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Lok Sabha polls: PM Modi takes dig at opposition with 'Noob in politics' jibe

"To regulate would not be ideal because it is the nature of government to intervene, that is its fundamental nature"



Eye on four 'castes', PM Modi to unveil BJP manifesto

NEW DELHI: Less than a week before the first phase of polling on April 19, PM Narendra Modi will launch the party's manifesto for Lok Sabha polls on Sunday. Modi along with other senior functionaries will release the manifesto - Sankalp Patra - with its planks of welfare and development, besides a roadmap for 'Viksit Bharat' expected to figure prominently in its agenda.

der who am I referring to... If I say it, you will think of a particular person," the PM said. BJP leader Shehzad Poonawalla also took a swipe at Congress leaders over PM Modi's "noob" jibe and said, "Noob PM @naren-

dramodi did not name anybody but why are Congress leaders reacting and confirming ki Rajniti ka Noob kaun hai." Bollywood actress and BJP leader Kangana Ranaut also posted on X asking, "Who is this Noob?" Meanwhile,

during his interaction, PM Modi also discussed the differences between gaming and gambling. He also asked gamers to send an e-mail mentioning all their problems with exact key points to his office. "To regulate would not be ideal because it is the nature of government to intervene, that is its fundamental nature. Either impose restrictions under the law or try to understand and mould it basis our country's needs. Bring it under an organised, legal structure and uplift the reputation,"

Akhilesh Yadav slams Chandrashekhar Azad, says he's working for BJP

BIJNOR: Samajwadi Party president and former CM Akhilesh Yadav on Saturday launched a scathing attack against Azad Samaj Party (ASP) president Chandrashekhar Azad and BJP, alleging their involvement in luring leaders from INDIA bloc.

Addressing a rally in Nahtaur town in Nagina Lok Sabha constituency, he accused BJP of orchestrating the defection of leaders from the opposition alliance by offering inducements out of fear, emphasising that only INDIA bloc could challenge BJP's dominance.

Akhilesh, without naming Azad, cautioned voters against those receiving security from BJP, insinuating their loyalty to the party. Notably, the Union ministry of home affairs provided 'Y-plus' category CRPF security to Azad in UP. Last year, Azad's convoy was attacked by armed men in Saharanpur district, leaving him injured. Azad is contesting his debut since he formed the party four years ago. He faces SP's Manoj Kumar, BSP's Surendra Pal Nainwal and BJP's Om Kumar in this seat. Azad has garnered significant support from Muslim and Dalit demographics, comprising over 38% and 24% of the voters, respectively. Akhilesh lambasted BJP for alleged extortion through electoral bonds, linking it to rising inflation and corporate profiteering.

In tribal belt, Rahul accuses Modi of altering adivasi identity

NAGPUR: Congress MP Rahul Gandhi targeted PM Modi during poll rallies spanning Chhattisgarh's Bastar to Maharashtra's Sakoli Saturday, accusing him, BJP, and RSS of attempting to alter the definition of "adivasi" and levelling allegations of crony capitalism against NDA govt for what he called preferential treatment



to businessman the Agniveer mili-Gautam Adani. tary recruitment Rahul also pledged policy on day one of to initiate a caste forming govt, if census and revoke voted to office.

Alleging BJP deliberately calls tribal people "vanvasi", instead of adivasi, he explained: "Adivasis have been living in jungles even before nation existed. They are real owners of land & have first rights over jal, jungle, jameen. Those who call you 'vanvasi' simply call you forest dwellers, & don't own any forest rights."

DMK opposition to Sanatan Dharma hurt Tamils: Amit Shah

MADURAI/ALWAR: Union home minister Amit Shah told a rally in Tamil Nadu's Kanya Kumari Saturday that DMK's opposition to Sanatan Dharma and Ram Temple in Ayodhya had hurt the sentiments of crores of Tamils. At another event in Rajasthan the same day, he reaffirmed BJP's commitment to continue reservations. Speaking during a road show for BJP Kanyakumari candidate Pon Radhakrishnan and Vilavancode assembly bypoll nominee V S Nandhini, Shah stressed that BJP respected everyone and aimed to take all along. Shah claimed rampant corruption by DMK and AIADMK had hin-



dered the development of Tamil Nadu. Shah urged the people to abandon both parties and strengthen PM Modi's leadership by voting for BJP. According to Shah, PM Modi has made the country secure and prosperous and elevated the pride of Tamil Nadu, Tamil language and Tamil culture across the country and the world. In Rajasthan's

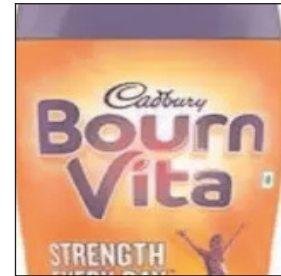
Alwar, Shah dwelt on quotas and accused Congress of spreading misconceptions that BJP wants to abolish the benefits. "PM Modi himself is the biggest supporter of reservation... Be it reservation for Dalits, tribals or backward classes, BJP supports it. We will neither end the reservation nor allow anyone to do it," Shah said.

8 of family with rare genetic disorder in Rajasthan vote from home

JAIPUR: When a team from district election office in Rajasthan's Churu reached the house of Bhanwar Lal in Sarothiya village on April 7, it was a special moment not just for him and his family, but even for the poll officials. Bhanwar Lal and his seven children - five sons and three daughters - cast their votes through Election Commission's home voting system, a rare occasion when so many members of a single family opted for the facility. "The current generation of the family is suffering from a genetic disorder and all the brothers and sisters.

Remove Bournvita from category of 'health drinks': Govt

New Delhi Ministry of commerce and industry has directed e-commerce platforms to remove drinks like Bournvita and other similar products from the category of "health drink" in stores/shops. This decision comes following the national commission for protection of child rights (NCPDR) finding that there is no specific definition for "health drink" under the FSS Act 2006, rules, and regulations as per



FSSAI and Mondelez India. The ministry notification issued on April 10 read, "National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPDR), a statutory body constituted under Section (3) of the Commission of

Protection of Child Rights (CPCR) Act, 2005 after its inquiry under Section 14 of CRPC Act 2005 concluded that there is no 'health drink' defined under FSS Act 2006, rules and regulation. s submitted by FSSAI and Mondelez India Food Pvt Ltd." "In view of above all e-commerce companies/portals are hereby advised to remove drinks and beverage including Bournvita from category of health drinks from their platforms".

Western media questions Indian democracy in string of op-eds on Lok Sabha

LONDON: Opinion pieces on the Indian elections have been appearing thick and fast in the Western press. On Monday, the Times ran a "leading article" saying: "Mr Modi is likely to be recognised as probably the most significant Indian leader since independence., putting his popularity down to spectacular growth, new technology, and welfare policies." "Modi has cultivated the image of a strongman... thumbing his nose at Western liberals and telling Indians their turn in the global spotlight has come. This plays as well with the poor as the rich elites," it said.

Israel-Iran tensions may send fares of Europe flights soaring

NEW DELHI: Your flying time to and from Europe and UK will increase by anywhere upto an hour, likely sending airfares northward too. Air India, Vistara and foreign airlines have started avoiding overflying Iranian airspace due to the looming threat of Iran attacking Israel, which US President Joe Biden expects may happen "sooner than later". IndiGo, whose daily service between Mumbai/Delhi and Istanbul is operated on Turkish Airlines wet-lease aircraft, is also taking an alternative route. AI's Delhi-Tel Aviv flight operated Saturday and the airline is watching the station to decide in real-time whether to continue the four-times-a-week flight,

say sources. AI had suspended this route after the Oct 7 attack on Israel and resumed them on March 3. India advised its citizens on Friday not to travel to Iran or Israel till further notice. Air India Flight 161, for instance, took off from Delhi at 4.30 am on Saturday but did not overfly Iran; instead, it took another route to London - instead of the usual India-Pakistan-Iran-Turkey-Black Sea route to Europe, the Boeing 787 Dreamliner followed a northern flight path. Thanks to AI still overflying Russia, this option is available to the airline for flights between Europe/UK and its main bases of Delhi and Mumbai. AI 161 had overflown Iran on Friday.

NHRC's inquiry at Sandeshkhali finds 'instances of atrocities

NEW DELHI: National Human Rights Commission's spot inquiry into the violence in Sandeshkhali case has revealed "several instances of atrocities on victims" that prima facie show that there was violation of human rights due to "negligence in prevention" of these incidents. The Commission has recommended an impartial investigation into the complaints by central agencies. Noting that the Calcutta High Court is already hearing the Sandeshkhali case, the NHRC will be seeking leave of the HC to intervene in the matter. As per the observations in the report based on a spot visit by a team led by one of its members from the commission between February 23-25 "the atmosphere due to the atrocities by the alleged accused persons rendered the victims silent" and the



"intimidation" and "terror created" made them "reluctant to seek justice". The NHRC emphasised on the need to "reinstate trust in the rule of law and confidence in authorities" and "uproot the fear" of these accused persons from the hearts of the victims. The commission highlights the important role that district authorities have going forward in instilling confidence among residents so that others who have been victims of crimes may come forward and file their complaints. The NHRC has recommended the appointment of special rappor-

teurs to periodically report on the situation in Sandeshkhali. Some of the other recommendations include - "investigation of missing girls and women from Sandeshkhali; ensuring witness protection and redressal of grievances; counseling and rehabilitation of victims of sexual offences; return of the land to the legitimate owners; operationalisation of Nationwide Emergency Response System (NERS)." The enquiry report highlights with much concern that according to data on missing females provided by Police Station Sandeshkhali from

January 1, 2023 to February 25, as many as 37 young women and 3 minor girls were still untraced. "This number is alarmingly large and a thorough in-depth investigation is required to trace the victims and to ascertain the reasons for their going missing including the angel of human trafficking," the report states. Hence the Commission has recommended that an investigation is necessary into cases of women who have gone missing. The commission has sought an action taken report on its recommendations within eight weeks from the West Bengal govt. According to the report the "The villagers/victims faced assault, threat, sexual exploitation, land grabbing, and forced unpaid labour, and under the given circumstances they were compelled to seek livelihood outside the Sandeshkhali region."

Excellent students honored, IAS Jagriti provided guidance to youngsters

Scribes Syed Aqib Raza and Alok Srivastava were program's guests

Prayagraj: The school management honoured many pupils from Bethany Convent School in Naini, Prayagraj. During the academic year 2023-24, chief guest IAS Jagriti Awasthi and Naini Central Prison Jailer Shailendra Pratap, as well as notable journalists Syed Aqib Raza and Alok Srivastava, honored students who have reached high positions in education and other sectors. Sister Shamita, Principal of Bethany Convent School, stated that the children who were awarded today are the product of their instructors' and parents' hard work. The schoolchildren also performed various colorful presentations throughout this



2-hour event. IAS Jagriti Awasthi

stated that every student should consider his or her

future goals and aspirations. When he/she con-

Jailer Shailendra Pratap also bolstered the pupils' spirits

centrates on the end objective, problems will arise, and success will undoubtedly follow. The program's guest, renowned journalist Syed Aqib Raza, also bolstered the kids' spirits by saying that success and failure are both natural parts of life, thus one should constantly strive for achievement. "Even if one fails, one learns something; hence, one should constantly attempt. If you continue, you will undoubtedly arrive at your objective," he remarked. Interestingly, Syed Aaqib Raza, a senior journal-

ist, is an alumni of Bethany Convent School. During this time, he recounted his experiences and recalled his school days. Senior journalist Alok Srivastava bolstered the children's spirits. Jailer Shailendra Pratap also praised the outstanding pupils, stating that children are India's future and that there is potential buried within each child, which must be identified. Ripsy Mehrotra and Preeti Mishra moderated the show. Guest coordinators Mohammad Sabir and Deepak Kumar were also present.

Emphatic victory of NFA & VBPS

"GOAL" U19 Football Tournament

Prayagraj: Under the auspices of Northern Football Academy, "Goal" Football Tournament started today at the football field of Vishnu Bhagwan Public School, Jhalwa. In the first league match of Under-19 boys category, Northern Football Academy defeated Bamrauli North Campus Boys by a huge margin of 10 - 1. The winning team was leading 4-0 at half-time. On behalf of



the winning team, Vedant Tripathi scored seven goals and Harshit Ojha scored three goals, while on behalf of the defeated team, Mohd. Azan scored a goal.

According to Indranil Ghosh, Head Coach of Northern Football Academy, the chief guest of the inaugural match, former football player Jai Prakash Oraon (working in MES Bamrauli) got introduced to the players of both the teams as well as awarded the Player of the Match winners Vedant Tripathi and Kundan Singh.

Vishnu Bhagwan Public School Jhalwa Boys defeated Offside Football Boys 5-0. The winning team was leading 2-0 at half time. For the winning team, Kundan Singh and Rishabh scored two goals each while Karthik scored one goal.

Now UP Board career counselling sessions on Saturdays

Prayagraj: All co-curricular activities and career counselling sessions will now take place on Saturdays in over 27,000 schools affiliated with the UP Board across the state. The academic calendar for the 2024-25 session, released by UP Board Secretary Dibyakant Shukla on Friday night, highlighted this significant change of designating Saturdays as the day for all types of co-curricular activities and career counselling, as informed by UP Board officials.

Career counselling classes will be held in two periods after lunch break on the second and fourth Saturdays of every month in every schools. The responsibility to hold the counselling has been given to the Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA)-a flagship scheme of government of India, to enhance access to secondary education and improve its quality, they added.

These sessions will cover topics such as understanding what a career entails, essential qualities for building a successful career, making informed

choices regarding careers, leveraging hobbies to advance in one's career, gathering information about specific career paths, steps for personal development, engaging in sessions with experts, and receiving training on aspects like resume writing, career planning, conducting psychometry tests, and exploring career options through case studies.

In the four periods before the lunch break, a variety of activities will take place, including awareness rallies, competitions, cleanliness campaigns, collective oaths, yoga programs at the ghat, and discussions on child and women's rights. Additionally, there will be activities such as creating compost pits in the school, establishing school gardens, learning and singing folk songs, participating in 'Prabhat Pheri', organising sports events, holding parent-teacher meetings, and introducing students to alphabets, songs, proverbs, and unique words in the languages of the paired states (Arunachal Pradesh and Meghalaya).

Heat wave hits watermelon yield, farmers suffer losses

Prayagraj: The heat wave and high temperatures have hit watermelon growers as the crop yield has fallen and the weight of fruit is also less. Farmers from Prayagraj, Kaushambi and Fatehpur districts, who grow famous watermelon varieties Saraswati, Arohi, and Muskan, are now finding it difficult to sell their produce in other districts and states. The high temperature has hit production and the weight of melons is also less, said farmers. On an average, the production of watermelon varieties has dipped by 35% to 40% due to intense heat, they added.

Mohd Qayum, a farmer said, "We have been facing tough times since the past three years. While the corona pandemic had affected our sales in the past two years, the heat wave and high temperatures hit the crop this year." "It becomes difficult to save the crop when the mercury crosses 46 degrees Celsius. As a result, we are facing financial losses again," said Qayum.

Normally, the weight of a single watermelon is around 3kg or more, but this time due to intense heat it

reduced to around 1.5kg only, said another farmer. As a result, we are selling melons in the city and adjoining districts only, he added. Farmers of the region grow Saraswati, Arohi, Baudi, Muskan and other varieties



of watermelons through mulching methods and used to earn well.

City-based agriculture expert, Manoj Kumar Srivastava said, "The farmers growing watermelons are finding it difficult to earn profit this time. The crop production has been hit by high temperatures." The limited

produce is being sold at higher price and there is not enough for sending to other states, he added. The farmers in Prayagraj region had started growing the hybrid varieties of watermelons and melons by using the mulch

and yellow interior, are more succulent, sweeter and in high demand. The farmers were using seeds brought from Taiwan for higher yield with minimum resources. These hybrid varieties have small sized watermelons

cultivation technique as they have a higher Total Solid Sugar (TSS) value. The summer fruits are cultivated in more than 2500 acres in Prayagraj, Kaushambi and Fatehpur districts.

The hybrid varieties like Vishala have a yellow exterior and bright red interior, Anmol has green exterior

and melons and are in demand as they have a total solid sugar (TSS) value up to 14 to 15%, and hence the farmers were able to earn profits up to Rs 50,000 to Rs 70,000 per acre. Agriculture experts added that high temperatures have hit the tomato and parwal (pointed gourd) crops also.

2 mobile thieves arrested in Holagarh

Prayagraj: Two accused arrested by Police Station Holagarh, 3 stolen mobile phones, 12 mobile batteries and 35 mobile chargers recovered from their possession. Two accused related to FIR No. 61/24 Section 457/380 IPC registered at Police Station Holagarh, and identified as Suraj Saroj, son of Mithai Lal, resident Aruanv police station

Holagarh Commissionerate Prayagraj and Sumit son of Jokhai resident of Ramdaspur po-

lice station Holagarh Commissionerate Prayagraj were arrested by Holagarh police team on Saturday in case of theft of mobile, mobile battery and mobile from the brick kiln located at Mukundpur under police station Holagarh area. They were arrested along with other items. On the basis of the above arrest/seizure, advance legal action was taken as per rules by increasing section 411 of the IPC in the case mentioned above.

4 gamblers arrested

Prayagraj: Handia police team arrested 4 accused while gambling, Rs 1350/- of Malfad and 52 playing cards were recovered from their possession. Handia police team arrested 04 accused - Sanjay Kumar, son of Rajkumar, resident of village Kajipur, post Bhopatpur police station Uttaraon, Mohd. Altaf, son of Mohd. Mustakh, Mohd. Kaif, son of Mohd. Mustakh, Mohd. Javed,

son of Mohd. Israel, resident of Ward No. 07, Handia Police Station, while gambling near the power house in Handia. They were arrested with Rs 1350/- recovered, 52 playing cards and a total of Rs 320/- recovered from the search. On the basis of the above arrest/seizure, FIR No. 168/24 Section 13 Public Gambling Act was registered at Police Station Handia and necessary legal action was taken as per rules.

Prayagraj Div ensures availability of drinking water at all stations throughout summer

Prayagraj: Keeping in mind the summer season, Divisional Railway Manager, Prayagraj Division Himanshu Badoni gave instructions to ensure availability of clean drinking water at all the stations and for continuous monitoring. During the summer season, there is additional pressure of passengers at the railway stations and the Railways tries to provide maximum facilities to the passengers. Railways have made extensive arrangements for the availability of clean drinking water for the passengers visiting the stations during the summer season. Extensive arrangements have been made for the availability of clean drinking water for the passengers at all the stations falling under Prayagraj division. It has been ensured at the stations that adequate quantity of drinking water is available at all times. To

ensure that passengers can get clean drinking water, all the water taps installed at the stations have been repaired and proper arrange-



ments have also been made for drainage of water. Along with this, the water coolers available at the stations for cold drinking water have been serviced so that cold water can be available un-

interrupted. Along with this, health inspectors have been directed to check the purity of water available at the stations from time to

time. Apart from this, arrangements have also been made for chloride based cleaning for water cleanliness. Guidelines have been provided to the concerned

officers and employees for the management of clean drinking water for the passengers at the stations in the upcoming summer sea-

son. Along with this, NGOs, voluntary organizations and service oriented organizations have also been appealed to take the initiative to install kiosks at the stations. Along with this, co-

operation is also being taken from scouts and guides, help groups etc. to distribute water especially near the general class coaches. NGOs and voluntary organizations are also helping railway passengers at stations like Prayagraj Junction, Vindhyachal, Mirzapur, Kanpur Central etc. Soft water is being provided. For the convenience of drinking water passengers, 319 water taps, 23 water coolers and 10 water vending machines are available at Prayagraj Junction railway station. In this sequence, 15 members of Bharat Scout Guide are providing drinking water to the passengers at Prayagraj Junction Railway Station. Regular monitoring is being done by the Railways for the provision of clean drinking water at the stations. Railways are making every effort to provide maximum facilities to the passengers coming to the station.

During Navratri fair, travelers regularly provided with facilities at Vindhyachal station



Prayagraj: Prayagraj Division made various efforts for the convenience of passengers at Vindhyachal station during Vindhyachal Chaitra Navratri Mela running from 09.04.2024 to 23.04.2024. There are crows. For the convenience of passengers, 5 additional ticket counters, 1 lost and found center and 1 inquiry center have been opened at Vindhyachal station. To provide easy ticketing to the passengers, 14 additional staff have been deployed to work at the ticket

counter. 5 working food stalls are already providing their services to the passengers at Vindhyachal station. In view of the summer season, arrangements have been made for 5 additional water points to provide drinking water to the passengers. In order to provide other facilities to the passengers, arrangements have also been made for 10 mobile bathrooms and 20 mobile toilets. Apart from this, one ambulance and 15 mobile toilets have been provided by the civil administration in the sta-

tion premises. For the convenience of passengers, 15 members of St. John Ambulance Brigade are working at Vindhyachal station. Medical care has been provided to more than 800 people in the first aid camp being run under the supervision of St. John Ambulance Brigade. For the convenience of the passengers, 10 members of Civil Defense Organization and 12 members of Bharat Scout Guide are working at Vindhyachal station for the convenience of the passengers.

Editorial

40 years of Operation

Meghdoot

The root cause of the Siachen dispute can be traced back to the Karachi Agreement of 1949. The representatives of both nations drew the 'Ceasefire Line' across maps of Jammu and Kashmir from Manawar in the south to Khor in the north and thence 'North to the Glaciers' through NJ 9842. Post the 1971 War, the line running north of NJ 9842, was the point mentioned when the talks between India and Pakistan took place in Suchetgarh to delineate the Line of Control. Presumably, when the discussion came up on the glaciated wilderness of snow and ice the representatives stopped at grid Point NJ 9842 on the presumption that neither side would be interested in contesting an area where not a blade of grass grows and even breathing is a problem. Beneath the veneer of this bleak beauty lie menacing hazards that snatch away human lives if one is not careful. The glacier, is of strategic importance to India, Pakistan and China as it is a hub for Shaksgam Valley and Karakoram Pass. In 1963, Pakistan illegally ceded some 5,180 square kilometres of Indian territory to China in the area where the boundaries of India, Pakistan and China meet thereby altering the geostrategic importance of this area. Further, the glacier is the source of the Nubra river that eventually feeds the Indus river, which is the major water source that irrigates the plains of Punjab in Pakistan. The problem started when Pakistan decided to further their ambitions by permitting and assisting foreign mountaineering and scientific expeditions in the area and raised the issue of 'rights' in an area that did not belong to them. Throughout the 1970s, several mountaineering expeditions were sponsored from the Pakistan side, many of which included foreign participants to lay claim to this area. These crossed the Salto Ridge and the Siachen glacier. It was only on 24 January 1978 that the Indian authorities became aware of the implications of joining NJ9842 to the Karakoram Pass and Pakistan's mountaineering expeditions. While due northwards meant along the Salto Ridge to K2, Pakistan in a cartographic aggression joined the line with Karakoram Pass thereby including both Siachen and Shaksgam Valley in their area. In response, India decided to send a strong military mountaineering expedition to climb a series of peaks on either side of the Siachen glacier led by Colonel Narinder (Bull) Kumar, a well-known mountaineer in 1978. The Indian Army returned to the glacier in 1981 to climb Salto Kangri I and other peaks and reached Indira Col (West) at the head of the glacier. In between these an army team climbed Apsarasas in 1980. It was on one of these expeditions under Colonel Kumar who headed the High-Altitude Warfare School (HAWs), and was a recipient of the Padma Shri, Kirti Chakra, Arjuna Award and McGregor Medal, that the cartographic aggression of Pakistan in the Siachen glacier was first detected in the region. The success of these expeditions also revealed evidence of other expeditions having entered the Siachen area from the west. Thereafter the Indian Army also sent long-range patrols to the area. Kumar alerted Lieutenant General ML Chibber, earlier the DGMO and later the Northern Army Commander about the Siachen mountaineering expeditions from Pakistan and 'recommended that to ensure the Pakistanis do not intrude into Siachen, India should establish a post in the area which could be manned during the summer. His actions led to him being fondly called the 'Saviour of Siachen'. The role of the Indian Air Force remained integral in the success of these expeditions since they supported the Indian Army by providing valuable logistic support and supply of fresh rations. A plan to counter Pakistan and not lose the area which is legitimately ours was discussed in Army Headquarters and approved by then Chief General Arun Vaidya.

As the world's fastest-growing large economy, India is on the rise. It is poised to become the world's third-largest economy. As more and more Indians are pulled out of poverty, as the middle class expands, we are seeing a commensurate increase in India's aspirations, national composite power and interests. And in accord with India's growing aggregate power, the necessity to safeguard those interests and the need to project power is also on the rise. When countries grow in wealth – provided they have adequate human resources and stability – they quickly convert economic heft into military power. This is certainly true of India, which has the world's fourth-biggest defence budget and is the world's most populous nation with a young demography to boot. India is not just perceived as a major power, it is starting to think of itself as one. The country is emerging from a reflexive post-colonial insularity, becoming more interested in the world and willing to understand how the world is interested in India. More and more Indians are travelling abroad, consuming global news, taking part in animated discussions on foreign policy, shaping India's perspectives and perspectives on India.

With the expansion of India's global role, India's ambitions are growing and with it, mass



interest in international relations. Foreign policy is no longer the esoteric preserve of boring bureaucrats and empowered elites but an animated talking point for people at large who are convinced that India is rapidly gaining global influence. As professor Rohan Mukherjee has pointed out in Foreign Affairs, led by Narendra Modi, the BJP has "infused diplomacy with a sense of national purpose and transformed it into one of the key dimensions on which citizens evaluate their government." It is disappointing to note that the Opposition has completely bypassed any debate on foreign policy in the campaign season for the upcoming general elections. It is true that be it the G20 presidency, Voice of Global South Summit, promotion of millets, yoga, or deft navigation of the tricky geopolitical terrain amid twin wars and a once-in-a-century pandemic, Modi has given an impressive

account of his handling of foreign policy. That doesn't mean, however, that the Opposition will give the government a walkover in an issue that is perceived as increasingly vital to India's interests. To C Raja Mohan in Indian Express, "The lack of a foreign policy debate today is less about a genuine consensus than declining interest in world affairs within the demoralised Opposition." Thankfully, the Congress has dedicated an entire page on foreign policy in its recently published Nyay Patra, the manifesto for the Lok Sabha elections. It allows us to take a glance into the policy prescriptions and plans of the grand old party and also its views on national security. Straight off the bat, it is encouraging to see Congress pledging to "significantly increase the size of the Indian Foreign Service" and "open more missions abroad." India urgently needs to widen its

diplomatic cadre to secure its widening interests, ambitions and influence, given the fact that its diplomatic workforce is lesser than many smaller economies. The BJP government is taking much-needed steps in this direction. India has the fastest-growing diplomatic network admittedly from a low base and is restructuring the Indian Foreign Service to add more than 200 additional posts over a span of five years. Minister-level visits to countries around the world, many of these for the first time, have seen a significant uptick with the prime minister leading the way. Africa has been in special focus with 16 of the 21 new missions opened in the continent. In a new development, New Delhi is posting defence attaches to several new countries and the majority of them in African nations such as Ethiopia, Mozambique, Ivory Coast, Tanzania and Djibouti. Still, Congress's focus in this area is welcome. Overall, however, Congress's manifesto reflects inherent confusion, lack of focus, virtue-signalling and worryingly, planned reversal of strategic postures that have served India well. The foreign policy chapter of the manifesto seems more of an afterthought than a measured document. For example, Congress has declared that it will issue a comprehensive National Security Strategy (NSS), which is a welcome

move, but that declaration sits at odds with its renewed pledge to affirm "strategic autonomy in thought and action". This is intrinsically contradictory. Let me explain. The BJP government at long last has embarked on an exhaustive process to issue India's first NSS document, a move that was reported last year but it needs to be understood why Indian strategy planners had refrained from doing so despite years of debates and deliberations within the policy, military and strategic communities, and also why India feels that it is finally ready to put together its first definitive security document. Though India's policy-making is shaped by internal guidelines, not publishing a definitive paper had its advantages for an emerging power in a tough neighbourhood. It maximized India's strategic nimbleness and allowed for a greater manoeuvring space for India's diplomacy that is incumbent on a policy of keeping relationships well-oiled with all major power nodes for abundant policy space and options. For a diplomatic culture ingrained with ambiguity of strategic, calibrated, tactical or deliberate kind, a dogmatic approach to diplomacy may serve to tie India's hands in identifying adversaries and red lines and force the government to act in a specific way in case these are breached.

South China Sea: Philippines' Marcos defies Chinese aggression

China has claimed a good deal of marine territory in the South China Sea for well over a decade now. It is prickly with all shipping in the area, stalking it with navy ships and aircraft. It routinely water cannons Philippine ships, Coast Guard vessels and fishing boats and those of other smaller countries in the littoral. It does not dare to physically harass US ships and aeroplanes that patrol the South China Sea to keep the sea lanes open. But it blockades the Filipino ships trying to go to its territory such as the Second Thomas Shoal. China issues statements like 'do not play with fire' to Manila. It loftily chides the United States too, for destabilising its maritime backyard, but with due care. However, the dragon is increasingly running

into headwinds as more and more countries band together to check its ambitions. Pressure is being met with counterpressure. The other countries of the basin, those in ASEAN, bigger, nuclear-weaponised powers, accept the International Court of Justice (ICJ) ruling of 2016. It says the South China Sea has international waterways for the use of all. It was the Philippines that had taken the matter of constant Chinese bullying and tense sea standoffs to the ICJ in 2013. So, it is unsurprising that the Philippines is at the forefront of the pushback. China did not recognise this 2016 ruling and indeed the ICJ in general. It is true that the rulings of the ICJ on various matters are not binding, but are generally respected by all. The long-festering

disputes have also directly affected Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei, Taiwan, Japan and farther afield, Australia. It's hard to say if the CCP and President Xi Jinping are playing top dog as an act of dominance, or if the real reasons are economic. The Chinese deeper motivations may be to do with the knowledge that there is likely a large amount of petroleum in these waters. Therefore, its actions go beyond denying countries in the area their fishing rights or claim to island-like bodies and shoals. There is more to its proclaiming Chinese sovereignty over the international waterway. If they got their way, the Chinese would probably control access and ingress to the sea as if it were the Suez or Panama Canal.

Khalistan, China links in Trudeau's accusations against India

As the moon eclipsed the sun on 8 April, a usually excited Justin Trudeau waved at a few Canadians after taking off his safety glasses atop his office. "Hey, good to see ya!" he says in the video with the caption "Sunny ways". It is not "sunny" indeed for Canada-India relations considering the immaturity and stupidity that have eclipsed Trudeau. His sudden backlash at India last September accusing its "agents" of murdering Khalistan Tiger Force (KTF) chief and Canadian citizen Hardeep Singh Nijjar, a wanted terrorist in India, at the parking lot of Surrey's Guru Nanak Gurdwara Sahib in June 2023 was intriguing. What made Nijjar's murder and the accusation more mysterious was his regular meetings with Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) officers since February 2023. His son Balraj Singh Nijjar told Canada's CTV News that his father met CSIS officers "once or twice a week", including one or two days before his murder. The CSIS also alleged India's role without providing substantial evidence and demanded accountability. In the second case of Canada's anti-India



stance and ranting, the CSIS alleged that India and Pakistan attempted to interfere in the 2019 and 2021 Canadian federal elections. Trudeau's Liberal Party of Canada, the country's longest-serving and the oldest federal political party dominating politics for almost seven decades, has had a proclivity for sheltering Khalistani terrorists. Besides, the party has a history of ignoring China's human rights abuses for better bilateral trade. These factors have had a direct bearing on its relations with India and are the reasons for the recent accusations against New Delhi. Canada's mollycoddling of the Sikh community and allowing anti-India activities by Khalistanis on its soil have a strong reason. Of Canada's 3.70 crore population, Sikhs number around 7,70,000, or 2.1 per cent, according to the 2021 census. Manitoba province

has the highest number of Sikhs at 2.7 per cent, followed by Alberta at 2.5 per cent and Ontario 2.1 per cent. Canada's Sikh population, which started increasing since 1991, has doubled in the last 20 years with the community becoming the fourth largest religious group after Christians, Muslims and Hindus. Trudeau's first Cabinet had four Sikhs and more politicians from the community were elected in the 2019 federal election compared to India's Lok Sabha election the same year. In what then-Opposition Conservative Party leader Candice Bergen described as Canadians being "hoodwinked" and "deceived" in a "power grab", Trudeau struck a surprise deal with Jagmeet Singh's opposition New Democratic Party (NDP) in March 2022 to keep his minority government in power till 2025.

Is Armenia India's new 'Extended Neighbourhood'?

In a major development on Thursday, the Indian government has appointed defence attaches to over half a dozen countries, including Armenia. Earlier, the hectic diplomatic parleys between India and Armenia in the last few years, especially since India's External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar's visit to Yerevan in October 2021, the first of its kind by a high-profile Indian leader in the last three decades, show India's keen interest in Armenia. For the first time in the three decades, since the independence of Armenia in 1991 following the disintegration of the

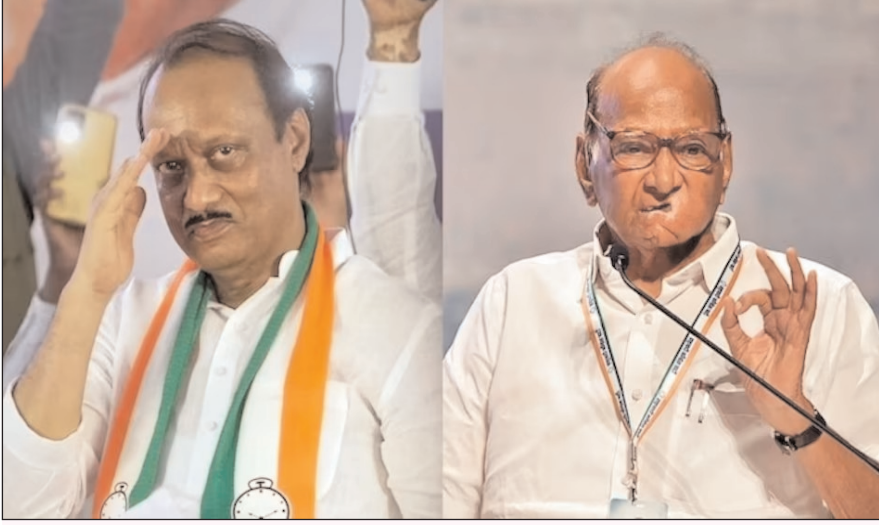
erstwhile Soviet Union, a high-profile minister of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government visited Armenia. Similarly, the last four years have seen many diplomatic waters flown between New Delhi and Yerevan. For example, the Armenian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ararat Mirzoyan, took part in the Raisina Dialogue, 2023 organised by India's External Affairs Ministry, and subsequently in February-March 2024, an Armenian delegation comprising academicians, think tanks and cultural ambassadors visited various institutes, think

tanks and organisations in New Delhi, Hyderabad and Bengaluru, besides taking part in the Raisina Dialogue 2024. Many analysts, strategists, and diplomatic honchos, both in Yerevan and New Delhi, believe that the recent rise in India-Armenia relations is the need of the hour amidst the crucial geopolitical ballgame in the South Caucasus region. Armenia fervently desires India to balance the fractured geopolitical situation in the South Caucasus that has witnessed regional power rivalry, conflict over territory, and war as well. While, Russia, which has been

the main support system of Armenia in the post-Soviet space, is now embroiled in several issues, especially the Western sanctions, following its war with Ukraine and thus taking scant interest in the issues related to Armenia and Azerbaijan.

Further, the dubious silence of Russian leadership during the Nagorno-Karabakh war in 2023 for whatever reason casts doubt on Armenia's dependence on Russia in the coming times. It is, therefore, ironically felt that amidst the weakening of Russian support to Armenia.

Baramati poll battle: Sharad Pawar meets old foe's kin after 55 years, others too



PUNE: As politics heats up in Baramati, Sharad Pawar is approaching old rivals to ease the way for his daughter Supriya Sule in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections. After visiting the residence of his political rival from Bhor Anantrao Thopte recently, Pawar stopped at another political rival's home in Baramati. After 55 years, Pawar visited the residence of former MP late Sambhajirao Kakade and met his family members. Pawar went for a condolence visit after the

demise of a Kakade family member to their residence. According to the NCP (SCP) supporters from Baramati, the rift between the Pawars and Kakades has been around for years. Both families have contested fierce political battles in the past but with Friday's visit, Pawar took the initiative to end the rivalry between the two families. Pawar also visited his old classmate Chandrakant Taware's residence. Taware was once his colleague too, but he left Pawar's party over political differ-

ences and joined BJP. When Ajit Pawar revolted and joined the BJP-Shiv Sena alliance in 2023, Taware had made a statement that the split in the party was not real, but a ploy by Sharad Pawar. Before Taware and Kakade, Pawar had met former MLA Anantrao Thopte at his home in Bhor and later held an MVA rally in Bhor in presence of Thopte's son Sangram. "We had taken different paths but now we have joined hands to save democracy," Pawar had said on his visit to Thopte's residence.

Stick to facts and cooperate with probe, experts advise MV Dali crew



HYDERABAD: Stay strong brother, just tell the truth to the investigation authorities — this piece of advice is for the captain of MV Dali which crashed into the Francis Scott Key Bridge in Baltimore. There are 21 Indian seafarers on board the ship and a Sri Lankan. Bhaskar Rivankar, founder-member of Goa Maritime Officers Association (GMOA), wishes he could speak with the captain and the crew to express solidarity with them but it has not been possible as the ship management has not made public the

names of the crew. "We understand the need to protect their identities as an investigation by multiple agencies is on and the crew need to provide all the details to the investigators," Rivankar, a chief engineer, who has been a seafarer for 23 years, said. "We would like the crew to at least know that we in India are standing solidly behind them at this crucial situation. Our suggestion is 'Tell the truth, whatever it is, to the investigation authorities,' he told. This is something that he has put up on his social

media too. "We want a fair investigation," Rivankar said. His words are being echoed by other seafarers and those from the shipping fraternity. Goa Maritime Officers Association secretary Larson D'Sa said major organisations in the shipping fraternity are also following the development and are ready to extend their support to the seafarers on board MV Dali. "There is a laid down procedure for the investigation and we believe that will be strictly adhered to," he said. author

CAPSULES

Woman found dead with stab wounds

New Delhi: A 34-year-old woman was allegedly murdered at her residence in Shahdara's Farsh Bazar on Friday. Police are probing whether she was killed by her neighbour, as claimed by her husband, or by someone else. The neighbour has alleged that the injuries were self-inflicted. DCP (Shahdara) Surendra Chowdhary said police were analysing videos shot by the deceased's family and the neighbour during the altercation. It is yet to be ascertained who the primary accused is in the case. A kitchen knife was allegedly used in the crime. Police received a PCR call about the incident around 11 pm on Friday. When cops arrived, they found a woman on the floor, with cut marks on her left hand and a small wound on her stomach. She was declared dead on arrival at a hospital. A case under section 302 (murder) of the IPC was registered. "Both families were known to engage in arguments and altercations with each other over trivial matters. Earlier that evening, they had a fight over filling of water," said the DCP. Police are interrogating the families and a witness in the case.

Man found dead in S Delhi

New Delhi: A 24-year-old man was found dead with a wire wrapped around his neck in south Delhi's Malviya Nagar on Saturday. Police received a PCR call about a body in Khirki Extension and the man was identified as Harsh from Sonipat. Police are trying to determine if it was a case of murder or suicide. "We are also scanning CCTV footage from nearby areas," an officer said.

TERI to study microplastics, froth in Yamuna

New Delhi: The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI) in a first-of-its-kind detailed study will analyse the presence of microplastics in the Yamuna and groundwater in Delhi and assess the source and cause behind the frothing in the river in certain seasons. After completing the study, TERI will provide remedies. Scientists at TERI said that the study, proposed by Delhi govt in Dec 2021, will take a year. The aim would be to identify and prioritise groundwater sources (aquifers) and to map resources based on

microplastic concentration. Scientists at TERI said the study would be done as two projects: the first on the froth in the Yamuna, the second on the microplastic in the river and groundwater. "The idea is to assess why the froth is so visible during Chhatt Puja in winters. We will investigate the reasons for its occurrence, possible sources and chalk out a short, medium and long-term strategies for mitigation. For microplastics, the objective is to know the sources and reasons for the presence of microplastics in the Yamuna, identify the

hotspots across the Yamuna stretch, and in the groundwater. We are now recruiting the team and developing a strategy," Nupur Bahadur, associate director of the circular economy and waste management division at TERI, said. Bahadur pointed out that the presence of froth is a phenomenon seen across the globe. "But in Delhi, it's more visible due to more public attention. What we have understood so far is that organic pollutants majorly come from untreated sewers, untreated industrial

effluents, illegal or unauthorised establishments without a sewerage system.... So, untreated water with phosphate, organic content, ammonia and the presence of hyacinth, as a combined effect cause frothing. The organic matter causes eutrophication in the water body, making green moss-like plant growth so the water cannot freely flow. We see this particularly along the Okhla barrage and Kalindi Kunj as the barrage has height and when it falls, it gets churned, and we see froth at the surface.

Son an opposition nominee, Sena MP attacks ally BJP over ED 'misuse'

MUMBAI: In a major embarrassment for the Mahayuti, incumbent Shiv Sena MP from Mumbai North West Gajanan Kirtikar, whose son Amol (belonging to Shiv Sena-UBT) was earlier this week questioned by ED in a money laundering case linked to the alleged Covid 'khichdi scam', criticised BJP and accused it of bringing in a "wrong culture of targeting rivals through central investigation agencies". BJP reacted sharply to Kirtikar's comments, with its



MLA Ameet Satam saying "it seems Kirtikar's body is with CM Eknath Shinde and soul is with former CM Uddhav Thackeray. For once he should decide who he is with. Using Modi's face, BJP workers, he became MP twice. The corrupt need to fear

ED. If they haven't done anything wrong, why fear?" Kirtikar's son has been put up by Sena (UBT) as candidate for Mumbai North West seat. Mahayuti, on the other hand, has not declared any candidate for the seat yet, indicating two-term MP Kirtikar will not be renominated. Amol got a summons from ED on the day his candidature was declared. BJP Shiv Sena MP Gajanan Kirtikar said Friday that while PM Modi had done good work, "arrogance has crept in" and

the "culture brought in by BJP of deploying central agencies is dangerous." "The BJP has such strong support that people will certainly vote for it, so there is no need for any ED experiment. People are angry and irritated with the ED. People are upset and use of ED must be stopped," he told mediapersons. His son, Amol, was questioned by ED on Monday for over 7 hours in connection with a case linked to the alleged 'khichdi scam'.

A goat's life: Politicians in Odisha stew poll pot with mutton and rice

BHUBANESWAR: With election fever picking up, goat rearing has been found to be a lucrative occupation in villages in many western Odisha districts to earn some quick money. A bit weird to correlate goat rearing with election but it is true. To woo the voters and keep workers in good humour, politicians throw a feast that has mostly mutton (colloquially called khasi) and rice as the main items. Since February, they have started rearing male goats that are between four and six months old. To celebrate getting party tickets, many candidates have bought goats and have thrown parties among workers. "But sales are expected to go up throughout April, May and June," said Rohita Karmi of Bhadrakali in Balangir district. The aides of politicians contesting the elec-



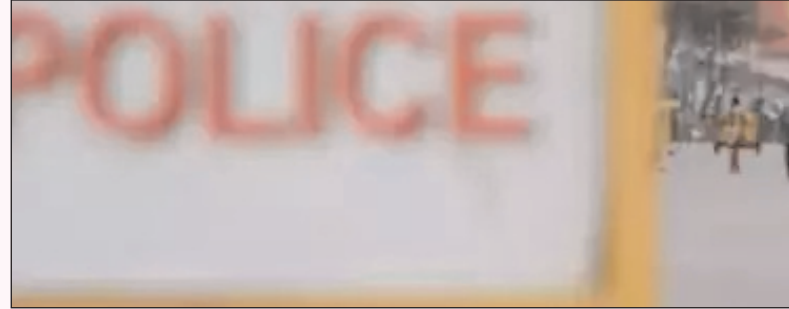
tions have their sphere of influence in villages. To keep the fellow workers and voters in good humour, parties, mostly mutton curry and rice are preferred menu. For mutton, they don't buy from butchers. They buy one or two goats (considering the number of people) and party," Karmi told. He said it is an added advantage of buying the goat because apart from the regular meat, they get other body parts to make delicious snacks. Around this time, the regular goat owners keep stock of four to six-month-old male khasi goat from January and February

so that they grow up to eight or nine months to weigh around 9kg. "The villages adjoining forests are the best grazing grounds and we don't have to put in extra labour of cutting grass and bring them to the farm. Mostly, we don't keep extra men but manage ourselves. So, no extra cost is involved," said Surendra Pradhan, a farmer of Umuria. While for quick money, they buy a four-month-old goat for Rs 2,000 each and sell it for Rs 8,000 to Rs 9,000 considering the robustness, they also rear mother goats.

Indore couple who claimed to rescue baby on train held for kidnap

INDORE/BHOPAL: An Indore couple, who claimed to have rescued an abandoned newborn on a train, has been arrested, along with a relative, for kidnapping the two-month-old in his sleep when he was travelling with his parents.

Indore GRP station in charge Sanjay Shukla said on Friday, "Amar Singh Chouhan, his wife Indu Chouhan and Indu's sister Ranjana were arrested by Gwalior GRP on April 10 after interrogation. They were taken to Gwalior where the women were sent to jail while the man was taken on police remand." Chouhan works as a sports teacher at a top management institute and his sister-in-law works with railways. The parents, Umesh and Sukhwanti Ahirwar, were reunited with their son, Naman, on Friday evening. According to police, Amar and Indu have a daughter but always wanted a boy, and they couldn't resist the temptation when they saw the little one asleep and took him home. Then, fearing arrest, they handed the baby to Indore GRP, saying they found



him. The incident occurred aboard the Malwa Express on the night of April 5-6 when Umesh and Sukhwanti, residents of MP's Chhatrapur, were returning from Vaishno Devi with their newborn. Amar and wife Indu were in the same coach, travelling from Mathura to Indore without reservation, say police. Just after the train left Mathura, Umesh went to sleep on berth 14 while his wife and child shared berth 13 in S2 coach. They woke up around 2.30am, when the train pulled into Dabra, and found the baby missing. Pandemonium broke out. The parents ran through the train looking for Naman in the wee hours. Railway police were informed and a case of kidnaping was registered with Gwalior

GRP on April 7. On April 8, Amar approached Indore GRP, claiming that they had found a baby abandoned on an upper berth while travelling to Indore. Shukla circulated pictures of the baby on social media and alerted other GRP units. "We found that Gwalior GRP had registered a case of abduction and it was clear that Amar and his family members were lying. A team from Gwalior arrived in Indore and interrogated them," said Shukla. Gwalior police scanned CCTV footage, checked their call details and found that the couple was lying. During questioning, Amar and Indu admitted to taking away the baby boy as they were always very concerned that they didn't have a son to "carry on the family lineage."

National law varsiities in Maharashtra introduce menstrual leave policy

MUMBAI: National law universities in the state have taken a lead in introducing period leave for students, acknowledging the impact of cramps and conditions that arise during menstruation. While Maharashtra National Law University (MNLU) in Mumbai came out with its policy document this week, MNLUs in Nagpur and Aurangabad introduced it recently. The MNLU-Mumbai's policy allows one day leave every month, with a cap of five days per semester. Dilip Ukey, vice-chancellor of MNLU-Mumbai, said there have been oral requests from the students' community, and it is also the need of the hour.

At 13 lakh, Maharashtra tops in voters aged 85+; UP next with 10.4 lakh

MUMBAI:

Maharashtra has the highest number of registered voters in the age-group of 85 years and above - 13 lakh - in the country, according to data available till April 8. Uttar Pradesh comes next with 10.4 lakh registered voters, while Bihar has 6.6 lakh and Tamil Nadu has 6.1 lakh voters in the 85+ category. The total voters in this category in India are 81 lakh.

Maharashtra's share is as high as 16%. The lowest registrations are in the Union territories. Lakshadweep has only 109 voters in the 85+ category, the lowest; this includes 50 men and 59 women. Dadra and Nagar Haveli, Daman and Diu have 698 voters. Andaman and Nicobar Islands have 1,037 voters in this group. Significantly, in this age category, women voters outnumber men both nationally and in the state. Of 81 lakh such voters in the country, 47.3 lakh or 58% are women. Men account for 33.8 lakh.



In Maharashtra, the share of women voters is almost 48%. However, in the 85+ category, it is 56% of the total voters. The state has 5.7 lakh male voters and 7.3 lakh women voters in this category. Election officials said Maharashtra's high registrations in the 85+ category is a reflection of longevity in the state. Also, the higher longevity of women is the reason they outnumber men in this group, they point out. This year, Election Commission has made provisions for this age-group to be able to vote from home. "The Block Level Officer (BLO) will make a home visit to voters aged 85+ based on

their names on the voter list in order to check if they want a home visit for voting. If they do, the BLO will fill form 12D," said the state's additional chief electoral officer Kiran Kulkarni. "The forms are submitted to the district collector or election officer. The forms which are received up to the 5th day after date of nomination for that phase of the poll, will qualify for home voting," he added. By contrast, election officials are concerned by low registration of first-time voters or teenage voters across the country. Only 38% of the population in the 18-19-year age category have registered to vote in the country.

Fortis Hospital Gurugram Launches 'Maitri' - a Dedicated Menopause Clinic



Gurugram: In a pioneering effort to cater to women health-related challenges, Fortis Memorial Research Institute, Gurugram today launched a dedicated clinic for diagnosis and treatment of menopausal healthcare for women. The clinic was inaugurated by Chief Guest Ms Suneeta Mukherjee, Former Health Secretary, Government of India. The clinic will offer various preventive health services such as pap smear test, mammography, transvaginal ultrasound, ultrasound of entire abdomen, gynae consultation etc. It would be operational on Fridays from 02:00 pm to 04:00 pm. Most women experience menopause (a life stage

marking the end of reproductive years) between the ages of 45 and 52 years as a natural part of biological ageing. However, perimenopause - the transitional period can last for years before menopause and upto 1 year after cessation of periods. According to WHO, perimenopausal and postmenopausal symptoms can be disruptive to personal and professional lives, and changes associated with menopause will affect a woman's health as she ages. Therefore, perimenopausal care plays an important role in the promotion of healthy ageing and quality of life. Speaking at the launch, Prof. Dr Suneeta Mittal, Senior Director

and HOD, Obstetrics and Gynaecology, Fortis Memorial Research Institute, Gurugram said, "As per reports, many women in the 40-45 age bracket have started experiencing early menopause and its accompanying symptoms of hot flushes, weight gain, mood swings, irregular bleeding, among others. With women facing a significant burden of various health issues and the launch of this clinic, women can get themselves treated for all health issues, encompassing everything from gynecological health, menopausal health, mental health, diet and weight control, heart and bone health"

CAPSULES

Sena to get Mumbai South, Nashik; Narayan Rane for Ratnagiri

CHANDRAPUR: CM Eknath Shinde seems to have once again gained the upper hand in the fight for allocation of Lok Sabha seats among the Mahayuti constituents in Maharashtra. Senior BJP politicians told TOI on Saturday that the contentious Nashik Lok Sabha seat as well as the Mumbai South seat will be contested by the Sena. The BJP will, however, keep the Ratnagiri-Sindhudurg LS constituency where it is likely to field Union minister Narayan Rane. Shiv Sena MP and Eknath Shinde's son Shrikant had at a public rally last month announced that the party's two-term sitting MP Hemant Godse will contest the Nashik Lok Sabha seat. Subsequently, the Ajit Pawar-led NCP laid a claim to the seat with state cabinet minister Chhagan Bhujbal declaring that he would contest if the NCP is given the seat. This led to Godse going to Varsha, the official residence of the CM, with his supporters in a show of strength. Sena sources told CM Shinde has been negotiating hard to ensure his party gets all 13 seats represented by his party MPs. BJP sources said the party is fighting hard to keep Thane as it had two-thirds majority in two civic corporations and has an MLA in Thane. BJP sources said the party has regained lost ground in Chandrapur in recent days after the controversial statement by its candidate for the constituency, Sudhir Mungantiwar. The constituency will see a close fight as caste could play a crucial role, sources said. Congress candidate Pratibha Dhanorkar is from the Kunbi community which has a large presence in the constituency, while BJP's Mungantiwar is from Komti community.

Dr. Bhim Rao Ambedkar's life is a source of inspiration: Ramchandra

Kaithal: Former Director HAFED and famous social worker Ramchandra Jadaula said that Baba Saheb Dr. Bhim Rao Ambedkar showed the path of social harmony to the society and gave a new direction to the society. His thinking was that this country is ours, we all have to preserve this country by performing our duties. After offering flowers to Baba Saheb's portrait on his birth anniversary and paying homage to him while talking at his establishment in New Anaj



Mandi, Ramchandra Jadaula said that Baba Saheb gave the slogan to the society to become educated, remain organized and fight for its rights. Due to which the society has come forward in the field of education today. They are working in an organized manner and also fighting for their

rights. Jadaula said that Baba Saheb received education in adverse circumstances on the basis of his ability and played his role in removing various social evils prevalent at that time. We all should resolve to include his thoughts in our words and actions. This is the true tribute to him. Today we all should follow the path shown by him. Ramchandra Jadaula said that in the present environment, the ideas of Bharat Ratna Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar

are relevant in removing social and economic disparities. He worked throughout his life for the upliftment of the backward class of the society and provided social and judicial rights to all. We all should follow the path shown by Bharat Ratna, Baba Saheb, who gave equal rights to women and gave the message of social harmony. Baba Saheb composed such a constitution, which was called the supreme constitution of the world and in which everyone got equal rights.

Manish Sisodia interim bail: Delhi court issues notice to ED, CBI

NEW DELHI: A Delhi court on Friday issued a notice to Enforcement Directorate (ED) and Central Bureau of India (CBI) following Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader and former deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia's request for interim bail to campaign in general elections. Rouse Avenue Court's special judge Kaveri Baweja instructed the central probe agencies to respond by April 20, when the court will review the plea.



CBI and ED have alleged irregularities in the modification of Delhi's excise policy, including undue favors to license holders, waivers of license fees, and extensions without proper approval. The accused officials are said to have diverted

illegals gains to themselves and falsified accounts to avoid detection. Sisodia was arrested by CBI on February 26 and ED on March 9 last year in connection with these allegations. He resigned from the Delhi cabinet on

February 28, 2023. Earlier, while opposing the regular bail plea of Sisodia, ED said that there was no delay on the part of the prosecution, rather, the delay was caused by the accused persons by filing frivolous applications in the excise policy case, extending his judicial custody till April 18. However, Sisodia's counsel cited in his bail plea a delay in trial. It was argued that trial proceedings are going at a snail's pace.

Rs 34 crore raised for expat's release from death row

KOZHIKODE: With just four days to go before Machilakath Abdul Rahim's court-ordered execution would be set in motion in Saudi Arabia, Keralites of all persuasions and beliefs - Hindus, Christians, Muslims - came together to save Rahim. In a way, he was 'born again' and it was an apt Eid-Vishu gift too. In a remarkable show of benevolence and solidarity, Keralites belonging to all walks of life - from daily wage workers to businessmen and expats to even guest workers in state - raised Rs 34 crore blood money (diyah) needed to secure Rahim's release. Rahim, hailing from Kodampuzha here, had been an autorickshaw driver at Feroke and he had gone to Saudi Arabia in November 2006 as driver in the house of a Saudi national, Abdulla Abdurahman Al Shahri.



He was mainly tasked to Al Shahri's differently abled son Anas Al Shahri. On the fateful day just one month after his arrival in Saudi, Rahim was trying to pacify Anas who became agitated during a trip, when his hand accidentally hit the tube attached to the boy's throat. Anas became unconscious and later died. A court in Riyadh found Rahim guilty of murder and awarded him a death sentence, which was upheld by higher courts as well. The Saudi family did not want to grant pardon to Rahim all these years despite interventions by various organ-

isations, but later agreed to do so on payment of 15 million Saudi riyals (Rs 34 crore) by April 16. A legal assistance committee, formed to secure Rahim's release, took up the mammoth task. "It was the life of Rahim's mother in tears in the past 18 years that moved us to make an attempt. Today, the happiness on her face is our biggest reward," committee chairman K Suresh Kumar said. Rahim's mother Fathima said she never thought such a big amount could be raised, but she had hopes that her prayers would be answered. "I thank everyone. Now my son will finally be able to come home. Harmony of people has helped in the effort to save my son. I have not seen him for the past 18 years. Even when he calls, I am not able to speak," she said.

'What have you done...': Priyanka Gandhi slams BJP for blaming Congress

NEW DELHI: Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Saturday attacked the BJP and asked how long would the ruling party keep blaming the Congress which has been out of power for the last 10 years. "For how long you'll keep blaming Congress? Congress has not been in power for the last 10 years. For the last 10 years, they have been in govt with a full majority. Now they say '400 paar' which means they want more majority," Priyanka said at an election rally at Ramnagar in Uttarakhand. The Congress leader said prestigious institutions like IITs, IIMs and AIIMs would not have been possible without initiatives Jawaharlal Nehru took in the 1950s.



"What have you done in the last 10 years? They say nothing has been done in 75 years. If nothing had happened, how did Uttarakhand develop so much of skill? From where did the IITs, IIMs and AIIMs came into existence. Who sowed the seeds for success of Chandrayaan? If Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru hadn't taken initiative in the 1950s, would these have been possible?" the Congress leader said. Priyanka also

attacked the government over the rising prices of gas cylinders. "They now say they will reduce the price of gas cylinders. But have you not been paying Rs 1200 for gas cylinders for the last many years? Who has been ruling the country - it is the BJP and PM Modi?" she said. "Today's reality is inflation, unemployment, paper leaks and corruption, and not what PM Modi shows you all," she said.

"PM neglected Dev Bhoomi," said Priyanka Gandhi. The Congress leader claimed PM Modi "neglected" Uttarakhand, which he calls Dev Bhoomi, when a natural calamity hit it last year. She said no relief funds were released by the Centre for the restoration work. "PM Modi in his public address during his recent visit to Rishikesh said the same thing that he said five years ago. I was confused and surprised listening to his speech. How long will you all suffer under his rule? PM Modi calls Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh 'Dev Bhoomi' in every speech; he neglected the same Dev Bhoomi (Himachal) when it was hit by natural calamity last year.

High court junks Maoist undertrial's plea for right to life and liberty

CUTTACK: Being an undertrial prisoner (UTP) for nine years does not infringe the fundamental right to life and liberty, Orissa high court has held on a plea by a Maoist kingpin, Sabyasachi Panda. Panda (55) faces 131 cases, of which he has been acquitted in 89, his counsel BS Rayaguru pointed out as he sought his production and release. But a division bench of Justice Arindam Sinha and Justice M S Sahoo rejected the contention. "Where petitioner is in custody as an undertrial and a convict, it cannot be said his fundamental right to life and liberty has been infringed to persuade us.

Govt takes Third Mumbai plan another step closer to reality

MUMBAI: The urban development department (UDD) has invited suggestions and objections from the general public from 124 villages that have now been made a part of the proposed Third Mumbai.

Third Mumbai largely consists of area that falls under the influence zone of the recently opened Mumbai Trans Harbour Link (MTHL), or Atal Setu.

MTHL is expected to have a major impact on the economic development and growth of the region and the state govt has decided to tap the potential that will emanate from this project. On Dec 12, Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Authority (MMRDA) was appointed the New Town Development Authority (NTDA) for area that falls under the MTHL influence zone. MMRDA has envisaged Third Mumbai as a liveable and environment-friendly greenfield sustainable business cen-



tre with smart city features. It will have regional-level amenities with mixed-use and integrated residential areas for job creation and economic growth of Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR).

Of the 124 villages, 80 villages are from Navi Mumbai Airport Influence Notified Area (NAINA), 33 villages from the Khopta New Town Notified Area, two villages from Mumbai Metropolitan Regional Plan and nine from the Raigad Regional Plan.

Since some of the areas from NAINA and Khopta New Town

Notified Area have been moved to NTDA, UDD has decided to seek suggestions and objections about the modifications.

A notification issued by state UDD said: "The suggestion and/or objections in respect of the proposed modification [are sought] from the general public within 30 days (April 3). The suggestions and/or objections shall be addressed to the joint director of town planning, Konkan Division, 3rd floor, main building, room no. 305, Konkan Bhavan, Navi Mumbai-400601."

Hyderabad: The Telangana high court has given the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) a free hand to deal with the alleged illegal structures allegedly raised by the church known as Calvary Temple at Hafeezpet. A division bench comprising Chief Justice Alok Aradhe and Justice J Anil Kumar left it open to the GHMC to take



appropriate action and disposed of an appeal. The bench said there was no need to pass any fresh order as the HC had earlier too given a similar directive in the matter. The Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) employees society has been complaining that the church had encroached on its land and wanted the authorities to demolish unauthorised.

The story of Siachen: How India set up a base at the roof of the world

NEW DELHI: The going was extremely tough on the forbidding glacial heights in the initial years. Indian troops had to "survive first and then fight". But the progressive upgrade of infrastructure, connectivity and medical facilities as well as induction of specialised equipment, heavy-lift helicopters, logistic drones and all-terrain vehicles have all steadily bolstered India's operational control on the Siachen Glacier-Saltoro Ridge region.

It was on April 13, 1984, that Indian troops occupied almost all the dominating heights from 15,000 to 22,000-feet in the world's highest and coldest battlefield under 'Operation Meghdhoot' against daunting odds. It pre-empted just by a day or two a similar military operation by Pakistan codenamed 'Operation Ababeel' after a sustained "cartographic aggression" campaign in the uncharted region. "Indian Army's control

over the Siachen Glacier for the last 40 years has not only been a story of unparalleled valour and determination but also an incredible journey of technological advancements and logistical improvements. One of the world's most formidable terrains has been transformed into a symbol of indomitable spirit and innovation," a senior officer said on Saturday. An IAF officer, in turn, said, "Helicopters are the lifeline and the sole link of

our troops on the 78-km long glacier with the outside world. Flying in such ruthless terrain and climatic conditions, records of human endurance, flying and technical proficiency are set nearly every day.

"The presence of Indian troops on the craggy Salto Ridge actually serves as a wedge between China and Pakistan to prevent them from "militarily linking up" to control the Karakoram Pass and threaten Ladakh.

Iskcon to rehabilitate both jumbos after mahout death

Kolkata: After mahout Samudra Rabha was killed by an elephant at Iskcon Mayapur last week, the temple authorities have decided to relocate two elephants, Bishnupriya and Lakshmi Priya. The Iskcon Mayapur Executive Board convened on April 10 to discuss this. Of the potential locations, only Vantara within Reliance's Jamnagar Refinery Complex.

HC rebukes sub-registrar, orders refund of excess stamp duty

Chennai: Madras High Court has pulled up the Perumbakkam sub-registrar for not following a division bench order setting aside a 2023 circular increasing guideline value and charging an excess amount from a property owner. The court has directed the official to refund the excess stamp duty of ₹1.90 lakh collected from the property owner. On March 20, 2024, petitioner K Shanti tried to register the property. However, the sub-registrar collected the stamp duty based on a March 2023 govt



circular — increasing the guideline value of properties in cities such as Chennai, Coimbatore, and Madurai by 33% — that the court had set aside on March 6, 2024. The order by Justice N Satish Kumar

said that when this quashing of the circular by the division bench was brought to the notice of sub-Registrar Senthil Kumar, he said he cannot follow the judgment of the division bench unless circular is

issued by the Inspector General of Registration. "The way scant respect shown to the judgment of the Division Bench of this Court instead giving importance to the circular from the Inspector General of Registration is nothing but a clear act of contempt. The act is nothing but clear contumacy. Such view of the matter, let K.Senthil Kumar, Sub-Registrar — Perumbakkam appear before this Court and explain as to why he shall not be proceeded under Contempt of Courts Act, 1971," the order said.

New Alipore school alumni group funds scholarship for 66 students

Kolkata: More than 1,400 former students of a state school in New Alipore went back to their alma mater, bearing Nababarsha gifts for the youngsters studying there now. The New Alipore Multipurpose School Alumni Association gathered at the institute on Saturday and donated seven desktops and one laptop, which were primarily a posthumous gift from a former teacher, Dipak Kumar Sengupta, and RS 2.8-lakh scholarship for 66 students of classes IV to XII. The



event was attended by executives, donors and alumni association members. Former teacher Sengupta, who passed away in 2016, had handed over a donation to the alumni association in 2012. He

had also instructed his son to "ensure the money was spent in the cause of the school". "This project was funded by Sengupta's donation. We had put the amount in a fixed deposit, and now, used

the money to get the computers," said the alumni association president, Suchibrata Gangopadhyay. "Ours might be a government-aided school, but the alumni association can still play a crucial role in shaping the future of current students. We formed this alumni association not merely to reminisce about our lost childhood but also to contribute meaningfully for the betterment of the school, which is over 60 years old." The scholarship was awarded not only to class-toppers.

List of eligible slum dwellers for Ramabai project by June

Mumbai: The slum rehabilitation authority (SRA) is expected to release the list of eligible slum dwellers for Ramabai slum redevelopment project by June. This project is being jointly executed with the Mumbai metropolitan region development authority (MMRDA). Ramabai Nagar in Ghatkopar (E) covers 33.15 hectare land and houses approximately 16,574 slum tenements. An SRA official said, "We will complete the survey of tenements in Ramabai Nagar by the end of this week and will publish the list of eligible slum dwellers in June." As part of this project, the MMRDA will receive free land for extension of the eastern freeway from Chheda Nagar to Thane. The SRA official added, "Priority will be given to 1,694 slums that will be affected by



the extension of the eastern freeway, which will be built by MMRDA."

The MMRDA plans to extend the eastern freeway by 14 km to Thane and install entry and exit ramps at four locations. This extension will make the freeway 31 km long, offering signal-free commute between Orange Gate and Thane. Due to this project MMRDA will acquire 5,000 more tenements for project affected persons (PAPs) from various ongoing projects.

Out of 16,754 slums, SRA has completed surveys for 14,000 slums. The Ramabai Nagar proposal received approval during an authority meeting in Nagpur chaired by CM Eknath Shinde on Dec 12, 2023. This project is crucial for MMRDA to generate funds through land sales, as the agency faces financial constraints while undertaking infrastructure projects this decade, including 10 metro projects (excluding Metro 3 and Metro 1), totalling Rs 75,000 crore.

Rameshwaram Cafe: Arrested duo taken to undisclosed site

Bengaluru: The NIA arrested Mussavir Hussain Shazib and Abdul Matheen Ahmed Taahaa from Kolkata for their alleged role in the blast at The Rameshwaram Cafe here, which left 10 people injured. They were flown into Bengaluru from Kolkata late on Friday night on a commercial flight. They were later taken to an undisclosed location for further questioning. Special public prosecutor P Prasanna Kumar cited the need for intense interrogation of the two accused in support of his demand for their custody by NIA sleuths. SPP Kumar said the family members of the accused in Thirthahalli, Shivamogga district, had been intimidated about the arrests on Friday itself. "But neither has any family



member arrived in the city to meet the accused, nor did their counsel appear when they were produced before the special judge," he said. Armed police guarded the gates of National Games Village (NGV), the residence of the special judge where the two accused were brought. Residents were allowed entry only after thorough verification. Around 11.30 am, a police van escorted by

a police Jeep and an SUV with armed cops entered the NGV complex through the main gate. The accused duo, in handcuffs, were seated inside the van, escorted by more than a dozen armed police officials.

Earlier, on Friday night, while the two suspects were being moved by NIA sleuths under transit remand from Kolkata to Bengaluru on a regular commercial flight operated by a private air-

line, passengers were forced to wait at the aerobridge at Kolkata airport for nearly 20 minutes until the NIA team settled down along with the two accused at the rear end of the plane.

Once the flight landed at Kempegowda International Airport (KIA) in Bengaluru around 12.40 am on Saturday, the accompanying police team in plain clothes whisked the accused out of the aircraft through the rear door after all other passengers were made to disembark through the front door. While armed personnel in uniform stood guard at the rear ladder point on the tarmac, the duo was bundled off under tight security cover on an airline bus, on which no other passenger was allowed.

Worker gets 20-year RI for raping student

Bengaluru: A fast-track court for Pocco cases held a 29-year-old man guilty of kidnapping and raping a class 10 student in 2022 and sentenced him to 20-year rigorous imprisonment with a fine of Rs 45,000. Convict Alexander Joroman, a daily-wage worker, had on Aug 10, 2022 kidnapped the girl and taken her to Chennai. He raped her there, said the chargesheet filed by VV Puram police. According to police, Alexander befriended the girl on social media. "The girl's parents often fought in the house. Alexander pretended to be her well-wisher. When they became close, Alexander got the girl to share pictures of herself and blackmailed her later," public prosecutor Geeta Gorawar said. The girl narrated the ordeal to her mother, who filed a police complaint. Since his arrest, Alexander has been in Bengaluru Central Prison.

Shimron Hetmyer stars as Rajasthan Royals beat Punjab Kings in a low-scoring thriller



NEW DELHI: Rajasthan Royals encountered a challenge against the Punjab Kings bowlers, who cleverly varied the pace on a sticky pitch. Despite the difficult conditions, the Royals managed to secure a hard-fought three-wicket victory in their IPL encounter on Saturday. Although the target of 148 seemed relatively straightforward, the precise bowling from Punjab and the challenging pitch made it a tough task for the Royals. However, they eventually reached 152 for seven. With 49 runs needed off the last five overs, the Rajasthan team faced a tense situation. Despite having power-hitters like Rovman Powell (11 off

5 balls) and Shimron Hetmyer (27 not out off 10 balls, including 1 four and 3 sixes), they had to wait until the penultimate ball of the match to cross the finish line. That equation came down to 10 off the final six balls after Hetmyer mounded Harshal Patel for a six and four, which the West Indian left-hander realised through a couple of sixes off pacer Arshdeep Singh in the last over. The Royals began their chase sedately through Yashasvi Jaiswal and Tanush Kotian without any real scoreboard pressure behind them. However, Kotian, who was batting so up in the order in T20s for the first time, did not

find his flow but still assisted Jaiswal to add 56 in 8.2 overs. But his effort to hammer Liam Livingstone out of the ground ended up in him losing his leg-stump. Jaiswal, who played a delectable flick off Kagiso Rabada, looked on course to end a string of low scores in this IPL. But a rather needless upper-cut off Rabada was grabbed by Harshal Patel near third man as Rajasthan looked a tad wobbly. Their woes deepened when skipper Sanju Samson, who had earlier broken the manacles with a six and four off Livingstone, was trapped leg-before by Rabada in his last over. Samson could not connect.

NEW DELHI: Shimron Hetmyer's explosive batting propelled the Rajasthan Royals to a thrilling three-wicket victory over the Punjab Kings at the Maharaja Yadavindra Singh International Cricket Stadium in Chandigarh on Saturday. With this win, Rajasthan Royals have maintained their position at the top of the points table. They have 10 points in 6 matches - 5 wins and 1 loss. With Punjab Kings restricted to 147/8 in their 20 overs, Rajasthan Royals faced a challenging chase, especially after the dismissals of Riyan Parag and Dhruv Jurel. However, entering the fray under pressure, Hetmyer showcased his prowess as a finisher, smashing an unbeaten 27 off just 10 balls. Despite limited opportunities with the bat throughout the season, Hetmyer's onslaught included four boundaries and three sixes, culminating in the winning shot that secured victory for RR with a ball to spare. "(On finishing games) It's just practice, I try as much as possible to bat properly in the nets first and then when everyone's finished, I go back and try my best to hit sixes. It's a blessing and a curse (on being the finisher). Sometimes it happens, sometimes it doesn't. I am



happy that I could help the team pull off a victory today. They (pressure) creep in the first couple of balls that I face, afterwards I just try to keep it as clear as possible," Hetmyer said after the match. "Even in the last over after I missed the first two balls, he (Boult) came down to me and he was like 'Don't worry, we've got this,' and I was able to feed off his energy and it really worked. I would have taken it (single with 2 runs needed off 2 balls). I spoke to Boult and he said, 'I got this.' After he said that, I was like even if I don't get the other one, I'll try my best to get a single. Even if we don't win it, at least tie it. I was really looking to get a single or double and then the full toss came and I tried to hit it over

Delhi FC spoil ISL-bound Sporting's I-League party

KOLKATA: The stage was set long before the kick-off, with thousands donning black and white jerseys and waving club flags turning up and keeping the vast Salt Lake Stadium throbbing in anticipation on Saturday. Dignitaries had already filled up the VIP lounge. Delhi FC welcomed the newly-crowned I-League champions to the ground with a guard of honour. But in the end, the final match of the 2023-2024 season of I-League didn't go the way the champions and the 40,000-odd home fans would have liked to, suffering a surprise 1-3 loss.

'It's easier to catch...': Sanju Samson's stern message to Rajasthan Royals pacers

NEW DELHI: In a hard-fought IPL encounter, Rajasthan Royals faced a formidable challenge from Punjab Kings' bowlers, who utilised clever variations in pace on a challenging Mullanpur pitch in Chandigarh on Saturday. Despite the seemingly modest target of 148, Royals encountered significant hurdles as they navigated through a set of disciplined Punjab bowlers and a tricky playing surface. However, despite the challenges posed by the Punjab bowlers and the tacky pitch, Royals exhibited resilience and determination to overcome the obstacles. Through determined efforts and effective partnerships, they managed to reach the target, ultimately posting a total of 152 for seven. Royals, who won 5 out of 6 games to sit atop, returned to winning ways after losing to Gujarat Titans in their last encounter.

'No difference between Ruturaj Gaikwad and MS Dhoni': CSK coach

NEW DELHI: Stephen Fleming, the head coach of Chennai Super Kings, came to the defence of captain Ruturaj Gaikwad, asserting that it's unfair to label him as "slow" while batting and drawing comparisons to the legendary MS Dhoni. Gaikwad, who assumed the captaincy role for CSK at the start of this IPL season, has faced criticism for his batting pace despite a mixed start to his leadership stint. Fleming highlighted Gaikwad's qualities and contributions to the team, emphasising that he shares similarities with Dhoni in terms



of his approach and style of play. While Gaikwad's strike rate may not be as high as some of his counterparts, Fleming believes that his value to the team extends beyond

mere statistics. In his five matches so far, the 27-year-old right-handed opener has accumulated 155 runs at a strike rate of 117.42. While these numbers may not dazzle on

paper, Fleming and the CSK management recognise Gaikwad's ability to anchor the innings and build partnerships, qualities reminiscent of Dhoni's leadership on the field. "There's no difference. He's as cool as it gets. I know the last captain was pretty cool. But this guy is cut from the same cloth, so that's rubbed through," Fleming said when asked if he had any discussion with Gaikwad in terms of differentiating between his leadership and his batting. "He is such an impressive young man around his game.

'You can never take it for granted': Sanju after beating Punjab Kings in a thriller

NEW DELHI: Rajasthan Royals secured their fifth win in six games this IPL, propelling them forward. Despite their success, skipper Sanju Samson remains cautious, drawing from past experiences that have taught him not to become overly ambitious or take anything for granted. In a nail-biting match against the Punjab Kings, RR endured tense moments before ultimately triumphing by three wickets. This victory further



solidified their standing at the summit of the points table. "You can never take it for granted. Last game, we did some really good things but ended up

losing. Tonight, we made more mistakes and won. Cricket is a funny game, so you have to put your head down and just focus on the process," he said at

the post-match presentation in Mullanpur. Despite the relatively modest target of 148, Rajasthan struggled to chase it down, adding unnecessary tension to the match. Samson candidly admitted that the team felt the pressure as they approached the finish line, reflecting the intensity of the contest. In the end, they managed to clinch victory in the penultimate ball of the match, showcasing their resilience under pressure.

Six 6s in an over! Big-hitting Nepal finisher joins Yuvraj

NEW DELHI: Nepal's middle-order batter Dipendra Singh Airee on Saturday created history, becoming only the third batter to smash six sixes in an over in T20 international cricket. Finisher Dipendra achieved the rare feat during the ACC Premier Cup Group A game against Qatar in Al Amerat as he



smashed six back-to-back sixes in the final over of the Nepal innings, powering his side to 210 for 7. With the remarkable effort, Dipendra joined India's Yuvraj Singh and West Indies' Kieron Pollard in the exclusive club. The 24-year-old is now also the fifth across all internationals to achieve the feat. Playing his 60th T20I, Dipendra's carnage came in the final over of the innings when he ripped apart pacer Kamran Khan, taking him to all corners of the park. Starting the over at 28 off 15, Dipendra finished on

an unbeaten 64 off just 21 balls at the end of the innings. With a total of three fours and 7 sixes in his 64-run carnage, Dipendra struck the ball at a strike rate of over 307. However, this is not the first time Dipendra has hit six back-to-back sixes. During the Asian Games in Hangzhou last year against Mongolia, Dipendra hit six consecutive sixes, spread across two overs. In that game, Dipendra scored 52 not out in 10 balls as Nepal put up a mammoth 314 for 3 -- the first time a team scored 300-plus runs.

'Didn't start well, didn't finish...': Kings' Sam after another loss

NEW DELHI: Punjab Kings' all-rounder Sam Curran, who led the team in the absence of injured skipper Shikhar Dhawan, blamed the team's batters for another 'close loss' in the IPL, expressing disappointment with their inability to finish games. Shimron Hetmyer kept his clam and scored an unbeaten 27 off 10 balls as Rajasthan Royals beat Punjab Kings by three wickets in a low-scoring thriller to maintain their pole position in the points table. After restricting Punjab to 147/8 in 20 overs, Royals were in trouble when Hetmyer came in after Riyan Parag's fall and saw Dhruv Jurel being dismissed as well. Under mounting pressure, Hetmyer, who barely got batting time in the



season, smashed a four and three sixes, including the winning shot, to get Royals over the line with a ball to spare. Despite competitive performances, Punjab have struggled to convert opportunities into wins, highlighting the need for improved execution in crucial moments. "The wicket was slightly slow, but we didn't start well with the bat and didn't finish well in the end. It was a good effort from the lower order, getting (close) to 150 was excellent, the bowling was good, we

kept them down, unfortunately another close loss," Curran said at the post-match interaction. "We stuck to our plans, bowled and fielded well, but I'm confident we'll bounce back in the next game. Three games is a hard way to fully work out the conditions (at the new venue), but we've adapted well, we won the first match and lost two matches by close margins (by 2 runs and 3 wickets), hard to take, but the boys will be lifted by how well we've played in the last couple of games.

Manchester City hammer Luton 5-1 to move top of the Premier League

Manchester City showcased their dominance in the Premier League with a commanding 5-1 victory over relegation-threatened Luton Town, propelling them to the top of the table in a fiercely contested title race. Erling Haaland continued his prolific goal-scoring form, notching his 20th league goal of the season to lead City to victory. Pep Guardiola's side displayed their attacking prowess right from the start, with Jeremy Doku opening the scoring within 70 seconds.



NEW DELHI: In a delightful and heartwarming gesture Kolkata Knight Riders mentor Gautam Gambhir distributed sweets to the media persons on the eve of Bengali New Year. Gambhir's gesture came after KKR's pre-match presser ahead of the clash against Lucknow Super Giants at the Eden Gardens on Sunday. "It's new year tomorrow, so we have got sweets for you guys. So please feel free and put some calories on," said a smiling Gambhir before distributing Rasgullas.