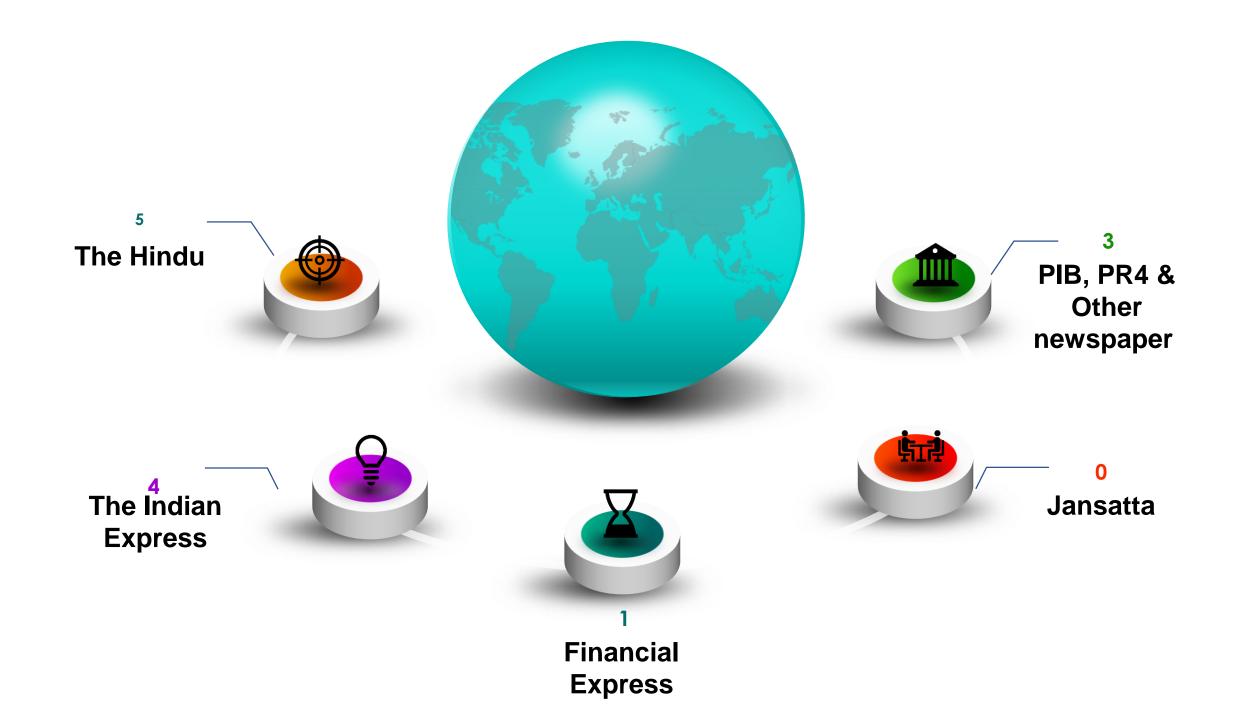
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ED should probe 'bribes' paid to BJP, savs AAP

NEW DELHI AAP leader Sanjay Singh asked why the ED had taken no action against the BJP for taking ₹60 crore in the form of electoral bonds from Sarath Chandra Reddy. cused-turned-approve in Delhi excise policy case to page 2

Cong. has turned tech city into tanker city: Modi

BENGALURU

BENGALURU
Coming down heavily on the
Congress government over
management of infrastructure
and civic issues in Bengaluru,
Prime Minister Narendra Modi
on Saturday accused it of
"turning the tech city into a
tanker city". » PAGE 5

CJI lauds new criminal laws for 'safeguards'

NEW DELHI

Describing the new criminal justice system as a "watershed moment", Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud said the laws had better safeguards and would be successful if those in charge of implementing them adapted to them. IN PAGE 5

Blast at Iraqi base housing pro-Iran group kills one

BACHEAD

One person was killed and eight wounded in an overnigh explosion at an Iraqi military base in the Babylon province south of Baghdad, housing a coalition of pro-Iranian armed groups, officials said on

buying health insurance

The Insurance Regulatory and Development Authori-ty of India (IRDAD) has re-moved the age limit for purchasing health insu-rance policies, with effect from April 1.

Earlier, there was an age limit of 65 years to buy new health insurance policies. The IRDAI's latest move is aimed at bringing in ex-tended health benefits to senior citizens, and caters to diverse demographic groups, including children and maternity needs.

The IRDAI directive mandates health insurance providers to develop specialised policies catering to senior citizens, and to esta-blish dedicated channels

blish dedicated channels for addressing their claims and grievances.

Companies are also en-couraged to develop tai-lored products to meet specific age-related re-quirements, fostering a more inclusive healthcare ecosystem.

ecosystem.
It adds that the move will enhance the accessibility and affordability of

Towards inclusivity What does the latest IRDAI 1) Health insurance specialised policies catering to senior citizens, and establish dedicated channels for addressing their claims

healthcare coverage across This change will greatly be all age groups.

The IRDAI is an autono-

mous and statutory body responsible for managing and regulating India's insu-rance and reinsurance in-

'Significant move' Speaking about the deci-sion, Aashish Chaudhry, sion, Aushish Chaudhry, MD of Aakash Healthcare, said: "The recent decision to lift the age restriction on insurance coverage is a sig-nificant advancement. Now, with the removal of this restriction, even the el-derly can access cashless by remiums for this demo-graphic may be higher.

nefit those in need of med-ical insurance, including children material and senior citizens, ensur ing a healthier life for ma-ny. It's a welcome move, serving the public interest

serving the public interest and promoting the longevi-ty and well-being of our ci-tizens, while also advanc-ing comprehensive insurance coverage." Ratnesh Sinha, head of Ratnesh Sinha, head of sales and marketing at PSRI Hospital said that this opens up avenues for peo-ple above 65 years. "This may lead to better access to healthcare and reduced burden of medical expen-diure for those in the age bracket;" he said.

IRDAI removes age bar for | **EC orders re-polling in 11 Manipur booths tomorrow**

The booths are located in five Assembly segments of Inner Manipur; presiding officers reported incidents of mob violence, gunfire and destruction of EVMs during the voting held on Friday

The Hindu Bureau

he Election Com-mission of India has declared void the polling conducted at II booths across five Assembpur on Friday, with presid-ing officers reporting mob violence, gunfire and des-troyed Electronic Voting Machines in some booths. The ECI has announced

that a re-poll will be con-ducted at these booths betducted at these booths between 7 a.m. and 5 p.m. on April 22, the Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) of Maninal Officer (CEO) of Maninal Officer (CEO) of Maninal Officer (CEO) of Maninal Officer (CEO) and the Khurai, Thosei upoling stations are located in the Khurai, Thonglu, Uripok, Konthoujam, and Kenthaman (CEO) of the CEO added. Office of the CEO added. On Priday, the Office of the CEO add written to the Election Commission (EC), pointing out that at least



six of these polling stations saw instances of mob vio-lence, riots, and unidenti-fied men casting votes on behalf of voters on Friday.

behalf of voters on Friday, Because of these incidents, the polling in these of the polling in these of the theory of the polling in the polling that results from these cannot be ascertained. Reports were submitted Reports were submitted Reports were submitted that the polling stations, in-cluding the one at Moriang-kampu Sejab Primary School in Imphal, where a

re-poll has been recom-

*Exchange of gunfire'
On the night of April 19, the
Manipur Police said it had
arrested three people near
change of gunfire that had
injured at least one person.
Poil officials in Manipur
also reported that a group
of unidentified persons
had entered the polling station at Khandem Makha, al-

so in Imphal, and cast 61 wotes without following due procedure. Mob vio-lence followed the inci-

dent.

In three polling stations at the Iroisemba Upper Primary School, EVMs were destroyed in mob violence as members of the public "overpowered the

security personnel".

The Manipur Pradesh
Congress Committee had complained of instances of disturbances, violence, intimidation, and booth cap turing in as many as 47 polling booths spread across 12 Assembly seg-ments, 11 of which were in

ments, II of which were in the Inner Manipur Lok - The Congress also altered the Inner Manipur Congress also altered the Inner Manipur Constituency. However, sources said that the concerned poll officials which was the Inner Manipur Constituency of the Inner Manipur Constituency. However, sources said that the concerned poll officials which were were the Inner Manipur Constituency of the Inner Manipur Constitue

Memorable melodies



India in favour of 'regulating'. not banning, single-use plastic

Ahead of week-long nego-tiations involving 192 coun-tries that are expected to begin in Toronto, Canada, globe to progress on elim-inating plastic pollution, In-dia is in favour of "regulat-ing", and not eliminating, single-use plastic, accord-countries" public negotiat ing positions by the Centre countries' public negotiat-ing positions by the Centre for Science and Environ-ment (CSE), a not-for-profit based in New Delhi.

in 2022, India brought into effect the Plastic Waste Management Amendment Rules (2021) that banned 19 categories of 'single-use plastics'.

'Disposable goods' These are defined as disposable goods that are made with plastic but are generally use-and-throw af-ter a single use and include plastic cups, spoons, ear-buds, decorative thermobuds, decorative thermo-col, wrapping or packaging film used to cover sweet ets, and plastic cutterly. It, bowever, does not include plastic bottles - even those tidayered packaging boxes such as milk cartons). Moreower, even the sin-face banned are not un-iformly enforced national-ly with several outlets con-



goods.
Of the nearly 17 topics that countries are expected to deliberate upon, one of them involves "probleof them involves "proble-matic and avoidable plastic products including singleuse plastics", which refer to sections of plastics that are likely to harm environ ment as well as human

The aim of negotiating countries is to implement global and national measures such as removing the following production through alternative practices or non-plastic ing problematic items to meet criteria for sustainable and safe product design. The CSE analysis says The aim of negotiating

has opted for language in the current version of the negotiating document, called a 'zero draft', that vouches for "regulating" instead of "not allowing", port and export of proble matic and avoidable plastic goods. It has, however greed to "scie such plastics.

A dead stream springs back to life after 30 years

The stream in Kerala's Idukki had vanished following the introduction of exotic species in the Marayur sandal division

Sandeep Vellaram

n the midst of a n the midst of a sweltering summer, a stream long dormant in a tribal settlement within the Marayur sandal within the Marayur sandal division in Idulkid district of Kerala has sprung back to life after a hiatus of 30 years. This remarkable transformation is credited to an eco-restoration initiative spearheaded by the Forest department in the area daving 2021-24.

CM COM

Thodu in the locality had introduction of exotic species. Officials recoun that the hills within the forest division of nalamkustv were Kammalamkudy were once grasslands with active water streams until 1990, prior to the introduction of Acacia means (black wattle) in the region. Embarking on a trial endeavour in department initiated an eco-restoration project supported by the United Nations Development



Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development . "Exotic species were

allowing natural grasses to flourish," explains Marayur Divisional Forest

"We erected a brushwood check-dam along the stream, attracting various wildlife species for hydration," Mr. Kumar says. "Since the conversion of hills into grassland, the area has witnessed an influx of diverse wildlife," he adds.

tream has been

IRDAI removes age bar for buying health insurance

Bindu Shajan Perappadan NEW DELHI

The Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) has removed the age limit for purchasing health insurance policies, with effect from April 1.

Earlier, there was an age limit of 65 years to buy new health insurance policies. The IRDAI's latest move is aimed at bringing in extended health benefits to senior citizens, and caters to diverse demographic groups, including children and maternity needs.

The IRDAI directive mandates health insurance providers to develop specialised policies catering to senior citizens, and to establish dedicated channels for addressing their claims and grievances.

Companies are also encouraged to develop tailored products to meet specific age-related requirements, fostering a more inclusive healthcare ecosystem.

It adds that the move will enhance the accessibility and affordability of



healthcare coverage across all age groups.

The IRDAI is an autonomous and statutory body responsible for managing and regulating India's insurance and reinsurance industry.

'Significant move'

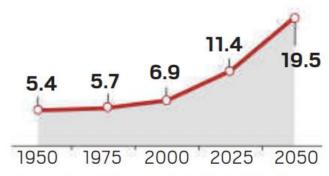
Speaking about the decision, Aashish Chaudhry, MD of Aakash Healthcare, said: "The recent decision to lift the age restriction on insurance coverage is a significant advancement. Now, with the removal of this restriction, even the elderly can access cashless insurance benefits, though premiums for this demographic may be higher.

This change will greatly benefit those in need of medical insurance, including
children, maternity cases,
and senior citizens, ensuring a healthier life for many. It's a welcome move,
serving the public interest
and promoting the longevity and well-being of our citizens, while also advancing comprehensive
insurance coverage."

Ratnesh Sinha, head of sales and marketing at PSRI Hospital said that this opens up avenues for people above 65 years. "This may lead to better access to healthcare and reduced burden of medical expenditure for those in the age bracket," he said.

SENIOR CITIZENS IN INDIA

Rise in elderly population (age 60 and above) in %



Source: United Nation (2019), World Population Prospects, The 2019 Revision, United Nations, New York

Prominent diseases among India's senior citizens (%)

Cardiovascular	35.6%
Hypertension	32%
Diabetes	13.2%
Chronic lung disease	8.3%
Chronic bone or joint disease	19%
Cancer	0.7%

All data self-reported

Source: Longitudinal Ageing Study in India



Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India



भारतीय बीमा विनियामक और विकास प्राधिकरण Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India

Abbreviation IRDAI

Formation 1999

Type Regulatory Body

Legal status Active

Headquarters Sy No. 115/1, Financial

District, Nanakramguda,

Hyderabad – 500032

Location India

Hyderabad, Telangana

Coordinates (a) 17.385°N 78.486°E

Services Insurance of India

Owner Ministry of Finance,

Government of India

Key people Debasish Panda, IAS

(Chairperson)

Artist of a Brave New World

FOUR-PAGE PULLOUT



inesh Phogat after beating Kyrgyzstan's Laura Ganikyzy at

Face of protests against Brij Bhushan, wrestler Vinesh Phogat clinches spot in Paris Olympics

IIHIR VASAVDA

WRESTLER VINESH Phogat, the ice of the protests against Brij hushan Sharan Singh, the for-ier Wrestling Federation of idia president accused of sexal harassment, has won a spot the Paris Olympics in the 50-

The Pairs Orympics in the Jo-g Category. In her first international com-etition since September 2022, hogat on Saturday defeated azakhstan's Laura Ganikyzy 10-in the semifinal of the Asian ualifying Tournament being eld in Kyrgyzstan capital

ishlork. The 29-year-old didn't con-ole a single point and needed at the more than six minutes to tot more than six minutes to tot aplace for India in the Paris ames, scheduled to be held ames, scheduled to be held on 26 July to 11 August. The base her very difficult. At CONTINUED ON PAGE 8

CIVIL SERVICES DAY

A RED initiative appears in today's edition of The Indian Express. These pages are an initiative of the marketing solutions team of The Indian Express Group and contain content paid for by advertisers. These

one stage, it felt impossible. But this is a job half done," she told the leadine Depress from listsheek, where the Asian Qualifying Indeed, this would have seemed improbable a year ago when, on April 21 last year, Phogat — along with six other vocamen wrestlers — fled a pomonths-long protests to de-mand the BJPMP's arrest. A Delhi court last week deferred until court last week deferred u April 26 its order on fram charges against Brij Bhushan in

EXPRESS NETWORK



BISHNOI, HIS AIDE WITH GANGSTER IN JAIL PAGES 14, 12

1XBE LARGEST OF THE SEVEN PHASES IN THE 2024 ELECTIONS Turnout down by 4 pc points in Phase 1 over 2019, EC looks at ways to bring more voters out

Heatwave to wedding season to lack of enthusiasm among reasons being cited

VOTING FOR the 18th Lok Sabha VOTING FOR the 18th Lok Sabha commenced on a relatively tepid note with the first and largest phase of the seven-phase elec-tions showing a decrease of about 4 percentage points in voter turnout, a development that has officials of the Election Commission of India concerned. On Friday, the 102 seats that

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8

PHASE-1 TURNOUT: 102 SEATS

65.12 63.99

Arunachal Pradesh 82.11 72.74 -9.37 Assam 78.14 76.09 -2.05



Election officials keep EVMs and VVPATs in a strong room in Thoothukudi, Tamil Nadu, on Saturday, a day after the first phase of polling was held for the Lok Sabha elections.

Vote for anyone, but do vote... it is important for country's future, says PM

A DAY after the first phase of polling for the Lok Sabha elec-tions ended with a voter turnout lower than that in 2019, Prime Minister Narendra Modi urged people to step out of their homes and "vote for anyone".

He even asked the Opposition parties to encourage their sup-porters to vote. This, he said, was important to secure the future of

the country.

Addressing a rally in Maha-rahtra's Nanded which will vote in the second phase on April 26, Modi claimed that voters had overwhelmingly voted in favour of the ruling NDA in the first

SEIGH V A LANGE OF THE PARTY OF THE PAR

PM Narendra Modi with Maharashtra CM Eknath Shinde in Nanded, PTT

greatest strength of ademocracy (loktantra ki sabse badi takat). Vose for anyone, but do vote... It is true that it is very hot, there are problems, there are weddings. There are some areas where farmers are at work. But look at CONTINUED ON PAGE B

COMES AMID PUSH FOR EV SECTOR

Musk defers India visit, says aim to visit 'later this year'

When big firms show interest in India, we make it attractive for them: Nirmala



unders. Musk was expected to announce his investment plans in India, a month after the Union Government released its new Electric Vehicle (EV) policy that opened the doors for the world's most valuable automaker to im port cars into India at lower du

port cars into India at lower du-ties amid expectations that this could help foster an EV ecosys-tem in the country. "Unifortunately, very heavy Tesla obligations require that the visit to India be delayed, but I do-wery much look forward to visit-ing later this year," Musk said in



ADELAYED visit would give more time to policy-malkers to broadbase the guidelines for new EV norms to effectively en-sure that the benefits from relaxed import du-ties can be leveraged by a greater number of players and help enrich the



CJI HAILS THREE NEW CRIMINAL LAWS: WATERSHED MOMENT FOR INDIA

'High growth not possible if we don't do our own science, produce own tech'

Can't miss bus on Al, quantum, energy and semiconductors: Sood

AMITABH SINHA

INDIA WILL not be able to achieve 10-12 per cent economic growth, if "we don't do our own science and produce our own science and produce our own technologies," and to that effect, what is needed is a ramp-up on all key science indicators, not just in numbers but in quality as well, said the government's Principal

Scientific Advisor, 1995, Scientific Advisor, 1995, Sood. In an interview with The Theoress, Sood said India Indian Express, Sood said India had missed the bus on certain had missed the bus on certain critical technologies in the past and must not allow that situa-tion to repeat in areas like artifi-cial intelligence, quantum tech-nologies, clean energy solutions, or semiconductors that are still under development. Indeed the company of the company of the technology output is linked to our economic growth, essen-

veloped nation by 2047. The kind of economic growth that is re-



AIAY KUMAR SOOD

possible without deployment breakthrough technologies. It these technologies that will driv

In Tharoor bastion, Rajeev mixes In Vokkaliga heartland, Mandya change pitch with Modi theme

HAJU PHILIP

EARING THE distant announce-nent about the impending ar-val of Rajeev Chandrasekhar, a roup of BJP workers at uravankonam junction in uravankonam junction in hiruwananthapuramgets eady, olding saffron shawds. As his onnoy halts, Chandrasekhar ends his head from the poof his wehide. The BIP roviners and several locals raps shawds around the hirim minister, one after nother. There is also a host.

stle among them for self-



the Thiruwananthapuram Lok Sabha seat, addresses the gath-ering. "Our election will be held on April 26. In this poll, we want so man discovered to the season of the common season of the season of the 4. whenour PM Modi, jibe-comes PM for the third term, Thiruwananth-apuram schould be part of

(Modi's target of) 400-plus with him.

Before his roadshow rolls to e next reception, Chandra-thur the BP's candidate from roadshow with nearly two



Cong 34.1 41.19 BUP 32.32 31.3 CPI 28.5 25.6

seat is a test of BJP-JD(S) alliance

-7.31 -0.37

AT THE gram panchayat office of Keragodu village — known for its multitude of temples dedicated to different deities — 14 km from the district headquarters of Mandya in south Karnataka, the Mandya in south Karnataka, the Triccolour is hoisted on a newly-erected 108-8-tailflagpole. Lower down, within a hand's reach, are saffron Hanuman flags tied tem-porarily to the post. A police van has been stand-ing guard near the flagpole for nearly three months now, ever since after Republic Day, focal since after Republic Day, focal

Hindutva groups, backed by members of the JD(S) that con-



Avodhva, but it was replaced



Hindutva groups took up the is-sue, resulting in a conflict. With the Congress govern-

KARNATAKA

JD(S) 41.89% 2014 result JD(S) 43.97% Congress 43.5%

ment adamant that it would al-low only the Indian flag on the CONTINUED ON PAGE 12

Juggling motherhood, career dreams, Haryana woman clears civil services

UKHBIR SIWACH

aryana's Kurukshetra ap-eared for the Union Public

hase" of juggling motherhood, er career and professional aspi-itions — the 31-year-old

mother to a three-year-old buy secured the 355th rank in the UPSC exam and hopes to be-come an IAS officer. Spurred by her husband Dr Arul Verma, Rani, a radiologist by profession, started preparing for the civil services when her son

the civil services when her son Rayardhan was just six months: old. And with Anal away to pursue his MD, the journey was not easy. Tused to prepare for the civil did not get too much time to study. I did not want to neglect my child. .. sometimes he would go to his grandmother's. That time I used to solve some ques-

told The Indian Express.
"When he used to sleep around 9.30 pm, lused to read for nearly three or four hours daily. That was my most effective time in terms of focused study. I used to plan chapters or topics to be

to plan chapters or topics to be covered every day," Rani added. Between her first attempt and this year's, Rani cleared the UPSC earlier in 2022-2023 as "Tused to prepare for the cultimater of the control services from my home itself." I support the cultimater of the culti



Pragati Rani began preparing for the civil services when her son Raivardhan was six months old. Figures:

She preferred to join the Haryana civil services and was posted as an Officer on Special Duty to the Arnhala Divisional Commissioner in November 2023. Still, she never let go of the IAS dream and keept preparing for it. This time, things were tougher as my son was older and aware that his mother was

tudving in another room. He

into the IAS.
Ranicredits her family for her success. She said her father, Naresh Verma, a school teacher, taught her to be humble in life while her mother Sushil Verma, a nurse in the state health department, stressed the impor-

Thurmon, please play with me."

The stream of the standard of

Atul, whom she married five years ago, told her to pursue her civil services studies "so that I would not regret it later", she said. And mother-in-law Kamlesh Verma, who retired as a school principal just 10 days before the birth of Rani's son, helped "when luse besweith me studies."



Nitish has lost his senses, says Lalu NEWS > PAGE 6





Muizzu's party secures a landslide victory

The Left-Cong. hostility in Kerala The INDIA allies share no bonhomie in the State DITORIAL » PAGE 8



KKR edges out RCB. GT scrapes past PBKS

INSIDE



Mulling ST status for 11 Gurkha sub-tribes: Shah

KOLKATA

Shah on Sunday said the Centre was considering ncluding 11 Gurkha sub-tribes that aspirations of the Gurkha community was always a priority for the BJP. » PAGE 2

Likraine says if struck Russian ship in Crimea

struck a salvage ship belonging to Russia on the annexed Crimean peninsula. Social media footage purportedly filmed in the Crimean port of Sevastopol showed a ship in flames. 19 PAGE 14

Net direct tax collections exceed 2023-24 target

Tax kitty grew thanks to a surge in personal income tax; uptick in net tax collections by the year-end was driven by it and securities transaction tax, while net corporate tax kitty shrank

ndia's net direct tax collections grew 17.7% in 2023-24 to hit ₹19.58 lakh crore, marginally sur-passing the revised esti-mates for the year, thanks to a surge in personal in-the task litty rose to \$5.3% from \$0.06% in the pre-vious year while corporate taxes' contribution dipped Provisional data re-leased by the Finance Mi-nistry on Sunday also

istry on Sunday also howed that the uptick in net tax collections over the final fortnight of the finan cial year was driven by personal income tax (PIT) and securities transaction tax (STT) collections, while the net corporate tax kitty shrank a little.



PIT and STT receipts al-so grew at almost double the pace of corporate taxes last year

st year. As of March 17, net direct taxes had risen 19.88% to ₹18.9 lakh crore, with PIT and STT accounting for 51.4% of the receipts and corporate tax yielding 59.14 lakh crore. By March 31, PIT and STT inflows had increased

by ₹73,000 crore, lifting their full-year tally to ₹10.44 lakh crore. Although gross corpo-rate tax collections in-creased from ₹10.98 lakh crore as of March 17 to ₹11.32 lakh crore by the close of the financial year close of the financial year, the net tax receipts from corporates, calculated af-ter adjusting for refunds, dropped from ₹9.14 lakh

crore on March 17 to ₹9.11 lakh crore. The gross direct tax kit-ty for 2023-24 stood at ₹23.37 lakh crore, reflecting a growth of 18.5% over the ₹19.72 lakh crore tally in 2022-23.

Of this, gross PIT and STT receipts accounted for \$12.01 lakh crore, rising \$76,000 crore between March 17 and 31.

Cong. will hand private wealth to Muslims: PM

Assailing the Congress's promise in its manifesto to address inequality, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday said the Congress if elected to power, would distribute people's land, gold and other valuables ong Muslims

among Muslims.

"The Congress has de-clared that Muslims have the first right to the coun-try's resources," he said.
Addressing public meet-ings in Rajasthan's Jalore and Banswara, he said the Congress had announced a survey to value the proper-ty of individuals, gold owned by women, and sil-

Land and cash belonging to government em-ployees and others would also be so distributed, he said. "Can you tolerate the government snatching your hard-earned money



While the Congress ma-nifesto has promised to make "suitable changes in policies" to address the wealth and income, party leader Rahul Gandhi said in Hyderabad earlier this month that the Congress, if voted to power, would car-tuitional survey, after the caste census, to ascertain caste census, to ascertain the distribution of wealth among the people in the country.
"The then Congress

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh stated [in 2006] that Muslims had the first claim

on the country's resources. That means the property will be distributed among those who have a large number of children... and among the infiltrators. Is it aniong the initial and six is a acceptable to you?" Mr. Modi said. He said "urban Naxal" ideology of the Con-gress would even deprive the women of their auspi-cious mangalsutra. "Conyour hard-earned money going into the hands of in filtrators?" Mr. Modi said.

"HATE SPEECH", SAYS CONG.

On the electoral cycle



Soren was arrested for refusing to leave the INDIA bloc, says Kharge

Former Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren was arrested for refusing to leave the INDIA bloc, Con-gress chief Mallikarjun Kharge alleged at a joint Convocition valle in Panchi Opposition rally in Ranchi on Sunday, warning Prime Minister Narendra Modi that if he tried to "terror-ise" tribals, he himself would be destroyed.

would be destroyed.

In a show of Opposition
unity and strength, the
leaders of the 28 parties
who constitute the INDIA
constitute the The wives of both men ere present with messag-

INDIA leaders at the Ulgulan rally in Ranchi on Sunday. PTI es from their jailed spous-

es, even as INDIA leaders vowed to protect the Con-stitution and democracy stitution and democracy by uproording the BJP-led National Democratic Al-liance in the ongoing Lok Sabha election.

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi skipped the rally due to ill health.

included Mr. Kharge; Sa-majwadi Party chief Akhi-lesh Yadav, Rashtriya Jana-ta Dal leader Tejashwi Yadav, Jharkhand Mukti Morcha chief Shibu Soren and Jharkhand CM Cham-pai Soren, Aam Aadmi Party leader Sanjay Singh and Punjab CM Bhagwant Mann, Trinamool Con-gress leader Vivek Gupta,

National Conference presi-dent Farooq Abdullah, and Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) general secretary Dipankar Bhatta-barran charya.

Historic revolution
The INDIA bloc has borrowed the word 'ulgulan', meaning 'revolution', from the local dialect; the word was coined by Adivasi icon Birsa Munda to describe his fight against the British for water, forest, and land, and the Opposition coali-tion is taking a cue from that historic revolution to

that historic revolution to describe its own electoral battle against the BJP. Alleging that the BJP has made Central agencies into its agents, Mr. Champai So-ren claimed that a conspiracy is being hatched to erase the existence of the tribals and indigenous peo-ple in Jharkhand.

Report faults crew, station staff, safety lapses on train for Andhra Pradesh accident

S. Vijay Kumar

jor train accident that left 17 people dead and 34 oth-ers injured in the Vizianag-aram district of Andhra Pradesh last year has con-cluded that the accident was caused by an "error in train working", adding that the collision could have en averted had the crew and operating staff fol-lowed the rules.

The inquiry by Pranjeev Saxena, Commissioner of Saxena, Commissioner of Railway Safety of the North East Circle, has also ex-posed lapses on the part of the railway administration; the National Disaster Res-ponse Force's lack of ex-pertise in handling relief ter train accidents; and sys-temic safety lapses, includ-ing the failure of anti-telescopic features in the trains and the malfunctioning of an automatic signalling system.

Primary reasons A locomotive pilot's deci-

sion to overshoot a signal in danger and his assis-tant's failure to apply the tant's failure to apply the emergency brakes in the face of the approaching collision were the primary reasons why Train No. 08504 Visakhapatnam-O8504 Visakhapatnam-Rayagada Passenger smashed into the rear of Train No. O8532 Visakha-patnam-Palasa Passenger at a speed of 82 kmph on October 29, 2023, accord-

ing to the final CRS report. The accident occurred between Kantakapalle and in the Waltair Division of

ast Coast Railway. Despite the failure of three automatic signals on all three lines, the Signal & communication staff did not indicate actions or precautions to be taken by the station and control staff. Badly drafted rules led to ambiguity on what was to be done in case of automatic signal failure was to be done in case of automatic signal failure, the report said.

For some reason, the stationmasters started in-forming the crew of ap-proaching trains about the failed signals, which en-couraged them to bypass the preactibed precau-



Kantakapalle issued a Priv-ate Number authorising ate Number authorising the Loco Pilot of Train No 08504 to proceed. "This was the penulti-mate action leading to the accident. Overwriting in the Private Number book on the number, claimed

failure of the Train Manag-er to hear the conversation er to hear the conversation between the Loco Pilot and Station Master of Kanand Station Master of Kan-takapalle (over walkie tal-kie) and "stolen" Train Manager journal indicate that assurance of some sort was given to the Loco Pilot/ Assistant Loco Pilot of this train to proceed at sectionwrote in the 60-page investigation report accessed by The Hindu.

The probe also revealed that the coaches of the two passenger trains lacked certain safety features that could have minimised the loss of lives and grievous injuries of passengers. The anti-telescopic features of the coaches, designed by the Integral Coach Factory (ICF), failed to work in both trains. The ICF coaches with

The ICF coaches with screw coupling were de-signed with weak structu-ral elements in the toilet portion located at the ends of the coach body. These elements were meant to be crushed and absorb kinetic energy through the defor-

plastic parts in case of colli-sions if the impact speed exceeded 30 kmph, thus protecting the passenger sections of the coaches

from the impact at relative ly lower speeds. Modified coaches However, over a period of time, ICF had modified the design to address sagging and corrosion issues. It

cluding those elements ori-ginally meant to collapse and absorb kinetic energy. Analysing the modifica-tions made to the structu-ral elements in compari-son to the original specifications, Mr. Saxena said that all the coaches including those elements orimodified. He suggested that at least the last two coaches

of every passenger-carry-ing train should have crash-worthy and injury-free features. The layout of Seating-cum-Luggage Rake coaches should be modi-fied to shift the luggage portion to the two ends of the coach.

also noted that a dead loco-motive had been attached next to the main locomo-tive in one of the trains. This caused higher casual-the locomotives were stiff-er and heavier than the coaches, leading to much higher kinetic energy of the rear train. also noted that a dead loco

Net direct tax collections exceed 2023-24 target

<u>Tax kitty grew thanks to a surge in personal income tax;</u> uptick in net tax collections by the year-end was driven by it and securities transaction tax, while net corporate tax kitty shrank

Vikas Dhoot

NEW DELHI

ndia's net direct tax collections grew 17.7% in 2023-24 to hit ₹19.58 lakh crore, marginally surpassing the revised estimates for the year, thanks to a surge in personal income tax whose share of the tax kitty rose to 53.3% from 50.06% in the previous year while corporate taxes' contribution dipped to 46.5% from 49.6%.

Provisional data released by the Finance Ministry on Sunday also showed that the uptick in net tax collections over the final fortnight of the financial year was driven by personal income tax (PIT) and securities transaction tax (STT) collections, while the net corporate tax kitty shrank a little.



Revenue surge

India's net direct tax collections for FY 2023-24 reached ₹19.58 lakh crore, marking a 17.70% increase over the previous fiscal year's ₹16.64 lakh crore

- Personal income tax constituted 53.3% of the total net direct tax collection while corporate taxes formed 46.5%
- The provisional figures exceeded both the Budget estimates (BE) and revised estimates (RE) by 7.40% and

0.67%, respectively

- Net personal income tax collections (including STT) amounted to ₹10.44 lakh crore, showing a growth of 25.23%
- Net corporate tax collections amounted to ₹9.11 lakh crore, showing a growth of 10.26%

PIT and STT receipts also grew at almost double the pace of corporate taxes last year.

As of March 17, net direct taxes had risen 19.88% to ₹18.9 lakh crore, with PIT and STT accounting for 51.4% of the receipts and corporate tax yielding ₹9.14 lakh crore.

By March 31, PIT and STT inflows had increased

by ₹73,000 crore, lifting their full-year tally to ₹10.44 lakh crore.

Although gross corporate tax collections increased from ₹10.98 lakh crore as of March 17 to ₹11.32 lakh crore by the close of the financial year, the net tax receipts from corporates, calculated after adjusting for refunds, dropped from ₹9.14 lakh

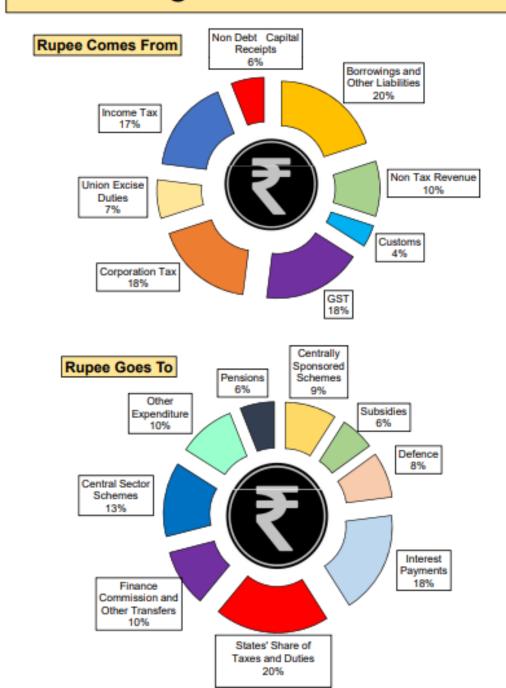
crore on March 17 to ₹9.11 lakh crore.

The gross direct tax kitty for 2023-24 stood at ₹23.37 lakh crore, reflecting a growth of 18.5% over the ₹19.72 lakh crore tally in 2022-23.

Of this, gross PIT and STT receipts accounted for ₹12.01 lakh crore, rising ₹76,000 crore between March 17 and 31.

DIRECT TAX MOP-UP IN FY24 (₹ trillion)* Budget Revised Estimate Achievement Estimate 18.23 19.45 19.58 C-4 10.44 9.11 ng Dy 3.79 re Refunds Personal Corporate Ctax income tax 4 ip in 25.23 22.74 10.26 Change on year (%) 1e *After refund 1-1e or ıd 1e

Budget at a Glance



Amid avian flu fears, Alappuzha reports deaths of more birds



Amid fears of avian flu spreading, mass bird deaths have been reported from Muttar and Ambalap-puzha North in Alappuzha

District Animal Husban dry Officer Sajeev Kumar K.R. said a farmer raising 2.300 ducks at Muttar los

a,300 ducks at Mutrar lost 164 in recent days. At Am-balappuzha North, 90 chickens of the total 650 in schools of the total 650 in to the Avian Disease Diag-nostic Laboratory at Thiru-valla for testing. The tests to the Avian Disease Diag-ry suspect bird flu. We have decided to send the samples to the National in-stance of the National In-Animal Diseases (NIERSAD) Animal Diseases (NIHSAD) in Bhopal for final confir-mation. It will be dispatched to Bhopal on Mon-day and the results are expected in a couple of expected in a couple of days," Dr. Kumar said. An avian flu outbreak can only be declared after confirmation from the

Over 17.480 birds. mostly ducks, within a one-km radius of

and Ambalappuzha North had been under surveillance following the bird flu outbreaks at Edathua and Cheruthana last week.

Surveillance up
After the presence of the
HSN1 subtype of the Influenza A virus was confirmed in ducks of three
farmers – one at Edathua
grama panchayat (Ward 1)
and two at Cheruthana
panchayat (Ward 3) – rapid
response teams of the Animent culled 17,480 birds,
mostly ducks, within a mostly ducks, within a one-km radius of bird flu

hotspots on April 19. The avian influenza vi-rus can be transmitted to humans. The Health de-partment has tightened preventive steps and urged people to maintain cau-tion. Surveillance has been

Congress must introspect upon its political stance, says Sitaram Yechury

LDF and CPI(M) have been the most consistent Opposition to Prime Minister Narendra Modi; the Congress has wavered in its fight against the ruling party, those who feared arrests have been leaving the Congress to join the BJP, the leader says

The Hindu Bureau

ommunist Party of India (Marxist) [CPI (M) general secretary Sitaram Yechury has said the Left front and the CPI(M) have been the "most consistent opposition" to Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

rendra Modi.
On the other hand, the
Congress that has wavered
in its fight against Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has been accusing the Left of collaborating with the ruling party at the Centre for electoral opportunism, Mr. Yechury said. Addressing a Left Demo-

cratic Front (LDF) rally in Thiruvananthapuram on Sunday, Mr. Yechury urged Sunday, Mr. Yechury urged the Congress and the Unit-ed Democratic Front (UDF) to introspect upon its polit-ical stance in combating communal forces. In an apparent response



martyred while in jail.

to Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's "demand" to arrest Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, Mr. Yechury said "They are inviting Naren-dra Modi to harass and arrest the Chief Minister of Kerala. As far as arrests are dira Gandhi arrested all of

those who feared arrests have been leaving the Con-gress to join the BJP. The former Chief Ministers of Maharashtra and Jammu and Kashmir are among those who left the

among those who left the party, he pointed out, re-ferring to Ashok Chavan and Ghulam Nabi Azad respectively. Mr. Yechury blamed the National Democratic Al-

liance (NDA)'s policies for equalities in the country.

"The poor are becoming poorer and the rich richer. The combined wealth of the top 10 richest persons have increased by 22%, while that of the bott while that of the bottom-half of the population has decreased by 13% last year. These are the two Indias that Modi has created. One, for the corporate, communal and Hindutva

suggesting that the Opposi-

nexus, and the other for

nexus, and the other for the rest of the Indians who are pushed to misery." Mr. The policites of NDA, he said, have also paved the way for the highest level of way for the highest level of country since Indepen-dence. "A total of 42% of graduates in India are un-yesterday, the three big-gest IF firms in India de-professionals will be re-professionals will be re-

professionals will be reprofessionals will be re-trenched because there is no market. With growing unemployment and infla-tion, the real wages of the people have stagnated in the last 10 years. The Central government's statistics itself have revealed that household savings have household savings have reached rock bottom of less than 5% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) for the first time ever since Independence," Mr. Yechu-ry added.

When against Kerala, Modi and Rahul speak in one voice: CM in a public meeting held as

Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan has rebutted Prime Minister Narendra Modi's recent accusations of cor ruption within the Kerala government, labelling

government, them as baseless,

defeating even the politi-cians of Bihar in terms of family rule and corruption. He had raised concerns about the involvement of about the involvement of the Chief Minister's Office in the gold smuggling case Despite allegations of inac-tion, Mr. Modi assured ar

part of the election cam-paign for the Left Demo-cratic Front candidate M.V. tion's attacks are driven by fear rather than facts. He accused both Mr. Modi and Balakrishnan at Palakunnu in the Kasaragod Lok Sab-ha constituency on Sun-Rahul Gandhi of spreading falsehoods about Kerala and emphasised the State's day, challenged the basis of these claims, demanding evidence. low corruption levels, questioning the authentici-ty of the Prime Minister's

He highlighted the fa-vourable political land-scape for the left in Kerala,

ing to Constitutional norms. "Mr. Modi and Mr.

"Mr. Modi and Mr. Gandhi have the same voice when speaking against Kerala. The Prime Minister is trying to cover up the achievements of the State with lies. He is lying while sitting in charge of the NITI Aayog," Mr. Vijayan said.

A.P. CM attack case: accused has 2 different dates of birth

Rajulapudi Sriniyas

The main accused in the stone-throwing incident against Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister V.S. Jagan Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy has two dif-ferent dates of birth on documents – one issued by a hospital and the other mentioned in Aadhaar card, the police said on Sunday.

The Ajitsingh Nagar pol-ice arrested Vernula Satish Kumar, a daily wager hail-ing from Vaddera Colony, for allegedly throwing a stone at the Chief Minist during the latter's election campaign in Vijayawada on April 13.

mar was born on October 14, 2005. However, the date of birth in his Aadhaar

cates.

They produced the birth certificate of the accused in the court.

Mr. Satish Kumar was shifted to Vijayawada Jail after the court sent him to a judicial remand for 14 days. "We are investigating how and from where Sat ish Kumar managed to ge his Aadhaar card with a dif-ferent date of birth," an of-ficer said.

Meanwhile, the NTR Commissionerate police released Vemula Durga

In devotion



'Table placed at entrance of temple in Mandya to bar entry of Dalit devotees'

The Hindu Bureau

The centuries-old Beeresh-wara Swamy Temple in Mandya's Cheeranahalli village, where Dalits were allowed entry barely a month ago after a discus-sion among representa-tives of all castes from the village, is back in the news. The temple priest alleg-edly placed a table across the main entrance creat The centuries-old Beeresh the main entrance, creat-ing a hurdle for devotees.

Complaint lodged Advocate Lakshman Chee-ranahalli, who lodged a complaint with the Deputy



said the priest had placed a table across the entrance allegedly to deny entry to Dalits, but it had resulted in creating hurdles for all In response to the com-

plaint, Additional Deputy Commissioner of Mandya wrote to the Tabsildar of Mandya on April 17, to take steps to ensure that all de-votees visiting the temple

the Tahsildar to place a board outside the temple stating there is no bar or entry. The Tahsildar has al-so been asked to inquire in-

to the allegations against the priest and take action if they are true. Responding to com-plaints of misuse of dona-tions to the temple, the Ad-ditional Deputy Commissioner directed the Tabsildar to ensure that a team of Revenue De-partment officials open the donation boxes in the pre-sence of devotees, count the collections and remit them to the temple's say

PMO trying to stop investments | Uncertainty over Mass liturgy continues in all southern States: Revanth

All political parties have their own unique DNA and the BJP's is in essence "an-ti-South Indian", said Te-langana Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy on Sunday, alleging that there were even attempts to scuttle in-vestments in States down South by direct interven tion of the Prime Minister's

Soffice (PMO).

Mr. Reddy, who is in Karnataka to campaign for Congress, told mediaper-Congress, told Office (PMO).

Mr. Reddy, who is in
Karnataka to campaign for
Congress, told mediapersons here, "If any multi-national company tries to invest in any South Indian
State, there is a direct call
from the PMO to threaten
and take the investment
away to Guljarat, it is the
spillower that we are ex-

South was also evident in the manner in which all

Vice-President, Speaker or even their party presidents are all from North India," Mr. Reddy pointed out, ar-guing that there has always been a better balance whenever the Congress is ir power. "Discrimination is going on and nobody from the party dares speak up. Anyone growing a little strong is sent home."

Won't cross 220'
Predicting that the BJP
would not cross 220 sears
with the black of the black of the black of 131 from South India.

"The black of 131 from South India.
"The black of 131 from South India.
"The black of 131 from Hangana,
tion Karnataka and three
or four from Telangana,
one, there is nothing else
coming from the entire
South," he said. 'Won't cross 220'

to haunt Syro-Malabar Church in Kerala

The Mass liturgy divide in the Syro-Malabar Church has deepened and uncertainty continues to grip the Church with a large rebel group of lay people and priests in the Ernakulampressing readiness either to be hived off the larger church or to be recognised church or to be recogni as a liturgical variant with-

in it.

Outside the larger SyroMalabar fold, the rebel
group wants to form a
church in communion
with Rome, but outside the
Syro-Malabar hierarchy, to
continue with full congregation facing Mass as is the
practice now in the archdiocese. This is in sharp
contrast to a swred dilter contrast to a synod diktat to follow the unified Mass



P

The full people-facing Mass is the only choice be-fore the archdiocese, said the group spokesman at the end of the presbyterium. "Nothing else is possi-ble," said the statement issued by senior priest Jose Vailikodath, spokesperson of Athirupatha Samraksha-na Samithy (Diocesan Protection Forum).

The presbyterium meeting was convened to discuss a plan of action to im-

Members of the Syre-Malabar Archicoces during a protest of the substitution to Implement the synod content of the Eucharists, but rurned to people in the substitution of the Eucharists, but rurned to people in the substitution of the Eucharists, but rurned to people in the substitution of the Eucharists, but rurned to people in the substitution of the Eucharists, but rurned to people in the substitution of the Eucharists, but rurned to people in the substitution of the Eucharists, but rurned to people in the substitution of the Eucharists of the substitution of the Eucharists of the substitution of the Eucharists of the Syro-Malabar ametring of the assembly of prices (questy) excent under the substitution of the Eucharists of the Syro-Malabar ametring of the assembly of prices (questy) excent under the substitution of the Eucharists of the Syro-Malabar ametring of the assembly of prices (questy) excent under the substitution of the Eucharists of the Syro-Malabar ametrical that the church authorities in Rome. But the statement from Ft. Valley and the substitution of the Eucharists of the Syro-Malabar ametrical that the church authorities in Rome. But the statement from Ft. Valley and the substitution of the Eucharists (and that the church authorities of the opposition raised by the rede group on Mass is and that the church authorities in Rome. But the statement from Ft. Valley and the substitution of the Eucharists (and the the church authorities in Rome. But the redevent from Ft. Valley and th

The statement also said that around 300 priests participated in the meeting and claimed the support of a total of 450 for the rebel cause.

Statement against rebel In the meanwhile, Samyuk-ta Sabha Samraksha Sami-ty (Unified Forum for Protection of Archdiocese), a group supporting the syn-od cause of unified Mass, said that the church auth-

Nandini to sponsor two cricket teams in World Cup

Get ready to see the Nandi-ni logo on the jerseys of Scotland and Ireland cricketers during the ICC The Karnataka Milk Feder ation, the dairy coopera sponsoring the two teams in the competition. "Our brand name and

Nandini to sponsor two cricket teams in World Cup

The Hindu Bureau

BENGALURU

Get ready to see the Nandini logo on the jerseys of Scotland and Ireland cricketers during the ICC Men's T20 World Cup which will be held in June. The Karnataka Milk Federation, the dairy cooperative from the State, will be sponsoring the two teams in the competition.

"Our brand name and logo will appear on the lead arm of the jerseys of the players. We will also be running various social media and advertisement campaigns in association with the teams. We also want to launch whey-based drinks during the World Cup," M. K. Jagadish, managing director, KMF, said.

Karnataka Milk Federation

Trade name

Nandini

Native name

ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ಸಹಕಾರ ಹಾಲು

ಉತ್ಪಾದಕರ ಒಕ್ಕೂಟ

Company

Cooperative

type

Industry

Dairy

Founded

1974

Headquarters

Bangalore, Hassan,

Karnataka, India

Key people

Jayanth y (President)

Products

Milk, curd, ghee, butter,

paneer, cheese, milk powder,

sweets, chocolates, ice

cream, frozen desserts

Owner

Ministry of Cooperation,

Government of Karnataka

Parent

Government of Karnataka

KCR to intensify election campaign with daily roadshows

The Hindu Bureau

Bharat Rashtra Samithi Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) president K. Chan-drashekhar Rao has decid-ed to intensify his cam-paign for the Lok Sabha election by planning 22 roadshows, including a few public meetings, starting from Miryalguda to Siddi-pet. The campaign is sche-

from Miryalguda to Siddi-pet. The campaign is sche-duled to begin on April 24 and end on May 10. The former Chief Minis-ter is planning to cover all Lok Sabha constituencies in his roadshows except those in and around Hvd rabad, the party said, ad-ding that roadshows were being preferred instead of public meetings for better

On the first day, Mr. Rao at Miryalguda and make a night halt at Suryapet, fol-lowed by a roadshow in Bhongir on April 25, Maha-



bubnagar on April 26, Na-garkurnool on April 27, Wa-rangal on April 29, Khammam on April 29, and Tallada and Kothagu-dem on April 30.

On May 1, he will hold a roadshow in Mahabuba-bad, Jammikunta on May 2, Ramagundam on May 3, Mancherial on May 4, Jag-tial on May 5, Nizamabad on May 6, Kamareddy and Medak on May 7, Narsapur and Patancheru on May 8, Karimnagar on May 9 and Sircilla and Siddipet on

Congress accuses Modi of resorting to 'hate speech'

Opposition party says PM is spreading lies about its manifesto; Rahul says Modi is disappointed after the first phase of polling and that is why he is diverting attention from people's issues

The Hindu Bureau

he Congress on Sunday medicared to Sunday medicared to Sunday Modi to show one paragration of the Sunday Modi to show one to talked about redistributing wealth to the Muslim community.

Addressing a raily in Rajasthan earlier in the day, the sunday of the Sunday Muslim of the Muslim community and the sunday of the sunday of the Sunday Muslim of the M

manifesto stated that if the party comes to power "they will calculate the amount of gold that moth ers and sisters have, get in formation about it and then distribute that pro perty". Mr. Modi added that "as the Manmohan Singh government had said earlier. Muslims have the



Congress president Malabout opponents were the likarjun Kharge, in a post on X, said the Prime Minis-ter had delivered the "hate values of the Rashtriya rativa lanata Party (RSS speech" after realising that the INDIA bloc had won

di has imbibed. "In the his tory of India, no Prime Minister has lowered the Mr. Kharge alleged that dignity of his post as much as Modi ji has," the Congress chief added.

gress chief added.
"To win one election, you are spreading lies in the name of Hindu-Musthe name of Hindu-Musthe name of Hindu-MusMinister to show us if there is any word like Muslim or Hindu in our manifesto. Either you accept this challenge or stop lying," Congress leader Pawan Khera

said on X.

Responding to the Prime Minister's speech, former Congress chief Rahul Gandhi, in a post on X, claimed that "the Prime Minister's lies have gone very low after the disap-pointment of the first phase of polling and that's why he is diverting attention from people's issues".
"The trends of Congress's revolutionary ma-

Congress blames Modi-led govt. for wage loss, inflation

The Hindu Bureau

The Congress on Sunday alleged that workers suffered unprecedented wage loss under the Narendra loss under the Narendra Modi regime in the last 10 years. The party said the purchasing power of the workers had also de-creased due to slow wage growth and back-breaking inflation.

inflation.

Blaming Prime Minister

Modi for the decline in

worker wages, Congress
general secretary Jairam
Ramesh said in a statement that multiple data sources were unanimous in show-ing that workers could buy less today than they could 10 years ago. "A combina-tion of slow wage growth and back-breaking infla-tion has caused an unprecedented decline in real wages (wages adjusted for price rise)," he said, citing the Labour Bureau's Wage

and 2023, real wages for labourers have stagnated, with clear declines in real wages in Modi-II," he said

Quoting the Ministry of Agriculture's 'Agricultural Statistics at a Glance', the former Minister said that under the 10 years of the UPA government, the real wages for agricultural lawages for agricultural la-bourers grew at 6.8% each year. "Under PM Modi, real wages for agricultural la-bourers declined by 1.3%

reported that average real earnings over time had stagnated between 2017 and 2022 across all em-

He also said that investment as a percentage of the GDP came down in the

Siddaramaiah | Big basket calls Prime Minister Modi a 'nalayak'

The Hindu Bureau

Calling Prime Minister Na rendra Modi a nalayak (useless), Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Sunday asked voters if they should vote for such a

"He[Mr. Modi] made outh believe by promising "He[Mr. Modi] made youth believe by promising two crore jobs. When jobs were sought after gradua-tion, he asked the youth to sell pakoda. The educated youth have decided that the Prime Minister Modi is election rally in the State's Kolar Lok Sabha consti-



Heady brew: Workers on the way to pluck tea leaves on the outskirts of Guwahati on Sunday. Assam now produces nearly 7 lakh m

Animal rights campaigners, experts rally behind govt.'s breed-specific ban on dogs

Soibam Rocky Singh

After six different High Courts across India decided to either nullify or sus-pend the Centre's circular last month banning 23 last month banning 23 breeds of "ferocious" dogs in India, animal rights groups and experts have come out in support of the government's breed-specif-its ban intistring.

the Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying issued a circular prohibiting import, breed-ing, and selling of breeds including the Pit Bull Terrier, American Staffordshire Terrier, Dogo Argen-tine, and American

tine, and American Bulldog. While the High Courts of Kerala, Madras, Rajasthan, and Calcutta stayed the cirand Calcutta stayed the cir-cular, two High Courts of Delhi and Karnataka have quashed the circular with a direction to the Ministry to give an opportunity to all the stakeholders to raise their objections before it came out with a fresh circular.

Rights and rules However, the India office of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PE-TA), an international non profit fighting for animal rights, has stood behind

According to PETA, pit bulls and related breeds are among dogs commonly abandoned in India.

the Ministry's initiative. "The circular issued by the central government responsibly aimed to stop pit bull-type breeds from be-ing torn apart in illegal dogfights, and to protect dogngnts, and to protect citizens from being at-tacked by dogs bred to be unstoppable weapons," PETA said in a statement. It added that 80 million dogs and cats suffer on India's and cats suffer on India's streets. Pit bulls and relat-ed breeds are the most commonly abandoned in India, in a country where animal shelters are already overcrowded. "Pit bulls and related breeds are also otherwise typically kept on heavy chains, as attack heavy chains as attack dogs, resulting in aggres-sive, defensive behaviour and a lifetime of suffering."

nd a lifetime of suffering. Gauri Maulekhi, a pro minent animal welfare activist and trustee of People for Animals, an India-based non-profit with a network of 26 animal hos-pitals across the country, told *The Hindu*, "India has 4 crore street dogs, which are homeless, and the acare homeless, and the ac-tivity of proliferating or breeding more dogs of any variety – let alone the fo-reign variety – is basically not in the interest of the

country."

Varda Mehrotra, animal rights activist and founder of Samayu, agrees that banning certain dog breeds is a commendable step. However, she felt the ban needs to be practical in terms of its implementaharassment of pet owners.

Opposing arguments People who had challenged the circular before the High Courts had ar-gued that it lacked scientifgued that it lacked scientif-ic basis, and was devoid of research or reports. They had said that the circular lacked a comprehensive framework or research-backed methodology to de-fine what constituted a "femae what constituted a ter-rocious breed" and how the selected breeds fit this classification. They further stated that enforcing breed-specific legislation can be challenging, espe-cially when determining a dog's breed is not straight

India is a top-tier security partner: Australia

India is a top-tier security partner for Australia, stat-ed its new National De-fence Strategy-2024 re-leased last week, and through the Comprehen-sive Strategic Partnership between Australia and Isbetween Australia and In-dia, the government is continuing to prioritise practi cooperation that directly contributes to Indo-Pacific

"Australia will continue to support India's key role in the region by increasing of our defence cooperation. The government will continue to seek opportunities with India to drive practical bilateral and multilateral cooperation, de fence industry cooperation and information sharing," the NDS released on April

The 2024 Integrated In-

sets out the specific de-fence capabilities Australia will invest in to give effect to the NDS. As per this, the Albanese

government has allocated \$330 billion for the IIP over the decade to 2033-34. Ad-ding other commitments announced, the defence funding as a proportion of Gross Domestic Product is projected to rise to around 2.4% by 2033-34 – up to 0.3% higher than spending trajectory set by the former government, a

statement from the Austra-lian government said.

India is a "top tier" se-curity partner for Austra-lia, Australian envoy in In-dia Philip Green said on X. "Under the 2024 National Defence Strategy, Australia will support India's role in our region and seek to drive practical bilateral and multilateral coopera-tion, defence industry op-portunities and informa-

tion sharing."
Australia will also invest
in deepening our defence

relationships with partners across Southeast Asia and the Pacific, as well as in the Pacific, as well as in the Pacific, as well as in the Asia regions, the NDS said. This includes continuing to expand our partnerships with Japan and India. This includes continuing to expand our partnerships with Japan and India. This includes yellow the Japan Pacific, including key European nations." He risk of a conflict is interest and the risk of a conflict is inthe risk of a conflict is in-creasing, including on the

Eight years in the making, Kashmir's magic carpet is a marvel

At least 30 people are required to unroll the intricate marvel, which weighs 1,685 kg and features over three crore knots; in the time it took to weave the carpet, 200 artisans returned to the traditional trade, overcoming several challenges such as the pandemic and dilution of Article 370

he famous Hazratbal dargah in Srinagar is attracting people for a rare spectacle this week – the ashing and clipping of the largest carpet wow in Kashmir by far. The gth and 40 ft in width

knots.
The rare attempt pits
Kashmiri artisans for the
first time against their
traditional Iranian rivals,
who have already woven a
carpet the size of a soccer field at 60,468 sq. ft. The

clipping and washing the huge and valuable carpet, which has taken eight years to complete and is likely to embellish a palace in the Middle East.

"At least 30 people are required to unroll the carpet. It would take 30-35

carpet. It would take 30-35 professional washers to professional washers to daily basis," Zahoor daily basis," Zahoor Ahmad Shah, owner of Shah Qadir and Sons, told Samples of water from the nearby Dal lake have been sent for testing to the been sent for testing to the Technology, Srinagar. "We wastit the report to ensure the water will not harm the carpet," Mr. Shah sald.



Mr. Shah's company received the order in 2014 and began working on it in 2015. "It was not an easy task. In between, we were hit by several challenges, including the 2014 floods, the dilution of Article 370 and the pandemic," he said. The carpet is woven in the Kashan style, a historic design of the Iranian city of Kashan. The company had to hire engineers to remake a carpet ioom at the Valloo-Kunzar village in north Kashmir's Baramulla

loom to match the task. Cranes lifted the carpet on to large trawlers for its transportation from Baramulla to Srinagar Each day, 25-30 artisans pent hours upon hours to complish the feat." Mr. He said that around 200 ons who had switcher

artisans who had switche to other professions returned to the trade for rhis project. "The carpet industry is waning in Kashmir and poor wages are pushing artisans to other professions. I believe that projects like this can rekindle hope," Mr. Shah said.
Kashmir, despite beins among the leading

carpet-producing States in India, has seen only slow growth in the sector due to the falling numbers of artisans. Over one lakh artisans are employed by the carpet industry here. "Kashmiris have been

weaving carpets for centuries, However, size has always remained a raint. The oldest and the largest carpet from Kashmir continues to embellish the Darbar Hall embellish the Darbar Hall of the Grand Lalit Hotel in Srinagar. This is a watershed revival moment for Kashmir's carpet industry," Mahmood Ahmed Shah, Director, Handicrafts and Handloom Industries, Kashmir, said.

Violence not limited to guns and daggers: Sonam Wangchuk

"The understanding of vio-lence should not be limited to just guns and daggers. Environmental challenges lead to the slow death of the elderly, the birds, and the animals. So, why do we not define pollution to be a form of violence?" asked form of violence?" asked sonam Wangchuk, an envi-ronmentalist from Ladakh, inspiration for the Bolly-wood movie 3 Idiots, at a protest in Freedom Park on the event which was held as a peaceful solidari-ty event for Ladakh as well as local aspirations for a

green, sustainable Benga-

outdated. We talk about the right to life, but we do not include slow poisoning with air pollution as a factor. We need to redefine groom our young people on how to live bet

Decentralisation nitch

Decentralisation pitch
The protest also focused
on the implementation of
P4th Constitutional
provides constitutional staprovides constitutional state of
People who live in their
rewn regions should have
more control over their
land."

India is a top-tier security partner: Australia

Dinakar Peri

NEW DELHI

India is a top-tier security partner for Australia, stated its new National Defence Strategy-2024 released last week, through the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership between Australia and India, the government is continuing to prioritise practitangible cal and cooperation that directly contributes to Indo-Pacific stability.

"Australia will continue to support India's key role in the region by increasing the depth and complexity of our defence cooperation. The government will continue to seek opportunities with India to drive practical bilateral and multilateral cooperation, defence industry cooperation and information sharing," the NDS released on April 17 said.

The 2024 Integrated Investment Programme (IIP) was also released which

sets out the specific defence capabilities Australia will invest in to give effect to the NDS.

As per this, the Albanese government has allocated \$330 billion for the IIP over the decade to 2033-34. Adding other commitments announced, the defence funding as a proportion of Gross Domestic Product is projected to rise to around 2.4% by 2033-34 — up to 0.3% higher than the spending trajectory set by the former government, a

statement from the Australian government said.

India is a "top tier" security partner for Australia, Australian envoy in India Philip Green said on X. "Under the 2024 National Defence Strategy, Australia will support India's role in our region and seek to drive practical bilateral and multilateral cooperation, defence industry opportunities and information sharing."

Australia will also invest in deepening our defence

relationships with partners across Southeast Asia and the Pacific, as well as in the Indian Ocean and North Asia regions, the NDS said. "This includes continuing to expand our partnerships with Japan and India. Australia will also continue to work closely with likeminded partners outside the Indo-Pacific, including key European nations."

The NDS also noted that the risk of a conflict is increasing, including on the border with India.

Cooperation in QUAD

- Both India and Australia are members of Quad.
- Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA), subsurface domain awareness, and anti-submarine warfare have been major focus areas for the Quad.
- In information sharing, the Ouad's Indo-Pacific MDA or IPMDA is currently in the implementation phase.
 - IPMDA is a technology and training initiative to increase maritime domain awareness in the Indo-Pacific region.
 - It was introduced at the Tokyo summit in 2022.

Bilateral cooperation

- India and Australia signed a Mutual Logistics Support agreement in 2020.
- The two Navies signed the 'Joint Guidance for the India-Australia Navy to Navy Relationship' document in August 2021.
- Australia also has a Liaison Officer at the Indian Navv's Information Fusion Centre for the Indian Ocean Region.

- Several firsts in 2023 in bilateral defence cooperation
 - There have been several firsts this year in bilateral defence cooperation:
 - the maiden visit of an Indian Navy submarine to Australia;
 - Canberra hosting the Malabar naval exercise; and
 - Indian Navy Dornier and Air Force C-130 visiting Cocos Keeling island.

Liquor case: ED

set to file new

chargesheet, may name AAP Kejriwal among new names likely; unprecedented step misuse of law to

BUSINESS AS I ISLIAI OUCH A big use over in big ruling partyeon who are the country's wresting.



Leaders may run grassroot workers have not gone anywhere MALLIKARJUN KHARGE PAGE 14

Peru-based top potato research centre to set up India wing

HARIKISHAN SHARMA

SEVEN YEARS after China got a International Potato Center (CIP), the premier research-for-develthe premier research-for-devel-opment organisation with focus on potato and sweetpotato, India is set to get a similar centre. The CIP-South Asia Regional Centre (CIP-SARC) is expected to come up in Agra. The centre will serve farmers not only in potato-belt states of India such as Uttar Pradesh.

Bihar and West Bengal but also in other South Asian countries.

in other South Asian countries.
The hadiom Express has learnt
the control of the control of the control of the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers'
Welfare, which is being prepared whether which is being prepared to the control of the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers'
Welfare, which is being prepared to the control of the Ministry of Agronding to Sources, officials from both sides — India and Perus
According to sources, officials from both sides — India and Perus
tions and a formal agreement

tions and a formal agreement will be signed after approval from the Union Cabinet.

The Agriculture Ministry is learnt to have forwarded the proposal to set up the CIP-SARC to the Committee on Establishment Expenditure (CEE) headed by the Expenditure Secretary. After the CEE's clear-ance, the proposal will go to the Cabinet for final approval. The project is expected to cost \$20 million (about Rs 160 crove), of which India will con-

tribute \$13 million (Rs 108 crore and the rest will be funded by the CIP, sources said. The Uttar Pradesh government will be pro-viding 10 hectares for the pro-

posed centre.

According to officials, the CIP-SARC will focus on development of new varieties of potato and sweetpotato, which are climate restilient, disease-free and

WHEN IN POWER. THEY SAID MUSLIMS HAVE FIRST RIGHT: PM IN RAJASTHAN

PM on Muslims: Cong will give your wealth to 'those with more children'



Prime Minister Narendra Modi with Rajasthan Chief Minister Bhajan Lal Sharma during a rally in Jalore, P.

'Should your hard-earned money be given to infiltrators, do you agree to it?'

PARIII KIII SHRESTHA & HAMZA KHAN BANSWARA, JAIPUR, APRIL 21

MENTIONING MUSLIMS and for-

kaha tha ki desh ki sar

pehla adhikar Musalmano ka hal. Iska matlab, ye sampati ikarthi karke kisko baatenge 7 finke zyada bacche hain, umlo baatenge, glus-pathiyon ko baatenge. Kya anpki mehnat ki karnayi ka paisa glus-



Opp INDIA bloc leaders Priyanka Chaturvedi, Kalpana Soren, Sanjay Singh, Bhagwant Mann, Akhilesh Yaday, Champai Soren, Faroog Abdullah and Rajesh Thakur in Ranchi, Sunday, Pri

Kharge: What PM said is hate speech. our manifesto talks of justice for all Rest in Peace...Election Commission of India: TN Minister

MANOJCG NEW DELHI, APRIL 21

TERMING PRIME Minister

TERMING PRIME Minister Narendra Modi's remarks as "hate speech", the Congress on Sunday said it was "a well sunday said it was "a well ple's attention, prompted by the "panic" and "disappointment" over the first phase of the ongo-ing Lok Sabha elections. The party said its manifesto "has no mention of the words Muslim and Hindu" and talks about CONTINUED ON PAGE 2 equality and justice for all.

AT INDIA BLOC RALLY IN RANCHI, FOCUS ON ARRESTS OF SOREN AND KEJRIWAL P 10

In his speech in Rajasthan, Modiclaimed that the Congress's manifesto talks about taking stock of 'the gold of mothers and sisters' and distributing that wealth, adding that the then

right to the country's assets. Reacting sharply to his re-marks, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge said "no Prime Minister in the history of India has lowered the dignity of his office as much as Modi." He said Modi's "panic-filled" speech said medis paint-amed speech showed that the Opposition IN-speech of the paint of the phase of elections which was held on April 19. "What Modiji said was hate speech and also a well thought-out ploy to divert attention. Today, the Prime Minister did

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

RITUSARIN

THE ENEORCEMENT Directorate

kely to file its latest prosecu-complaint — equivalent to a applementary chargesheet - in Delhi Chief Minister Arvind ejriwal as well as the Aam admi Party, possibly before

Political

named in the previous six chargesheets in the case, The Indian Express has learnt. ED ARGUES that AAP is a

Besides Kejriwal and Kavitha, also likely to figure in the new supplementary chargesheet is

figure in the chargesheet.

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE





party &

political party registered under Section 29-A of the since AAP is also an "association of individu-als," it falls within the definition of "company"

they had sound legal advice back it. Indeed, the possibility doing so had been acknow

EXPRESS NETWORK

SLUGFEST OVER

CORPORATOR KIN

THRISSUR FEST ROW CM ORDERS CITY TOP COPS' REMOVAL

AN EXPRESS SERIES - PART I : MAHARASHTRA

Many new cracks on the political ground but above it, there's one question: Modi versus?

The Indian Express retraces the route from where Rahul Gandhi's second 'vatra' ended, takes detours to listen to people - on where the Opposition and the ruling party

are headed

|**\oints**| Мимваі то MURSHIDABAD

VANDITA MISHRA & SHUBHANGI KHAPRE MUMBAI THANE NASHIK MALEGAON, DHULE, APRIL 21

WHEN THE Bharat Iodo Nyay Yatra wound to an end in a rally at Mumbai's Shivaji Park on March 17, those who were



A 'Modi guarantee' hoarding in Mumbai, Amir Chrismours

Hindu brothers, sisters, mothers..., "as he usually did, Udwasaid: "My patriotic brothers, sisters, mothers..." east, traditional roals that have stared each other down across the state" secular sist decades, were acknowledging, shead of this election, their sisters of the state of the sister of the state of the sister of



FOR THIRD TERM CONG CANDIDATE FOR SURAT REJECTED, TO

Uddhav: Won't remove 'Hindu', 'Bhavani' from party song, EC must act



against PM, Shah first

Sunday called it an "insult" to Maharashtra and said his party will not follow the poll panel's direction to remove the two references from the song.

'The Election Commission has issued us a letter regarding the theme song we released last "The EC has sent us a fatw asking us to take 'Jai Bhavani' ou of our song. Under no circum week. They are asking us to re-move two words from the song, which are 'Hindu' dharma and mention of goddess Bhavani. We have not asked for votes on the basis of Hindu religion anywhere stance will we take this wout. If the EC wants to act agains then it should first act against the standard stan

In Kerala, under fire for 'silence' on DECISION (1/2) 2024 CAA, Cong promises to repeal law

SHAJUPHILIPA MANOJICG THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, NEW DELHI, APRIL 21

A PORTNIGHT after the Congress released its election manifesto, which made no mention of the controversial Citizenship (Amendment) Act that it had op-



manifesto committee

committee

acking the Congress over its 'sa'
parliament if the INDIA bloc
parliament if the INDIA bloc
Congress and the Left are up
against each other.
Chidambaram, who headed
the Congress's manifesto commister to real the CAA was part of the
CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Kerala where Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan — with an eye on the significant and influential Muslim vote bank - has been at-tacking the Congress over its "si-

DEVE GOWDA: ONLY MODI CAN SHOULDER

Gukesh on threshold of history, Anand says 'he's steady and focused'

AMIT KAMATH

AS HE emerged from the playing hall in Toronto on Sunday momng after defeating Alireza with just one game left — D Gukesh was asked about his trademark unfazed demeanor cide the challenger to the reign-ing World Champion, but there were no signs of nerves.

"Twe been eager and excited in the same way from the start. My mental state has been the

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same." Gukesh said at the press conference after the Round 13 triumph that made him the odds-on favourite to be the des-ignated No.1 Candidate to take on defending champion Ding

duel, Guikesh's closest rivals— Ian Nepomniachtichi and Hikaru Nakamura—settled for a quick Nakamura—settled for a quick citting final round on Monday. Guikesh at 8.5 points is now closely followed by the three joint-second candidates—the two Americans, Nakamura and Fabiano Caruana, along with

Despite his opponents breathing down his neck, Gukesh played the waiting game. He didn't allow pressure to make him anxious. It was the Liren of China next year. French GM Firouzja who blinked first. The moment came when



the two rival queens were fac-to-face. Called-tell-first his pusey from a skirmish and accepted the queen exchange. This put him in a winning position. It would take him 17 more moves to the face of the the occasion, Culsesh has held his own against his experienced rivals when the battle stretched.

sponse. "I would describe Gukesh at the Candidates as steady and focused, focused besteady and focused, focused besion and the chance he has got. And steady because he plays one
game at a time and gives the imtration on the game ahead of
him. He is happy and excited at
the chance he has got. But generally, he is quite level-headed
would say he gives the impreswould say he gives the impresrwals when the battle stretched the stretched with the stretched by the stretched to rationalise an explanation for why he has been playing so well dead of the stretched by the

Anand tried to cheer Gukes

ing star. The five-time wor champion said he himself h a lot riding on the outcome an CONTINUED ON PAGE

CLOSELY WATCHED BY INDIA, CHINA AMID REGIONAL POWER DYNAMICS

With over 60 seats, Muizzu party secures landslide win in Maldives Parliament polls

Polls seen as litmus test for pro-Beijing President; party wins all big cities in blow to opposition

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

MALE, APRIL 21

MALDIVIAN PRESIDENT Mohamed Muizzu has secured a "supermajority" in Parliament by winning over 60 seats in Sunday's crucial parliamentary election, seen as a litmus test for the pro-Beijing politician whose policies are being closely watched by both India and China amidst regional power dynamics.

According to information released by the Elections Commission (EC), 207,693 people cast their ballots as of 5:00 pm local time, making for a voter turnout of 72.96 per cent. This includes 104,826 men and 102,867 women. A total of 284,663 people were eligible to vote to elect lawmakers for 93 constituencies in the 20th People's Majlis.



At a polling station in Male on Sunday. AP

Atotal of 368 candidates were in the fray, including 130 independent candidates.

According to preliminary results, PNC secured over 60 constituencies accounting for almost two-thirds of the parliament, it said.

As per the trends, the PNC led by Muizzu bagged 67 seats, followed by Maldivian Democratic Party (MDP) at 12 seats and Independents won 10 seats. Maldives Development Alliance (MDA) and Jumhooree Party (JP) got one each. The Democrats,



Maldives President Mohamed Muizu

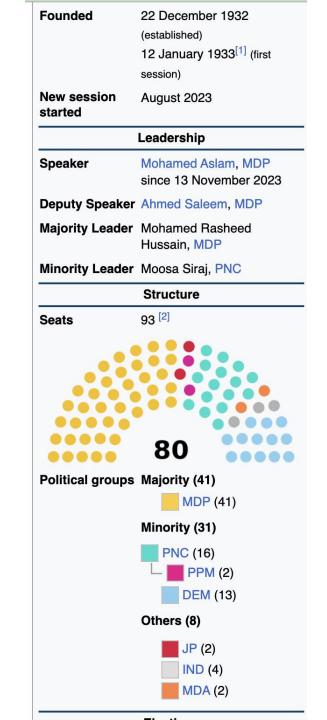
Maldives National Party (MNP) and Adhaalath Party (AP) are yet to open their accounts.

The main ruling PNC secured all cities across the Maldives, in a major loss to the main opposition MDP, which had dominated the cities in previous elections. Preliminary results show that PNC secured the majority of the seats in Male City, Addu City and Fuvahmulah City. The Democrats, founded by former President Mohamed Nasheed, and candidates endorsed by former President Abdulla Yameen Abdul Gayoom have not secured any

seats, according to media reports.

A total of 602 ballot boxes were set up in the Maldives and three other countries for the parliamentary election. Polling stations were also open in 34 resorts, prisons, and other industrial islands. The countries in which ballot boxes were placed for voting are Thiruvananthapuram in India, Colombo in Sri Lanka and Kuala Lumpur in Malaysia, psmnews.mv reported.

The election is crucial for Muizzu, seen as a pro-China politician, as just a few days ahead of the polls, the opposition parties demanded a probe and impeachment of the president following a leaked report of his alleged corruption from 2018, a charge dismissed by him. Besides, since Muizzu came to office, lawmakers have blocked three of his nominees to the cabinet.



WITH EACH WEEK, JUNTA'S FORCES ABANDON MORE OUTPOSTS

Resistance forces now control over half of Myanmar's territory

HANNAH BEECH & WEIYI CAI

APRIL 21

MYANMAR'S MILITARY staged a coup in 2021, strangling democratic reforms and jailing much of the country's civilian leadership. Three years on, the Southeast Asian nation is teetering on the brink of failed statehood. Insurgent groups, including pro-democracy forces and ethnic militias, are battling the junta's soldiers. Tens of thousands of people have been killed, and millions more are displaced.

The resistance now controls more than half of Myanmar's territory.

The fighting, in forests and

towns across Myanmar, gets little of the international attention claimed by the conflicts in Ukraine and Gaza. Yet a decade ago, this nation wedged between India and China was touted as a rare example of a country peacefully transitioning from military dictatorship toward democratic rule.

The army putschended any illusion of political progress. Myanmar has returned to a military reign of terror and the fractured reality of civil war. The lawlessness that thrives in conflict areas has radiated outward, with transnational crime networks using Myanmar as a base.

A common goal of overthrowing the junta has led to unity between pro-democracy militias



Soldiers from 8th Battalion of the Karenni Nationalities Defense Force, an armed insurgent group in February. NYT and armed ethnic groups. Together, these resistance forces have claimed significant territory from the Myanmar military. On April 11, they captured a key border town from the junta's forces, their biggest victory yet.

More than 20 militias representing various ethnic minorities have been fighting for autonomy for decades. Some of these insurgent groups control territory in Myanmar's resource-rich periphery.

Tens of thousands of young people — among them doctors, actors, lawyers, teachers, models, Buddhist monks, D.J.s and engineers — escaped from the junta-held cities and formed more than 200 People's Defense Forces, pledging allegiance to the

shadow government. Often trained by the ethnic militias, the People's Defense Forces (PDF) is now fighting in more than 100 townships across the country.

Since an alliance of three ethnic armies, backed by the P.D.F., began an offensive on Oct. 27, the resistance has gained significant ground. Rebels now control much of Myanmar's border region, including a strategic trading town that was captured on April 11. A few days later, they fired rockets at the nation's top military academy. Some of the fighting is taking place within striking distance of Naypyidaw, the bunkered capital that the generals built early this century.

This year could be a turning point in Myanmar's war, military

analysts say. With each week, the junta's forces abandon more outposts. Myanmar's military is overstretched and underprovisioned. Even at the best of times, its biggest asset has been numbers, not expertise. In February, the military brought in a draft, signaling its desperation for fresh recruits.

By the end of last year, more than 2.6 million people had been driven from their homes in a country of about 55 million, according to the United Nations human rights office. Nearly 600,000 of those internally displaced people fled after the fighting intensified in October. More than 18 million people are in desperate need of humanitarian aid, according to the United Nations.

Capital	Naypyidaw ^[a]
Largest city	Yangon ^[b]
Official language	Burmese
Recognised regional languages ^[1]	Chin · Kachin · Karen · Kayah · Mon · Rakhine · Shan
Ethnic groups (2018 ^{[2][3]})	68% Bamar 9% Shan 7% Karen 4% Rakhine 3% Chinese 2% Indians 2% Mon 5% other
Religion	87.9% Buddhism (official) ^[4] 6.2% Christianity 4.3% Islam 1.6% other ^[5]
Demonym(s)	Burmese · Myanma
Government	Unitary assembly- independent republic under a military junta
President SAC Chairman and Prime Minister	Myint Swe (acting) Min Aung Hlaing
SAC Vice Chairman and Deputy Prime Minister	Soe Win ^[c]
Legislature	State Administration Council

Formation	
Pagan KingdomToungoo dynastyKonbaung dynastyAnnexation by Britain	23 December 849 16 October 1510 29 February 1752 1 January 1886
Independence from the United Kingdom	4 January 1948
1962 coup d'état Renamed from "Burma" to "Myanmar"	2 March 1962 18 June 1989
 Dissolution of military government 	30 March 2011
• 2021 coup d'état	1 February 2021
Area	2.
Total Water (%)	676,579 km ² (261,229 sq mi) (39th) 3.06
Population • 2022 estimate	57,526,449 ^[10] (26th)
Density	196.8/sq mi (76.0/km²) (125th)
GDP (PPP)	2023 estimate
• Total	\$277.767 billion ^[11] (64th)
Per capita	▲ \$5,124 ^[11] (146th)
GDP (nominal) • Total	2023 estimate \$74.861 billion ^[11] (90th)
• Per capita	▲ \$1,381 ^[11] (167th)
Gini (2017)	▼ 30.7 ^[12] medium
HDI (2022)	▲ 0.608 ^[13] medium (144th)
Currency	Kyat (K) (MMK)

Areas of Ethnic Militant Activity in Myanmar



Source: Burma News International, "Deciphering Myanmar's Peace Process: A Reference Guide 2015"

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MILITANT GROUPS AND NUMBER OF TROOPS

- **UWSA** (United Wa State Army): 30,000 troops, 10,000 reservists
- KIA (Kachin Independence Army): 10,000 troops, 10,000 reservists
- RCSS (Restoration Council of Shan State): 8,000+ troops
- SSPP (Shan State Progress Party): 8,000+ troops
- KNU (Karen National Union): 5,000+ troops
- **TNLA** (Ta'ang National Liberation Army): 4,500+ troops
- NDAA-ESS (National Democratic Alliance Army-Eastern Shan State): 4,500+ troops
- MNDAA (Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army): 2,000 troops
- DKBA (Democratic Karen Benevolent Army): 1,500+ troops
- NMSP (New Mon State Party): 800+ troops, 2,000 reservists
- KNPP (Karenni National Progressive Party): 600+ troops
- NSCN-K (National Socialist Council of Nagaland-Khaplang): <500 troops
- **PNLO** (Pa-O National Liberation Organization): 400+ troops
- CNF (Chin National Front): 200+ troops
- KNO-B (Kuki National Organization-Burma): 200+ troops
- KNU/KNLA-PC (Karen National Union/Karen National Liberation Army-Peace Council): <200 troops
- ALP (Arakan Liberation Party): 60-100 troops

THE STORY OF INDELIBLE INK, A LASTING SYMBOL OF ELECTIONS

DECISION

2024

RISHIKA SINGH

NEW DELHI, APRIL 21

AS FRIDAY marked the first phase of the Lok Sabha elections, the classic symbol of Indian polls was under the spotlight again — a left hand with its index finger extended, marked by purple-black indelible ink.

Mysore Paints & Varnish Ltd, owned by the Karnataka government, which is the sole manufacturer of the ink in India, told DD News that around 26.5 lakh phials or small bottles (with a capacity of 10 ml each) would be made for this election cycle.

Why is the ink required?

The indelible ink was first manufactured at the Election Commission of India's request by the Council of Scientific & Industrial Research. The MyGov website says, "It was to counter the challenge of fraudulent voting" that research work

on formulating the ink began in the 1950s by scientists. Later, the National Research Development Corporation patented it.

Mysore Paints & Varnish Ltd has been licensed to manufacture the ink and has been in the business since 1962. It was established in 1937 by Nalwadi Krishnaraja Wodeyar, the Maharaja of Mysore.

How long has it been in use?

The Representation of the People Act (RoPA) of 1951 mentions the ink. Section 61 states that rules may be made under the Act "for the marking with indelible ink of the thumb or any other finger of every elector who applies for a ballot paper or ballot papers for the purpose of voting at a polling station before delivery of such paper or papers to him."

When ballot papers were the norm, voters had to mark their preference on them. Before the paper was given, a voter's



Voters after casting votes for the Lok Sabha polls, in Nagpur, on Friday. PTI

index finger would be marked with the ink.

The RoPA also speaks of rules being formulated "for prohibiting the delivery of any ballot paper" to anyone having a mark.

An ECI report on the first general elections (1951-52) said the ink was applied with a glass rod. A total, 3,89,816 phials were supplied to the states for Rs 2,27,460.

The mark was made on the base of the forefinger until the 1962 general elections, after which it was made above the root of the nail on the skin.

What makes it indelible?

Indelible ink contains silver nitrate. It is colourless and becomes visible when exposed to ultraviolet light, like sunlight.

At around 20% concentration of silver nitrate, the ink becomes difficult to remove for at least 72 hours after application.

According to MyGov, "This waterbased ink also contains a solvent like alcohol to allow its faster drying."

Currently, each phial is sold for Rs 174. The ink is exported to more than 25 countries. However, the procedure of its application varies. "In Cambodia and the Maldives, voters need to dip his/her finger into the ink... in Burkina Faso the ink is applied with a brush, and nozzles are used for its use in Turkey," the website says.

Those with 4-yr bachelor's degree, 75% marks can directly pursue PhD: UGC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA New Delhi, April 21

STUDENTS WITH FOUR-YEAR undergraduate degrees can now directly appear for National Eligibility Test (NET) and pursue PhD, according to University Grants Commission (UGC) chairman Jagadesh Kumar.

To pursue a PhD with or without a Junior Research Fellowship (JRF), the candidates will require a minimum of 75% marks or equivalent grades in their four-year

undergraduate course. Till now, a candidate for the NET needed a master's degree with a minimum of 55% marks.

The exam this year will be conducted in offline mode instead of a computer-based test. Tests for all subjects will be conducted on June 16.

"The candidates with four-year undergraduate degrees can now directly pursue

PhD and

appear for NET. Such candidates are allowed to appear (for tests) in a subject in which they want to pursue a PhD irrespective of the discipline in which they have obtained the four-year bachelor's degree," Kumar told *PTI*.

"Candidates having passed a four-year or eight-semester bachelor's degree programme should have a minimum of 75% marks in aggre-

> Jagadesh Kumar, UGC chairman

gate or its equivalent grade on a point scale wherever the grading system is followed," the UGC chairman said.

A relaxation of 5% marks or its equivalent grade may be allowed for those belonging to SC, ST, OBC (non-creamy layer), differently-abled, economically weaker sections and other categories of candidates as per the decision of the UGC from time to time, he added.

The application process for the exam began on Saturday and will end on May 10.

University Grants Commission



Abbreviation UGC

Formation 28 December 1956; 67 years

ago

Founder Maulana Azad

Headquarters New Delhi

India Location

Official language English, Hindi

Owner Government of India

Chairman Mamidala Jagadesh Kumar

Parent organization Department of Higher

Education, Ministry of

Education, Government of

India

Budget (2021- ₹4,693 crore

22)

(US\$590 million)[1]





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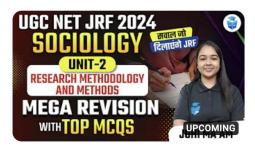
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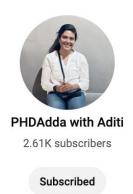
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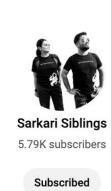
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World Heritage Day



- World Heritage Day, also known as the International Monuments and Sites Day, is observed on 18 April every year.
- The theme of World Heritage Day is 'Discover and Experience Diversity

Background

- **World Heritage** is the designation for places on Earth that are of outstanding universal value to humanity and as such, have been inscribed on the World Heritage List to be protected for future generations to appreciate and enjoy.
- In 1982, The International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) proposed that April 18 should be observed as the World Heritage Day.
 - Later, the date was approved by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) at the 22nd General Conference in 1983.

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Sweden Joins Artemis Accords



- Sweden and Slovenia became the 38th and 39th country respectively to sign the Artemis Accords.
- About
- The Artemis Accords are a set of principles and guidelines for international cooperation in space exploration.
 - They are not a legally binding instrument.

- They were announced by NASA in 2020 and named after NASA's Artemis program which is aimed at returning humans to the Moon by the mid-2020s.
- The Accords mirror principles set out in 1967, as part of the Outer Space Treaty to help govern international cooperation space.
- Members: Artemis Accords has 39 members including Australia, France, Germany, India, Japan, United Kingdom, United States of America etc.
 - India joined the Artemis Accords in 2023.
 - Russia and China are not part of the Artemis Accords.

Srinagar (considered for World Craft City)

Srinagar is being considered for the prestigious World Craft
 City (WCC) title by the World Crafts Council International
 (WCCI).

Pashmina shawls	Luxurious woollen shawls made from the wool of Pashmina goats are known for their softness and warmth.
Carpets	Hand-woven carpets featuring intricate designs and vibrant colours, often showcasing traditional motifs.
Papier mâché	Decorative objects crafted using molded and painted paper pulp.

Walnut wood carving	Beautiful furniture pieces, decorative panels, and small items such as boxes and bowls.
Hand-knotted carpets	Meticulously handcrafted carpets with elaborate patterns and designs, made using traditional techniques passed down through generations.
Kani shawls	Shawls are woven using the Kani technique, where each thread is individually looped and woven into the fabric, creating intricate patterns and designs. Pashmoda Pashmoda

 The World Craft City (WCC) initiative was launched in 2014 by the World Crafts Council International (WCCI), a Kuwait-based organization. It acknowledges the contributions of local authorities, craftspeople, and communities to cultural, economic, and social development worldwide. WCC aims to establish a network of craft cities globally, promoting the principles of the creative economy and preserving traditional crafts.

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