, seeking permission for various campaigning activities.

The applications submitted by by parties and candidates include requests for booking rally grounds, opening temporary party offices and operating video publicity vans, the EC said. More than 44,600 requests have been

approved with first in-first out principle ensuring level playing field for parties and candidates, it said. Of the total requests received, nearly

11,200 or 15 per cent were rejected, and 10.819 applications cancelled as they were invalid or duplicate, the data released by the commission showed.

Maximum requests were received from Tamil Nadu (23,239), followed by



West Bengal (11,976) and Madhya Pradesh (10,636).

The least number of requests so far have been received from Chandigarh (17), Lakshadweep (18) and Manipur (20), the poll authority said.

The Suvidha portal has streamlined the process of obtaining permissions and facilities by candidates and parties,

rallies, booking venues, opening tempo- Minister Narendra Modi alleged on arrest two main suspects in a 2022 TMC government of impeding the imrary party offices, door-to-door canvassing, video vans, use of helicopters cense for corruption and violence in and helipads, obtaining vehicle permits and distributing pamphlets.

The EC said offline submission options are also available to ensure inclusivity and equal opportunity for all

The permission data available on the portal serves as a valuable resource for scrutinising election expenditures, contributing to greater accountability and integrity in the electoral process, the commission noted.

The seven phase elections were announced on March 16 and voting would commence from April 19. The last phase is on June 1. (PTI)

Central agencies attacked in Bengal as TMC wants to protect corrupt leaders: PM Modi

It caters to permissions for organising JALPAIGURI (WB), April 7: Prime a mob on Saturday when attempting to Sunday that the TMC desires a free li-West Bengal, which is why central agencies investigating such cases face attacks in the state. While addressing a mega rally in Jalpaiguri, Modi also claimed that "TMC's syndicate Raj" prevails in West Bengal, and the party is only interested in protecting its corrupt leaders.

"The TMC government seeks to have a free pass for looting and terror in Bengal. To shield its extortionist and corrupt leaders, the TMC orchestrates attacks on central investigative agen-

cies when they come here," he said. Modi's comments come a day after an NIA team was allegedly attacked by dinipur district. "The TMC is disregarding the law

and the constitution of the country," he The attack on NIA on Saturday

evoked memories of January 5 when a team of the Enforcement Directorate (ED) was attacked by a mob in North 24 Parganas district's Sandeshkhali during a search at the house of TMC leader Shajahan Sheikh, who was later suspended, in connection with alleged irregularities in the public distribution system.

Modi mentioned that the situation in the state is such that "the court has to intervene" in various matters.

The prime minister accused the plementation of the Centre's wellare schemes for the poor in the state.

"The TMC is not allowing the central funds to reach the poor people of the state. They want the central funds in their own account first. The syndicate Raj of TMC is going on across West Bengal. The TMC government is putting brakes on central schemes for the welfare of the poor," he said.

Claiming that the Enforcement Directorate has attached properties worth Rs 3,000 crore from corrupt leaders of the TMC in various corruption cases in Bengal, Modi said suggestions are being taken on ways to return the money to those who have given it

support for rare disease patients in manifesto

NEW DELHI, April 7: Advocacy groups for rare disease patients have urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi and BJP manifesto committee head Rajnath Singh for including sustainable funding support for such patients in the party's Lok Sabha poll

The appeal has been made by the Lysosomal Storage Disorders Support Society (LSDSS), the Rare Diseases India Foundation (RDIF) and the Niemann Pick Disease Charitable Trust (NPDCT).

In a letter to Singh and Modi, they said for rare disease patients and their families, "seeing their issues addressed in a manifesto" will "instill hope for positive change and improvement in their circumstances". It will also show that their voices matter and can make a difference in shaping policies, the groups said.

The National Policy for Rare Diseases-2021 (NPRD) has been instrumental in providing a framework for support, leading to life-saving interventions, and in improving outcomes for affected individuals, they said as they acknowledged the government's efforts in addressing the unmet needs of rare disease patients.

Rare diseases, especially chronic and ultra-rare conditions such as Lysosomal Storage Disorders (LSDs) like Gaucher disease, Pompe disease, Mucopolysaccharidosis (MPS) type I and II, Neimann Pick disease and Fabry disease, present a



"The government's commitment to rare disease patients is evident through its transformative measures such as the provisioning of funding support for group-3 conditions, in particular. These efforts have not only helped patients start their lifesaving therapies but also provided hope and reassurance to countless families across the nation," the letter said. However, the journey towards sustainable treatment support for chronic-rare diseases remains a crucial next step, it said, underlining that it is imperative to ensure that patients with chronic conditions have access to ongoing treatment based

them to lead fulfilling lives. Drawing the attention to the current operational challenges, the groups in the letter highlighted the immediate need for prioritising and ensuring sustainable funding support for all notified ultra-rare disease conditions that are chronic but have approved therapies with excellent

on clinical parameters, enabling

The current budgetary provision

of up to Rs 50 lakh is only one-time, thereby hindering the process of saying lives for patients diagnosed with these conditions, they said.

"Several patients across Centres of Excellence (CoEs) have once again been put off life-saving therapies after the one-time support got exhausted," the groups said in their

They stressed on providing equal weightage to all notified disease conditions under the NPRD-2021.

Though notified as Group 3(a) condition in the NPRD 2021, patients diagnosed with Pompe disease, Fabry disease, MPS I and II are still not getting the same priority at the CoEs, thereby delaying treatment and posing serious risk to their lives, they said.

"For the marginalised or underserved communities like rare disease patients and their families, seeing their issues addressed in a manifesto can not only instill hope for positive change and improvement in their circumstances but would also show that their voices matter and can make a difference in shaping policies," the letter said.

It also said that a mention in the election manifesto would also reflect the priorities of the BJP and would inspire confidence, mobilize support, and drive positive change on the ground, the letter said. (PTI)

Groups urge BJP to include sustained funding Agnikul puts off for third time launch of Agnibaan sub-orbital rocket

Agnilet engine is the world's first single-piece 3D-printed semi-cryogenic rocket engine NEW DELHI, April 7: Chennai-

based space start-up Agnikul Cosmos on Sunday called off the maiden launch of its 3D-printed. semi-cryogenic Agnibaan rocket about 92 seconds before lift-off citing some technical issues. Sunday's was the third attempt at the test launch of the Agnibaan Sub-Orbital Technology Demonstrator (SOrTeD) since March 22, when the test flight was first scheduled to be held at the Agnikul

> The rocket uses a semi-cryogenic engine with a mix of liquid and gas propellants, a technology that is yet to be demonstrated by the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) in any of its rockets. The SOrTeD mission is a single-stage launch vehicle demonstration that will be powered by a semi-cryogenic engine, the Agnilet, a sub-cooled liquid

developed indigenously. The start-up has readied the vehicle with the first-ever ethernetbased avionics architecture and fully in-house developed autopilot software from India.

oxygen-based propulsion system

Powered by sub-cooled Liquid Oxygen (LOX) and Aviation Turhine Fuel (ATF), the vehicle is equipped with four carbon composite fins to provide passive con-

The Agnilet engine is the world's first single-piece 3Dprinted semi-cryogenic rocket en-

The mission will last just over two minutes from launch to splash-

Following lift-off, the vehicle is expected to perform a pitch-over manoeuvre nearly four seconds

This manoeuvre involves the

controlled rotation of the vehicle to change its orientation from vertical to a predetermined angle with respect to the ground or its flight

The vehicle will then go into the wind biasing manoeuvre at just over 39 seconds, which is introduced in rockets to compensate for the effects of wind on the trajec-

tory of the rocket during ascent. At 1 minute 29 seconds, the launch vehicle is expected to reach apogee, the point it will be farthest from the launch site before it splashes down at just over two minutes into the flight, marking the completion of the mission. (PTI)



Launch Pad at ISRO's Satish

Dhawan Space Centre at Sri-

The second attempt at the test launch at 7.45 am on Saturday also

On Sunday, the Agnibaan

"The Agnibaan SOrTeD lift-off

Agnikul is seeking to conduct

SOrTeD launch was scheduled at

5.30 am but was put off to 7.45 am.

was cancelled at T minus 92 sec-

onds," the IIT Chennai incubated

India's second private rocket

launch, following startup Skyroot

Aerospace's November 2022

launch of the Vikram-S sub-orbital

rocket. Agnibaan is a customis-

able, two-stage launch vehicle that

can carry a payload of up to 300 kg

into orbit of about 700 km, accord-

ing to the company.

harikota.

could not fructify.

start-up said.

Candidates Chess: Praggnanandhaa stops Gujrathi's applecart

grandmaster R Praggnanandhaa came up with a spectacular game to down compatriot Vidit Gujrathi in the third round of the Candidates Chess tournament here. It turned out to be a satisfying day for the only sibling to make to the Candidates ever as R Vaishali also scored her first victory in the event at the expense of Nurgyul Salimova of Bulgaria in what was also the lone decisive game in the Women's section. In the men's section, D Gukesh tried to make some headways but could not really dent the solid defences of Ian

while Frenchman Firouza Alireza's extra pawn came to a naught against top seed Fabiano Caruana of United States.

The other American Hikaru Nakamura, however, had no difficulty in getting an easy draw as black against Nijat Abasov of Azerbaijan.

In the women section, Koneru Humpy played out an easy draw with white against Zhongyi Tan, Tinjie Lei of China signed peace with Aleksandra Goryachkina of Russia, while the other Russian Kateryna Lagno split the point with Anna Muzychuk of Ukraine. With 11 rounds still to come in both eight-players double round-robin tournament, Caruana, Gukesh and Nepomniachtchi share the lead on two points apiece in the men's section. They are now followed by Gujrathi and Praggnanandhaa on 1.5 points each. Nakamura,

line up another half point behind. In the women's event, Zhongyi Tan with two points remained a half point clear of nearest rival Goryachkina with Humpy, Vaishali, Lagno on their toes

Alireza and Abasov complete the

with 1.5 points each. Lei, Muzychuk and Salimova share the sixth spot with one point each in their kitty.

celerated Schielmann defence out of a Ruy Lopez that is seldom seen in top GM games. Pragg, as he is fondly called, is known to spring surprises beyond imagination of his opponent, and Gujrathi realized this very early in the opening.

That Gujrathi was obviously in for a long grinding game as his first white after a brilliant start was visible as he spent a lot of time in the opening but then the complications were clearly above the human mind.

The game fluctuated in the early middle game between an equal position and sometimes

every time he was posed a question. In the end Gujrathi was left to play 11 moves in about five minutes with the position not favouring him and as is often the case, the ticking away clock took its toll on the Indian.

Praggnandhaa quickly landed himself with a winning rook and pawns endgame and there was no hopes left soon for Gujrathi. The game lasted 45 moves.

"I saw that I could make a draw through perpetual checks on move 11 but believed my position to be better," Gujrathi said after the game.

preparation, but I think black was

fine," Praggnanandhaa opined. Gukesh was caught a bit-offguard in a Queen pawn game playing white. It was a symmetrical structure in the ensuing middle game after the queens got traded early and Nepomniachtchi kept the balance despite being on the defensive. In the end, Gukesh had two Bishops but black was simply too solid to make a decisive headway. Alireza started off with the King pawn and had some pressure to boast off. However Caruana's 16th move cleared the centre and left little scope and subsequent

easy to find all the best moves ing as I could not remember the exchanges led to a drawn minor pieces endgame. Arriving here with a leg injury, Abasov conceded that he was not feeling too well during the game against Nakamura. The American was however happy to equalize in the Slav exchange and the result was a dull draw after 29 moves. Vaishali and Pragg have started with the exact same three results in the first rounds of their respective events: a draw, a loss and a win. After the family had a tough day in the second round following losses against Gukesh D and Tan Zhongyi, Vaishali also bounced back with a fine win.

After back-to-back losses, CSK bank on home advantage against unbeaten KKR



champions Chennai Super Kings would expect a lot more from their top-order as they aim to get their campaign back on track against a power-packed Kolkata Knight Riders in the IPL here on Monday.

Back-to-back defeats would not create panic in the forever calm CSK dressing room but the management will be keen to fix the flaws going ahead.

Skipper Ruturaj Gaikwad and the highly rated Rachin Ravindra need to up their game to provide CSK the start they need in the powerplay. Gaikwad is striking at 118.91 while Ravindra will be itching to make an impact after not doing much in the previous two games.

CSK's leading run scorer has been Shivam Dube who has tallied 148 runs at an impressive strike rate of 160.86

It remains to be seen if the young Sameer Rizwi is brought back into the team. The 20-year-old uncapped batter displayed promising intent in his six-ball 14 versus Gujarat Titans but a duck against Delhi Capitals in the subsequent game led to him being dropped against SRH.

Pacers Mustafizur Rahman and Matheesha Pathirana missed the last game due to different reasons, exposing the chinks in CSK's bowling attack. If they remain unavailable

for the KKR game, CSK will need to think out of the box to make up for their absence.

Thus, the onus will be upon Deepak Chahar, Tushar Deshpande and Mukesh Choudhary, alongside spinners Moeen Ali, Ravindra Jadeja and Maheesh Theekshana.

KKR, who alongside Rajathan Royals remain unbeaten in the tournament, have reaped rich dividends for their fearless approach with the bat. Having said that, the personnel in the KKR batting order allow them to bat at the same tempo throughout the innings.

Making Sunil Narine open again has proved to be a master stroke. Being the team's highest run-scorer this season, Narine is expected to give a tough time to the CSK bowlers. His opening partner, Phil Salt, has also aided the Trinidadian to a good extent.

The middle-order comprising skipper Shreyas Iyer and Ramandeep Singh need to display a lot more consistency, while Andre Russell and Rinku Singh have excelled thus far. Also, KKR's bowling so far has been impeccable, which has seen even contributions from Harshit Rana, Russell and Vaibhav Arora. Mitchell Starc and Varun Chakaravarthy are slowly finding their feet after an underwhelming

across departments has been flawless and they would not want to fiddle with their playing XI for this

Given the unusual pitch behaviour at Chepauk so far, it could be another run-feast. Squads

CSK: MS Dhoni, Aravelly Avanish, Devon Conway, Ruturaj Gaikwad (c), Ajinkya Rahane, Shaik Rasheed, Moeen Ali, Shivam Dube, RS Hangargekar, Ravindra Jadeja, Ajay Jadav Mandal, Daryl Mitchell, Rachin Ravindra, Mitchell Santner. Nishant Sindhu, Deepak Chahar, Tushar Deshpande, Mukesh Choudhary, Mustafizur Rahman, Matheesha Pathirana, Simarjeet Singh, Prashant Solanki, Shardul Thakur, Maheesh Theekshana and Sameer Rizvi.

KKR: Shreyas Iyer (c), KS Bharat, Rahmanullah Gurbaz, Rinku Singh, Angkrish Raghuvanshi, Sherfane Rutherford, Manish Pandey, Andre Russell, Nitish Rana, Venkatesh Iyer, Anukul Roy, Ramandeep Singh, Chakravarthy, Sunil Narine, Vaibhav Arora, Chetan Sakariya, Harshit Rana, Suyash Sharma, Mitchell

Starc, Dushmantha Chameera, Sakib Hussain, Mujeeb Ur Rahman. Match starts at 7.30 PM IST.

against Australia in second hockey Test, trail series 0-2

India lose 2-4

PERTH, April 7: The Indian men's hockey team dished out a much-improved performance as compared to its previous game but it still lost 2-4 to Australia in the second Test of the five-match series here on Sunday.

After the 1-5 drubbing they received on Saturday, the Indians were able to play in equal terms against their formidable opponents in the first and second quarters of the match.

In fact, India were 2-1 ahead at half time, but some sloppy defending in the third quarter cost them dearly as the hosts pumped in three goals to register their second straight win.

Jeremy Hayward (6th and 34th minutes) converted two penalty corners, while Jacob Anderson (42nd) and Nathan Ephraums (45th) found the net from field efforts for Australia.

India's both goals came off penalty corner conversions by ugraj Singh (9th) and skipper Harmanpreet Singh (30th).

The Indians started on the front foot in the game with vicecaptain Hardik Singh heavily involved in the middle field.

But Australia took the lead from their first penalty corner in the sixth minute through Hayward, who sounded the board with a powerful low drag-flick to the right of Indian goalkeeper Krishan Bahadur Pathak, who started the match under the bar in place of veteran PR Sreejesh.

The Kookaburras looked threatening after taking the lead as they earned back-to-back penalty corners soon after but the Indian defence stood tall.

The Indians slowly got their footing into the match and started to put pressure on the Australian defence and in the process secured three consecutive penalty corners.

While the first two penalty corners went abegging, Jugraj drew parity for the visitors in the ninth minute with a fierce flick to the left top corner of the Aus-

The goal seemed to have given a lot of confidence to the Indians as Abhishek came tantalisingly close to doubling the visitor's lead in the 12th minute.

An unmarked Abhishek received a fine ball inside the Australian 'D' with only the keeper to beat, but he hit the cross bar.

A minute from the first quarter, Australia secured another penalty corner, but the push was not perfect.

In the second quarter, the Indian defence had to withstand immense pressure from the Kookaburras but didn't falter.

Just 41 seconds from halftime, India secured a penalty corner and skipper Harmanpreet made no mistake to score his 180th career goal and hand his side a 2-1 lead.

Trailing by a goal, the Australians came out all guns blazing after the change of ends and pumped in three goals to show their domination over India.

Four minutes into the third quarter, Australia secured a penalty corner and Hayward scored his second of the match to level the scores. It was yet another lesson for

the Indians, who played catch-up hockey and failed to match the Australians for the second consecutive day.

It was relentless pressure from Australia which broke the Indian defence on more than one occa-

Anderson registered his name in the scoresheet in the 42nd minute, deflecting from a build up by Matt Dawson and Jack Welch, literally catching Indian custodian Pathak off-guard.

The Indians secured two more penalty corners minutes later but Harmanpreet failed to breach the Australian defence.

Just a few seconds left in the third quarter, Ephraums found himself at the right place at the right time to slap in a deflection from an Indian defender past Pathak from a quick turnover to

Akshay Bhatia is four ahead and one round away from Masters spot

SAN ANTONIO, April 7: In- pin. His pitch wasn't anything dian American Akshay Bhatia stayed on course for a last minute Masters berth and a second PGA Tour title as he grabbed a four-shot lead after the third round at the Valero Texas Open here.

Bhatia birdied his last two holes at the TPC San Antonio for a four-under 68, taking a four-shot lead over Denny Mc-Carthy into the final round as he tries to get the last spot in the Masters.

Bhatia was at 15-under 201. After McCarthy, the next closest player to the lead was Brendon Todd, who shot 70 and was

seven shots behind. McCarthy was the only player who stayed close to the 22-yearold Bhatia. He was helped by his three birdies in a four-hole stretch in the middle of the back nine. Bhatia, on his part, hit a perfect drive on the reachable par-4 17th to just short of the green, which featured a front

special, but he holed a 12-foot putt. On the closing par 5, he laid up and hit wedge to a back pin to just inside 10 feet and made the birdie putt.

Bhatia's lead is the largest in 20 years at the Valero Texas Open. McCarthy has his work cut out. With a message "Race My Race," Bhatia who had worked with a psychologist, has been working extra hard on the mental game. Rory McIlroy opened with a double bogey, got those two shots back with birdies, dropped further back with a pair of bogeys on the back nine and finished with two birdies. He shot 72 and was 10 behind in his final tournament before going to the Masters. A victory would give Bhatia the final spot in the Masters, set aside in case the Valero Texas Open winner is not already exempt. He also would be exempt for the U.S. Open with his second victory since last June. (PTI)

for form and confidence: Flower standing Virat Kohli's sparkling form, Royal Challenger Bengaluru batters are struggling for "form and confidence", said head

coach Andy Flower following his

team's fourth loss in five games

this IPL season. Kohli (113) hit a superb hundred at the top but RCB could only manage a below-par 183 for three, a target which was overhauled by Rajasthan Royals, riding on a 58-ball 100 not out from Jos Buttler.

"We're one from five and that's not a position any side wants to be. Yes, we do have some issues with our batting. We got Virat in superb form but other guys are struggling for form and confidence," Flower said during the post-match press conference on Saturday.

"We're trying everything we can to make them feel strong and confident. As you've seen in this competition, scores and aggression of teams are only going one way. So the guys need all the form and confidence to put the haven't found that form yet.'

Barring Virat, batters struggling

Kohli smashed 12 fours and four sixes during his 72-ball unbeaten knock but apart from skipper Faf Du Plessis (44 from 33 balls; 2x4, 2x6), he did not get any support from the other batters. "We do discuss strike rates and aggression, it's part of the understanding of the T20 game. The level of aggression has to be above a certain threshold and you have to always be putting the opposition under pressure," Flower said. "Certainly taking the aggressive option, especially on pitches like today. It's just a fact that at the moment that our top five aren't in sparkling form except Virat. It's a tough place to be.

"It's not from lack of effort, they're working hard, they're giving everything they've got. Just not firing at the moment. If we've got to turn this around, we need them firing."

It was a sensational comeback from England's white-ball skipper Buttler, who had ended IPL 2023 with three successive ducks

JAIPUR, April 7: Notwith- opposition under pressure. We and scored a highest of 13 in his

last three innings. "Obviously delighted for Jos Buttler. You know we have been winning games without the opening partnerships but he and Yashasvi Jaiswal has been striking the ball very well in the nets. "So it's about time if one of

them starts firing. It's good to see Jos Buttler at his best and the boys came up with the win," said Talking about the contrasting hundreds by Kohli and Buttler, Bond said: "You've got two of the

best batters in the world. I mean,

always enjoy watching Virat bat, his technique and the way goes about his work...he's such a great technician and fantastic "Then you've got obviously the, the power and skill of Jos who scores in different areas and

plays. So you got two very different types of players but both fantastic to watch.'

Bond was also lavish in his praise for skipper Sanju Samson, who cracked a 42-ball 69. (PTI)

Sreesanth escaped due to vacuum of law: Former Delhi CP Neeraj Kumar

NEW DELHI, April 7: Stake- tralia, New Zealand have it...in Euholders have shown a distinct lack of seriousness in bringing a law against corruption in Indian sports. a reason why someone like tainted former pacer S Sreesanth got away despite strong evidence of spotfixing against him in the 2013 IPL, former Delhi Police Commissioner Neeraj Kumar has said. Kumar, a celebrated IPS officer who served for 37 years, was in charge of Delhi Police when its Special Cell under his guidance arrested Sreesanth and fellow Rajasthan Royals cricketers Ajit Chandila and Ankit Chavan on spot-fixing charges.

However, in 2019, the Supreme Court, despite ruling that there was evidence against the former India player, asked BCCI to reconsider the life ban on him. The punishment was eventually reduced to a seven-year suspension that ended n September, 2020. 'The case seemingly didn't go

anywhere...unfortunately, there is no law (in India) to deal with corruption in cricket or corruption in sports in general," Kumar said during an exclusive interaction with PTI journalists at its headquarters here. "Even a country like Zimbabwe has specific law. Aus-

rope, there is a law because corruption is there not just in cricket but in football, tennis, golf," said the 70-year-old. He was also associated with the Hansie Cronje match-fixing scandal in 2000 as part of CBI's investigating team. Kumar said the biggest roadblock in prosecuting corruption in sports is the absence of a law. "So many things that we do, they do not stand test of judicial scrutiny, for instance. If we say, during matchfixing, people were cheated, now the court will ask, show me one person, who is cheated, produce that person in court," he rued. "Who will come to the court and

say I went to a cricket match expecting fair-play and for everybody to play to his or her potential? So, in the absence of a victim, it becomes very difficult to prove a case," Kumar explained the grey areas. In India, a law to curb the malice has been in the works since 2013. The Prevention of Sporting Fraud Bill (2013), which was tabled in Lok Sabha in 2018, had a provision for five-year imprisonment and a fine of Rs 10 lakh for those found guilty of sporting fraud, including fixing.

Kohli said pitch was two-paced but it never looked like one with the way he batted: Ajay Jadeja

NEW DELHI, April 7: Virat Kohli reckoned that the Jaipur track was two-paced making strokeplay difficult but former India ODI skipper Ajay Jadeja felt that the manner in which the star batter batted, there seemed to be very little demons present in

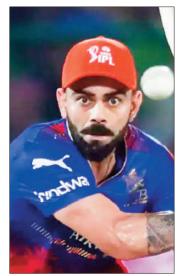
the 22-yard strip. Kohli scored an unbeaten 113 off 72 balls with 12 fours and four sixes but RCB managed only 183/3 in 20 overs, a total that was surpassed by Rajasthan Royals with five balls to spare, courtesy Jos Buttler's 58-ball ton.

Jadeja, an astute cricket brain, felt that there seemed to be some discrepancy in what Kohli observed and how in general the pitch behaved during the entire

duration of the game.

"He (Kohli) started out so well. He hit a couple of boundaries in the first few overs, and you knew you were watching something special tonight. The only surprising thing was him speaking about how the deliveries were not carrying through on this pitch, but the way he batted, we didn't see any shortcomings in the pitch," Jadeja, a 'Jio Cinema' IPL expert said. After scoring his eighth IPL hundred, Kohli had said the pitch was not a flat one.

"The wicket looks quite different from the outside. It feels like it's flat, but the ball is holding up in the pitch, that's when you realise the pace changes," Kohli



Saturday evening. It is Kohli's shot-making that convinced Jadeja to believe there

were no shortcomings in the sur-

"In terms of his shot-making, no corner of the ground was left where he didn't smash the ball What he said made us think something might be wrong with the pitch, but the way he played,

there wasn't a single shortcoming that could be seen.' The other Jio Cinema expert Shane Watson feels that the 17th edition of IPL could finally be Sanju Samson's breakthrough season.

"He showed intent from ball one in his own cool, calm, col-

the first 10 balls means you're not just trying to get ones. You're waiting for a loose ball and he did put it away straight away and because of the skill he's got, he's playing the ball on its merit," Watson said.

"If a bowler bowls a slightly loose ball, because of all the shot options that Sanju Samson has got, he scores very freely. You can see the calmness in him, and he continues to do that game after game, there's no reason he can't have a very successful tourna-

"I'm actually predicting he'll have a long and successful IPL with the bat this year," the former CSK and Royals star said. (PTI)

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