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Kejriwal gets 21-day interim respite

Apex court bars Delhi CM from visiting office, signing files ● AAP's LS poll campaign receives a boost

NEW DELHI, May 10: In a big relief to embattled Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal, the Supreme Court on Friday granted him interim bail in a money laundering case at the peak of the election season but barred him from visiting his office or the Delhi secretariat and signing official files unless absolutely necessary for obtaining the lieutenant governor's approval.

Setting him free for 21 days to campaign for the remaining phases of the Lok Sabha elections after 50 days of custody in the money laundering case linked to the alleged Delhi excise scam, the court said he shall surrender on June 2, a day after the last phase of the seven-phase poll gets over.

The fourth phase of polling will be held on May 13.

A wave of jubilation swept across the INDIA bloc parties as the news spread like wildfire, with his AAP terming it a "triumph of truth".

"Truth can be troubled but not defeated. The decision of the Hon'ble Supreme Court is welcome. The dictatorship will end.



Satyamev Jayate," AAP Rajya Sabha MP Sanjay Singh, also accused in the money laundering case, said in a post in Hindi on X.

"Hanuman ji ki jai. This is the victory of democracy. It is the result of the prayers and blessings of millions of people. Many thanks to everyone," Kejriwal's wife Sunita, who was filling in for her husband during his absence from the electoral battleground, said in a post on X in Hindi.

Kejriwal's release from jail, however transient, is expected to

give a boost to the AAP's Lok Sabha campaign in Delhi where polling is scheduled for May 25, with its foremost leader hitting the hustings.

While imposing a string of bail conditions on Kejriwal, the apex court directed him to furnish bail bonds of ₹ 50,000 with one surety of the like amount to the satisfaction of the jail superintendent.

A bench of Justices Sanjiv Khanna and Dipankar Datta rejected the vehement argument of the Enforcement Directorate (ED)

counsel that enlarging Kejriwal on interim bail to campaign in the elections will be without a precedent.

The court did not concur with his contention that interim bail to the AAP national convenor for campaigning would be like giving "premium of placing the politicians in a benefic position compared to ordinary citizens of this country".

"While examining the question of grant of interim bail/release, the courts always take into consideration the peculiarities associated with the person in question and the surrounding circumstances. In fact, to ignore the same would be iniquitous and wrong," the bench said, adding that the Lok Sabha elections are the "most significant and an important event this year".

The bench said no doubt, serious accusations have been made, but Kejriwal has not been convicted yet, does not have any criminal antecedents and is "not a threat to the society". It noted that more importantly, the legality and validity of his arrest (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Bharat Gaurav train set to start service

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, May 10: The Bharat Gaurav Special Tourist Train, covering the tourist destinations of North India, will start from New Jalpaiguri (NJP) railway station on May 18, an official statement from the Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) said on Friday.

The journey spans 8 nights and nine days, covering key destinations including Vaishno Devi, Haridwar, Rishikesh, Mathura, Vrindavan, and Ayodhya.

The train, comprising AC-3 tier and economy/sleeper class coaches, will traverse through Malda Town, Rampurhat, Dumka, Bhagalpur, Jamalpur, Kiul to reach Patna Junction on May 19.

On May 20 and 21, the train will be stationed at Vaishno Devi Katra station and on May 22 and 23, the train will be at Haridwar station. On May 24, the train will be stationed at Mathura and at Ayodhya on May 25.

The train will start its return journey from Ayodhya to reach Patna Junction on May 26 from where the tourists can start their de-boarding (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Every inch of PoK belongs to India, no force can snatch it: Amit Shah

KHUNTI (JHARKHAND), May

10: Union home minister Amit Shah on Friday slammed the Congress for "raising question mark" on Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) and asserted that every inch of it belonged to India and no force can snatch it.

"Mani Shankar Aiyar is telling us to respect Pakistan as it possesses an atomic bomb. Few days ago, INDIA alliance leader Farooq Abdullah said do not talk about PoK as Pakistan has an atomic bomb. I want to tell the Congress and INDIA alliance that PoK belongs to India and no force can snatch it," Shah said at an election rally in Jharkhand's Khunti.

He said, "I do not know what has happened to the Congress. A resolution was passed unanimously in Parliament that PoK is part of India. You (Congress) are now putting a question mark on PoK by talking about the atom bomb. BJP's stand is clear that every inch of PoK belongs to India and it will remain with India."

He said Congress preserved Article 370 for 70 years but Prime Minister Narendra Modi ensured

its abrogation.

Urging people to vote for the BJP, Shah said the JMM-led alliance in Jharkhand was neck-deep in corruption.

"JMM-led alliance indulged in ₹ 300-crore land scam, ₹ 1,000-crore mining scam, ₹ 1,000-crore MNREGA scam, ₹ 40-crore liquor scam. We will not allow the JMM-led alliance to digest poor people's money," he said.

Referring to the recovery of about ₹ 350 crore from the premises linked a Rajya Sabha MP from Jharkhand and ₹ 35 crore from the domestic help of an official linked to Congress Minister Alamgir in Jharkhand, he said the money belonged to people of Jharkhand which was "being looted by Rahul Baba's party" but will be given back to the masses.

He accused the JMM and Congress of doing "vote-bank politics".

"Congress created obstacles in building Ram Mandir in Ayodhya for 70 years whereas PM Modi constructed the temple in five years...Rahul Baba did not come to Ram (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

HT BRIEFS

Amritpal Singh

DIBRUGARH: Waris Punjab De chief Amritpal Singh filed his nomination from Khador Sahib constituency as independent candidate. Nomination filed by lawyer and relatives at district returning officer's office. Amritpal Singh, who is lodged in Assam's Dibrugarh jail, filed his nomination as an independent candidate from Khador Sahib Lok Sabha constituency on Friday. The nomination was filed by the Waris Punjab De leader's lawyer, Harjot Singh, his relative Sukhchain Singh and five others on behalf of him at the office of the district returning officer in Khador Sahib. Confirming about the development, Amritpal Singh's lawyer Rajdev Singh Kalsa his uncle Sukhchain Singh came to Dibrugarh Central Jail on Thursday and taken Amritpal Singh's signature in the documents.

Jorhat Police

JORHAT: The Jorhat police has initiated an inquiry, led by the Additional SP (Crime), into a recent firing incident resulting in injury to a youth accused of involvement in the theft of a water pump last week. Kusha Kutum (23) of Randhanijan village, located on the outskirts under Pulihar Police Station, was shot by a policeman from a police team on May 6 in the early morning while attempting to apprehend him. This followed his escape from police custody the previous night. Jorhat SP S. Mishra, addressing reporters, outlined the sequence of events leading to the firing. He explained that Kusha, along with three others, had been apprehended on May 5 in connection with a water pump theft case and were subsequently brought before the court.

HSSLC Examination

TEZPUR: Sudipta Bhowmick, a girl from Narayanpur under Dhekiajuli Police Station, seems destined for success in her life, overcoming all odds stacked against her. Sudipta, who is specially abled and has been paralyzed in both of her hands since birth, faces significant challenges, including difficulty in moving her neck properly and an inability to write or perform tasks with her hands.

China ready to work with India on specific issues: Beijing's new envoy

BEIJING, May 10: China is ready to work with India to "accommodate" each other's concerns and find a mutually acceptable solution to "specific issues" through dialogue at an early date, Beijing's new envoy to New Delhi Xu Feihong has said, remarks that came against the backdrop of the prolonged military standoff in eastern Ladakh.

An assistant minister ranked official, Xu, 60, appointed by Chinese president Xi Jinping for the sensitive job, said he regards his posting in New Delhi as an "honourable mission and a sacred duty" to improve and advance the bilateral ties.

"It is an honourable mission and a sacred duty. I will do my best to deepen understanding and friendship between the two peoples, expand exchanges and cooperation in various fields, and improve and advance the bilateral relationship," Xu told PTI and China's state-run CGTN-TV in a media interaction here before leaving for New Delhi to take up his posting.

"China is ready to work with India to accommodate each other's concerns, find a mutually acceptable solution to specific issues through dialogue at an early date, and turn the page as soon as possible," Xu said without elaborating further.

Xu previously served as China's Ambassador to Afghanistan and Romania, besides senior cadre-level postings in the ruling Communist Party of China (CPC).

He succeeds veteran Chinese diplomat Sun Weidong, who completed his tenure in October 2022. He is currently China's vice foreign minister.

Xu's appointment comes after an unusually long delay of 18 months amid strained relations between the two countries over the Ladakh military standoff.

Relations between the two countries hit a low except for trade ever since the eastern Ladakh border standoff (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Five held in Karbi Anglong district, pistol seized

HT Correspondent

BOKAJAN, May 10: In a decisive move against suspected drug trafficking, the police in Karbi Anglong launched a targeted operation which led to the apprehension of five individuals and the seizure of a cache of firearms.

Acting on specific information, authorities launched an operation Thursday evening, establishing a checkpoint at the Kaliram Basti Railway Overbridge. There, they intercepted a Bolero SUV bearing registration number NL 07 CB 8179.

The vehicle underwent a meticulous search, yielding a startling discovery - a 9 mm Beretta Pistol

accompanied by three magazines and 43 live ammunition.

Although the search didn't reveal narcotics, the presence of the firearms raised significant concerns.

The occupants of the vehicle, identified as Thonga Wangsa (39), Aloto Chishi (40), Hekiho Zhi-moni (45), Khukivi Aye (32), and Sattar Ali, were promptly apprehended.

The individuals hail from various regions, spanning Nagaland and Assam, indicating a potentially intricate network of illicit activities across state boundaries. Among them, Thonga Wangsa resides in Pukha, (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

ED files fresh charge sheet in Delhi Excise Policy case

NEW DELHI, May 10: The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Friday filed a fresh charge sheet in the Delhi excise policy-linked money laundering case naming BRS leader K Kavitha as an accused, official sources said. The federal agency had arrested Kavitha, the daughter of former Telangana chief minister K Chandrashekar Rao, from her Banjara hills residence in Hyderabad on March 15.

Official sources said the prosecution complaint has been filed under sections 45 and 44(1) of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) before a designated court, the sources said. A similar complaint against Kejriwal is expected to be filed next week.

This is the seventh charge sheet by the ED in this case in which it has arrested 18 people so far including Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal, who was given interim bail by the Supreme Court on Friday.

The ED had alleged that ₹ 45 crore "kickbacks", out of the ₹ 100 crore "bribe" provided by the 'South Group', were used by the AAP for the Goa assembly election campaign in 2022.

The 'South Group' liquor lobby allegedly includes Kavitha, TDP Ongole seat Lok Sabha candidate Magunta Sreenivasulu Reddy, his son Raghav Reddy and others.

The excise case pertains to alleged corruption and money laundering in the formulation and execution of the Delhi government's excise policy for 2021-22, which was later scrapped.

Delhi Lieutenant Governor V K Saxena recommended a CBI probe into the alleged irregularities. Subsequently, the ED registered a case under the PMLA. The ED filed its money laundering case on August 22, 2022, taking cognisance of the CBI FIR that was lodged on August 17, 2022. (PTI)

INDIA bloc leaders meet EC over voter turnout data, alleged model code violations

NEW DELHI, May 10: A delegation of opposition party leaders on Friday met the top brass of Election Commission and raised its concerns over the delay in releasing voter turnout figures for the first two phases, and urged them to take action on complaints of model code violations by ruling BJP leaders during the ongoing polls.

Samajwadi Party leader Javed Ali, meanwhile, raised the issue of a "red card" being issued by the Uttar Pradesh Police to people in the state, which they said is stopping many from exercising their franchise.

The delegation included Congress leaders Abhishek Manu Singhvi, Salman Khurshid, TMC's Derek O'Brien, DMK's TR Baalu, JMM's Mahua Majhi, CPT's Binoy Viswam, and Ali among others.

"We have a very distinguished gathering of INDIA alliance. Each party across India is represented. We spent 45 minute to an hour," Singhvi said briefing the media after the meeting.

"Issue number one was one of great trust deficit, question mark and a feeling of alarm and distress that 11 complaints by Congress alone, and complaints by all parties put together against the Prime

Minister and Home Minister, starting from early April, have not been addressed," Singhvi said.

"No action has been taken. Look at the oddity - you have sent notices after a long gap and not to the offenders. For the first time in the history of the Election Commission you have sent notices to the party presidents," Singhvi said, referring to its letter to BJP president JP Nadda over complaints against Modi's Banswara speech.

He said they have not been informed about the response to the EC notice, or about the action being taken. "Why there is a delay?"

"This is an irreversible window, it touched upon level playing field, it touches upon elections, it touched upon democracy and basic structure. Custodian of all these constitutional values is the Election Commission. If they don't act promptly, it will be a complete abdication of Constitutional duty," Singhvi said.

The Congress leader also hinted that the opposition parties may approach the Supreme Court with the issue.

"It is no joy for us to go to the Supreme Court and get directions saying why (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

'Mechanisms in place to track social media, difficult to look at everything'

NEW DELHI, May 10: The Delhi poll body has various mechanisms in place to monitor paid news and social media, chief electoral officer P Krishnamurthy said, even as he admitted that it is not plausible to keep a check on online platforms due to the large volumes of content.

In an interview with PTI, Krishnamurthy also dismissed allegations about the poll panel being biased and asserted that it provides a "level playing field".

Announcing the schedule of the general elections for the 18th Lok Sabha, chief election commissioner Rajiv Kumar noted the complexity of tackling misinformation in the digital age and said the Election Com-

mission had put in place certain measures to nip misinformation in the bud.

Kumar had also said the commission would launch a "Myth vs Reality" project to clear the air around fake news on social media.

Speaking on social media monitoring, Krishnamurthy told PTI that the Delhi poll body has media teams at different levels to look into various aspects of social media, including paid news.

"We have committees that certify the advertisements that go into electronic media, including social media. We have a committee at the level of the chief electoral officer and then there (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

HT Bureau

DIPHU, May 10: In a concerted effort to foster environmental consciousness among the youth, the Assam Science Technology and Environment Council, in collaboration with Rengbonghom HS School, spearheaded a dynamic one-day workshop on vermin composting here on Friday.

Held under the aegis of the Environment Education Programme of Mission Lifestyle for Environment (LIFE) in Assam, this initiative aimed to equip students with practical knowledge on sustainable waste management and agricultural practices.

Graced by the presence of esteemed dignitaries including inspector of schools (IS) Karbi



Anglong, Biresing Engti, the workshop commenced with the lighting of the inaugural lamp.

Engti, in his impassioned ad-

dress, urged students to translate theoretical understanding into actionable steps by implementing vermin composting in their homes

and advocating for its adoption in their communities.

Reflecting on the pressing environmental challenges, Engti emphasised the imperative of cultivating a habitat conducive to clean air and fertile soil.

"In today's era of technological advancement, our ecosystems have suffered degradation. To restore environmental equilibrium, we must amplify afforestation efforts and embrace organic farming practices like vermin composting," Engti remarked.

Furthermore, Engti underscored the pivotal role of Eco-Clubs in nurturing eco-consciousness among students. He also advocated for the establishment of such clubs in every (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)



Two parakeet birds perched on a tree branch in Guwahati. UB photos

'In today's era of technological advancement, our ecosystems have suffered degradation'

Assam Science Council empowers youth with vermin composting workshop

ITA seeks financial assistance from Centre

Struggling Darjeeling tea industry needs support

KOLKATA, May 10: The Indian Tea Association (ITA) on Friday reiterated its plea for financial assistance from the Centre to support the struggling Darjeeling tea industry.

According to the ITA, the situation in Darjeeling is critical due to decreasing yields and plummeting prices.

Without a financial relief package, the survival of the Darjeeling tea industry is in jeopardy, the association said, adding that it has urged the government to consider and act upon a financial revival package endorsed by the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Commerce in March 2022.

"The association has urged the government to extend a financial



revival package to the Darjeeling tea sector which has been already endorsed by the Parliamentary Standing Committee on commerce

in March 2022. This awaits consideration and action", the ITA said.

The ITA, quoting Tea Board data, highlighted that adverse

weather conditions have affected tea production in Assam and West Bengal, leading to a significant decrease in production.

From January to March 2024, production was down by 13.69 million kg at 96.10 million kg across the country, according to Tea Board data. Prices at the auctions have also taken a beating during the same period, the ITA said, adding that at an all-India level, auction prices were down by ₹ 16.08 per kg at ₹ 128.12.

Meanwhile, tea exports from India during January to December 2023 fell to 227.91 million kg as compared to 231.08 million kg in the same period of 2022, adding to the industry's challenges, the ITA said. (PTI)

Marble Centre launches new showroom



HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, May 10: Marble Centre, a premier destination for exquisite Italian Marble, granite, and tiles, unveiled its grand expansion with a state-of-the-art showroom in Guwahati on Friday. The spacious new location, opposite the Mahindra Showroom in Ganeshguri, marks a significant milestone for the brand, promising an unparalleled shopping experience for luxury home décor enthusiasts.

The inauguration ceremony was graced by esteemed dignitaries, including AREIDA president Pranab Kumar Sharma, who officially opened the doors to a world of opulence and sophistication. Proprietors Pradip Lahoty and Architect Abhishek Lahoty expressed their excitement, highlighting the vast array of handpicked collections sourced from around the globe.

Boasting a staggering 13,000 sq.ft. of display area,

Marble Centre stands as the largest showcase of Italian marble in the city, embodying a commitment to quality, competitive pricing, and exemplary customer service. The new showroom, nestled within The Jain House – Car Ghar, features a two-storey layout showcasing a diverse selection of imported marble, Indian and imported granite, as well as artificial and natural quartz—all conveniently housed under one roof.

Its tiles unit – Bath & Sanitary – which is located at Christian Basti, opposite the Aaykar Bhawan is another renowned three-storey tiles and wellness boutique showroom.

Speaking of their success, Pradip Lahoty stated, "For the last several years, we've served our esteemed clients from across the Northeastern states, and now, with our expanded presence, we aim to elevate the standards of luxury marble shopping in the region."

The celebration extends beyond Guwahati, as Marble Centre recently opened its doors in Shillong at Mawblei, receiving an overwhelming response from patrons. Plans for additional outlets across the region are already in motion, underscoring the brand's commitment to accessibility and growth.

The inauguration extravaganza was a jubilant affair, welcoming industry professionals including traders, contractors, builders, architects, and interior designers. Marble Centre envisions becoming the epitome of luxury marble retail, prioritizing quality and customer satisfaction above all else.

As Marble Centre sets the stage for a new era of luxury living, patrons can expect nothing short of excellence in every facet of their shopping experience.

Sensex, Nifty rebound as Reliance, ITC gain

MUMBAI, May 10: Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty found firmer ground on Friday, propelled by a rally in market heavyweights Reliance Industries, ITC and Bharti Airtel amid a supportive trend overseas.

Recovering from the sharp decline in the previous trade, the 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 260.30 points or 0.36 per cent to settle at 72,664.47. During the day, it rallied 542.37 points or 0.74 per cent to 72,946.54.

The NSE Nifty climbed 97.70 points or 0.44 per cent to 22,055.20.

From the Sensex basket, Power Grid, NTPC, JSW Steel, Asian Paints, ITC, Bharti Airtel, Hindustan Unilever and Tata Motors were the biggest gainers.

On the other hand, Tata Consultancy Services, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Infosys, Wipro, Mahindra & Mahindra and HDFC Bank were among the laggards.

In Asian markets, Seoul, Tokyo, Shanghai and Hong Kong settled with gains. (PTI)

Rupee settles 1 paisa lower at 83.49 against US dollar

MUMBAI, May 10: The rupee stayed range-bound and settled 1 paisa lower at 83.49 (provisional) against the US dollar on Friday, as the support from positive domestic equities was negated by elevated crude oil prices.

Forex traders said significant foreign fund outflows dented investors' sentiments.

At the interbank foreign exchange market, the local unit traded in a narrow range. It opened at 83.48, and touched an intraday high of 83.46 and a low of 83.51 during the day. The domestic unit finally settled for the day at 83.49 (provisional), down 1 paisa from its previous close.

On Thursday, the rupee closed at 83.48 against the American currency.

The Indian rupee traded on a flat note. Positive domestic markets and a weak US dollar supported the rupee, however, a rise in crude oil prices and sustained foreign fund outflows capped sharp gains, said Anuj Choudhary Research Analyst, Sharekhan by BNP Paribas.

Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was at 105.23, higher by 0.01 per cent as the US dollar declined on rising weekly unemployment claims from the US.

Weekly unemployment claims

rose to 231,000 vs 209,000 in the prior week and the forecast of 212,000.

"We expect the rupee to trade with a slight negative bias and the US dollar may rise again amid hawkish Fed speak and safe-haven demand amid geopolitical tensions in the Middle East," Choudhary said.

Selling pressure by foreign investors and rising global crude oil prices may also pressurise the rupee. However, a rise in risk appetite in global markets may support the rupee at lower levels. "Traders may take cues from India's IIP data and Michigan consumer sentiment data from the US. USD-INR spot price is expected to trade in a range of ₹ 83.30 to ₹ 83.75," Choudhary added.

Brent crude futures, the global oil benchmark, rose 0.62 per cent to USD 84.40 per barrel.

On the domestic equity market, the 30-share BSE Sensex advanced 260.30 points, or 0.36 per cent to close at 72,664.47 points. The broader NSE Nifty settled 97.70 points or 0.44 per cent higher at 22,055.20.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) were net sellers in the capital markets on Thursday as they offloaded shares worth ₹ 6,994.86 crore, according to exchange data. (PTI)

British economy rebounds strongly in first quarter of the year

LONDON, May 10: The British economy bounced back strongly in the first three months of the year, bringing to an end to what economists termed a "technical recession", official figures showed Friday.

The Office for National Statistics said the economy grew by 0.6 per cent in the first quarter from the previous three-month period, with broad-based strength across the crucial services sector in particular.

The increase was higher than the 0.4 per cent predicted by economists and the strongest since the fourth quarter of 2021 when the economy was rebounding following the sharp contraction during the coronavirus pandemic. It comes after two quarters of modest declines, which in the UK is defined as a recession.

Despite the quarterly increase, the British economy has barely grown over the past year. It has been hobbled by interest rates at 16-year highs of 5.25 per cent.

There was hope Thursday that they may be on the way down soon. Bank of England Gov. Andrew Bailey indicated that a rate cut may be on the cards in June if inflation continues to trend downwards.

The Bank of England, like the US Fed and other central banks around the world, raised interest rates aggressively in late 2021 from near zero to counter price rises first stoked by supply chain issues during the coronavirus pandemic and then by Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

High interest rates — which cool the economy by making it more expensive to borrow — have helped ease inflation, but they've also weighed on the British economy.

Economists laid out the hope that, with inflation cooling and interest rates lower, the British economy may be entering a period of more sustained growth.

However, it's not expected to be particularly strong, with the Bank of England predicting only 0.5 per cent growth this year.

"This is a surprisingly strong recovery and a likely turning point for the economy," said Debapratim De, director of economic research at DeLoitte. Lawmakers in the UK's governing Conservative Party, which appears headed for a big electoral defeat later this year to the Labour Party, will be hoping that the economy is set fair, relieving the pressure on financially stretched households, thereby helping to fuel an economic feel-good factor.

"There is no doubt it has been a difficult few years, but today's growth figures are proof that the economy is returning to full health for the first time since the pandemic," said Treasury chief Jeremy Hunt. (AP)

Airtel celebrates 2.5million 5G customers in Northeast and Assam

Company has successfully deployed 5G service across all cities and districts in North East and Assam

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, May 10: Bharti Airtel ("Airtel"), one of India's leading telecommunications service providers, recently announced that it has 2.5 million customers enjoying 5G service in the states of North East and Assam. The company has successfully deployed 5G service across all cities and districts in North East and Assam reflecting a promising shift towards offering next-generation mobile connectivity.

Airtel has registered a significant increase in 5G users in the past 6 months in North East and Assam.

The company's expansive network deployment has effectively extended its services across the entire state, greatly simplifying the process for customers to embrace 5G. From the iconic architectural marvels and pilgrimage sites of Tawang Monastery in Arunachal Pradesh and Ujjayanta Palace in Tripura, to the breathtaking



vistas of tourist hotspots like Kaziranga National Park in Assam, Mawsynram- the wettest place on Earth in Meghalaya, Hornbill Festival in Nagaland and Tea plantations in Assam, Airtel continues to complete its rollout across North East and Assam.

Commenting on the milestone, Rajnish Verma, CEO- North East and Assam, Bharti Airtel said, "We are making significant strides in building the network infrastructure required to facilitate widespread adoption of 5G in North

East and Assam. We express our gratitude to our valued customers who have upgraded to enjoy the power of unlimited 5G service at no additional cost. Our tireless efforts are to keep our customers consistently connected to the state's fastest, most reliable, and cutting-edge network."

The rapid deployment and adoption of 5G in the country is due to multiple factors including rapid network enhancement, accelerated 5G rollout and increasing availability of 5G devices. In order to make affordable devices accessible to users, Airtel also collaborated with Poco to offer sub-10K 5G smartphones, which helped to grow its overall 5G user base in the country. Retail expansion in the region to increase physical format of stores has further augmented consumer connect to help customers upgrade conveniently to 5G service.

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Kejriwal gets 21-day interim

itself was under challenge before the top court which is yet to finally pronounce its verdict on it.

"The factual situation cannot be compared with harvesting crops or pleading to look after business affairs. In this background, once the matter is subjudice and the questions relating to legality of arrest are under consideration, a more holistic and libertarian view is justified, in the background that the 18th Lok Sabha General Elections are being held," the bench said. Ruling that Kejriwal's case is "not an exception", the bench said power to grant interim bail is commonly exercised in a number of cases and interim bail is granted keeping in mind the facts of each case. "For the aforesaid reasons, we direct that the appellant – Arvind Kejriwal will be released on interim bail in connection with case... till June 1, 2024, that is, he will surrender on June 2, 2024 on the following terms and conditions..." the bench said, adding, "he shall not visit the office of the Chief Minister and the Delhi secretariat".

"He (Kejriwal) shall be bound by the statement made on his behalf that he shall not sign official files unless it is required and necessary for obtaining clearance/approval of the Lieutenant Governor of Delhi," the court said. Kejriwal will not make any comment with regard to his role in the case and will not interact with any of the witnesses or have access to any official files connected with the case, the bench directed.

The top court said the ongoing Lok Sabha elections has prompted the consideration of interim bail to Kejriwal as at this stage, it is not possible for the court to either conclude the arguments or finally pronounce the verdict on his plea challenging his arrest.

"As the appeal is pending before us, we do not think it would be proper for us to direct the appellant - Arvind Kejriwal to approach the trial court for interim bail/release. This may not be apt in view of the legal issues and contentions that are under examination and consideration before us," it said.

"Between 650-700 million voters out of an electorate of about 970 million will cast their votes to elect the government of this country for the next five years. General Elections supply the vis viva (energy) to a democracy," it said, underlining the importance of the Lok Sabha elections. (PTI)

Bharat Gaurav train set to start

at their respective destinations till New Jalpaiguri station. The cost of the package will be ₹ 29,500 for AC class and ₹ 17,900 per person for economy/sleeper class. Bharat Gaurav is the first such tourism special train and is in line with the Centre's initiative 'Ek Bharat, Shrestha Bharat' and 'Dekho Apna Desh', the official said in a release.

Every inch of PoK belongs to India,

Mandir consecration as he was afraid of his 'vote bank'," he said. "I want to ask Rahul Gandhi why the Congress failed to appoint any tribal President during its rule", he said while taking a jibe at the grand old party and INDIA alliance.

Shah said under the Congress regime, Maoists exercised rights on "jal, jungle and jameen (water, forest and land) in Bihar, Jharkhand, Odisha, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh. "After you made Modi Prime Minister, he wiped out the Maoist menace and ushered in development," he said.

The Home Minister said the credit of freeing Jharkhand and Budha Pahad from the clutches of Maoists goes to BJP and PM Modi.

He said it is the BJP regime that ensured respect and dignity for tribals and the Prime Minister has already announced to celebrate the 125th birth anniversary of tribal icon Birsu Munda as 'Janjatiya Gaurav Varsh' in 2025. Birsu Munda waged a war against the British and its effect reverberated across India, but the Congress and JMM governments did not give tribals their due, he said.

"Now, the tribal population faces the biggest threat from infiltrators who are building homes in tribal villages and marrying local girls. If anyone can stop them, it is only the BJP," he said.

"Under Prime Minister Modi, the tribal welfare budget was enhanced to ₹ 1,33,000 crore from ₹ 29,000 crore in the previous Congress regime," he said and added that 40,000 teachers will be appointed for Eklaya Model schools across the country. A total of one lakh children are enrolled in 740 such schools," he said. (PTI)

China ready to work with India on

erupted on May 5, 2020, following a violent clash in the Pangong Tso (lake) area. The two sides have so far held 21 rounds of Corps Commander-level talks to resolve the standoff.

India is pressing the People's Liberation Army (PLA) to disengage from the Depsang and Demchok areas, maintaining that there cannot be restoration of normalcy in its relations with China as long as the state of the borders remains abnormal.

According to the Chinese military, the two sides so far agreed to disengage from four points, namely the Galwan Valley, the Pangong Lake, Hot Springs, and Jianan Daban (Gogra).

As he set to take over his posting in New Delhi, Xu was candid and hopeful about resolving the present deadlock in bilateral ties.

"I noted Prime Minister Modi's comments on the importance of China-India ties, and the Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson responded to that right afterwards," Xu said.

In his recent interview with Newsweek magazine, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said India's relationship with China is important and significant.

"The Chinese side always believes that China-India ties should not be defined by any single issue or area; the boundary question is not the entirety of the relationship. Speaking at the Indian Council of World Affairs in September 2014, President Xi Jinping said that we must not focus our attention only on differences and forget about our friendship and cooperation, still less should we allow the differences to stand in the way of our development and interfere with the overall growth of bilateral relations," Xu said.

On how he viewed his appointment after a considerable hiatus, Xu said, "It is my great honour to be appointed by His Excellency President Xi Jinping as the 17th Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the People's Republic of China to the Republic of India".

"I look forward to, and I trust that I will have, the support and assistance from the Indian government and friends from all sectors as I work to perform my ambassadorial duties," he said.

Xu also said cooperation and coordination between India and China on global and regional affairs would not only bring opportunities to both but also have an "important positive impact" on a reasonable international order. (PTI)

Five held in Karbi Anglong district,

Mon district, Nagaland; Aloto Chishi in Naharbari, Diphupur police station, Dimapur district, Nagaland; Hekiho Zhimoni in Imcomland, Dimapur East police station, Dimapur district, Nagaland; Khukivi Aye in Padum Pukhuri, Diphupur police station, Dimapur district, Nagaland; and Sattar Ali in Mitmari Kaopuru, Lahorighat police station, Morigaon district, Assam.

INDIA bloc leaders meet EC

don't you decide. This is not the way a Constitutional functionary should function. We are distressed and there is no satisfactory answer why these people are not touched," he said. Singhvi said the second issue raised was the "non-publication or publication with extreme delay of the voter turnout percentages."

"We made three quick points - the difference of voter percentage increase is 5.74 per cent or 5.5 per cent. The comparable figure in the 2019 election the first three phases was two per cent, one per cent, two and half per cent, this time it is double," he said.

"We are not given a stamp of approval by the published figures of the EC. We are told to calculate on our own because there is real time data available with the candidate or the voting app. That maybe so, but the stamp of approval of a published absolute figure and a percentage figure by the EC carries its own constitutional weight, we have asked for that," he said.

Amid the opposition's allegations, the Election Commission had asserted last week that booth-wise data of the "actual number of votes polled" is available with the candidates soon after the voting ends.

They said copies of Form 17C, which contains the number of voter turnout, duly signed by the presiding officer and all present polling agents are shared with all present polling agents.

Singhvi added that the questions are avoidable if the EC acts promptly.

"You have to avoid this delay and this huge discrepancy in figures because it raises unnecessary question marks. Did this increase in vote suddenly occur only in those areas where the ruling party had done badly last time, did it occur across all constituencies... these are all avoidable questions because transparency and promptitude by EC will solve them immediately," he said. Ali meanwhile raised the issue of Uttar Pradesh police issuing "red cards" to a number of individuals banning them from going near polling booths. (PTI)

'Mechanisms in place to track

are teams at the returning officer level. They do pre-certification of the advertisements that go online," he said. He explained there are teams regularly checking TV channels, websites and newspapers for any violation of the rules. Discussing the challenges of monitoring social media, Krishnamurthy said it is considered a very vast network. "What we do is that we have certain protocols to monitor what is happening on social media. But concerning the volumes generated, it may not be plausible to look at everything happening there. But anything of serious concern is looked into and we do take action if there is any violation," he asserted.

Earlier this week, the Election Commission reminded the Delhi chief electoral officer to take action against anonymous political hoardings. In a letter to the office of the chief electoral officer, the poll authority said it had been receiving representations from various stakeholders, including political parties, regarding anonymous election hoardings at authorised and unauthorised locations in the national capital.

Throwing light on such posts, Krishnamurthy said, "So far as anonymous things are concerned, there are agencies looking into them. Concerning attacks on individuals, the affected parties make complaints and those are being acted upon. Recently, the Election Commission had also asked social media platforms to take off some posts. Action is happening wherever there are violations." AAP recently accused the poll body of being biased after it was asked to modify its campaign song "Jail Ka Jawab Vote Se Denge". (PTI)

Assam Science Council empowers

educational institution to galvanise efforts towards biodiversity conservation and sustainable living.

The inaugural session witnessed the participation of key stakeholders including Longsing Timung, principal of Rengbonghom HS School, and representatives from academic institutions and local governance bodies. Expert resource persons elucidated the intricacies of vermin composting, delineating its significance, and elucidating its agricultural benefits.

The inaugural session was attended by the principal, Rengbonghom HS School, Longsing Timung; Bolly Ronghangpi, lecturer, District Institute of Education and Training (DIET); principal, Basic Training Centre, Dhonsing Timung; president, SMDC, Rengbonghom HS School, Robinson Kathar and vice president, Kangbura Senar. The resource persons were scientist, Assam Agriculture University, Zonal Research Station, Dr Manjurima Gogoi; assistant professor, Department of Life Science & Bioinformatics of Assam University Diphu Campus, Dr PV Bhaskar Reddy and agriculture development officer (ADO) Rukheswar Timung explained to the students what vermin composting, the process of preparation of vermin composite, its values and benefits in agriculture.

Fierce storm, rains cause damages in Nagaon



HT Correspondent

NAGAON, May 10: A fierce storm coupled with heavy thundershowers lashed Barhampur and Kathiatoli in Nagaon on Thursday night, injuring one person and causing extensive damage to government offices as well as other buildings.

The injured has been identified as Sujan Biswas, an audit assistant.

According to sources, the fierce storm reportedly ravaged the headquarters of the 9th Battalion of Assam police. A team of audit from the Office of Audit General, Guwahati had been examining as well as monitoring the accounts of expenditure of the battalion when suddenly a large tree, which had been uprooted, fell on the office building destroying the furniture and other official documents of the battalion. Besides, it also caused severe injury to Biswas. The victim was immediately rushed to a local hospital for treatment.

Similarly, Pipikon Bordoloi, a resident of thye Kathiatoli Tapaati area was also seriously injured in the fierce storm. Bordoloi was trapped for long at his cowed by a huge tree that fell down on it after being uprooted under the impact of the storm.

Sources claimed that Bordoloi was later rescued by some locals and admitted to a local hospital at Nagaon where the doctor referred him to the Guwahati Medical College and Hospital for advanced treatment.

The Kalayugi water supply project was also extensively ravaged in the storm, sources claimed.

Jorhat DC stresses on enforcement of traffic rules

HT Correspondent

JORHAT, May 10: The Jorhat district commissioner Pulak Mahanta has stressed on strict enforcement of the 'no helmet, no petrol' directive in the district.

A district administration official informed that Mahanta, while chairing the district development committee meeting at the DC's conference hall on Thursday with heads of all departments and agencies, called for not providing petrol to two wheelers riders and pillion riders without helmets at the fuel stations.

Emphasising on road safety measures, the DC directed the authorities concerned to caution the petrol stations that strong action would be taken against them if they are found not adhering to the directive.

He also asked for use of speed guns by the enforcement authorities to check vehicles found to be breaking the speed limit.

With an aim to give a boost to the agriculture sec-

tor in the district, the DC also directed the officials of the district agriculture department to hold fortnightly meetings with farmers across the district to know about their problems and other issues.

Stressing on increasing crop production and making the farmers self-reliant, Mahanta suggested that the agriculture department should encourage farmers to take up kharif season crops along with millet and rice.

In view of the ensuing rainy season, the DC asked the district health department to take necessary steps to prevent outbreak of diseases like malaria and dengue.

He further asked the health department to take steps to reduce infant and maternal mortality.

Mahanta further directed the district animal husbandry and veterinary department to keep stocks of medicines ready for livestock and make necessary preparations to provide them with care during possible floods.

Couple injured after jumping off two-storey building

HT Correspondent

DEMOW, May 10: A couple was seriously injured after they jumped off a two-storey building in Demow on Friday.

According to sources, the victims, Bidyut Nath and his wife Upasana Borgohain Nath had been staying in a rented house at Kushal Path in Demow.

Both are teachers and hail from Charing.

Soon after the incident, locals rushed the critically injured couple to the Demow Model Hospital.

After administering primary treatment, doctors referred them to the Assam Medical College and Hospital (AMCH) in Dibrugarh for better treatment.

The reason behind the couple taking the extreme step is still not known.

The Demow police soon rushed to the spot and began investigations.

The couple had been living in the rented house of Om Prakash Goswami for the past two months.

NTPC Bongaigaon Salakati bags runners-up trophy in Corporate Management Olympiad

HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, May 10: The NTPC Bongaigaon Salakati won the first runners-up trophy at the 6th Corporate Management Olympiad 2024 in the case study category.

The dynamic duo comprising Madhurja Singha Lahkar, senior manager, HR-corporate communication, and Manish Kr. Singh, senior manager, C&I, represented NTPC Bongaigaon at the prestigious event held in New Delhi on Thursday.

Competing in an online format, they showcased their expertise on the topic 'Best Process Practices' amidst stiff competition from more than 17 teams representing prominent organizations nationwide.

K C Muraliedharan, business unit head of NTPC Bongaigaon, extended hearty congratulations to the triumphant team.

He emphasised the significance of their achievement in enhancing the station's reputation and urged them to continue striving for excellence.

The event also witnessed the

presence of Onkar Nath, additional general manager (HR), NTPC Bongaigaon who graced the occasion with his encouragement and extended the support for the team.

The Corporate Management Olympiad, organised by the All-India Management Association (AIMA), serves as a platform to foster agility and resilience in organisations, equipping them to thrive in evolving business landscapes.

NTPC Bongaigaon's remarkable performance is a glaring example of its commitment to embracing new realities and driving transformative change in the corporate sphere.

In addition to this remarkable feat, NTPC emerged as the undisputed overall champion of the competition for 2024, winning the highest number of awards across various categories including quiz, business simulation and case studies.

This resounding success reaffirms NTPC's position as a leader in corporate excellence and management innovation.

AAU signs MoU on carbon financing project to benefit farmers

Project to contribute towards achievement of global climate goals



HT Correspondent

JORHAT, May 10: The Assam Agricultural University (AAU) on Friday signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with New Delhi based The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI) and ReNew Power Synergy Private Limited to work on a project to plant one crore trees in 10 districts of the state for carbon financing to benefit farmers.

The project would encourage farmers to plant trees in their lands with an aim to provide additional income by selling carbon credits of the trees in the international market.

The project would also contribute towards achievement of global climate goals. The 10 districts selected for the initiative are Jorhat, Sivasagar, Golaghat, Bongaigaon, Sonitpur, Darrang, Udal-

guri, Baksa, Nalbari and Barpeta.

AAU vice-chancellor, Bidyut Chandan Deka, speaking on the occasion stated that the project implementation would be overseen by TERI and ReNew Synergy and research centres and Krishi Vigyan Kendras under AAU. They would also identify farmers in whose land the trees would be planted.

Deka said, "The planting materials in this project would be pro-

vided to farmers free with the cost to be borne by TERI and ReNew. Power Synergy Pvt. As per the MoU signed by AAU with the two agencies in July 2023, a project is being implemented under which one crore existing trees owned by people are to be selected to make them eligible for earning carbon credits points by the owners. The registration process of the trees was underway.

Now with the signing of MoU for the new project today, altogether 2 crore trees would be earned."

AAU director (research, agriculture), Sanjay Kumar Chetia, faculty of agriculture, PK Pathak, director (extension education), Manoranjan Neog, associate director (extension education), Ranjit Kumar Saud, associate director (research, agriculture), Mrinal Saikia, TERI senior directors JV Sharma and D Saharia and Guwahati-based TERI regional director Naba Kumar Goswami were among those present during the programme held at the Conference Hall of the vice-chancellor's office complex.

Prasanta Jyoti Baruah honoured with Brahmaputra Valley Journalism Award

HT Correspondent

SIVASAGAR, May 10: Prasanta Jyoti Baruah, the executive editor of The Assam Tribune and a prominent journalist of the state, was honoured with the prestigious Brahmaputra Valley Journalism Award during a function held in the Sivasagar District Journalists Bhawan in Sivasagar on Friday.

Instituted by the Assam State Journalists Union (ASJU), the award was presented to Baruah by Sabanayakan Salvakumaraswami, secretary general of the Indian Journalists Union (IJU) in the presence of over a hundred journalists from different parts of the state.

Receiving the award, Baruah said that the newspaper industry is passing through a tough time during the post-COVID-19 period. The media people had to bear the brunt of the COVID crisis. Most of the newspaper owners were forced to retrench journalists. He urged the government to increase the journalists' pension in the wake of inflationary trends. He thanked the ASJU for recognising his contributions.

SSB organises informative programmes for students in Gossaigaon

HT Correspondent

GOSSAIGAON, May 10: The 31st battalion of the Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB) stationed at Matiajuri in Gossaigaon organised a series of engaging and informative programmes for the students of St. Anthony English Medium School to enhance their skills.

The event, which was held at the unit headquarters aimed to acquaint the young minds with the operations of the Central Armed Police Forces, specifically the SSB, and to inspire them to pursue a career in the Central Armed Police Forces.

The programme included a tour of the Unit Campus for the students, Mahila Contingent parade drill, a K9 Dog demonstration and a weapon exhibition designed to provide the students with first-hand experiences of the activities of the SSB.

Sh. Parag, second in command (officiating commandant) while



Baruah said that The Assam Tribune is the first newspaper group in India to implement the Justice Maitiaji Wage Board for working journalists in 2011. The editor of the Assam Tribune, Prafulla Govinda Baruah took a decisive step in implementing the recommendations of the Board despite stiff opposition from all leading newspaper groups in the country. His bold stand for the journalists was vindicated when the Supreme Court quashed the challenge from INA and newspaper owners and ordered payments to the journalists from 2011.

Attending the function as the chief guest of the award-giving ceremony,

Sabanayakan Salvakumaraswami said that fake news and paid news in Indian journalism are about to destroy the industry and the profession now. Similarly, AI, social media, and Content Creation are also serious issues threatening the profession which must be tackled professionally to save traditional media.

Jitu Sarma Rajkhowa, president of the Assam State Journalists Union (ASJU) presided over the meeting, and Pradip Deka, secretary spoke on the objectives. Biren Sarma, veteran journalist of Nazira was also felicitated in the meeting. Soumerjyoti Mahanta, principal, of the Sibsagar Commerce College delivered the keynote address and spoke on the recent trends in journalism.

Pratim Sarma, principal of the Sivasagar Girls' College released the souvenir 'Jagata Prahar' on the occasion. Students of the Fuleswari Girls' HS School presented a chorus. Anil Gupta, president in-charge of the Sivasagar District Journalists Association and Manoj Kumar Borthakur, executive president of ASJU offered the vote of thanks.

Train cancelled due to repair work



HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, May 10: In view of the ongoing track repairing work at KM - 110/7 between Jatinga Lampur and New Harangajao under Lumding division of the Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR), few trains have been cancelled.

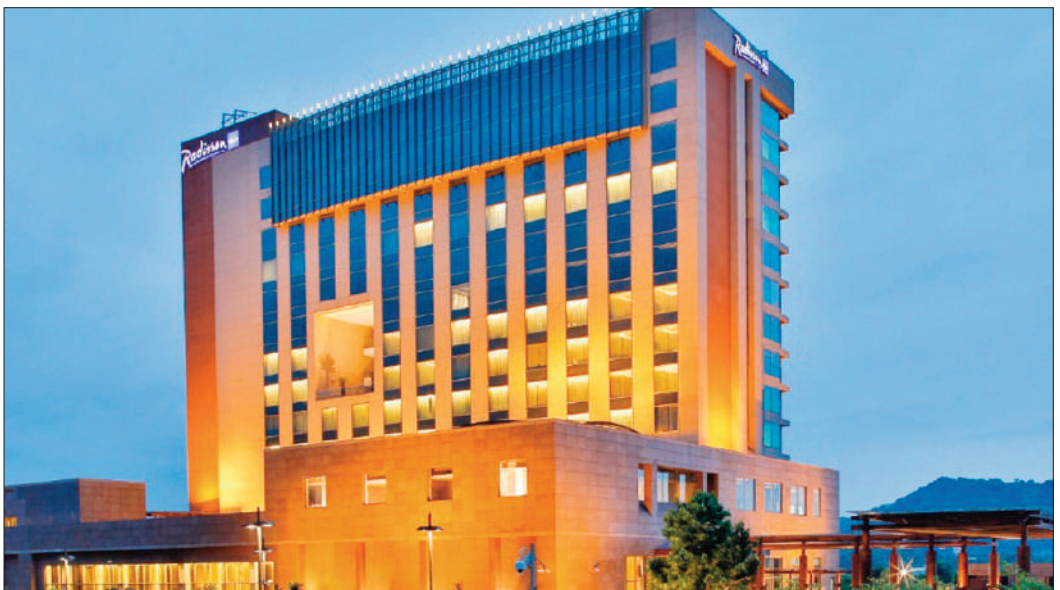
On the other hand, the ongoing Kisan agitation at the Sambhu Station under Ambala division of Northern Railway few trains will be diverted.

The (Guwahati - Silchar - Guwahati) Express and the Guwahati - Badarpur - Guwahati Express scheduled to depart on May 11 from their respective destination will remain cancelled.

Meanwhile, the Guwahati - Jammu Tawi) Express commencing on its journey on May 13 will be diverted via Ambala Cantt. - Chandigarh - New Morinda Jn. - Sirhind - Sanahwal. The Katihar - Amritsar) Express commencing on its journey on May 10, 11 and 12 will be diverted via Jakhhal Jn. - Dhuri - Ludhiana. The Kamakhya - Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Katra) Express commencing on its journey on May 12 will be diverted via Ambala Cantt. - Chandigarh - New Morinda Jn. - Sirhind - Sanahwal. The Guwahati - Jammu Tawi) Express commencing on its journey on May 13 will be diverted via Ambala Cantt. - Chandigarh - New Morinda Jn. - Sirhind - Sanahwal. The Amritsar - Katihar Express commencing on its journey on May 11, 12 and 13 will be diverted via Ludhiana - Dhuri - Jakhhal Jn.

Special brunch on offer on Mother's Day at Radisson Blu

Authentic traditional Bengali cuisine on offer during Friday Dinner Fest at Raddison Blu on every Friday of May



HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, May 10: A series of special dining experiences are in offer at The Radisson Blu in the city to celebrate Mother's Day on May 12. Radisson Blu will offer a special Mother's Day Brunch at Café B You. The restaurant will present an extensive Sunday

brunch spread, including special dishes hand-picked by the chef to honour all mothers. Guests will be greeted with a special mocktail on arrival. The brunch is priced at Rs. 2,549 with additional taxes per person. In a special gesture of appreciation, on a table of four, one mother's brunch will be complimentary. The brunch will be available on this day from 12:30 pm to 4 pm.

Apart from this, the hotel will also hold the Friday Dinner Feast - Flavors of Bengal at Café B You on every Friday of this month by bringing to the public an array of authentic traditional Bengali

dishes. The hotel hopes to immerse its patrons in the culinary delights of Bengal with the dinners on offer from 7 pm to 11:30 pm on these days.

Known for its distinctive use of mustard oil, fish, and confectioneries, Bengali cuisine offers an array of flavors that are both bold and satisfying. The dinner will feature live counters that replicate the vibrant street food scenes of West Bengal. Priced at Rs. 2149 with additional taxes per person, this feast promises to be a delightful exploration of Bengali traditions and tastes.

The hotel also offers the ultimate weekend vibes with Live Bands at Reign - the luxurious nightlife outlet at Radisson Blu Guwahati on Fridays and Saturdays. Melodious music with drinks flowing, the evening offers people some relaxing moments to unwind and celebrate.

The hotel invites all to join in on these vibrant festivities and delectable dining experiences this month. The hotel promises all a chance to experience the essence of diverse cultures through different cuisines from different places.

Lokanayak Omeo Kumar Das College holds career counselling programme

HT Correspondent

TEZPUR, May 10: The department of education, Career Guidance and Placement Cell and IQAC of the Lokanayak Omeo Kumar Das College has organised a career counselling programme at its campus in Dhekiajuli aiming to provide an orientation to the undergraduate students regarding career choices.

Achintya Baruah, retired faculty from IIE Guwahati and Nayan Jyoti Pathak, circle officer of Dhekiajuli revenue circle took part in the programme as resource person. Jnanjyoti Patangia, co-ordinator of the Career Guidance and Placement Cell explained the objectives of the programme.

Achintya Baruah made his presentation in a very interesting manner and highlighted the significance of self analysis, setting realistic goal and working on it. He also dwelt at length on how to become an entrepreneur and achieve success. He deliberated on various aspects of entrepreneur-

ship like person, product and promotion.

Nayan Jyoti Pathak highlighted the importance of clearing self doubts and ways to prepare for competitive examinations. He stated that sacrifice, hard work and clearly chalked out strategy are the keys to achieve success in such examinations. During his interaction with the students he also expressed willingness to help aspiring students for competitive examinations.

Kantar Bhushan Nandi in his speech highlighted the importance of skill and why it has become imperative to learn new skills. Principal of the college, Sukdev Adhikari delivered his welcome address and stated the importance of career counselling in today's competitive environment and urged the students to utilise such opportunities. President of the college's governing body, Jogendra Saikia also emphasised on the need to prepare for the future by focusing on goals.



By: Kaustov Kashyap

Corporate Law is a specialised field in the field of Law, and has a great scope for the graduates. This degree applies to sole proprietorship, partnership, association and corporations. The day-to-day activities of a Corporate Lawyer include safeguarding the commercial transactions, preparing corporate agreements, filing taxes and managing government reporting. A degree in the Corporate Law domain can be pursued at both undergraduate and post-graduate level. Corporate Law is a specialisation that one can pursue while taking up a degree course in Law.

Degrees like LL.B (Bachelor of Legislative Law) and B.A., LL.B, BBA.LL.B BBA.LL.B (Hons) in B.Com. LL.B, B.Sc. LL.B can be pursued in Corpo-

rate Law. The recent decades have been a trendsetter for "Corporate" since we are living in a corporate era. Most people are ambitious to get a corporate job in a top-notch organisation, but their thoughts are limited to software and IT only. The growth in this sector brought lots and lots of career avenues worldwide. Corporate Law is a highly reputed and rewarding career in the corporate world.

Eligibility Criteria
Eligibility Criteria for UG Courses in Corporate Law

Before applying to the UG courses in the field of Corporate Law, candidates must ensure that they meet the eligibility criteria of the course. They must have completed their 10+2 examination with a percentage of 45%; there will be a relaxation of 10 percent for the candidates belonging to the reserved cate-

gories. Candidates applying for the admissions to the UG programmes in the field of Corporate Law must clear the eligibility criteria of the course. They must achieve a minimum aggregate score of 45%, there will be a relaxation of 10 percent for the students belonging to the reserved categories.

The top entrance exams for UG courses in India are SET SLAT - The Symbiosis Entrance Test and CLAT- Common-Law Admission Test. The SET SLAT is organised by the Symbiosis Law School (SLS), Pune to help students in seeking admission to the university's law courses. Whereas, the CLAT is an entrance test in the area of law that is conducted by the National Law University at a national level in India. It is an offline examination and is widely accepted in most law institutions and col-

A career in Corporate Law

leges.

Eligibility criteria for PG courses

Candidates applying for the PG courses must meet the eligibility requirements of the desired institute. They can study the eligibility criteria by visiting the official website of the same. Candidates require a Bachelor's degree in the field of law or related discipline with an aggregate score of 45 percent. Mentioned below is the eligibility criteria for PG courses in the field of Corporate Law. A Bachelor's degree in the field of Law or relevant discipline is also necessary for the admissions to the PG courses in the Corporate Law field. Students should also clear the LSAT- the Law Student Admission Test and CLAT- Common-Law Admission Test PG any one of these two exams to enter in the field of Corporate Law.

LSAT is the most popular entrance exam at the global level for law aspirants. It is conducted by the Law School Admission Council. It is a half-day standardised test held about seven times each year. CLAT PG is a national level law entrance examination conducted by Consortium of National Law Universities (NLU's) for admission to the postgraduate

programmes in the field of Law.

Scope of corporate law

The scope of a Corporate Law course is very diverse in both India and abroad. The Corporate Industry is growing in India and there is increasing demand for corporate lawyers due to high dependability on them. The salary of a Corporate Lawyer is handsome, which varies on their experience and knowledge. Graduates can work in law firms, corporates, banks or any other government or private sectors. Law abroad has always been a top-ranking and high-paying career; many countries like the USA hire qualified legal lawyers provided they are eligible for the same.

Careers in Corporate Law

Corporate Law is an emerging career in the law field as well as the corporate field. This is a versatile choice of career. The demand for corporate Law will never come down as the corporate sectors are growing at a very rapid speed. The corporate sector contributes 53 per cent of GDP to the Indian Economy. Corporate Law plays a major role in corporate governance as it includes involvement in major decisions to commercial transactions and solving disputes to negotiating settlements. Cor-

porate Law generally revolves around overseeing all legal and external affairs. As the knowledge, experience, and potentiality of the corporate lawyer increases, it increases his/her prestige and demand in the corporate world. One can become a Corporate Lawyer, Legal Advisors, Corporate Events Associate, Associate Advocate, Legal Counsellor and Law Administrator by studying corporate law.

Top Corporate Law colleges in India

The admission to corporate law colleges is based on the entrance examination or direct admission based on past academic performance. The fee for private colleges is generally higher as compared to government colleges. A few private Corporate law colleges are-Babu Banarasi Das University, Lucknow, GITAM School of Law Visakhapatnam, Hemchandracharya North Gujarat University, Patan, SLCU Bangalore, Symbiosis Law School, Nagpur, Indian Law Institute, New Delhi, NLU Jodhpur - National Law University, Jodhpur to name a few.

Upcoming trends

The demand for Corporate Law courses is rapidly increasing in the corporate sector. But corporate Law has nailed its place to

serve a large number of companies. The upcoming trends in this area include:

Virtual Law Firm: Virtual Law firms, as the name suggests are legal companies who don't have a physical presence and are mostly operated from the home of a Lawyer. A virtual law firm is a very beneficial innovation that reduces the cost of setting up an office, the location and time both are flexible, lawyers can operate it from anywhere in the world. The client reach also increases.

Legal Search Engines: Legal Search Engines is an online platform that allows the legal professionals, lawyers and law students to access the legal information easily. Finding legal information online can be a bit overwhelming, but due to Legal Search Engines now the individual can access the information very easily and quickly.

There are some other innovations in the field of law such as Web- Based Legal Services and Corporate Secretarial Services Market. These trends and innovations make the corporate field a rapidly-developing field. *(The author is an HR & Career Consultant based in Jorhat, Assam. He can be reached at 9957663224 & pragati-group08@gmail.com)*

Railway Protection Force Constable Recruitment – 4208 Posts, Online Apply

Last Date: 14/05/2024

Ministry of Railways, Government of India has released an employment notification for the recruitment of 4208 Posts of Constable (Executive) in Railway Protection Force (RPF) and Railway Protection Special Force. Interested and eligible candidates may apply online.

Name of post: Constable (Executive)

Name of organisation: Railway Protection Force (RPF) and Railway Protection Special Force

No of posts: 4208 Posts

Male: 3577 posts
Female: 631 posts

Pay: Level 3 of 7th CPC Pay matrix with initial pay of ₹ 21,700 and Allowances.

Advertisement No: CEN No. RPF 02/2024

Helpline for candidates: For any queries related to technical issues of submission of Application of CEN (10:00 AM to 5:00 PM on all working days)

Email: rrb.help@cen.gov.in
Phone: 9592001188

Eligibility Criteria of Railway Protection Force Constable Recruitment

Nationality: A candidate must be a citizen of India.

Age Limit: Candidate age must be between 18 to 28 years as on 1st July 2024.

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

SC/ST: 5 years
OBC (Non-Creamy Layer): 3 years

Medical Fitness: Candidates must ensure that they fulfil the prescribed medical standard for the post.

Educational Qualification: Candidate must have 10th Pass or Equivalent from recognised Board.

Application Fee for RPF Constable Recruitment

Candidates have to pay an examination fee as mentioned below as per their categories or community:

Category	Fee
SC	₹ 250
ST	₹ 250
Female	₹ 250
Ex-Serviceman	₹ 250
Minorities	₹ 250
Economically backward class	₹ 250
Others	₹ 500

Payment Mode: ONLINE fee payment only through internet banking, debit/credit cards, or UPI will be accepted. All applicable service charges shall be borne by the candidate.

Important Dates of RPF Recruitment 2024

Starting date of submission of online application: 15th April 2024
Last date of submission of online application: 14th May 2024
Dates for Modification window for corrections in application form: 15th to 24th May 2024

Sonitpur Judiciary Recruitment 2024 – Office Assistant & Peon Posts

Last Date: 20/05/2024

District Legal Services Authority (DLSA), Sonitpur, Tezpur has released an employment notification for the recruitment of 2 posts of Office Assistant and Peon on contractual basis in the Office of Legal Aid Defense Counsel System, Sonitpur. Interested and eligible candidates may apply.

1. Office Assistant (Contractual)

No of posts: 1

Educational Qualification:

Candidate must be a Graduate.
Knowledge in Basic Computer Applications like MS Office, Word, Excel, Power Point, DTP (English & Assamese) and Internet etc.
Good typing speed with proper setting of petition.
Ability to take dictation.
File maintenance and processing knowledge.

Pay: ₹ 18,000 (Rupees Eighteen Thousand only) per month

Tenure: 02 (two) years

Age Limit:

Minimum: 18 years
Maximum: 40 years as on the date of advertisement
Age Relaxation as per Govt. Rule

2. Peon (Contractual)

No of posts: 1

Educational Qualification: Class VIII Passed. Those who have passed HSSLC or above shall be ineligible to apply.

Pay: ₹ 12,500 (Rupees Twelve Thousand Five Hundred only) per month

Tenure: 02 (two) years

Age Limit:

Minimum: 18 years
Maximum: 40 years as on the date of advertisement
Age Relaxation as per Govt. Rule

Other Criteria of Sonitpur Judiciary Recruitment

Citizenship: Candidates must be an Indian citizen as defined in Article 5 to 8 of the constitution of India.

Employment Exchange Number: Candidates must have registered their names in the Employment Exchange and the Registration Numbers along with the date must be mentioned in their applications.

How to Apply for Sonitpur Judiciary Recruitment

The application with attested copies of all testimonials regarding Educational Qualification, Age, Caste, Valid Employment Exchange Registration Card, [Certificate/ Diploma in Computer Application etc.] along with 3 (three) copies of recent passport size photographs duly signed by the candidate on the reverse side should reach the following address on or before 20-05-2024.

The District & Sessions Judge -cum- Chairman,
District Legal Services Authority,
Sonitpur, Tezpur.

The applicants shall mention their mobile no. in the application, without fail. Application without Mobile Number will be disqualified.

The last date of receipt of application is 20-05-2024. No application will be entertained after the last date.

Important Dates of Sonitpur Vacancy 2024

Starting date of submission of application: 4th May 2024
Last date of submission of application: 20th May 2024

Indian Navy SSR Recruitment 2024 – Agniveer SSR Online Form

Last Date: 27/05/2024

Indian Navy has released an employment notification for the recruitment of Agniveer (SSR) posts for 02/2024 batch. Interested and eligible unmarried male and female candidates may apply online.

As Agniveer (SSR), a candidate will become part of a highly technical Organization. Hr/ She will be required to serve in powerful, modern ships such as Aircraft Carriers, Guided Missile Destroyers and Frigates, Replenishment Ships and highly technical and fascinating submarines and aircraft.

Name of post: Agniveer (Senior Secondary Recruits)

No of posts: To be updated later

Male: To be updated later
Female: To be updated later

Name of batch: 02/2024 batch

Name of scheme: Agnipath Scheme

Duration of service: 4 years

Mode of application: Online

Training venue: INS Chilka, Odisha

Eligibility Criteria of Indian Navy SSR Recruitment

Age Limit: Candidate should be born between 01 Nov 2003 – 30 Apr 2007 (Both dates inclusive).

Martial Status: Only unmarried Indian male and female candidates are eligible for enrollment as Agniveer. Agniveers shall not be permitted to marry during their entire tenure of four years.

Educational Qualification:

Qualified in 10+2 with Mathematics & Physics from Boards of School Education

recognized by Ministry of Education, Govt of India, with minimum 50% marks in aggregate. OR

Passed Three years diploma course in Engineering (Mechanical/ Electrical/ Automobiles/ Computer Science/ Instrumentation Technology/ Information Technology) from Central, State and UT recognized Polytechnic Institute with 50% marks in aggregate. OR

Passed Two years Vocational Course with Non-vocational subject viz. Physics and Mathematics from Education Boards recognized by Central, State and UT with 50% marks in aggregate.

Application Fee of Indian Navy SSR Recruitment

Candidates applying for Indian Navy Agniveer SSR Recruitment have to pay an application fee as per the details mentioned below.

General/ OBC: ₹ 550 + 18% GST

SC/ ST: ₹ 550 + 18% GST

Payment Mode: Debit Card / Credit Card / Net Banking

Important Dates of Indian Navy SSR Recruitment 2024

Starting date of submission of online application: 13th May 2024
Last date of submission of online application: 27th May 2024

APSC Recruitment 2024 – 5 Research Assistant Posts, Online Apply

Last Date: 29/05/2024

Assam Public Service Commission has released an employment notification for the recruitment of 5 Research Assistant Posts under Finance (Economics Affairs) Department. Interested and eligible candidates may apply online.

Name of post: Research Assistant

No of posts: 5 posts

Category-wise vacancy:

UR: 2
OBC/ MOBC: 1
SC: 1
STP: 1
STH: 0

Name of organisation: Finance (Economics Affairs) Department, Govt. of Assam

Scale of Pay: ₹ 22,000 to ₹ 97,000; GP: ₹ 9,400

Age Limit: The candidates should not be less than 21 years of age and not more than 38 years of age as on 01/01/2024.

Educational Qualification: Candidates must have a Degree in Science, Commerce or Arts with Statistics, Mathematics or Economics as one of the subject of study in Degree course from a recognized University. The Minimum six months Diploma in Computer Application is desirable.

Other Criteria of APSC Recruitment

Citizenship: Candidates must be Indian Citizens as defined in Articles 5 to 8 of the Constitution of India.

Residency:

(i) The candidate must be a permanent resident of Assam.

(ii) The candidate must produce PRC issued in Assam for educational purpose/ Employment Exchange Registration certificate as proof of residency along with the application form.

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

SC: 5 years
ST: 5 years
OBC/ MOBC: 3 years
PwBD: 10 years
For more details pl read the official notification/s.

Employment Exchange Registration: Candidates must be registered themselves in any of the employment exchanges of Assam.

Small Family Norms: The candidates have to submit a declaration regarding "The Small Family Norms" in Form-A at the time of applying for the post.

Application Fee: Category-wise application fee is as under.

Category	Fee (in Rs.)
General	₹ 297.20
SC/ST/OBC/MOBC	₹ 197.20
BPL/ PwBD	₹ 47.20

Important Dates of APSC Recruitment 2024

Starting date of submission of online application: 29th April 2024
Last date of submission of online application: 29th May 2024

President Muizzu had set May 10 as the deadline for the withdrawal

India fully withdraws soldiers from Maldives: Presidential spokesperson

MALE, May 10: India has withdrawn all its soldiers from the Maldives, the government has said, ahead of the May 10 deadline set by President Mohamed Muizzu for the complete withdrawal of Indian military personnel from his country.

President Muizzu, widely seen as a pro-China leader, had set May 10 as the deadline for the withdrawal of the Indian military personnel from his country. Repatriation of some 90 Indian military personnel stationed in the Maldives was a key pledge of Muizzu during his presidential campaign last year.

The last batch of Indian soldiers stationed in the Maldives have been repatriated, confirmed Heena Waleed, President's Office chief spokesperson told Sun.mv news portal, without giving the number of Indian soldiers.

She added details about the



number of the soldiers stationed would be disclosed later. The Indian military personnel were stationed in the Maldives to operate and maintain two helicopters and Dornier aircraft India gifted earlier.

Earlier, the Maldives government announced that 51 of these soldiers were repatriated to India on Monday.

The government earlier an-

nounced the presence of 89 Indian soldiers in the Maldives, citing official documents.

India and the Maldives had agreed to withdraw the remaining Indian troops before May 10.

At a media briefing in New Delhi on Thursday, external affairs ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said the first and the second batches of the Indian personnel returned to India and "now

deputation of competent Indian technical personnel has taken place" to operate the three Indian aviation platforms.

The development came as Maldivian Foreign Minister Moosa Zameer visited India. He met External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Thursday.

They had "extensive discussions" on bilateral ties and regional security issues.

The relations between the two countries came under severe strain after Muizzu insisted on the withdrawal of Indian military personnel operating three military platforms in the island nation.

The Maldives is India's key maritime neighbour in the Indian Ocean Region and occupies a special place in its initiatives like SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region) and the Neighbourhood First Policy of the Modi government. (PTI)

Hopes are fading for 44 workers still missing days after South Africa building collapse; 9 are dead

CAPE TOWN, May 10: Hope was fading on Friday for 44 construction workers buried for days in the rubble of a building that collapsed in South Africa, with authorities saying rescuers are now faced with the challenge of moving thousands of tons of concrete with heavy machinery to see if there are any more survivors.

The death toll rose to nine after a worker who was in critical condition died in the hospital, authorities said.

Of the 28 workers rescued from the site, 21 were in critical condition or had life-threatening injuries following Monday's collapse of the five-story apartment complex that was under construction.

With fears that the final death toll could exceed 50, authorities in the city of George on South Africa's south coast said large earth-moving equipment had arrived and rescue teams were removing huge slabs of concrete and rubble to reach deeper into the wreckage.

City authorities said it was still a rescue rather than a recovery operation, but no survivors have been located or brought out since Wednesday.

"Despite the introduction of large machinery, rescue techniques will still be applied meticulously and sensitively by the highly skilled and experienced disaster management team," the city said in a statement.

It also revised the number of missing from 38 to 44 after determining that there were more construction workers at the site than previously thought. New information provided by the construction company showed there were 81 workers when the building came crashing down, not 75 as authorities had initially announced, it said.

More than 600 personnel are involved in the rescue operation, with many brought in from nearby towns and cities. George, which is about 400 kilometers (250 miles) east of Cape Town, is a small city known as a vacation and golfing destination.

Authorities say multiple investigations are underway into the cause of the collapse, including by police, the provincial government and the national department of labour. (AP)

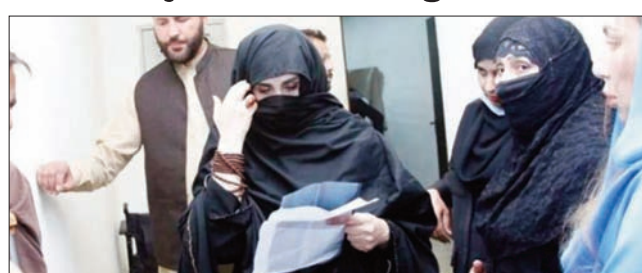
Imran Khan's wife Bushra Bibi's right to life violated in sub-jail: Pak high court

ISLAMABAD, May 10: A Pakistani high court has concluded that the state transgressed the right to life of former premier Imran Khan's wife Bushra Bibi by confining her at her private residence designated as a sub-jail and depriving her of interaction with other prisoners, a media report said on Friday.

On Wednesday, the Islamabad High Court (IHC) ordered the former first lady's transfer to the high-security Adiala Jail in Rawalpindi, where her 71-year-old husband Khan has been jailed. Bushra Bibi, 49, had been incarcerated at Bani Gala, the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party founder's mansion in the suburbs of Islamabad, after conviction in two cases, while Khan was kept at the Adiala Jail.

On Thursday, the IHC issued a 15-page written order in which it said that the state has not just made the sentence of simple imprisonment harsher and heavier but has also violated Bushra Bibi's right to life guaranteed under Article 9 of the Constitution. The Express Tribune newspaper reported.

"The mere fact that the room where the petitioner [Bushra Bibi] was confined in the sub-jail [was] guarded by a prison ward [did] not mean that the petitioner [was] not in isolation," it said. Asserting that it has the power and responsibility to intervene and protect the prisoner against inter alia harsher restraints and heavier severities



than the sentence carries, the court noted that the sentence of 14-year rigorous imprisonment handed out to Bushra Bibi had already been suspended.

It also noted that a seven-year sentence given to her in another case was simple imprisonment.

"By keeping her in isolation at the sub-jail and depriving her of interaction with other prisoners, the state has not just made the sentence of simple imprisonment harsher and heavier but has also transgressed the petitioner's right to life guaranteed under Article 9 of the Constitution," it said.

The court noted that the entire Bani Gala was declared a sub-jail, implying that the property could not be freely accessed by either Bushra Bibi's or her husband's children or family members unless specifically permitted by the superintendent or the court.

"In other words, the impugned notification dated 31.01.2024 [of Islamabad commissioner] has had the effect of requisitioning the said property in its entirety. The said property

is admittedly in the use of government officials who have been assigned [its] responsibility of internal and external security," it said. There was nothing on the record to show that the property owner's consent was obtained before the notification's issuance, it said.

"In this way, the state deprived the owner of Khan House of his fundamental right enshrined in Article 24 of the Constitution and [remained] under an obligation to adequately compensate him for such deprivation," it said.

In its order on Wednesday, the court announced the notification to declare Bani Gala, a sub-jail, "null and void. Bushra Bibi was arrested on January 31 this year after an Islamabad accountability court sentenced her and Khan to 14 years in jail in the Toshakhana corruption case.

While their sentences in the Toshakhana corruption case were suspended by the IHC, Bushra Bibi remains in custody in the 'un-Islamic' marriage case, while Khan also remains incarcerated in other cases. (PTI)

UN to vote on resolution that would grant Palestine new rights and revive its UN membership bid

UNITED NATIONS, May 10: The UN General Assembly is expected to vote on Friday on a resolution that would grant new "rights and privileges" to Palestine and call on the Security Council to favourably reconsider its request to become the 194th member of the United Nations.

The United States vetoed a widely backed council resolution on April 18 that would have paved the way for full United Nations membership for Palestine, a goal the Palestinians have long sought and Israel has worked to prevent, and US deputy ambassador Robert Wood made clear on Thursday the Biden administration is opposed to the assembly resolution.

Under the UN Charter, prospective members of the United Nations must be "peace-loving," and the Security Council must recommend their admission to the General Assembly for final approval. Palestine became a UN non-member observer state in 2012.

"We've been very clear from the beginning there is a process for obtaining full membership in the United Nations, and this effort by some of the Arab countries and the Palestinians is to try to go around that," Wood said Thursday. "We have said from the beginning the best way to ensure Palestinian full membership in the UN is to do that through negotiations with Israel. That remains our position."

But unlike the Security Council, there are no vetoes in the 193-member General Assembly and the resolution is expected to be approved by a large majority, according to three Western diplomats, speaking on condition of anonymity because negotiations were private. The draft resolution "determines" that a state of Palestine is qualified for membership — dropping the original language that in the General Assembly's judgment it is "a peace-loving state." It therefore recommends that the Security Council reconsider its request "favourably."

The renewed push for full Palestinian membership in the UN comes as the war in Gaza

has put the more than 75-year-old Israeli-Palestinian conflict at center stage. At numerous council and assembly meetings, the humanitarian crisis facing the Palestinians in Gaza and the killing of more than 34,000 people in the territory, according to Gaza health officials, have generated outrage from many countries.

The original draft of the assembly resolution was changed significantly to address concerns not only by the US but also by Russia and China, the diplomats said.

The first draft would have conferred on Palestine "the rights and privileges necessary to ensure its full and effective participation" in the assembly's sessions and UN conferences "on equal footing with member states." It also made no reference to whether Palestine could vote in the General Assembly.

According to the diplomats, Russia and China which are strong supporters of Palestine's UN membership were concerned that granting the list of rights and privileges detailed in an annex to the resolution could set a precedent for other would-be UN members — with Russia concerned about Kosovo and China about Taiwan. Under longstanding legislation by the US Congress, the United States is required to cut off funding to UN agencies that give full membership to a Palestinian state — which could mean a cutoff in dues and voluntary contributions to the UN from its largest contributor.

The final draft drops the language that would put Palestine "on equal footing with member states." And to address Chinese and Russian concerns, it would decide "on an exceptional basis and without setting a precedent" to adopt the rights and privileges in the annex.

The draft also adds a provision in the annex on the issue of voting, stating categorically: "The state of Palestine, in its capacity as an observer state, does not have the right to vote in the General Assembly or to put forward its candidature to United Nations organs." (AP)

Heavy fighting in Gaza's Rafah keeps aid crossings closed, sends 100,000 civilians fleeing

RAFAH, May 10: Heavy fighting between Israeli troops and Palestinian militants on the outskirts of the southern Gaza city of Rafah has left crucial nearby aid crossings inaccessible and caused over 100,000 people to flee north, a United Nations official said on Friday.

Israel's plans for a full-scale invasion of Rafah appear to be on hold for now, with the United States deeply opposed and stepping up pressure by threatening to withhold arms. But even the more limited incursion launched earlier this week threatens to worsen Gaza's humanitarian catastrophe. Heavy fighting was also underway in northern Gaza, where Hamas appeared to have once again regrouped in an area where Israel has already launched punishing assaults.

Over a million Palestinians have fled to Rafah to escape fighting elsewhere, with many packed into UN-run shelters or squalid tent camps. The city on the border with Egypt is also a crucial hub for bringing in food, medicine, fuel and other goods.

The UN's Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, known as OCHA, says about 110,000 people have fled Rafah and that food and fuel supplies in the city are critically low. Georgios Petropoulos, an OCHA official working in Rafah, said the two main crossings near the city remain closed, cutting off supplies and preventing medical evacuations and the movement of humanitarian staff.

"Even if there were assurances to us being able to pass through a corridor, the proximity so close to a military involved in fighting is just not acceptable for something that has to be a humanitarian zone," he said.

The UN's World Food Programme will run out of food for distribution in southern Gaza by Saturday unless more aid arrives, Petropoulos said. (AP)

Iranians vote in parliamentary runoff election after hard-liners dominate initial balloting

TEHRAN, May 10: Iranians voted on Friday in a runoff election for the remaining seats in the country's parliament after hard-line politicians dominated March balloting.

People in 22 constituencies across the country will elect 45 representatives from a pool of 90 candidates, 15 of whom are considered moderate.

In the capital, Tehran, 16 representatives will be chosen from 32 candidates, all hard-liners. Final results are expected on Monday, though counts in smaller constituencies are likely before that.

Iran's parliament plays a secondary role in governing the country. Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has the final say in all important state matters.

State TV showed Khamenei voting on Friday immediately after the polls opened. He urged people to vote and said the runoff election was as important as the main one.

In the March election, hard-liners won 200 out of 245 seats, with more moderate candidates taking the other 45.

A total of 25 million ballots were cast, for a turnout of just under 41%. The previous lowest turnout was 42% in the 2020 parliamentary election.

Politicians calling for change in the country's government, known broadly as reformists, were generally barred from running in the election.

Those calling for radical reforms or for abandoning Iran's theocratic system were also banned or didn't bother to register as candidates. (AP)

India votes in favour of UNGA resolution supporting Palestine's bid to become full UN member

UNITED NATIONS, May 10: India on Friday voted in favour of a draft UN General Assembly resolution that said Palestine is qualified and should be admitted as full member of the United Nations and recommended that the Security Council "reconsider" the matter "favourably."

The 193-member General Assembly met in the morning for an emergency special session where the Arab Group resolution 'Admission of new Members to the United Nations', in support of the State of Palestine's full membership in the UN, was presented by the United Arab Emirates, as Chair of the Arab Group in May.

The resolution got 143 votes in favour, including by India, nine against and 25 abstentions. The UNGA hall broke into an applause after the vote was cast.

The resolution determined that "the State of Palestine is qualified for membership in the United Nations" in accordance with Article 4 of the Charter of the United Nations and "should therefore be admitted to membership in the United Nations".

It recommended that the Security Council "reconsider the matter favourably, in the light of this determination".

India was the first non-Arab State to recognise the Palestine Liberation Organisation as the sole and legitimate representative of the Palestinian people in 1974. India was also one of the first countries to recognise the State of Palestine in 1988 and in 1996, Delhi opened its Representative Office to the Palestine Authority in Gaza, which was later shifted to Ramallah in 2003.

Earlier this month, India's Permanent Representative to the UN

Putin reappoints his prime minister, a technocrat who has kept a low political profile

MOSCOW, May 10: Russian President Vladimir Putin reappointed Mikhail Mishustin as the country's prime minister on Friday, a widely anticipated move to keep on a technocrat who has maintained a low political profile.

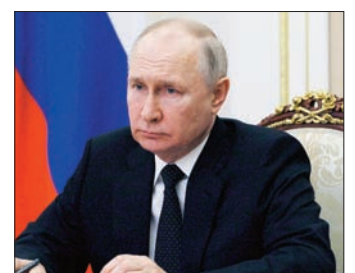
Mishustin and other technocrats in the Cabinet have been credited with maintaining a relatively stable economic performance despite bruising Western sanctions for Russia's role in Ukraine. Most other Cabinet members are expected to keep their jobs, though the fate of Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu appeared uncertain.

In line with Russian law, Mishustin, 58, who held the job for the past four years, submitted his Cabinet's resignation on Tuesday when Putin began his fifth presidential term at a glittering Kremlin inauguration.

Mishustin, the former head of Russia's tax service, steered clear of political statements and avoided media interviews during his previous tenure. The speaker of the parliament's lower house, Vyacheslav Volodin, announced that Putin submitted Mishustin's candidacy to the State Duma, which will hold a session later Friday to consider it.

Under the constitutional changes approved in 2020, the lower house approves the candidacy of the prime minister, who then submits Cabinet members for approval. The changes were ostensibly meant to grant parliament broader power, but the procedure is widely seen as pro forma given Kremlin control over the body.

Most Cabinet members are expected to keep their jobs, but it was



not clear if Shoigu, the defence minister, would be among them after last month's arrest of his top associate, Timur Ivanov. Ivanov, who served as deputy defence minister in charge of massive military construction projects, was arrested on bribery charges and was ordered to stay in custody pending official investigation.

The arrest of Ivanov was widely interpreted as an attack on Shoigu and a possible precursor of his dismissal despite his close personal ties with Putin. Shoigu was broadly criticised for Russian military's setbacks in the early stage of the fighting in Ukraine.

He faced scathing attacks from mercenary chief Yevgeny Prigozhin, who marched on Moscow nearly a year ago to demand the ouster of Shoigu and the chief of the General Staff, Gen. Valery Gerasimov.

After Prigozhin's death in a suspicious plane crash two months after the rebellion — widely seen as the Kremlin's revenge — Shoigu appeared to shore up his position. But Ivanov's arrest, interpreted by many as part of Kremlin's political infighting, again exposed Shoigu's vulnerability. (AP)



Ambassador Ruchira Kamboj had said that while Palestine's application for membership at the UN was not approved by the Security Council because of the veto in the UNSC, "I would like to state here at the very outset that in keeping with India's long-standing position, we hope that this would be reconsidered in due course and that Palestine's endeavour to become a member of the United Nations will get endorsed".

An annex to the resolution said that the additional rights and privileges of participation of the State of Palestine will be effective as of the 79th session of the General Assembly that begins in September this year.

These include the right to be seated among member states in alphabetical order; the right to make statements on behalf of a group, including among representatives of major groups; the right of members of the delegation of the State of Palestine to be elected as officers in the plenary and the Main Committees of the General Assembly and the right to full and effective participation in UN conferences and international conferences and meetings convened under the auspices of the General Assembly.

Prince Harry, Meghan arrive in Nigeria to champion the Invictus Games and meet with wounded soldiers

ABUJA, May 10: Prince Harry and his wife, Meghan, arrived in Nigeria on Friday to champion the Invictus Games, which he founded to aid the rehabilitation of wounded and sick service members and veterans, among them Nigerian soldiers fighting a 14-year war against Islamic extremists.

The couple, visiting the West African nation for the first time on the invitation of its military, arrived in the capital, Abuja, early in the morning, according to defence spokesman Brig. Gen. Tukur Gusau.

Harry and Meghan will be meeting with wounded soldiers and their families in what Nigerian officials have said is a show of support to improve the soldiers' morale and wellbeing. "This engagement with Invictus is giving us the opportunity for the recovery of our soldiers," Abidemi Marquis, the director of sports at Nigeria's Defence Headquarters, told reporters on Thursday. Harry served in Afghanistan as an Apache helicopter pilot gunner, after which he founded the Invictus Games in 2014 to offer wounded veterans and service-members the challenge of competing in sports events similar to the Paralympics.

Nigeria was among the nations that participated in last year's edition of the games. During their stay, they will attend basketball and volleyball matches and will meet with local non-governmental organizations in Abuja and Lagos that are receiving support from them.

Meghan will also co-host an event on women in leadership with Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, Director General of the World Trade Organization, according to



their spokesman Charlie Gipsom.

The news of Meghan's visit excited some in Nigeria where her life — and association with the British royal family — is closely followed. The Nigerian military has touted the Invictus Games as one which could help the recovery of thousands of its personnel who have been fighting the homegrown Boko Haram Islamic extremists and their factions since 2009 when they launched an insurgency.

"Eighty per cent of our soldiers that have been involved in this recovery programme are getting better (and) their outlook to life is positive," Marquis, the military's sports director, said. "The recovery programme has given them an opportunity to improve their personal self-esteem, to improve their mental health and emotional intelligence." (AP)

Sangma said that the NPP will also field candidates in other civic bodies

NPP to contest civic body polls in Nagaland



HT Correspondent
DIMAPUR, May 10: Meghalaya chief minister Conrad Sangma-led National People's Party (NPP) will contest the upcoming urban local body elections in Nagaland.

Making the announcement at a press conference here on Friday

evening, NPP national secretary (org) James Sangma said the party will primarily set up candidates in the constituencies where it has legislators in the current Nagaland assembly. The NPP has five MLAs in the state who are lending support to the Neiphiu Rio-led Peo-

ple's Democratic Alliance government in Nagaland.

Sangma added that the NPP will also field candidates in other civic bodies where there is demand to set up candidates and also on the response of the people.

Asked whether the NPP will go

solo in the elections, he said discussions in this regard are on.

Sangma added that the NPP's support to the Rio government is issue-based which is to usher in development and bring change in the state.

"We do not want to be an impediment to the efforts of the Nagaland government in its development efforts and resolution of issues," Sangma added.

Welcoming women candidates to contest the civic body polls, he, however, said allotting tickets to them would depend on the number of applications from them for the same.

Sangma added that the NPP would focus on bringing in innovation and new thoughts in the management of the civic bodies of the state.

The NPP Nagaland unit president, A Nyamnyi Konyak, and other party leaders were present at the press conference.

Elections to the three municipal councils and 36 town councils in the state are slated to be held on June 26.

₹ 200 crore grant sought from Centre for hailstorm damage in Manipur



IMPHAL, May 10: The Congress in Manipur has urged the central government to sanction a minimum of ₹ 200 crore for the people of the state affected by hailstorm accompanied by heavy rain and to declare the calamity as a "national disaster".

More than 15,400 houses and hectares of agricultural farms were damaged by the hailstorm on May 5. The state government had sanctioned ₹ 6.90 crore for relief of the affected people.

"Urgent request for declaring the unprecedented... hailstorm with strong winds on May 5, as a natural disaster and grant for immediate relief of minimum ₹ 200 crore for the affected people of Manipur in a time bound manner," state Congress president K Meghachandra said in a letter to Prime Minister

Narendra Modi.

The people have not experienced a natural disaster of such magnitude in the history of the state, he said. Addressing a press conference near the residence of an affected family in Imphal West district, Meghachandra asked why the state government has not pressured the Centre on the issue.

"The amount sanctioned by the state government is not sufficient to cover the losses of the people" he said, alleging that the state government has not apprised the Centre of the situation.

Chief minister N Biren Singh on Thursday said the government will compensate for the losses incurred by farmers, and materials for reconstruction of houses will reach people within four days. (PTI)

DC convenes grievance redressal meeting

HT Correspondent
WILLIAMNAGAR, May 10: East Garo Hills deputy commissioner, Vibhor Aggarwal, convened a meeting of the Grievance Redressal Cell at conference hall of Williamnagar Circuit House on May 10.

During the meeting, the deputy commissioner highlighted the need to convene the meeting of the cell as it has received complaints and grievances of the aggrieved citizens in the district which need to be looked into on time. He also urged the officers of the district to be proactive and to give due attention in dealing with the complaints and grievances of the citizens.

It may be mentioned here that the grievance redressal cell of the district has received complaints pertaining to various departments like PWD, CLLMP, NRLM, MGNREGS, ICDS, DRDA, Legal Metrology, MECL, Education, Medical, Tourism, Social Welfare, Fisheries, C&RD Blocks, etc.

Dimapur police reveal modus operandi of money-snatching gangs

HT Correspondent
DIMAPUR, May 10: The Dimapur police on Friday alerted the public on money-snatching gangs/cliques and revealed their modus operandi.

The alert was issued following numerous complaints reported across police stations of commissionerate districts of Dimapur such rip off by the money-snatching gangs operating in around Dimapur and neighbouring states.

The Dimapur DCP (crime), in a release, said investigation into such frequently reported cases has unraveled the modus operandi of this currency snaffle syndicate. The release said surveillance and observation revealed that one or two gang members go inside the banks posing as customers and scan for potential victims.

Then they zero down attention to lone, elderly, vulnerable customers making withdrawals. Thereafter, the selected target is shadowed and information passed on to gang members deployed outside the bank. Once the cash withdrawal is completed and the customer leaves the bank, outside gang members are signaled and alerted.

The gang members then distract and divert attention of the target customer by secretly spraying colouring /itchy chemicals, or deliberately dropping of cash notes/wallets and informing the victim that their clothing is stained/personal belongings dropped.



When the target is temporarily distracted by such attention diversion techniques, another gang member quietly snatches the cash or personal belongings and disappears. The release said the initial investigation has indicated that these are inter-state gangs mostly based in neighbouring districts of Assam.

It added that all available CCTV footages have been examined and efforts are on to identify the persons involved. The Dimapur police released the captured images of the suspects and urged to share information with them on the identity and other details of the suspects in the interest of investigation.

IRB jawan commits suicide in Imphal

HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, May 10: A 53-year-old India Reserve Battalion (IRB) jawan died by suicide in Manipur's Imphal on Friday morning, said officials.

The IRB jawan identified as Longjam Nanda was deployed as a house guard for a Manipur High Court judge, A. Guneswar Sharma, at his Yaikul residence in Imphal West district.

According to officials, other IRB personnel on guard duty heard a gunshot around 9 am and rushed to find Nanda in a pool of blood inside the barrack.

"They discovered Nanda deceased inside the barrack with a gunshot wound to the head," said an official.

The motive behind Nanda's actions remains unclear. Imphal police have registered a case and are investigating the cause of the suicide.

Nanda hailed from Haobam Marak Keisam Leikai in Imphal West district.

Most illegal appointees in PHE dept from Keyi Panyor: Workers' union



HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, May 10: The All Arunachal Pradesh Public Health Engineering & Water Supply Department Workers Union (AAP-PHE & WSDWU) is alleging irregularities in the recent appointment of 17 work-charged (WC) employees in the state's Public Health Engineering & Water Supply (PHE&WS) department.

The union claims that a majority of these appointments favor individuals from the Keyi Panyor district and were made through unfair means. AAP-PHE & WSDWU president Tadar Dawa, addressing a gathering of department laborers in Yachuli, expressed concern that these appointments bypass deserving candidates.

"Many dedicated workers in Keyi Panyor have served as casual laborers for over 20 years. These recent appointments, made under the quota for Longding and Changlang districts and then transferred to Keyi Panyor, will place them under supervisors who lack their experience," Dawa said.

Dawa further alleged political

motives behind the appointments, claiming that "even Anganwadi workers and panchayat leaders were brought in."

To voice their disapproval, the union has threatened to halt water supply across the state from May 13th onwards. Their demands include the cancellation of these appointments, the arrest of those involved, and an immediate investigation by the State Investigation Commission (SIC).

Takam Tanik, president of the AAP-PHE & WSDWU's Keyi Panyor district unit, echoed these concerns.

"If these appointments are not revoked," he declared, "workers in Keyi Panyor will hold a dharna protest and disrupt water supply. We urge all student unions and youths of the district to join us in fighting against corruption and unfair practices. We cannot allow the reputation of our newly formed district to be tarnished."

The AAP-PHE & WSDWU has also announced a state-wide dharna protest starting May 13th if the government fails to address their grievances regarding the 17 disputed appointments.

MDoNER hosts countdown to International Day of Yoga in Delhi



HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, May 10: In anticipation of the upcoming International Day of Yoga, the Ministry of development of north eastern region (MDoNER) organized a countdown event at Vigyan Bhawan Annexe in New Delhi.

Secretary and officers/officials of MDoNER and CISF officers and staff posted in Vigyan Bhawan Annexe, actively participated under the guidance of Yoga Instructors and Demonstrators from MDNIY highlighting the timeless benefits of yoga deeply ingrained in Indian heritage.

The event featured dynamic yoga practices aimed at nurturing holistic well-being.

Secretary MDoNER emphasized

yoga's role in promoting physical, mental, and spiritual health.

As MDoNER hosts the countdown to this transformative day, it reaffirms India's commitment to nurturing a culture of health and wellness through yoga.

The event at Vigyan Bhawan serves as a reminder of yoga's universal appeal and its enduring relevance in addressing contemporary challenges.

Yoga, with its roots in ancient Indian tradition, has been widely recognized for its positive impact on physical, mental, and spiritual health.

MDoNER's event highlights the importance of incorporating yoga into daily life for a healthier and more balanced lifestyle.

Five alleged drug peddlers arrested in Agartala with brown sugar

HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, May 10: Tripura Police arrested five alleged smugglers on Friday for allegedly selling brown sugar near MBB College in Agartala city. A huge quantity of the narcotic drug was also seized during the operation.

Sanjit Sen, officer-in-charge of East Agartala Police Station, informed reporters that they conducted raids in Shivanagar and Kalyani areas acting on a tip-off.

The raids led to the apprehension of the suspects and the confiscation of approximately 16 grams of brown sugar.

"A scooter belonging to the suspects was also seized. The seized brown sugar has an estimated street value of Rs 10,000. We received information yesterday regarding drug peddling near MBB College. Based on this tip, we conducted the raid and apprehended the accused," said OC Sen.

The arrested individuals are Biswajit Nama, Joel Miya, Sujit Saha, Liton Das, and Biki Tanti.

"These individuals are alleged to be involved in supplying drugs in the college vicinity. An NDPS case has been registered against them, and they will be produced in court for police remand," he added.

Sohum Shoppe launches 7th store in Dimapur

22,000 square feet of exciting shopping experience at Supply Colony Road, Midland

HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, May 10: Sohum Shoppe, Northeast India's leading shopping destination, has launched its 7th store - and its first in Dimapur, opposite the West Police Station on Supply Colony Road, Midland.

The store is spread across an area of 22,000 sq ft and offers customers the trendiest apparel, footwear, children's wear, beauty & accessories, jewellery, toys, and home decor. The store will provide the best shopping experience to the people of Nagaland with ample parking space (approximately 130+ parking spots) as it will house a wide variety of exciting brands and products across 3 floors, offering a one-stop shopping destination.

Sohum, as a company, always believes in boosting local employment and has hired 120 employees for this new store.

The grand opening was held on May 10 in presence of chairman Manohar Lal Jalan, managing directors Sandeep Jalan, Siddharth Jalan and K.K. Angami among others.

A pioneer in modern retail in Northeast India, Sohum is synonymous with being the pioneer of bringing modern retail to the North Eastern part of the country. To date, they happen to be the first and one of a kind large format player housing a unique and iconic mix of categories and brands that cater to a large set of customers. In this new Dimapur store, the Sohum team has further enhanced the product mix.

Renowned for its widespread brand collection, trendy product portfolio, and youthful, vibrant store ambience, Sohum provides its customers a seamless shopping experience. The store brings under one roof a wide



range of leading national and international brands, including Superdry, Gas, Jack & Jones, Selected, Forever New, Vero Moda, Only, Rareism, Rare Rabbit, Nautica, US Polo, Levis, and FCUK, among others.

The visual merchandising and store layout of the new Dimapur store are among the best that Sohum has showcased. With a sophisticated and modern appeal to the store ambience, the flooring and fixtures are distinct to each category, thereby escalating the convenience and ensuring a delightful shopping experience.

Sohum Shoppe currently operates 2 stores in Guwahati, and 1 each in Dibrugarh, Jorhat, Tezpur, and Naharlagun (Arunachal Pradesh). The first Sohum Shoppe store was established in the year

2000, and with this new store launch in Dimapur, the profound legacy of 24 years will be passed on to the people of North East. The flagship Sohum Shoppe store in Guwahati, located on the prime commercial street of GS Road, is a shopper's paradise, spread across 60,000 sq.ft of retail area. Similarly, their other store in Guwahati, "Sohum Emporia - The new face of Luxury," which is spread across 45,000 sq.ft. of retail area, is an international shopping destination with brands like Hugo Boss, Armani Exchange, Emporio Armani, Tommy Hilfiger, CK, Swarovski, and Hamleys.

Sohum Shoppe has done exceedingly well in changing the way people shop across the North East region, with cities like Dibrugarh, Jorhat, Tezpur, and Nahar-

lagun getting exposure to quality products and aspirational brands. Sohum Shoppe also runs an attractive Membership Loyalty Program, "My Own Club," which has a customer base of approximately 4 Lakh+ and counting, spread across the region. The customers benefit from regular updates and exclusive schemes and coupons, making it an aggressive touch point for everyone. Dealing in a wide range of categories, from departmental, lifestyle, and luxury to home furniture and furnishings solutions, Sohum has been very successful in providing the best possible mix for the people in the region.

M.L. Jalan, chairman - Sohum Shoppe, says, "It is the 'Grace of God,' the dynamic think-tank coupled with the will-power of Sandeep and Siddharth, and the hard work and belief of the Employees, as well as the love of the Customers, that has ultimately given us the success, making us the No. 1 choice among the people in the region for addressing their shopping needs."

Sandeep Jalan, managing director, Sohum Shoppe, believes, "The most important motto that has always been followed by us is to satisfy the needs and listen to the customer's requirements. You always want them to keep coming back after all!"

Siddharth Jalan, managing director, Sohum Shoppe, stated, "People are becoming brand-savvy, and they enter a store considering the store as a brand itself. Sohum has become that brand for their esteemed customers spread across the region. The more fashionable the consumer, the more aggressive you have to be in providing them with what they want."

Join Ajit, Shinde instead of dying with Congress: PM Modi tells Pawar, Uddhav

NANDURBAR (MAHARASHTRA), May 10: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday advised the NCP (SP) and Shiv Sena (UBT) to join hands with Ajit Pawar and Eknath Shinde after Lok Sabha poll results instead of "dying by merging" with the Congress.

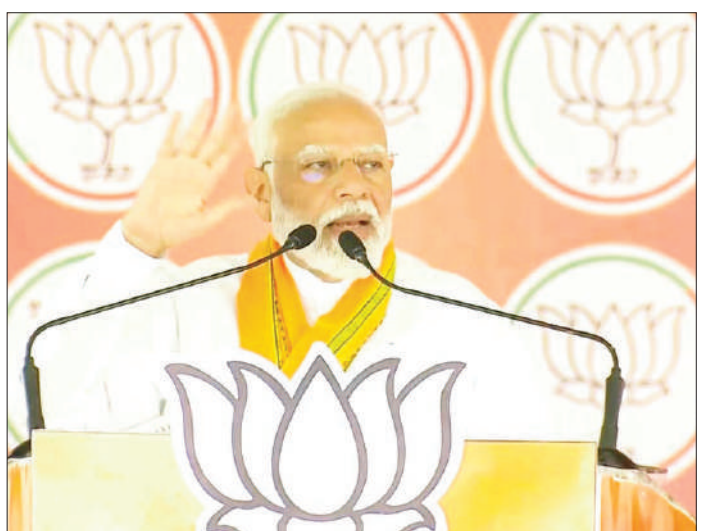
"A big leader here who is active for 40-50 years is worried about polling in Baramati (Lok Sabha seat). He says that after June 4, smaller parties, in order to survive, will merge with the Congress," Modi said, without naming Sharad Pawar.

"This means the nakli NCP and nakli Shiv Sena have made up their minds to merge with the Congress," Modi said, addressing an election rally in Nandurbar district of north Maharashtra.

"But instead of dying by merging with the Congress, come to Ajit Pawar and Eknath Shinde," Modi said.

In the Nandurbar seat, the BJP has renominated incumbent MP Heena Gavi, who is pitted against Gowal Padavi of Congress. The constituency will go to polls in the fourth phase of the general elections on May 13.

"In the next couple of years, several regional parties will associate more closely with the Congress. Or they may look at the option of merging with the Congress if they believe that is the best for their party," NCP (SP) chief Sharad Pawar had told The Indian Express.



Speaking at the rally, Modi also accused the Congress of conspiring to end "Hindu aashta" (faith). The guru of Congress' 'shehzada' has told the US that Ram temple and Ram Navami festivities are against the idea of India, he said, targeting Sam Pitroda, former chairman of the Indian Overseas Congress.

Pitroda on Wednesday resigned after stoking controversy with his remarks that cited ethnic and racial identities like Chinese, Africans, Arabs and Whites to describe the physical appearance of Indians.

"Congress calls people with Lord Krishna's colour as Africans. So they didn't want Droupadi Murmu to be the President of India. Isn't it an insult of adivasis," he asked.

The PM said that the Congress'

agenda is so dangerous that if it terms Ram temple construction and Ram Navami celebrations against the idea of India. "They may say my going to temple is anti-India. See the Congress mindset, that in the land of Ram, a temple is anti-India."

These people organise "sarkari iftar" and beautify graves of terrorists, he said.

In an apparent reference to Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Sanjay Raut's alleged comment about "burying him in Maharashtra just like Mughal emperor Aurangzeb", Modi said, those from the duplicate Sena are speaking of burying him alive.

They have also got a bomb blast accused for election campaigning, he said, referring to the Uddhav

Thackeray-led party. "These people have lost public support and their political space has eroded. People of India are my security cover. These people can't bury me alive or dead," he said.

Providing quota benefits on the basis of religion is against the very values and principles enshrined in our Constitution, he said. As long as he is alive, Modi said, he won't let an "inch" of reservation of Dalits, adivasis and OBCs be taken away on the basis of religion.

Extending Akshaya Tritiya greetings to the people, he said, "Your blessings to me on this occasion shows that a third term for me is guaranteed."

Modi said service to adivasis and deprived sections is like serving family members for him.

"I am not like Congress' 'shahi parivar' but was raised in a poor family. Adivasis and the poor had suffered a lot in terms of lack of access to housing, electricity and water even after 60 years of independence. But my government has worked hard to improve their lives," said the BJP's star campaigner.

He said the Congress has no concern for adivasis and did nothing to eradicate sickle cell anemia, prevalent among tribals.

Modi said his government has initiated steps in that direction to secure the future generations of tribals.

He said the Congress knows it cannot match Modi over development. "So it has opened a factory

of lies on reservation and Constitution." Their ecosystem is filled with rumours, he said.

"On the Constitution change rumour, it is nothing but a 'chor machaya shor' (thieves creating noise) situation for Congress. It wants to introduce reservations based on religion which is against the Constitution. Making such an attempt is like stabbing the maker of the Constitution in the back," he said. Alleging that the Congress wants to replicate its "Karnataka model" across the country by snatching quotas from SC, ST and OBC and giving those to their minority vote banks, Modi cautioned people to be alert.

In Karnataka, the Congress turned Muslims into OBCs overnight and now it wants to snatch quotas from tribals and Dalits, he said.

"The Maha Vikas Aghadi is running a 'maha abhiyan' (mega drive) to finish off quota while I am doing 'maha rakshan ka maha yagna' (grand ritual for protection) to save it," he said.

"I have been challenging the Congress to give in writing that it will not end the SC and ST quota and give it to Muslims. But the Congress is not replying. They have a hidden agenda to loot your rights. But they are spreading rumours by being hand in glove with anti-national elements," he said.

"Modi is the 'chowkidar' (watchman) to protect the rights of the deprived sections of society," he said. (PTI)

Upward trajectory of India-US ties not impacted at all: EAM Jaishankar on Pannun case



NEW DELHI, May 10: The upward trajectory of India-US relations has not been impacted at all by allegations of an Indian link to a foiled assassination plot, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar has said.

In November, the US charged an Indian national of conspiring to murder Sikh separatist Gurbhag Singh Pannun in New York.

In an exclusive interview to PTI late Thursday, Jaishankar said the fundamentals of India-US ties are very robust and the allegations have not impacted the relations.

"The United States brought to our attention certain information in good faith because we also believe some of it has implications for our own system," he said.

"We are investigating it. But I do not think the fundamental course of the upward trajectory of India-US is impacted by this at all," the external affairs minister said in the free-wheeling conversation at PTI's headquarters.

Days after Washington alleged the Indian link to the plot, India instituted a high-level inquiry committee to look into the inputs received from the US in the case.

Pannun, wanted in India on terror charges, holds dual citizenship of the US and Canada.

Last month, The Washington Post named an Indian official for allegedly plotting to assassinate Pannun. Days later, India said the report made "unwarranted and unsubstantiated" imputations on a serious matter and that investigation into the case was underway.

Listing various areas of cooperation, Jaishankar said, "I think, today, we have such a strong strategic convergence with the United States."

In his remarks, he cited driving the international economy, diversifying production, creating new supply chains, ensuring peace and stability and collaboration in the domain of high-technology as shining examples of India-US ties.

"I think the India-US account is a very, very solid one," he said.

Jaishankar also said there was a problem in the relationship in the past.

"There was a kind of left-wing ideology in this country which said let us not do too much with the US. It goes back to the Nehruvian-Kr-

ishna Menon time period. I think it went all the way till 2014," he said.

"Maybe Atal ji's (Atal Bihari Vajpayee) government was an exception, but otherwise pretty much there were self-imposed constraints in our dealing with the US," he said.

Jaishankar said Prime Minister Narendra Modi does not share those views.

"PM Modi doesn't share those and we have seen actually a much more robust, much more whole-hearted relationship with the US which is actually showing results on the ground," he added.

The minister also highlighted the assertive approach in India's foreign policy under the prime minister's leadership.

"When we look at an issue, we look at it from the point of view of Indian national interest. And if that Indian national interest means taking pressure, offending other countries or pushing back, we are prepared to do it," he said.

"We are, for example, very, very focused on trying to get UN Security Council membership. This was not the case earlier. In fact, there was a time when, you know, the position of our government was that first let them accommodate China and then our turn will come," he said.

"So, we are very clear, Bharat comes first."

Jaishankar said the Modi government is also very focused on issues relating to national security.

"Not only positioning wise, but in terms of friends and partners who will contribute to our national security and also in terms of the border infrastructure where there has been quite a remarkable transformation," he said.

"The quality of the infrastructure today allows us to deploy troops on the LAC (Line of Actual Control) in a manner which we could not have done earlier," he said.

The Modi government is also very focused on getting for the country the resources, the best practices, the technologies that it believes are important for national development, according to the minister.

"We are also much more conscious of our culture, civilization, heritage, traditions than previous governments. We project it much more confidently," he said. (PTI)

Mamata was silent as women in Sandeshkhali were tortured: Shah

MAJIDIA (WB), May 10: Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Friday accused West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee of maintaining silence on the issue of Sandeshkhali, where complaints of sexual abuse have emerged against TMC leaders, and said the BJP "will not spare single culprit and will hang them upside down".

While addressing an election rally at Majidia in Ranaghat Lok Sabha seat in Nadia district, Shah alleged that Banerjee was "misleading" people on the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019 (CAA) and slammed the TMC dispensation over alleged corruption cases in the state.

On the incidents in Sandeshkhali in North 24 Parganas district, where allegations of sexual abuse against TMC leaders have been made, Shah said it is a matter of shame that "Mamata Banerjee, despite being a woman chief minister, tried to protect the culprits".

"In Sandeshkhali, TMC leaders tortured hundreds of our sisters based on religion. Mamata Didi was not ready to arrest the criminals of Sandeshkhali. Even after the high court's order, the investigation was not done, so the high court handed over the probe to the CBI," he said.

Shah also said, "Whoever has committed atrocities in Sandeshkhali, even if he hides in the underworld, we will find him and put him in prison? The BJP will punish these culprits."

His comments come a day after multiple purported videos of Sandeshkhali women, shared by the TMC, claimed that a local saffron party leader made those women sign blank papers which were later filled up as complaints of sexual assault.

Shah, while addressing a considerable Matua population in the Lok Sabha seat, criticised Banerjee for opposing CAA, and "taking out rallies in support of infiltrators".

"Those involved in corruption won't be spared and the culprits will be sent to jail, no one will be spared," he added. (PTI)

NGO moves SC, seeks release of voter turnout data for LS polls in 'absolute numbers' within 48 hrs of polling

NEW DELHI, May 10: An NGO has moved the Supreme Court seeking a direction to the Election Commission to upload polling station-wise voter turnout data in "absolute figures" on its website within 48 hours of conclusion of polling for each phase of the ongoing Lok Sabha elections.

The Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) has filed an interim application in its 2019 PIL seeking directions to the poll panel that "scanned legible copies of Form 17C Part-I (Account of Votes Recorded)" of all polling stations be uploaded immediately after the polls.

"Direct the Election Commission to provide tabulated polling station-wise data in absolute figures of the number of votes polled as recorded in Form 17C Part-I after each phase of polling in the on-going 2024 Lok Sabha elections and also a tabulation of constituency-wise figures of voter turnout in absolute numbers in the on-going 2024 Lok Sabha elections," the NGO said. It said that the plea was filed to ensure that the democratic process is not subverted by elec-

Why are we discussing Pakistan when polls are in India: Priyanka Gandhi slams BJP amid Aiyar row

AMETHI (UP), May 10: Why is Pakistan being discussed when elections are taking place in India and the unemployment rate here is at a 45-year high, Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra asked on Friday as she hit back at the BJP on the row over Mani Shankar Aiyar's remarks. She also asked the ruling party to fight the polls on real issues.

In an exclusive interview with PTI, Priyanka Gandhi accused the BJP of raising the Hindu-Muslim rhetoric to win the elections and asserted that the people don't want the polls to be contested on the basis of religion and caste.

"People are saying you've (the BJP) won two elections on religion and now move forward from that," the Congress general secretary said.

Questioned on the row over Congress leader Aiyar's remarks, Priyanka Gandhi asked why the issue is being discussed now when the statement is an old one.

"I ask when was the statement made? ... If it is an old statement, then why are we discussing it today? Secondly, I want to ask, where are elections taking place, in India or in Pakistan? They are taking place in India. So why are we discussing Pakistan?" she told PTI during her campaign trail in Amethi for the party's candidate Kishori Lal Sharma.

Priyanka Gandhi also questioned why discussion is not taking place on rising unemployment in India, which is the highest in the last 45 years, and on the high inflation due to which "people go to the market and return without



buying half the things they wanted to".

"If they (people) have to get treatment done, they feel worried. Why is this not being talked about? Farmers are suffering, unable to earn, everything has become expensive, from diesel to farming materials. Why is this not being discussed? Why are labourers being exploited and do not get enough wages?" she asked.

Aiyar's remarks on Pakistan sparked a row on Friday, with his party quick to dissociate itself from the comments while the BJP latched on to those, accusing the grand old party of being an apologist for Pakistan and the terrorism emanating from its soil.

Aiyar said the video was old and dredged up now as the BJP's election campaign is faltering.

In comments that have gone viral on social media, Aiyar is heard saying that India should give respect to Pakistan as it is a sovereign nation and engage with it as it also possesses an atom bomb.

Kejriwal's interim bail victory of democracy, his release will lead to big changes in nation: AAP

NEW DELHI, May 10: The Aam Aadmi Party on Friday thanked the Supreme Court for granting interim bail to its national convener and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, saying his release from judicial custody will pave the way for "big changes" in the country. At a joint press conference at the party office here, AAP leader and Delhi minister Saurabh Bharadwaj described the interim bail as a blessing of Lord Hanuman to his devotee Kejriwal. In a major relief to Kejriwal, the Supreme Court on Friday granted him interim bail till June 1 to campaign in the ongoing Lok Sabha elections.

Arrested in a money laundering case linked to the alleged excise policy scam, Kejriwal will have to surrender and go back to jail on June 2. June 1 is the last day of the seven-phase elections. The votes will be counted on June 4. Bharadwaj said, "Kejriwal's interim bail after 40 days is no less than a miracle. There is also a divine hint that prevailing conditions are going to change in the country. His release will pave the way for big changes in the country." Senior leader and the party's Delhi unit convener Gopal Rai said all people in the country who love democracy are overjoyed with the top court's verdict and it is a ray of hope for them.

"The SC verdict has not only provided interim bail to Kejriwal, it has also ensured victory of democracy and the constitution," he said.

AAP leader and Delhi Minister Atishi described the top court's decision as a victory for truth and democracy in the country. The verdict will save democracy and free and fair elections, she said. (PTI)

toral irregularities.

"The voter turn-out data for the first two phases of the ongoing 2024 Lok Sabha elections published by ECI on April 30 has been published after 11 days of the first phase of polling held on April 19 and 4 days after second phase of polling held on April 26.

"The data as published by the ECI in its press release dated April 30, 2024 shows a sharp increase (by about 5-6%) as compared to the initial percentages announced by ECI as of 7 pm on the day of polling," the plea said. The petition said the "inordinate" delay in the release of final voter turnout data, coupled with the unusually high revision of over 5 per cent in the poll panel's press note of April 30, 2024 has raised concerns and public suspicion regarding the correctness of the said data.

The non-release of absolute number of votes polled, coupled with the "unreasonable delay" in release of votes polled data, has led to apprehensions in the mind of the electorate about the sharp increase between initial data and data released on April 30, it said. (PTI)

CWC's analysis also indicated a week-on-week decrease in storage levels, affecting not only the southern region but also the nation as a whole

Southern India grapples with severe water scarcity as reservoir levels further plunge to 15 pc: CWC

NEW DELHI, May 10: With the southern region most hit at just 15 per cent total live storage capacity in reservoirs, the storage capacity this year is below the average of last 10 years during the corresponding period, the Central Water Commission (CWC) data has revealed.

The CWC's analysis also indicated a week-on-week decrease in storage levels, affecting not only the southern region but also the nation as a whole.

As of last Thursday, the southern region's reservoir capacity stood at 16 per cent, dropping from 17 per cent the previous week.

The bulletin from the CWC said the southern region has been severely impacted, with reservoirs operating at only 15 per cent of their total live storage capacity.

The data from the CWC shows that storage levels this year are lower than both the corresponding period last year and the ten-year average for the same period.

Nationally, out of 150 monitored reservoirs, the total live storage capacity is 178,784 billion cubic metres (BCM), approximately 69.35 per cent of the estimated 257,812 BCM created across the country.

However, the live storage available in these reservoirs currently sits at 27 per cent, down from 36 per cent recorded last year and 32 per cent on average over the past decade.



Compared with historical data, the bulletin highlights that the current live storage is only 79 per cent of last year's levels and 92 per cent of the 10-year average for the corresponding period.

The storage during the current year is lower than that of the corresponding period last year in all of the country while it is below the average storage of the last 10 years during the corresponding period in northern, eastern southern and western.

The southern region, encompassing Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka, Kerala, and Tamil Nadu, has a total live storage capacity of 53,334 BCM. According to the reservoir storage bulletin dated May 9, the available live storage in these reservoirs is 7,921 BCM, constituting only 15

per cent of their total capacity.

In comparison, last year's storage during the corresponding period was 27 per cent, and the 10-year average was 21 per cent of the live storage capacity.

The northern region, which comprises Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, and Rajasthan, has 10 reservoirs under CWC monitoring with a total live storage capacity of 19,663 BCM. The bulletin reports the current live storage available in these reservoirs at 5,759 BCM, representing 29 per cent of the total live storage capacity.

During the corresponding period last year, the storage was 37 per cent, and the 10-year average was 33 per cent of the live storage capacity.

Similarly, the eastern region, including Assam, Jharkhand,

Odisha, West Bengal, Tripura, Nagaland, and Bihar, has 23 reservoirs with a total live storage capacity of 20,430 BCM. The live storage available in these reservoirs currently stands at 6,952 BCM, which is 34 per cent of the total live storage capacity.

In contrast, last year's storage during the corresponding period was 31 per cent, while the 10-year average was 34.2 per cent of the live storage capacity.

The western region, covering Gujarat and Maharashtra, has a total live storage capacity of 37,130 BCM. As per the reservoir storage bulletin, the available live storage in these reservoirs is 10,339 BCM, which is 28 per cent of the total live storage capacity.

Compared with last year's storage during the corresponding period (34 per cent) and the 10-year average (29 per cent), the current year's storage is notably lower.

Lastly, the central region, comprising Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Madhya Pradesh, and Chhattisgarh, has 26 reservoirs under CWC monitoring with a total live storage capacity of 48,227 BCM. The live storage available in these reservoirs is reported at 16,687 BCM, representing 35 per cent of the total live storage capacity.

While this is a decline from last year's 41 per cent, it is an improvement compared to the ten-year average of 33 per cent during the corresponding period. (PTI)

Sandeshkhali's women being compelled to withdraw complaints due to ongoing polls: NCW

'TMC party workers are instilling fear among the women of Sandeshkhali to suppress the victims from coming forward'



NEW DELHI, May 10: Women from West Bengal's Sandeshkhali are being "compelled" to withdraw their complaints by TMC workers in view of the ongoing Lok Sabha polls, the NCW has claimed, seeking an inquiry from the Election Commission in the matter.

Multiple purported videos of Sandeshkhali women shared by the TMC on Thursday claimed that a local BJP leader made those women sign blank papers, which were later

filled up as complaints of sexual assault.

The women in those purported videos claimed they were asked by BJP worker Piyali Das to appear in person at the local police station and relate their ordeal before the National Commission for Women (NCW) team, which had visited Sandeshkhali to take stock of the ground situation.

The women went on to allege that they never intended to file sexual as-

sault complaints but were later surprised to find such complaints filed in their names allegedly in the wake of the blank papers they were made to sign by Das.

In a letter to the EC, the women's rights panel has requested the poll body to look into the matter on priority basis and ensure that women are not compelled to withdraw their complaints due to the threat from TMC workers.

"It has come to the notice of the

Commission that the women of Sandeshkhali are being compelled to withdraw their complaints by TMC workers as they are the ruling party in West Bengal during General Elections, 2024," the women's panel said.

"The TMC party workers are instilling fear among the women of Sandeshkhali to suppress the victims from coming forward with their complaints potentially impacting the fairness of the election process in the area," the NCW claimed.

The Commission requested the EC to look into the matter on priority and ensure that women are not compelled to withdraw their complaints due to the threat from TMC workers.

Furthermore, the Election Commission may direct the authorities to take appropriate measures.

In a different set of videos shared by the TMC, women were heard expressing their wish to withdraw those complaints and alleged that the BJP was issuing threats and monetary compensations after they voiced their reconsidered desire.

PTI did not individually verify the authenticity of the videos which have been put out in the public domain so far. (PTI)

Shut down coaching centres that violate safety norms: HC directs MCD, DDA

NEW DELHI, May 10: The Delhi High Court on Friday directed the MCD and the DDA to shut down forthwith the coaching centres operating in violation of the fire safety norms.

A bench headed by Justice Yashwant Varma, which had earlier ordered inspection of coaching centres in Mukherjee Nagar by a team of lawyers, also asked the authorities to re-locate electrical equipment installed outside their premises which may be potentially dangerous to the public.

The order came on a batch of petitions on the operation of coaching centres in the area, including a case the high court had registered on its own after taking cognisance of an incident of fire that broke out at one of them in June 2023.

Amicus curiae Gautam Narayan told the court that the inspection, which was carried out on two occasions in April, revealed that a few coaching centres that the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) claimed had shut down were still functioning under a new management or name.

Narayan said these premises were in non-compliance with the fire safety requirements, and in one instance, an electrical board was found installed at the very entrance, blocking the way in case of a fire.

The court pulled up the MCD for failing to take note of such coaching centres in spite of its earlier direction to close down institutes which are in violation of fire safety norms, and directed it to immediately take action against them.

"Someone is wanting to play games? You are trying to nitpick. The direction was to shut it down. Don't say anything now. You shut it down. The amicus is doing the job which the MCD should be

doing. You created this mess. You will shut down all four properties which have been identified," the bench, also comprising Justice Ravinder Dubeja, said.

"In light of apparent violation of sealing directions issued by us, we direct the MCD/DDA (Delhi Development Authority) to take action forthwith and premises are sealed," the bench ordered.

The high court had earlier said "fire safety is a must" and all coaching centres must either comply with their statutory requirements under the Delhi Master Plan, 2021 and other applicable regulations or face closure.

On Friday, the court also clarified that the "character" of a building for the purposes of its identification as an educational building and the applicability of the fire safety norms has to be determined by its "use", and asked the MCD, DDA and The Delhi Fire Service (DFS) to undertake a fresh survey to identify non-compliant coaching centres within four weeks.

On a prima facie evaluation, the court finds that it is the expression "used for" in Unified Building Bye Laws which would be determinative of character as an educational building and therefore in case of buildings which may be falling in other general category but are used for school, coaching etc with over 20 students, it is the norms of educational buildings that will get attracted, it said.

Last year, the high court had registered a case on its own after taking suo motu cognisance of a fire incident at a coaching centre in Mukherjee Nagar in June during which students were seen climbing down the building using ropes. (PTI)

Andaman Police chatbot 'Naye Kanoon Mitra' to help people understand 3 new criminal laws



PORT BLAIR, May 10: Andaman and Nicobar Police have come out with an artificial intelligence (AI) based chatbot called 'Naye Kanoon Mitra' to help people understand the three new criminal laws - Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), Bharatiya Nagrik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS) and Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam (BSA), an official said.

The chatbot was developed by the Superintendent of Police, South Andaman, Niharika Bhatt and ASP, South Andaman, Vikas Swami and will serve as a virtual assistant, offering assistance on the principles and guidelines, outlined in the newly enacted laws.

Speaking to PTI, Bhatt, said, "The chatbot 'Naye

Kanoon Mitra' can be accessible through two ways - a weblink (<https://mediafiles.botpress.cloud/69e1bc77-1c9b-4d0b-aaca1238d73c5751/wechat/bot.html>) and a QR-code. Both the platforms will direct the user to the chatbot, where any citizen can ask questions directly related to three new criminal laws through text messages."

Director General of Police, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Devesh Chandra Srivastava commended all the officers involved in this project and said, "The adoption of this chatbot is an effort to harness the potential of artificial intelligence in delivering efficient and accessible services to the public."

"In the last four months we have conducted campaigns to make people aware of these three new criminal laws in all the three districts - South Andaman, North and Middle Andaman and Nicobar district," the DGP said.

All police personnel are being given extensive training to ensure a smooth and seamless transition to the new criminal laws. The aim is to give multiple training sessions to all the staff of ANI Police in the coming months and cover all the personnel of the police department before the July 1 deadline.

The training is being given in collaboration with various institutions of national repute such as National Forensic Science University, Gujarat, National Law University, Bangalore, Bureau of Police Research and Development (BPR&D) and Central Detective Training Institute (CDTI), Kolkata. (PTI)

AI Express operations slowly improving; expects normalcy in next two days: Official

NEW DELHI, May 10: The operations of Air India Express slowly started improving on Friday as more cabin crew members are joining back for duty, after significant flight disruptions caused by cabin crew strike that has been called off. The strike by a section of the cabin crew since Tuesday night that resulted in the cancellation of more than 170 flights was called off on Thursday evening and the airline also withdrew termination letters issued to 25 striking cabin crew. The Tata Group airline, which operates around 380 flights daily, has curtailed operations in the wake of the strike and the official on Friday said, normalcy is expected in the next two days.

Cabin crew who were on strike are joining back and the airline is extending support to them in getting the fitness certificate, which is required to resume duty, the official added. The official also said that most international flights are in the evening time and the operations on that front are expected to be better from Friday onwards with the availability of more cabin crew.

On average, the airline operates 120 international flights and 260 domestic services daily while there are fewer flights on some days.

Faced with cabin crew shortage, Air India Express on Thursday cancelled 85 flights or around 23 per cent of its total daily capacity.

After the strike was called off on Thursday, the airline had said it will help to swiftly restore flight schedule and also apologised to passengers who were impacted by the flight disruptions. Many cabin crew members had reported sick to protest against alleged mismanagement at the airline and lack of equality in treatment of staff. Air India Express -- which is in the process of completing the merger of AIX Connect, formerly AirAsia India, with itself -- has around 6,000 employees, including over 2,000 cabin crew. (PTI)

27 emails, 10 banks accounts: Mystery of missing Taarak Mehta actor Sodhi deepens



NEW DELHI, May 10: The mystery of missing actor Gurucharan Singh, who played Roshan Singh Sodhi's character in TV series 'Taarak Mehta Ka Ooltah Chashmah', has become deeper as the Delhi Police has found that the actor was using 27 separate email accounts in the fear of being "surveilled" by someone.

According to a police officer, who is privy to the investigation, the actor was having a suspicion of being "surveilled" for which he would often change his email accounts.

The 51-year-old actor was supposed to board a flight from here to Mumbai on April 22 evening but never reached his destination. His father, who lives in Palam, informed the local police after his phone was found to be unreachable.

A police officer said a case under section 365 (kidnapping or abducting with intent to convey out of India or secretly confine person) of the IPC was registered at Palam police station on April 26.

A police team has been tasked to trace his location from the mobile phone which he was carrying, a police officer said.

The officer said Singh's mobile phone is switched off since 9.22 pm on April 22. On the basis of a CCTV footage, his last location was tracked to Dabri in southwest Delhi where he reached in an e-rickshaw, hired from near IGI airport.

The actor used to carry two mo-

bile phones. But he left one of them at his home in Delhi. He made the last call to his friend, who was supposed to pick him at the Mumbai airport, another officer said.

The police teams have scanned his financial transactions from his bank accounts and credit cards. They show that the last transaction was of Rs 14,000, which he withdrew from one of his bank accounts on the day he went missing.

The police officer said Singh's financial condition was not sound, as he had several loans and dues on him.

At least a dozen police teams, including the Crime Branch and Special Cell, are working to locate him, the officer said.

Another officer said Singh is a follower of a sect for which he used to visit a meditation centre in Delhi's Chattarpur. The police have taken the statements of the sect's followers who are known to him.

The officer further said the actor had once showed his interest in going to the Himalayas for meditation. The teams of Delhi Police have taken the statements of over 50 people in Delhi and Mumbai.

The police teams have also visited some states like Haryana, Punjab and Uttarakhand to get any lead in connection with the case, the officer said.

Singh's father, relatives and friends are praying for his well-being. (PTI)

ISRO: '3D-printed' rocket engine saves 97 pc raw materials, 60 pc production time

BENGALURU, May 10: ISRO has successfully conducted a long-duration test of its PS4 engine, re-designed for production using cutting-edge additive manufacturing (AM) techniques -- also known in common parlance as 3D printing -- and crafted in Indian industry, the space agency said on Friday.

The new engine, now a single piece, saves 97 per cent of raw materials and reduces production time by 60 per cent, ISRO said.

ISRO achieved the major milestone with the successful hot testing of a liquid rocket engine manufactured through AM technology for a duration of 665 seconds on May 9, a release from the space agency said.

The engine used is the PS4 engine of PSLV (Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle) upper stage.

The PS4 engine manufactured in the conventional machining and welding route has been in use for the fourth stage of PSLV which has a thrust of 7.33 kN in vacuum condition. The same engine is also used in the Reaction Control System (RCS) of the first stage (PS1) of PSLV, the release said.

The engine uses the earth-storable bipropellant combinations of Nitrogen Tetroxide as oxidiser and Mono Methyl Hydrazine as fuel in pressure-fed mode. It was developed by ISRO's Liquid Propulsion Systems Centre (LPSC).

LPSC redesigned the engine making it amenable to the Design for Additive Manufacturing (DfAM) concept thereby gaining considerable advantages.

The Laser Powder Bed Fusion technique employed has brought down the number of parts from 14 to a single-piece, and eliminated 19 weld joints, saving significantly on the raw material usage per engine (13.7 kg of metal powder compared to the 565 kg of forgings and sheets for conventional manufacturing process) and reduced 60 per cent in the overall production time, the ISRO release said. (PTI)

Bomb threat emails sent to Ahmedabad schools ahead of voting traced to Pakistan

AHMEDABAD, May 10: Emails threatening blasts sent to at least 36 Ahmedabad-based schools on the eve of the May 7 voting have been traced to Pakistan, the police said on Friday, labelling them as an attempt to spread fear among the people ahead of polling.

Lok Sabha elections for 25 of the 26 seats in Gujarat were held in a single phase on May 7. The candidate in Surat has already won unopposed.

"The emails were sent from 'mail.ru' domain, in which a man impersonating himself as Tauheed Liaquat sent them to all the schools with the aim of spreading fear among voters and Indian citizens," the Ahmedabad crime branch said in a press statement.

Liaquat had also assumed another identity as Hamad Javed. The



person with these names was operating from Faisalabad district of Pakistan, Joint Commissioner of Police Sharad Singhal said.

The same person has created various identities on different social media platforms, one of them being that of Hamad Javed. These social media platforms are used to spread anti-India messages, rumours and fear among Indians, he said.

"It is possible that the name was

created to spread fear and rumour. But one thing is certain the mails were sent using mail.ru domain and the location was traced to the Faisalabad cantonment area in Pakistan," he said.

The name of this accused has also been revealed during a honey-trap investigation by another agency, the official said.

Further investigation is underway and agencies like the Intelligence Bureau (IB), Anti Terrorist Squad (ATS), National Technical Research Organisation (NTRO) and Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) have been contacted, Singhal said.

Several of the 36 schools that had received the threat email from the Russian domain 'mail.ru' were designated as polling booths.

The email was received on May

6, a day before the voting in the city where Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah exercised their franchise.

The content of the email was similar to the one sent to schools in Delhi recently. It was sent using the Russian domain 'mail.ru', and no explosive or anything suspicious was found after the schools were searched.

A technical surveillance was then initiated to trace the sender of the email, said the official.

The schools that received the threat email included DPS and Anand Niketan in Bopal, Udgam School on SG Highway, Calorex School in Ghatlodia, Kendriya Vidyalaya at Chandkheda and Army Cantonment on Airport Road. (PTI)

3 held in connection with ₹44 lakh cyber fraud case in Gurugram

GURUGRAM, May 10: The Gurugram Cyber Police has arrested three men, including a bank employee, in connection with a cyber fraud relating to stock market investments, an officer said on Friday.

Eleven bank employees involved in cyber fraud cases have been arrested so far, police said.

The alleged bank employee used to provide bank accounts to cyber thugs. The accused defrauded a Gurugram resident of ₹44.57 lakh last month promising solid returns if he invested in the stock market, police said.

According to the police, an FIR was registered at the Cyber Crime Police Station East on April 17 on the complaint of a local resident, who alleged that he was duped of ₹44.57 lakh in a cyber fraud.

After investigation, a team of Cyber Police led by Inspector Savit Kumar arrested three persons, including an employee of Punjab National Bank.

The arrested men have been identified as Devendra Sharma, Imran, and Hasrat Ali alias Happy, all residents of Jaipur in Rajasthan. During police interrogation, it was revealed that Devendra Sharma worked in Punjab National Bank in Jaipur and had opened an account in the name of a fake firm on documents provided by Imran Ali and made it available to Hasrat Ali alias Happy.

"The accused revealed that out of the defrauded amount, ₹1 lakh was transferred to the said bank account. Hasrat Ali alias Happy had sold the above bank account to cyber thugs for ₹1.50 lakh.

"In exchange for the bank account, Devendra Sharma and Imran had received ₹50,000 each. We are questioning the accused," said Siddhant Jain, DCP ACP Cyber. (PTI)

India's strides in research on Arctic, Antarctica and Himalayas may soon be part of NCERT textbooks

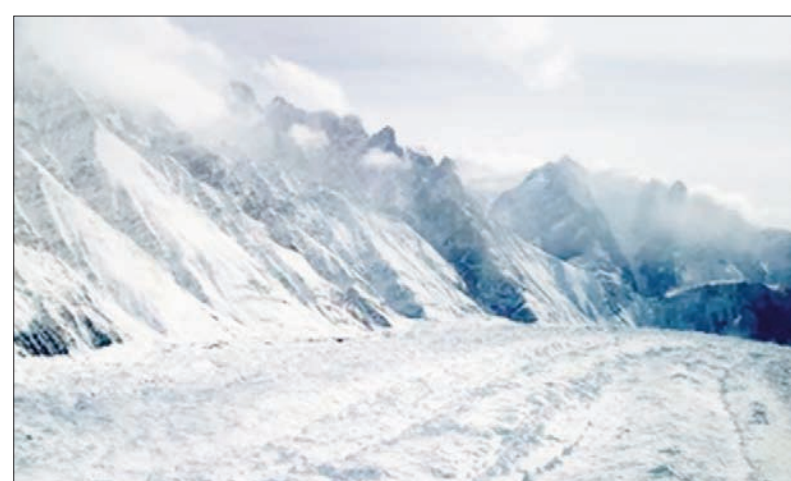
NEW DELHI, May 10: India's strides in research on the Arctic, Antarctica and the Himalayas may soon figure in school textbooks, with the Union Ministry of Earth Sciences reaching out to the NCERT to include the latest developments in its curriculum.

Ministry of Earth Sciences Secretary M Ravichandran said the National Council for Educational Research and Training (NCERT) has constituted a committee to bring out the importance of research in these areas in school textbooks.

"We wrote a letter to them ... they (NCERT) have recently constituted a committee for bringing out importance of the Antarctica expedition, Arctic and also the Himalayas and some other aspects, including climate change. They are working on it," Ravichandran said during an interaction with PTI editors here.

The Antarctica expedition finds mention in NCERT textbooks but the content hasn't been updated for a long time. There is very limited mention of the ongoing research in the Arctic and the Himalayan regions, too.

In a rationalisation exercise post



Covid-19, the NCERT dropped topics such as climate change, monsoon and greenhouse effect from textbooks, triggering a controversy.

The council later clarified that the subjects had been dropped to reduce curriculum load in view of the pandemic and added that the topics would be restored with the release of books based on the new curriculum framework.

These books are currently being

worked on and will be available for all classes by 2026.

The Union Ministry of Earth Sciences is hosting the 46th meeting of the ATCM, the highest governing body for Antarctica, and the 26th CEP meeting.

The crucial meets will be held in Kochi from May 20-30 where countries engaged in research in the southern polar region will share the outcome of their scientific pursuits and future plans.

India has two active research stations -- Maitri and Bharti -- in Antarctica. The first research station, Dakshin Gangotri, set up in 1983, had to be abandoned after it sank in the snow.

Thamban Meloth, director of the National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research (NCPOR), said several students involved in the research have been to Antarctica in recent years.

"We have not taken any high school students so far but several senior students involved in the research have been to Antarctica," he said in response to a question.

Asked about possibilities of introducing a programme such as Students on Ice for Indian school students, Meloth said, "It is not logistically feasible. It costs around Rs 1 crore to send a single person to Antarctica ... there are lot of other logistical issues too when it comes to high school students.

The Students on Ice programme is run by Canadian educator and environmentalist Geoff Green, under which high school students from across the globe, accompanied by educators and scientists, get an opportunity to travel to Antarctica and the Arctic. (PTI)



Willem Dafoe, Tom Hiddleston to star in biopic on mountaineer Tenzing Norgay

LOS ANGELES, May 10: Hollywood stars Tom Hiddleston and Willem Dafoe have been roped in to feature in the biopic of the legendary Nepalese-Indian mountaineer Tenzing Norgay. Norgay, who climbed Mount Everest with Sir Edmund Hillary in 1953, was among the first men to reach the summit of the world's highest peak. Hiddleston will portray Hillary, while Dafoe will portray the English expedition leader, Colonel John Hunt, reports Variety.com. A search is currently underway to cast the lead role of Norgay. "Tenzing" comes from acclaimed filmmaker Jennifer Peedom ("Solo", "Sherpa"), who has the exclusive rights to tell the Nepalese-Indian mountaineer's story via his family and has a close relationship with the Sherpa community. The project is written by Academy Award-nominated Luke Davies and produced by Liz Watts, Emile Sherman, and Iain Canning for See-Saw Films, alongside Jennifer Peedom and Davies. The executive producers are Simon Gillis, David Michod, and Norbu Tenzing. Peedom said: "I could not be more thrilled to bring Tenzing Norgay's story to the screen. I've been working towards this film my whole career, and I'm incredibly grateful to Tenzing's family for

entrusting me with it. I am excited to work with See-Saw Films and our amazing cast to bring this story to life." The director added that Tom Hiddleston and Willem Dafoe are two of the most generous and talented actors in the business, so pairing them with our brilliant Himalayan cast is going to be electric. "I have no doubt this film will resonate widely. We all have our own mountains to climb, and this film shows us what human beings are truly capable of," Peedom added. Tibetan-born Norgay alongside New Zealand mountaineer Hillary, both outsiders on a British expedition, defied the odds to achieve what was considered impossible, reaching the summit of the world's tallest mountain, Mount Everest. In the film, after six previous attempts, Norgay risks everything for one final venture. He must navigate treacherous politics and perilous weather as he embarks on the most sig-

nificant climb of his life. Norbu Tenzing, son of Tenzing Norgay, added: "Jen is somebody who has earned the respect of our people, understands the community, and is deeply im-

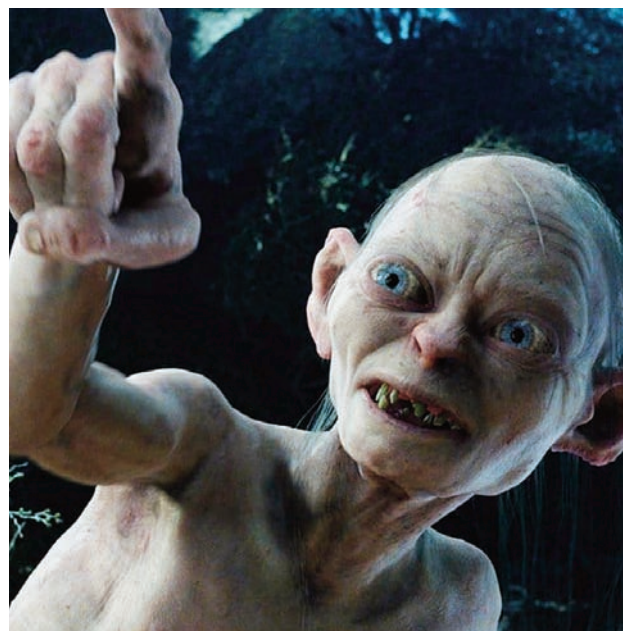
mersed in our culture.

She's a great human being and someone that we trust, and she has had a lifelong interest in the story of my father, Tenzing Norgay." "We are so excited to embark on this exhilarating ascent led by one of the most inspirational directors we've encountered, Jennifer Peedom," said See-Saw's Sherman and Canning. Added producer Liz Watts: "This is an extraordinary story, fueled by Luke Davies' incredibly powerful script. With Jen Peedom's authentic and captivating direction and with our exceptionally talented cast, we can't wait to bring Tenzing's awe-inspiring story to audiences worldwide." (AGENCIES)



Andy Serkis to star in and direct new 'Lord of the Rings' movie for Warner Bros

LOS ANGELES, May 10: A new "Lord of the Rings", focussing on the iconic character Gollum, is being developed by Warner Bros with actor-filmmaker Andy Serkis. The British star had brought alive the lanky Hobbit-like creature from JRR Tolkien's fantasy novel in Peter Jackson's "Lord of the Rings" and "The Hobbit" trilogies. The new movie, which is tentatively titled "Lord of the Rings: The Hunt for Gollum", will be directed by Serkis. The actor will also reprise the role in the movie, reported entertainment news outlet Variety. The project is currently in the early stages of script development from writers Walsh and Boyens, along with Phoebe Gittins and Arty Papageorgiou. During an earnings call Thursday, Warner Bros Discovery CEO David Zaslav said the project will "explore storylines yet to be told", and release in theatres in 2026. Jackson and his partners Fran Walsh and Philippa Boyens are producing the movie and "will be involved every step of the way," he added. It will be executive produced by Ken Kamins, with Serkis and The Imaginarium's Jonathan Cavendish. The Hollywood studio had announced in February 2023 that Mike De Luca and Pam Abdy had brokered a deal to make "multiple" films based on the beloved JRR Tolkien books. Besides "The Hunt for Gollum", Warner Bros also has an animated fantasy film, titled "The Lord of the Rings: The War of the Rohirrim", arriving in theatres in December this year. (PTI)



John Malkovich, Ralph Ineson Join Cast Of 'The Fantastic Four'

LOS ANGELES, May 10: Marvel Studios' much-awaited "The Fantastic Four" movie has added veteran actor John Malkovich and Ralph Ineson to the cast. Malkovich has been roped in for an undisclosed role, while Ineson has been cast as the world-devouring cosmic villain Galactus, reported entertainment news outlet The Hollywood Reporter. The two actors will feature in the movie alongside Pedro Pascal, Vanessa Kirby, Ebon Moss-Bachrach, Joseph Quinn, Julia Garner and Paul Walter Hauser. "The Fantastic Four" will mark the entry of the superhero quartet — Pascal's Reed Richards aka Mr Fantastic, Sue Storm aka the Invisible Woman (Kirby), Johnny Storm aka the Human Torch (Quinn), and



Moss-Bachrach's Ben Grimm, also known as the Thing — into the Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU), after 20th Century Fox's merger with The Walt Disney Company in 2019. Garner was recently cast as Shalla-Bal, a version of Silver Surfer from the Marvel comics. Matt Shakman of WandaVision fame will direct "The Fantastic Four" from a screenplay by Josh Friedman, Jeff Kaplan and Ian Springer. Marvel Studios will release the film on July 25, 2025. (PTI)

Tarsem Singh's 'Dear Jassi' to open IFFLA 2024, film gala to take place from June 27-30

NEW DELHI, May 10: Filmmaker Tarsem Singh's "Dear Jassi" will serve as the opening film for the 2024 edition of the Indian Film Festival of Los Angeles. The film gala, which will run from June 27 to 30, will screen 20 films, including seven narrative features, twelve shorts, and one docu-series with a diverse line-up of films from India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Pakistan and the United States, a press release said. "Dear Jassi" has toured various film festivals across the globe and follows Jassi, a Canadian-born Indian girl who falls in love with Mithu, a rickshaw driver from a lower social class. The movie features Pavia Sidhu and Yugam Sood in the lead roles. Tamil superstar Vijay Sethupathi's "Maharaja" will be bringing the curtains down on IFFLA. Directed by Nithilan Saminathan, the movie is an action-packed thriller about a group of men seeking revenge with twisted turns along the way. Saminathan, along with the film's cast and producer, will attend the premiere in L.A. The festival will also screen "Kill", an upcoming action thriller from filmmaker Nikhil Nagesh, and the Sundance winner "Girls Will Be Girls", which is the maiden production venture of actor-couple Ali Fazal and Richa Chadha. The line-up includes award-winning filmmaker Christo Tomy's film "Undercurrent", which explores the powerful themes of female solidarity; a tender love story "Ben and Suzanne, A Reunion in 4 Parts", written and directed by Shaun Seneviratne; and "A House Named Shahana" by Leesa Gazi. (PTI)

India to host 'Bharat Parv' at 77th Cannes Film Festival

NEW DELHI, May 10: India is set to host a 'Bharat Parv' at the 77th Cannes Film Festival for eminent dignitaries and delegates from around the world to showcase the myriad creative opportunities in the country. At the prestigious film gala, a delegation consisting representatives from central and state governments as well as members of the industry will showcase India's creative economy in Marche du Films through a series of significant initiatives, the Information and Broadcasting ministry said on Friday. It will be for the first time that the country will host a "Bharat Parv" at the Cannes Film Festival to engage with film celebrities, filmmakers, directors, producers, buyers and sales agents from across the world and showcase the creative opportunities and a rich bank of creative

talent. The official poster and trailer of the 55th India International Film Festival, to be held in Goa on November 20 to 28, will also be unveiled at the Bharat Parv, the release stated. At the Bharat Parv, the delegation will also see the release of the "Save the Date" for the first edition of the World Audio-Visual & Entertainment Summit, which will take place alongside the 55th IFFI. The Bharat Pavilion, which serves as a platform for the Indian film community to engage in various activities, at the 77th Cannes Film Festival at 108 village International Riviera will be inaugurated on May 15 in the presence of eminent celebrities. The Pavilion will be organized by the National Film Development Corporation in collaboration with the Federation of Indian Chambers

of Commerce & Industry as industry partner. A 'Bharat Stall' will be put in the Marche du Cannes through the Confederation of Indian Industry. The Bharat Pavilion has been designed by the National Institute of Design, Ahmedabad. It is christened on 'The Sutradhara' for depicting this year's theme of "Create in India". At the internationally recognised festival, several Indian movies and productions will be showcased. The highlight will be filmmaker Payal Kapadia's "All We Imagine As Light", which has been selected in the Competition section, where it will vie for the top prize Palme d'Or. British-Indian filmmaker Sandhya Suri's "Santosh" will be showcased at the 77th edition under the Un Certain Regard section.

"Sunflowers Were the First Ones to Know", a short film by the Film and Television Institute of India students, has been shortlisted in the La Cinef Competitive section. Karan Kandhari's "Sister Midnight" will be screened in Directors' Fortnight and Maisam Ali's compelling "In Retreat" in L'Acid. A restored version of veteran filmmaker Shyam Benegal's 1976 film "Manthan" will be screened under Cannes Classics, a section created 20 years ago which features celebrations, restored prints and documentaries. National Award-winning cinematographer Santosh Sivan will be the recipient of the prestigious Pierre Angenieux tribute at the festival, where he will also deliver a masterclass, becoming the first Indian to be recognised with the honour. (PTI)



NADAL SHOWS HE'S NOT QUITE READY FOR RETIREMENT IN A COMEBACK WIN AT THE ITALIAN OPEN

ROME, May 10: For a brief stretch on Thursday, Rafael Nadal looked every bit of a weary 37-year-old player nearing retirement. Struggling to produce pace off both sides with his groundstrokes, committing an uncharacteristically high number of unforced errors and unable to stay in rallies, Nadal dropped the first set of his first-round match at the Italian Open against Belgian qualifier Zizou Bergs.

Then the fist-pumping, virtually-unbeatable-on-clay, 22-time Grand Slam champion version of Nadal emerged and the Spaniard rallied for a 4-6, 6-3, 6-4 victory before an adoring crowd in what will likely be his

final tournament at the Foro Italico.

Nadal was playing only his 10th match this year after missing nearly all of 2023 with a hip injury that required surgery. He's hoping to be competitive one last time at the French Open, where he is the record 14-time champion. "That was not my best match. I was practicing better than how I played today, without a doubt. But I found a way to win," Nadal said. "My game is more unpredictable than before. I didn't play much tennis for the last two years. So I'm up and down, on and off, but I think I can do it much better than what I did today."

Rome, where he is a record

10-time champion, is Nadal's last big warmup tournament before Roland Garros starts on May 26.

Nadal noted that after overcoming his hip and abdominal issues, the time has come "to prove myself if I am able to push my body to the limit that I need to push to feel myself ready for what's coming."

"I am not talking only about Roland Garros. I am talking about the next match. I need to lose this fear," Nadal said. "Matches like today help. Some moments I was moving faster. Some moments not. I need to get used to that, to take that risk. ... I feel more ready to try it than before." During his 70th win in

the Italian capital, the Campo Centrale crowd serenaded Nadal with chants of: "Ole, Ole, Ole, Na-dal, Na-dal."

"I've always been emotional to play here, these kind of events are the most important events in my tennis career," Nadal said. "The crowd has been always amazing with me, supporting me since the beginning of my tennis career. So I'm super excited to be able to play one more time here." Nadal was coming off a straight-set loss to 31st-ranked Jiri Lehecka in the fourth round of the Madrid Open. But he has never lost consecutive matches on clay in his entire career and now that impressive statistic remains intact during what he has

indicated is his final season on tour. Nadal got out to a strong start, unleashing a 95 mph (153 kph) forehand winner en route to an early break and a 3-1 lead in the first set. But he gave the break right back in the next game when he missed three weak groundstrokes into the net.

Then at 4-4, Nadal double-faulted twice and was broken again to give the 108th-ranked Bergs a 5-4 lead and a chance to serve out the set.

In the first set, Nadal committed 16 unforced errors to Bergs' 10. During the first game of the second set, the match was briefly suspended when a spectator in the stands required medical treatment. That allowed

Nadal to chat with Carlos Moya, his coach.

After the 10-minute suspension of play, Nadal raced out to a 3-0 lead in the second set as he upped the power on his shots and became more aggressive.

During the third set, Nadal managed to win a point after he fell to the red clay, quickly getting up to resume the rally and then producing a delicate drop-shot winner. Then he blasted a forehand cross-court winner to break for a 3-1 lead and unleashed a double-clutch fist pump. There were more fist pumps when Nadal rallied from 0-40 on his serve to hold for a 4-2 lead in the third.

Nadal's mother and sister sit-

ting behind the court shouted encouragement and his 1-year-old son was also court-side — sitting on the lap of Nadal's father.

The Nadal family can now look forward to a second-round matchup with seventh-seeded Hubert Hurkacz. Top-ranked Novak Djokovic is on the opposite side of the draw, while second-ranked Jannik Sinner and third-ranked Carlos Alcaraz both withdrew because of injuries.

In other matches, Serbian qualifier Hamad Medjedovic beat Alexei Popyrin 6-3, 6-2; Thiago Seboth Wild defeated French qualifier Gregoire Barrere 6-4, 6-2; and Dominik Koepfer eliminated Andrea Vavassori 6-4, 6-3. (AP)

Gukesh storms back, Praggnanandhaa moves to joint third; Carlsen takes lead

WARSAW, May 10: World Championship challenger D Gukesh bounced back from a sedate start to defeat compatriot R Praggnanandhaa and Germany's Vincent Keymer before holding world No. 1 Magnus Carlsen after round six of the Superbet rapid and blitz tournament here on Friday.

However, Praggnanandhaa produced a strong fifth round, defeating Holland's Anish Giri and he followed it with a win over Keymer in the sixth round.

Norway's Carlsen shares the lead with Wei Yi of China with eight points apiece while Praggnanandhaa and Shevchenko share the third spot on seven points each.

Nodirbek Abdusattorov of Uzbekistan, Gukesh and Arjun Erigaisi are joint fifth on 6 points, a full point ahead of local star Duda Jan-Krzysztof.

With four points, Keymer is in ninth spot in the \$175000 prize money tournament, a point clear of Giri.

However, the dream run of Romanian Kirill Shevchenko was ended by Erigaisi, who scored his first victory in the event. Starting with losses in the first two rounds followed by a lone draw, Gukesh showed pluck to prevail over Prag-



gnanandhaa in the fourth round in 41 moves.

The middle game arising out of a double fianchetto by white did not offer much scope for Gukesh and his position worsened as Praggnanandhaa launched a King side attack by

advancing his pawns.

The pressure was immense on both and despite getting close to a winning position Praggnanandhaa could not keep his nerves and let Gukesh come back strongly.

In the next round, Prag-

gnanandhaa was on target with some difficult moves to grind down Giri in just 21 moves out of an irregular Queen pawn game.

Giri fell prey to a brilliant rook manoeuvre and blundered early.

Gukesh made most of the chances to crush Keymer who played white. The tactical complications led to a wild position in the middle game wherein Keymer found his king going for a long walk.

It was hard to recover for him from there and Gukesh finished the game with a queen sacrifice.

Arjun was on the receiving end in the day's opener against Duda, but then came up with an exemplary game to outplay Shevchenko.

In the last game of the day, Arjun played out a draw with Abdusattorov, keeping himself within striking distance of the leader's pack.

Carlsen remained solid to score one win and two draws for the second day running.

The victory over Abdusattorov in the fifth round reminded everyone of Carlsen's superior skills in grinding down a rival while against Gukesh he missed a promising continuation before signing peace.

Wei Yi was the star of the day scoring three victories on the trot to join Carlsen in the lead.

Starting off with a win against Giri, the Chinese wrapped it up against Duda before handing Shevchenko his second defeat of the day. (PTI)

At no stage did I refuse to give dope sample: Bajrang Punia

NEW DELHI, May 10: Olympic medalist wrestler Bajrang Punia has claimed that he refused to provide urine samples during the selection trials in Sonapat in March because the dope control officials failed to furnish adequate proof that they were carrying proper equipment to conduct the tests.

The Tokyo Olympic Games bronze medalist said he had only demanded an explanation from the officials as on one of the two previous occasions, they (NADA officials) had come with expired kits while during other time, they appeared with only one testing kit as opposed to the mandatory three. Bajrang, one of the country's most successful wrestlers, was suspended by National Anti-Doping Agency (NADA) on April 23 after being served a whereabouts failure notice on April 18. On Thursday, wrestling's world governing body UWW also suspended him till the end of this year following NADA's decision to hand him a provisional suspension for refusing to undergo a dope test on March 10 in Sonapat. "This is to clarify that, I have at no stage refused to give my sample for doping control. On 10 March 2024, when I was approached by alleged doping control officials, I merely reminded them that the last two times they came to collect my sample, they had gotten expired kits once," wrote Bajrang on 'X' on Friday.

"...and on the other instance, they had approached me with a single testing kit as opposed to the three testing kits," added Bajrang, who has been at the forefront of a protracted agitation against former Wrestling Federation of India chief Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh. The grappler, who competes in the 65 kg category, said he had sought an answer from the Dope Control Officers (DCO) on March 10 on why NADA was not responding to his queries regarding two previous lapses, but he got no explanation. "I then sought an answer from them (DCOs) as the NADA did not provide an answer to any of my communications demanding an explanation for the same and informed them that I would give my sample upon receiving such explanation from them. "Not only did the doping control officials refuse to provide an explanation, they did not provide me any proof on this instance of them carrying proper equipment and merely left from the venue where I was at, claiming it to be a refusal from my end," added Bajrang.

Bajrang added that contrary to reports that he left the venue immediately, he was present for almost one hour after the dope control officials had approached him for the sample. "I continued to be at the venue as I had another bout scheduled for 3/4 position. After my semifinal bout, I met the SAI (Sports Authority of India) doctor at the venue for treatment regarding a knee injury suffered during the semifinals of the Wrestling Trials. "I only left the venue about an hour after the alleged doping control officials approached me, contrary to how it has been portrayed that I left immediately," added Bajrang.

He also alleged that the DCOs had not followed the norms which mandated them to stay till such time a wrestler submits his medical report to the competition manager. "The dope controlling officer should have accompanied me till I submitted my medical report to the competition manager as per protocol, rather than leaving in a hurry in middle of the trials, to record my refusal. "Even if this incident is treated as refusal, the fact that it was due to NADA using expired kits and not providing an explanation for using them, or giving me comfort, that they had not carried expired kits again, should be considered as a compelling justification.

"I took such a stance solely because of the NADA's actions in the past, which, in the absence an explanation, could continue a dangerous trend of the use of expired kits or non-compliance with doping control protocol. "It is my moral obligation towards the wrestling community and particularly the younger wrestlers, that I exercised here," he added. (PTI)

Hardik's ego-driven, chest-out style of leadership doesn't look genuine: De Villiers

JOHANNESBURG (SOUTH AFRICA), May 10: Hardik Pandya's "ego-driven, chest out" style of captaincy doesn't seem to look genuine and experienced teammates aren't exactly buying his false bravado, feels former South Africa skipper AB de Villiers. Pandya's first stint as Mumbai Indians skipper replacing the highly successful Rohit Sharma turned into a nightmare as the five-time champion franchise failed to reach the play-offs.

Worse, the MI fans didn't like team's decision with Pandya being greeted with boos in every single game. "The captaincy style of Hardik Pandya is quite ego-driven in a way, chest out," De Villiers said on his YouTube channel.

An IPL legend himself, De Villiers observed that Pandya's trying to unsuccessfully fake it.

"I don't think how he walks on the field is always genuine, but he has decided that is his way of captaincy. Almost like MS (Dhoni). Cool, calm, collective, always got your chest out."

Pandya had led a young Gujarat Titans team to back-to-back IPL finals winning the inaugural edition. De Villiers opined that the style which flopped in Mumbai Indians worked in an earlier fran-

chise because the core group was much younger.

"When you play with a lot of experienced players, guys who have been around for ages, they don't buy into that. It worked at GT, where it was a younger team. Sometimes, inexperienced players love to follow that kind of leadership." Giving some captaincy advice to Pandya by remembering his playing days under Graeme Smith, de Villiers stated that the all-rounder needed to get out of his "bravado" or put on confidence mentality.

"I remember Graeme Smith. He was out there for the team. All I needed to do as a youngster was to follow. Now, there's a Rohit (Sharma), there's a Jasprit Bumrah," he continued.

"They go like, 'All we need you to be is calm. Give us a bit of input on how to win matches. We don't need the bravado.'"

However, the South African also clarified that he was not targeting Pandya and that he loved to watch him play.

"I'm not having a go at Hardik. I love watching him play. I love him putting out his chest because I was like that. I believed that as a batter sometimes, you've got to fake it to make it," he concluded. (PTI)

No longer vintage but Kohli is still quite remarkable: Tom Moody

DHARAMSALA, May 10: Virat Kohli is not without his limitations but the star Indian batter has made up for them with his commitment to training, feels former Australian all-rounder Tom Moody. Armed with his powerful slog-sweep, Kohli has been able to counter the spinners in the middle overs, and on Thursday after blazing his way to a 47-ball 92, the 35-year-old effected the key run-out of Shashank Singh with a superb direct hit from deep mid-wicket against Punjab Kings.

"It's quite remarkable, especially considering he's not the same as the vintage Virat Kohli, but he's also not 21 anymore; he's 30. So, that's brilliant what he's done there," Moody said on 'Star Sports Cricket Live'.

"Running in from the deep, throwing himself to the ground, and managing to make the

throw from that position is no easy feat. That's something we've definitely taken into consideration. It's truly extraordinary," he said.

The knock took Kohli's season total to 634 at an average of 70.44 from 12 matches with Chennai Super Kings skipper Ruturaj Gaikwad at a distant second (541 from 11 matches).

Emphasising his agility and contribution with the bat despite his age, Moody said: "He's not just a fielder; he's also contributed with the bat, scoring 92 runs and spending considerable time out in the middle. "Despite the physical exertion, he's always running around in the field like no one else. In the middle of the innings of that second innings he still managed to display the focus, enthusiasm, fitness, and agility required to execute a run-out like that." The

expert commentator further noted that while Kohli may not train as intensely as before, he still focuses on improving his performance through training. In the post-match interaction, the player-of-the-match revealed that he has brought out the slog-sweep option to counter spin. "From what we took from his post match interview, you can see how he learnt how to manage how he prepares for a competition now," Moody said.

"He knows he can't hit as many balls and train as hard as he used to, but he's still training alright. He's still training on how to improve on his performances.

"We talk about the sweep slog, how he's brought that back out against spin, and hasn't that been a really effective weapon for him in those middle overs," he added. (PTI)

Need to improve fitness and tactics to beat the Chinese more often: giant slayer Manika Batra

NEW DELHI, May 10: Manika Batra could not be more thrilled about bossing the World No.2 from China earlier this week but to beat the top-10 players more often, the Indian table tennis trailblazer knows she needs to do more on the tactical and fitness front.

After becoming the first Indian female to reach the quarterfinals of a Grand Smash (top tier events organised by World Table Tennis), the 28-year-old doesn't want to sit on her laurels and her focus is firmly fixed on the Paris Olympics in July-August.

The Delhi-born player shocked Wang Manyu, the 2021 World Champion in women's singles and member of the Olympic gold-winning Chinese team at the Tokyo Olympics, before blanking 14th-ranked Nina Mittelham from Germany to make it a special week in

Saudi Arabia.

The loss in the quarterfinals came against fifth-ranked Hina Hayata, an opponent Batra has beaten before, but on Thursday the Japanese was better prepared for the challenge.

Speaking to PTI after a successful run in Saudi Arabia, Batra said playing against the best over one week has given her a good idea of where she needs to improve ahead of Paris Olympics.

"So first of all I am really happy. Maza aa gaya usko hara ke (I had a lot of fun beating her)," said a beaming Batra, who had lost badly to Wang Manyu at the Macau World Cup last month.

Specific planning with coach Aman Balgu after that defeat paved the way for a landmark victory.

"After Macau, I sat with my

coach, I was really emotional at that time because I told him that something is going wrong and we really have to work on a few things.

"After that, we had a few 10-12 days intense sessions which really helped me in this tournament. Not only against Wang, but against the other two players as well," said the Indian, who is managed by IOS Sports and Entertainment.

Batra, who plays with long pimples on the backhand, is known for twiddling the racket in the middle of a point but of late she has made a conscious effort to not do that excessively.

The 39th ranked Indian, who will break into the top-25 next week, also feels she needs to be more agile around the table and attack more with her forehand to compete against the mighty Chi-

nese on a consistent basis.

"To be honest, I don't see any differences (between myself against Chinese) but I have noticed in this tournament that if you want to reach semi-finals and finals, your stamina, your body should be trained like that. The Chinese and Japanese move really fast.

"It shouldn't happen that after quarter or semi-finals... you are getting tired. So I really learned from this tournament that I have to work on my stamina and agility till the Olympics.

"Game wise, everything was there at this tournament. It's just mentally you have to be strong and you have to believe that you can do it. Beating World No 2 and World No. 14 is a massive boost. "I also really liked how my fighting spirit was in this tournament.

I was fighting for every ball, every game. Need to work on a few things like my forehand. It was really good in this tournament but need to take it to the next level," said Batra.

The Indian's pimpled rubber on the backhand allows her to slow the pace of the point so that she can get herself in an attacking position.

"I have to be more attacking because now I've realized that from backhand only, you cannot win. You have to attack from forehand. I have realized this and I am working on this with my coach for few months.

"At this level you have to be stable. The mistakes have to be minimal, whether it is while receiving or serving," said the first Indian female to win a singles medal at the Asian Cup. (PTI)

IPL: KKR target playoff berth at home; MI seek to salvage pride

KOLKATA, May 10: In red-hot form, two-time former champions Kolkata Knight Riders will look to seal an IPL playoff berth for the first time in three years when they take on the struggling Mumbai Indians in their final home match of the season, here on Saturday.

The return of their two-time title-winning skipper Gautam Gambhir as team mentor has done wonders for the side which has found ways to win games from difficult situations this season.

Sitting at the top of the 10-team standings with eight wins from 11 matches, another win will guarantee them the playoff berth as the Shah Rukh Khan-owned franchise will look to end on a high, its campaign at the home venue of Eden Gardens.

Gambhir's ploy to back Sunil Narine as an opener along with World No.2 T20I batter Phil Salt has been a masterstroke.

The duo have scored bulk of the team's runs, giving it the perfect platform in power-plays to post six 200-plus totals from eight matches batting first.

With 32 sixes to his name, Narine is also the second in the list behind Abhishek Sharma (35).

The consistency with which Narine keeps churning out high scores match



after match has been phenomenal.

With one century and three fifties, the

Trinidadian has also been their leading run-getter, amassing 461 runs at a strike-

rate of 183.66. Englishman Salt has scored 429 runs at a strike-rate of 183.33.

The duo's explosive form has also meant that the likes of Andre Russell and Rinku Singh, who have been their designated finishers, have not got enough opportunities. Their performance has also covered up the team's bowling profligacy, particularly that of Mitchell Starc.

The young Angkrish Raghuvanshi at No.3 has also proved his worth, while Rameendep Singh has been spectacular at the death.

In contrast, five-time champions Mumbai Indians, under Hardik Pandya, became the first team to be knocked out after Sunrisers Hyderabad demolished Lucknow Super Giants the other day.

Coming on the back of a morale-boosting win over SRH, MI will look to salvage some pride.

Fresh from his knocks of 56 and 102 not out, Suryakumar Yadav has been in scintillating form which augurs well for Team India ahead of the T20 World cup in less than a month.

At the same time, Team India fans will hope that Rohit Sharma and Hardik Pandya also return among runs.

The India captain has four single-digit scores and one 11 in last five games, while Pandya's best this season has been 46. The struggling all-rounder has failed

to cross 10 in his last six innings.

Pandya would be desperate to strike form given that it would be crucial to India's chances in the T20 World Cup next month.

Teams:

Kolkata Knight Riders: Shreyas Iyer (c), KS Bharat (wk), Rahmanullah Gurbaz (wk), Rinku Singh, Angkrish Raghuvanshi, Sherfane Rutherford, Manish Pandey, Andre Russell, Nitish Rana, Venkatesh Iyer, Anukul Roy, Rameendep Singh, Varun Chakravarthy, Sunil Narine, Vaibhav Arora, Chetan Sakariya, Harshit Rana, Suyash Sharma, Mitchell Starc, Dushmantha Chameera, Sakib Hussain, Mubeen Ur Rahman, Gus Atkinson, Allah Ghazanfar and Phil Salt.

Mumbai Indians: Hardik Pandya (c), Rohit Sharma, Suryakumar Yadav, Dewald Brevis, Jasprit Bumrah, Piyush Chawla, Gerald Coetzee, Tim David, Shreyas Gopal, Ishan Kishan (wk), Anshul Kamboj, Kumar Kartikeya, Akash Madhwal, Kwena Maphaka, Mohammad Nabi, Shams Mulani, Naman Dhir, Shivalk Sharma, Romario Shepherd, Arjun Tendulkar, Nuwan Thushara, Tilak Varma, Harvik Desai (wk), Nehal Wadhwa and Luke Wood.

Match starts: 7.30pm. (PTI)

Kishan, Iyer's exclusion from central contracts was chief selector Agarkar's call: Jay Shah



MUMBAI, May 10: The exclusion of Ishan Kishan and Shreyas Iyer from the list of centrally-contracted players was a decision that was solely taken by chairman of selectors Ajit Agarkar, BCCI secretary Jay Shah has revealed, asserting that "nobody is indispensable".

Kishan and Iyer were left out after failing to show up for domestic engagements despite a directive from the BCCI. While Kishan went on a long break after the end of the ODI World Cup last year and remained unavailable until the IPL, Iyer eventually did feature in a few matches for Mumbai in the Ranji Trophy including the semifinal and the final.

However, Iyer still found himself at the receiving end after it emerged that he had attended a Kolkata Knight Riders' camp in Mumbai when his domestic side was busy playing a Ranji Trophy fixture.

"You can check the constitution. I am just a convener (of the selection meeting)," he said during a media interaction at the BCCI head office here on Thursday.

"That decision lies with Ajit Agarkar, even when these two players (Ishan Kishan and Shreyas Iyer) who did not play domestic (cricket), the decision to drop them (from the central contracts list) was only his.

"My role is just to implement. And we have got new players (in place), like Sanju (Samson). Nobody is indispensable," he added.

Shah reiterated the Board's position that Indian players will have to prioritise domestic cricket.

In the days leading up to the contract snub, Shah had stated before the third Test between India and England in February this year that he would completely back the

chief selector's decision for any action on players who do not comply with the Indian captain and team management's requirement for participation in domestic cricket.

Shah said he spoke with the players after their exclusion. "Yes, I had spoken with them. Media had even carried the reports," he said.

"Even Hardik (Pandya) said if BCCI is considering me for white-ball, then I am ready to play Vijay Hazare Trophy and Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy. Any player will have to play, even if they do not want to, they will have to," Shah continued.

Talking about high scores in this year's IPL, Shah said ultimately, it comes down to who is playing well and who, as a player, can sustain performance.

"Whoever plays well in the IPL... like say Ishan Kishan, he finds it difficult to take part with the Indian team but he can play in Mumbai Indians as a player. There he can play in a relaxed manner.

"In Team India, you have to prove yourself, give back to back performances. The one who can handle that can be described as a right player," he added.

Shah also revealed details of his conversation with Kishan, which took place after Mumbai Indians' match against Gujarat Titans.

"No, I did not advise him anything. It was just a friendly talk that he should do well and I speak with all players like that," he said.

While there have been a few media reports mentioning an increase in the match fees for domestic players in the country, Shah said there is no such plan.

"We have increased the pay anyway and also incentivised Test cricket. We had increased the pay by 100 per cent in 2022," Shah added. (PTI)

Mumbai City FC head coach Petr Kratky's contract extended

MUMBAI, May 10: Mumbai City FC have extended head coach Petr Kratky's contract by one year until the end of 2025-26 season after their Indian Super League Cup final victory over Mohun Bagan SG.

Kratky took charge of the Mumbai City FC in December last year and he has had a successful run, winning 16 and drawing three from his overall 23 matches. The team also registered their highest ever tally of 47 points in the league phase of an ISL season under the 42-year-old former defender from Czech Republic.

The club said in a release that under Kratky, Indian players in particular have had a successful run as they scored more than 62 per cent — 23 of their 37 goals. Along with this, the team enjoyed a nine-game unbeaten run until the final day of the league when they faced off against Mohun Bagan SG. "My first season with Mumbai City FC has been fantastic, the team and the whole squad is full of ambitious people, who stick together no matter what happens," Kratky said.

"It was of course great to finish the season with the ISL Cup, and next season we will come back and look to be stronger, and more consistent in all our processes," he added. (PTI)

IPL's impact player rule implemented as test case, can be revisited: Jay Shah

MUMBAI, May 10: (PTI) BCCI Secretary Jay Shah says the 'Impact Player' rule, which has divided opinions in the ongoing IPL, can be revisited if that's what the stakeholders want given that it was introduced as a "test case".

The impact player rule has had a heavy bearing on the ongoing edition with teams crossing 250-run mark as many as eight times so far. Players, coaches as well as experts have pointed out the challenges which the impact player rule poses to the bowlers, saying that it allows teams to have extended batting line-ups.

India captain Rohit Sharma has stated that the rule hurts all-rounders as they are not getting enough bowling opportu-

nities.

"Impact player rule was brought in as a test case. On the bright side, it is providing additional playing opportunities to two Indian players," he said in an interaction with select media at the BCCI office here on Thursday.

"Isn't it important that two Indian players are getting a chance? The game is also becoming more competitive," he added.

Shah said all stakeholders will sit down in a meeting likely to be held after the T20 World Cup to decide on it.

"But still, if the players feel that this is not alright we will speak on it. However, no one has said anything about it yet. After the IPL and the World Cup, we will have a meeting and decide," he said.

"After the World Cup, we will consult with players, franchise and broadcasters and decide about the future course. It's not a permanent rule nor am I saying we will move past it," he added.

Shah said India's T20 World Cup-bound players for the Caribbean and the USA, who are currently busy with the IPL, need no rest as competition is perfect preparation ahead of the mega event.

"Why do you want to rest players? This is (as good as a) practice session, you cannot get any better opportunity (to prepare) than this," Shah said.

"There is a cosmopolitan team in front of you, one team has a bowler from New Zealand, the other has a bowler from Australia and the next one

has a bowler from Sri Lanka," he added.

Shah said IPL is the best way to prepare for the Indian players as a Jasprit Bumrah gets a chance to gauge a marauding batter like Travis Head well ahead of the World Cup.

"If we rest a bowler he won't get a chance to bowl at Travis Head. When (Jasprit) Bumrah will bowl to Travis Head, he will understand where to bowl to him and how. There is no better opportunity," he said.

Shah said the focus has also been on improving women's cricket by adding more fixtures to their calendar.

"Women's cricket is going on full fledged and it is being managed no less than men's cricket. There is a World Cup in

Bangladesh so we have maintained our bilateral relationship and played a series," Shah said.

"We have put our focus 51 per cent on women's cricket and 49 per cent on men's because we are doing good in men's cricket so we are taking women's cricket on priority (basis). Their match fees has also increased so they have income as well," he added.

However, Shah said there is no possibility of an increase in the number of teams for the Women's Premier League.

"Let it be five teams for now. The media and sponsorship rights are set for five years and adding more teams will only create issues for them. The franchises have to sustain as well," he said.

It's shameful, there's a way to talk: Shami slams Goenka's outburst on Rahul

NEW DELHI, May 10: Star pacer Mohammed Shami has termed Sanjiv Goenka's "public reprimand" of his India teammate KL Rahul as "shameful" and said the Lucknow Super Giants team owner's reaction to a loss in front of TV cameras "does not have any place in sports". Goenka's animated chat purportedly reprimanding Rahul after Lucknow Super Giants' record demolition at the hands of Sunrisers Hyderabad in Hyderabad has gone viral on social media and Shami was the first Indian cricketer to criticise the act.

"Crores of people are watching you and learning from you. If these things happen in front of cameras, and you see such reactions on screen, it's shameful," a blunt Shami said on 'Cricbuzz Live'. "Aapka ek dayra hona chahiye baat karne ka, yeh message bahut galat jaata hai. (You should have boundaries, there's a way to talk. This sends a very wrong message)."

SRH openers Travis Head and Abhishek

Sharma smashed fiery fifties as the home side chased down the target of 166 in just 9.4 overs, which also became the record 10-over score in any T20 match. But what followed after the result has become a big talking point.

The video of a furious RPSG Group chairman and Kolkata-based billionaire, Goenka apparently losing his cool on Rahul, has gone viral on social media. TV commentators Graeme Smith and Scott Styris remarked that such discussions should occur privately, not in front of cameras.

"It's very important to note that players have respect, and you are a respectful person too, as an owner. It's not that you're talking suddenly," Shami said.

"If you have to do that, there are many different ways. You could've done the same thing in the dressing room or the hotel. It wasn't necessary to do it on the field. Aise reaction de ke koi lal quile pe handa toh gaad nahi diya aapne (you didn't hoist a flag on Red Fort by doing what you

did)," Shami said.

Shami, who is currently recovering from an injury and is not taking part in the IPL, said such actions send a wrong message to the public.

"He's the captain, not a normal player. It's a team game; it isn't a big thing if the plan isn't successful. Anything is possible in the game. I understand there can be good or bad days, but every player has respect, and there's a way to talk," he said.

"There are a lot of moments in the game when tempers flare up, and players quarrel with each other. It should not happen in cricket or any sport, but it does happen.

"A player talking to another player is different, but someone from the outside discussing something with the player is different. We are only speculating from what we are seeing, and only KL Rahul can tell what the conversation was about, but these kinds of reactions do not have any place in sports." (PTI)

Virat Kohli should open in T20 WC: Ganguly



oriented game and that's what it is going to be.

"I was reading Sanju Samson's comments the other day, where he said there's no time to settle down in modern T20s. You just have to hit, and that's the way it is going to be," said Ganguly.

The Kolkata man, himself no stranger to hitting some monster sixes during his playing days, identified the evolved mindset of batters and Impact Player rule as the main reasons behind such mammoth totals in the IPL.

"Now, in IPL we are seeing scores like 240, 250 regularly. The main reasons are good batting wickets and the grounds are also not big in India. In the last game between Delhi Capitals and Rajasthan (Roy-

als), 26 sixes were hit in a 40-over game, which is almost one six every over.

"That's how this game has gone and that's how the players have started approaching the game. The Impact Player rule, where every team has the possibility of adding another batsman, has also added another dimension to it," he detailed.

Ganguly said the bowlers need to upskill themselves to counter the ruthless march of batters in T20s, and cited the example of pacer Jasprit Bumrah.

Amidst the general ruins of bowlers, Bumrah stood tall, grabbing 18 wickets from 12 matches and his economy rate of 6.20 is the best among regular bowlers.

"The bowlers need to be really more skillful, we have some skillful bowlers around,

to be more successful. Look at Bumrah, Axar Patel, Kuldeep Yadav, all of them bowl superbly in all formats of the game and in the IPL.

"I don't believe in formats. I believe in skills. These are exemplary players who will thrive in all formats," he noted.

Does he think the power-hitting will take the elegance and artistry away, making cricket robotic?

"Not at all. Demands of different formats are different. Everything evolves, sports is not an exception. You will still see elegance and artistry in Test cricket. Test matches will always be Test matches.

"Look, quality players will be successful in all formats of the game. Look at Virat Kohli... the best players will adjust to all formats," he added.

Recently, Dinesh Karthik had expressed his desire to return to the Indian side in the context of the T20 World Cup, but Ganguly said the selectors made the right choice by selecting Rishabh Pant and Sanju Samson as wicketkeeper batters.

"Dinesh played well but there are better players than Dinesh. I don't think you can leave Sanju or Rishabh out. There are better players than Dinesh Karthik at the moment," said Ganguly.

Ganguly also refrained from commenting on the "public reprimand" given to Lucknow Super Giants skipper KL Rahul by the team owner Sanjeev Goenka.

"It is not fair for me to make a comment based on a TV grab. I don't know what Sanjeev had spoken to Rahul. So, I leave it at that," he said. (PTI)