

# TOP NEWS OF J&K

JAMMU, TUESDAY, MARCH 05, 2024

Daily Evening Newspaper



ENTERTAINMENT | 6

**People started seeing me in a different light post 'Maharani': Huma Qureshi**



NATIONAL | 7

**No place for violence in elections, Bengal bureaucracy asked to be impartial: Chief Election Commissioner**

INTERNATIONAL | 8

**Maldives president Muizzu says no Indian troops to remain on his island, not even in civilian clothing**



e-paper: [www.topnewsjk.in](http://www.topnewsjk.in)

RNI No. JKENG/2010/39369

Regd. No. JK-435

Vol.-15 Issue-64 Pages-12 Rs.-2/-

## BRIEFLY

### Government orders transfers, postings in administration department

SRINAGAR, Mar 5 (Agencies): The Jammu and Kashmir government on Tuesday ordered transfers and postings of four JKAS officers. Here is the list of the transfers: Mukhlis Ali, previously serving as JKAS Assistant Director in DE&CC Poonch, has been transferred and appointed as Assistant Director in DE&CC Jammu.

Rupali Jasrotia, who was previously posted as Assistant Labour Commissioner in Ramban, has been transferred to the position of Assistant Labour Commissioner in Jammu.

Amit Kumar, the former JKAS Assistant Labour Commissioner (Central), has been reassigned to the role of Assistant Labour Commissioner in Ramban. Additionally, he will be entrusted with the responsibility of Assistant Director in DE and CC Ramban.

Nowshad Anjum, previously serving as JKAS Assistant Director in DE and CC Anantnag, has been transferred to DE and CC Baramulla as Assistant Director. He has also been assigned the additional role of Assistant Labour Commissioner in Baramulla.

### Army chopper lands briefly in field in Rajouri

JAMMU, Mar 5 (Agencies): A Cheetah helicopter of the Army briefly landed in an agriculture field in Jammu and Kashmir's Rajouri district. While some reports said the chopper made an emergency landing due to a technical snag, Army officials denied it. The chopper, with two pilots on board, landed in Dewak Hathal village of Sunderbani sub-division. Videos of the chopper landing in the field went viral on social media. The videos showed one of the pilots walking in the field before returning to the chopper. The chopper took off after a brief halt.

### MeT predicts light to moderate rains, snow from March 12 to 14

SRINAGAR, Mar 5 (Agencies): Meteorological Department has predicted light to moderate rains and snow at most places of Jammu & Kashmir from March 12 to 14.

The officials said **Turn to page 9**

## PM Modi congratulates new Pak counterpart Shehbaz Sharif

NEW DELHI, Mar 5 (Agencies): Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday congratulated Shehbaz Sharif after he was sworn in as the 24th Prime Minister of Pakistan.

Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) President Sharif, 72, was administered the oath of office on Monday in a ceremony held at



the Aiwan-i-Sadr, the presidential residence. Taking to his X, PM



Modi wrote: "Congratulations to @CMShehbaz on being sworn in as the

Prime Minister of Pakistan".

Sharif, the younger brother of former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, served as the PM from April 11, 2022, to August 14, 2023, after the Imran Khan government lost a no-confidence motion.

The swearing-in ceremony was attended by Nawaz Sharif, Punjab

**Turn to page 9**

## PM Modi has transformed J&K from terrorism capital to tourism capital: Tarun Chugh

SRINAGAR, Mar 5 (Agencies): Prime Minister Narendra Modi has transformed Jammu and Kashmir from terrorism capital to tourism capital of the country, senior BJP leader Tarun Chugh on Tuesday said.

"Jammu and Kashmir was once infamous as the terrorism capital, but it is now known as the tourism capital due to the policies of Prime Minister Modi," Chugh told reporters here.

The BJP leader was here to take stock of the preparations for Prime Minister Modi's public rally at Bakshi Stadium here on Thursday.

Chugh said there is all round development



in Jammu and Kashmir now.

"There is industrial growth and the youth are getting jobs, corruption has ended. The people want to see, meet and listen to the PM after he broke the shackles of Article 370. We have information that around 1.5 lakh to two lakh people will attend the rally at Bakshi Stadium," he added.

**Turn to page 9**

## Delhi Police files chargesheet against hizbul operative Javed Ahmed Mattu

NEW DELHI, Mar 5 (Agencies): The Special Cell of Delhi Police has filed a chargesheet against Hizbul operative Javed Ahmed Mattu, who is among the top ten terrorists designated by the Union Ministry of Home Affairs.

He was arrested by the Delhi Police on January 4, 2024.

According to Delhi

Police, Mattu has been associated with multiple terror attacks in Jammu and Kashmir and has been wanted by security agencies for the past 13 years with a 10 lakh reward on his head.

As per the Delhi Police, he was in the Delhi NCR region allegedly to collect arms and ammunition, which were to be used for a series of terror

activities in Jammu and Kashmir

The Cell has filed the chargesheet before Chief Metropolitan Magistrate (CMM) Nabeela Wali of Patiala House Court on March 3, 2024.

The court has fixed March 15 for cognizance on the charge sheet.

Earlier, the police, while taking custodial remand, stated that the

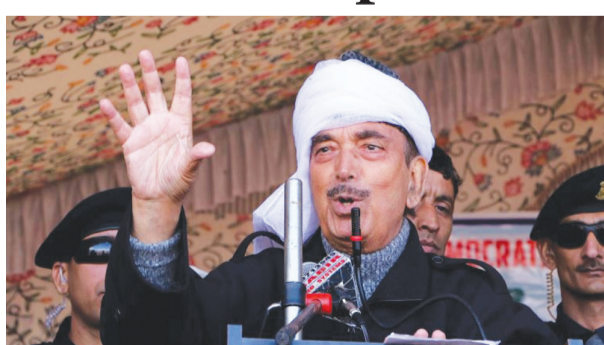
**Turn to page 9**

## Ghulam Nabi Azad taunts NC, PDP: 'Those who call us b team were part of BJP Govts'

ANANTNAG, Mar 5 (Agencies): Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) chairman Ghulam Nabi Azad on Tuesday said those who accuse him of being in cahoots with the BJP have no right to say as they have themselves been in alliance with the saffron party in the past.

Azad's remarks came amidst accusations by regional parties in Jammu and Kashmir that his party was the 'B' team of the BJP.

"Those who say that (I am B team), they both are A team. They have been in government and became CM. I have not been a minister or MP or MLA of that team," he



said. "So, what right do they have to call us as a B team when they themselves have been a part of BJP governments?" Azad told reporters here when asked about the accusations.

In an apparent reference to the National Conference (NC) and Peoples Democratic

Party (PDP), Azad said such parties should do some soul-searching before accusing anyone else.

"They should also check Parliament's records to see who spoke against the BJP there," he added.

To a question whether the Peoples Alliance for Gupkar Declaration

(PAGD) had failed, the former J-K chief minister said they are doing their work and he is doing his.

"Whether it has failed or is successful, it is for the people to decide," he said.

About his remarks on China during his speech at the public meeting earlier, Azad said India is facing threat on the border from both China and Pakistan.

"Yes, there is a danger to the whole country. This is not something new," he said.

However, when asked that Union Home Minister Amit Shah makes no reference to China but says India will

**Turn to page 9**

## GoI approves proposal of DoP&T, extends J&K deputation of 3 IAS officers by one year

### Top News Report

JAMMU, Mar 5: Approving a proposal of the Department of Personnel & Training, Government of India, Appointments Committee of the Cabinet, Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions, Department of Personnel and Training, has extended Jammu and Kashmir deputation of three Indian Administrative Services' officers by one year each.



Among the officers who by the effect of the order are getting the extension, include, Basharat Qayoom, Akshay Labroo and Athar Aamir UI Shafi Khan.

While Basharat

Qayoom gets the extension from Jharkhand cadre, Akshay Labroo is getting the extension from Tripura cadre and Athar Aamir UI Shafi Khan gets the extension from Rajasthan cadre.

## Two die after vehicle plunges into gorge in Ramban

JAMMU, Mar 5 (Agencies): At least two people died in a road accident after a vehicle they were travelling fell into deep gorge near Battery Chashma along Jammu Srinagar national highway in Ramban district on Monday night, an official said on Tuesday.

An official told that the driver of ill-fated cab was failed to negotiate a sharp curve, and the vehicle fell into a deep gorge about 150 meters near Battery Chashma, Ramban, on NH-44 at 12:30 am.

He said soon after the

accident police, civil QRT, and SDRF reached the accident spot and two occupants traveling in the said vehicle were retrieved and shifted to DH Ramban, where both were declared brought dead at hospital.

The deceased have been identified as Hakam Din, son of Abdul Rehman, aged about 25 years and Tariq Ahmed, son of Abdul Rashid, aged about 32 years, both residents of Village Dalwa, Sangaldan, Gool District Ramban.

"A case FIR No 48/224

**Turn to page 9**

## Police seize bag containing gunpowder in border area of Kathua

JAMMU, Mar 5: A bag containing gunpowder was found near the India-Pakistan International Border in Jammu and Kashmir's Kathua district on Tuesday, officials said.

An investigation is underway, they said and added that gunpowder is

**Turn to page 9**

## Scrap 5 Pc customs duty on Newsprint: INS Urges Govt

NEW DELHI, Mar (Agencies) 5: The Indian Newspaper Society has urged the Government to scrap the five per cent Customs duty on newsprint to allow publishers to manage their operational costs more effectively.

In a statement, the INS said a combination of factors affecting the price and availability of newsprint—geopolitical uncertainties, logistics,

rupee depreciation and Customs duty — have created a formidable burden for publishers in the country.

The escalations in the conflict in West Asia, as well as the conflict between Russia and Ukraine, have significantly affected the global supply chain, including for newsprint, the organisation said in its statement issued here on Monday.

The Indian Newspaper Society (INS) urgently appealed to the Government to reconsider the imposition of five per cent Customs duty on newsprint.

"This measure, if withdrawn, would provide much-needed relief to the print media industry, allowing publishers to manage their operational costs more effectively and ensure

**Turn to page 9**

Ports	4Ports - 64 Ports
Trunks	4 - 10 Trunk's
FND	Tri-Color
Scheduler	Small, ABS Body
KTS	Pluggable Add on
Paging	Yes
Hotel Fn	Yes
MMOH	Pluggable Add on

www.crystalpbx.com

CADNICA ELECTRONIC SOLUTIONS

Contact Person Mr. Sanjeev Kumar

9419143503





## EDITORIAL

GREEN  
HYDROGEN

Green hydrogen is produced through electrolysis using renewable sources of energy such as solar, wind or hydropower.

Green ('green') depends on how the hydrogen is obtained. How is electricity generated, which does not emit greenhouse gases when burnt?

Green hydrogen is produced through electrolysis using renewable sources of energy such as solar, wind or hydropower. Gray hydrogen is produced from fossil fuels such as coal and gas and is currently India accounts for 95% of total production in South Asia.

Blue hydrogen is also produced using electricity generated by burning fossil fuels, but using technologies to prevent free carbon from entering the atmosphere in the process. Is produced with.

Promotion of non-fossil fuels: India has started producing green hydrogen with an aim to increase non-fossil energy capacity to 500 GW by 2030.

Adhering to the Paris Pledge: Under the Paris Agreement 2015, India will reduce its greenhouse gas emissions 3335% below 2005 levels.

At the 2021 Conference of the Parties in Glasgow, India reiterated its commitment to shift from a fossil and import-dependent economy to a net-zero economy by 2070. High import bill: India's average annual energy import bill is more than \$100 billion and increasing use of fossil fuels has made the country a high carbon dioxide (CO2) emitter.

India's carbon dioxide (CO2) emissions It accounts for about 7 per cent of the global carbon dioxide mass. India's quest to become energy independent by 2047: Government stressed the need to introduce green hydrogen as an alternative fuel that can make India a global hub and a major exporter of hydrogen.

National Hydrogen Mission (NHM): It was launched on August 15, 2021 with the aim of reducing carbon emissions and increasing the use of renewable sources of energy.

On April 20, India's first 99.99% pure green hydrogen pilot plant was set up in Duliajan in eastern Assam.

Key objective: It is designed with the aim of "preparing the country for pilot scale production of hydrogen". This was also done to ensure that it would continue to be used in a variety of applications while research and development efforts continued to reduce the costs of producing, storing and transporting hydrogen.

Key Features of the Plant: Powered by a 500 kW solar plant, the green hydrogen unit has an installed capacity to produce 10 kg of hydrogen per day and scale up to 30 kg per day.

The green hydrogen produced from the plant will be produced from natural gas. A special blender has also been set up for mixing and supplying the blended gas to Jorhat area for domestic and industrial use.

Oil India Limited (OIL) has studied the impact of blended gas on the existing unit. Experts from Indian Institute of Technology Guwahati have been appointed to conduct the assessment.

Reliable source of energy: The intermittent nature of renewable energy, especially wind, leads to grid instability.

Green hydrogen can be stored for long periods. The stored hydrogen can be used to produce electricity using fuel cells.

Commercialization of produced oxygen: Experts say the oxygen produced as a byproduct could be used for industrial and medical applications or to the environment. Can also be monetized by using to enrich.

The potential of hydrogen has led many countries to pledge investment, with Portugal unveiling a \$7.7 billion national hydrogen strategy in May.

The huge market for renewable energy: Renewable developers see green hydrogen as an emerging market. Some have targeted the transportation sector, although electric vehicles have begun to capture the imagination of consumers today.

## Gaza bleeds as Israel lacks endgame, hits US politics

By: K.C. Singh

With the fatalities in the Gaza Strip crossing 30,000, the world has been emotionally numb to the rising death toll. However, the events in north Gaza on February 29 revived global criticism of not only Israeli excesses but an inert American government. Over 100 people had died and at least 700 were injured, when a food truck convoy got mobbed and Israeli troops opened fire. Many questions arise.

First, with Israeli military operations over in January in north Gaza, why has Israel not installed a post-war administrative structure in a sanitised zone it fully controls? Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has mooted a nebulous "plan" encompassing "the administration of civilian affairs and the enforcement of public order" based on "local stakeholders with managerial experience". But his extreme right-wing alliance partners have been pushing for re-establishing Israeli settlements in Gaza, withdrawn two decades ago.

Prime Minister Netanyahu also conditioned the new Gaza administrators to not be affiliated with "countries or entities that support terrorism". That sounds like India's precondition to dialogue with Pakistan. The United States and its Arab friends, on the contrary, are suggesting an experienced Palestinian leader from the West Bank. This has the virtue of being seen as a step towards a united Palestinian state.

After Israel had withdrawn its forces from the Gaza Strip in 2005, the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank ran Gaza until it was defeated in an election by Hamas.

Israel has, meanwhile, announced that the next interim ceasefire is acceptable to it, provided of course

that Hamas concurs. There has been rising concern amongst the left wing of the Democratic Party in the US that President Joe Biden has been over-indulgent with Mr Netanyahu's Israeli government. The speed with which Americans airdropped food aid over north Gaza indicated the Biden administration's concern over their plunging approval ratings at home. The New York Times noted the "extreme hunger and desperation" in north Gaza amongst 300,000 Palestinians still braving it out there. But the crisis is unlikely to be ameliorated by aerial drops because if truck convoys are getting mobbed, how will these consignments get equitably distributed?

The question again resurfaces as to why a local law and order machinery, in lieu of the one that Hamas ran, is still absent. One suggestion is to resurrect the police force that the Palestinian Authority had recruited in 2005, which Hamas had dissolved. Another is for Egypt and Jordan providing a joint force for administering portions of Gaza apparently freed from Hamas control. Essentially, none of these schemes will work till there is strategic clarity in Israeli thinking.

Paradoxically, for this clarity, Mr Netanyahu has to ignore the right-wing radicals in his coalition government. But if he does that his government will fall, leading to his exit as Prime Minister. Some sections of the Israeli media are urging less radical elements in the ruling coalition to push for an early election.

A new poll in the United States by Times/Siena brings bad news for President Joe Biden. Although the American public's main priorities are immigration and the economy, the negative perception about partiality towards the Israeli government is affecting the overall

assessment of the US President. His job handling rating is a poor 47 per cent. When those who voted in 2020 for Joe Biden and Donald Trump were asked if they would do so again, the tally for Mr Trump was 97 per cent, and only 83 per cent for President Biden. In fact, 10 per cent of Mr Biden's previous voters favoured Mr Trump now. Overall, 40 per cent expressed sympathy towards Israel as against 24 per cent for the Palestinians.

The impact on global trade and manufacturing of a protracted Gaza conflict is now self-evident. The first sinking recently of a commercial vessel in the Red Sea by the Houthi rebels underscores the danger to this vital shipping corridor. The missile attacks on Houthis by the US and its allies seem to have had limited impact on attacks on shipping. Indirectly, Egypt is being driven into a worse financial mess due to loss of income from the Suez Canal. The Iranian parliamentary elections have resulted, as expected, in more conservative candidates winning. The low 40 per cent odd voter turnout may be a moral defeat for the Iranian regime but it is unlikely to stem their geopolitical designs.

Therefore, uncertainty prevails due to a political logjam in Israel and a US presidential race between an aging incumbent and a morally deficient and unpredictable challenger. India too is sailing into a highly contentious and polarised parliamentary election.

Whoever takes the oath as India's next Prime Minister in May or early June would inherit the complexities of these global trends and conflicts. India's positive growth data enthusiastically marketed by the government would get a reality check in this year's second half. Growth generated by the government's capital

expenditure on infrastructure has limited salience, as China is now discovering. The Indian farmers' protests, despite strong action by the police, are persisting as the wedding extravaganza of a billionaire's child draws the global glitterati. Nothing reflects India's distorted growth model better.

Can this scenario evolve into a new global order of stability and peace? The first quarter of the 21st century so far offers no assurance. The reasons are multi-fold.

One, the United States is slipping from its role as the global provider of security and repository of liberal democracy. Two, the Sino-Soviet alliance, with Iran and North Korea in tow, have resurrected bipolar contestation, with diminished risk aversion. Three, India is in danger of becoming a majoritarian, even theocratic, state, with implications for its relations with the Islamic world. Four, new technologies like Artificial Intelligence (AI), Quantum Computing and the arms race in space open possibilities of fresh global friction. Five, the Ukraine war has reshaped the rules of post-modern war by demonstrating the utility of cheap drones to counter expensive military weapons and equipment. Six, four decades of Israeli peace-making with Arabs has been shown as flawed due to wrongly assuming that the underlying conflicts and issues had lost currency. Seven, the United Nations has lost its relevance and residual moral authority.

The world is thus at an inflexion point as elections are held in India, the European Union and the United States. The voters can choose those that subscribe to a liberal global order. Alternatively, they may let their domestic worries and prejudices have them back populist-nationalists? The answer will be critical to the world's future.

## How RSS, world's largest NGO, led to Jan Sangh/BJP, world's top party

By: Aakar Patel

Next year, the world's largest NGO marks its centenary. The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh was founded in 1925 at a single shakha in Nagpur and today, according to its website, has over 57,000 daily shakhas across India. The RSS says it doesn't keep a record of its members, so it doesn't know how many there are.

Why was it formed? We are told the reason for this in the six-volume official history of the BJP, published by the party in 2006. The party quotes Hindu Mahasabha leader B.S. Moonje as saying that communal violence frequently happened in Nagpur because though Muslims only numbered 20,000 of the city's population, "we (Hindus) felt insecure because the Muslims were never afraid of 1.3 lakh Hindus". Moonje felt this was because Hindus were divided into watertight compartments, "each having a special and cultural life of its own that there is hardly any association between them". This was in contrast to Muslims, who "form one organic community, religiously well organised and disciplined". And because of this "any injury done to any part of the community anywhere is felt as keenly all throughout".

The book says the RSS' formation was to address this problem of disunity of Hindus in relation to taking on Muslims. It would work towards the cause of Hindu unity and solidarity and

cultural nationalism. Its founder K.B. Hedgewar went about organising Hindu society and addressing its two problems of disunity and the caste system.

He did both of these through the mechanism of the shakha, where Hindus of all castes would gather for an hour daily. They would play games, exercise, learn to march and do some drills. They would also sing songs together addressed to Bharat Mata. The problem of caste would be addressed through their playing and eating together. M.D. Deoras, the third head of the RSS, described it thus: "I was present in the first Sangh camp. In that there were quite a number of Mahaar brethren. At the time of meals, some began hesitating to sit with them. They had never before in their lives sat for meals with Mahaars. They placed their problem before Doctorji (Hedgewar). But he did not enforce the discipline of the camp and ask them to get out. Doctorji simply said: "Our practice is to sit together. We shall sit accordingly." All of us sat together for meals. Those few that were hesitant sat in a separate line. But for the next meals those very people came to Doctorji, and apologised and sat with us of their own accord." Hedgewar died in 1940, by when the RSS had spread beyond Nagpur and had 100,000 members. His successor was Golwalkar, under whom the RSS continued to grow and spread. Golwalkar was pragmatic and felt the RSS had to operate within the law. When the British forbade Indians in 1943 from

military dress and drill, the RSS gave it up immediately.

The BJP says an RSS rally in Delhi in December 1947 drew a large crowd and also attracted Hindu princes, businessmen and leaders of other Hindu organisations. This popularity was something that alarmed the Congress, especially Jawaharlal Nehru. On January 30, 1948, Mahatma Gandhi was assassinated. Golwalkar had sensed the RSS would get into trouble once the details of Gandhi's assassination were out. He acted immediately. On the day of the murder, January 30, he sent telegrams to RSS branches suspending operations for thirteen days. The same day he telegraphed Nehru, Patel and Devdas Gandhi with a message of condolence: "Shocked at this cruel fatal attack and tragic loss of greatest personality". The next day he again wrote to Nehru expressing his shock and referring to Godse as "some thoughtless perverted soul" who had "committed the heinous act of putting a sudden and ghastly end to the life of poojya Mahatmaji by the bullet". He called the killing unpardonable and an act of treason. That same day he wrote also to Patel: "My heart is wrung with extreme agony. It is difficult to find words to condemn the person who committed this crime..."

None of this helped. Patel banned the RSS on February 2. The official notification said: "The professed aims and objects of the RSS are to promote the physical, intellectual and moral well-being of Hindus and also to

foster feelings of brotherhood, love and service amongst them... the government have, however, noticed with regret that in practice members of the RSS have not adhered to their professed ideals... Undesirable and even dangerous activities have been carried on by members of the Sangh (who) have indulged in acts of violence involving arson, robbery, dacoity, and murder and have collected illicit arms and ammunition. They have been found circulating leaflets exhorting people to resort to terrorist methods to collect firearms... rendering it incumbent on the government to deal with the Sangh in its corporate capacity." Golwalkar was arrested on February 3 along with 20,000 swayamsevaks.

The RSS says it was shocked that no political party or leader spoke up for it. The ban remained for 17 months. It was lifted after the RSS was asked to produce a constitution. This was written up and submitted. The ban was lifted on July 11, 1949. Immediately after this, the RSS began debating entering politics in the pages of its house organ, The Organiser. It published articles from RSS workers including K.R. Malkani who wrote that the RSS "must take part in politics not only to protect itself" but also "to stop un-Bharatiya and anti-Bharatiya politics" and to "advance the cause of Bharatiyata through the state machinery".

This was what led to the birth of the Jan Sangh/BJP, today the largest political party in the world, child of the largest NGO.

# Akasa Air enters J&K, commences operations from Srinagar

## Top News Report

SRINAGAR, Mar 5: Akasa Air, India's fastest-growing airline, commences operations from Srinagar, the capital of Jammu & Kashmir, connecting it to Mumbai with non-stop daily flights. The inaugural flight on March 2024 departed from Sheikh ul-Alam International Airport at 13:55 hrs arriving at Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport at 17:00 hrs.

The new route strengthens Akasa Air's presence in North India while offering enhanced and convenient options for travel between the two cities.

Alongside receiving acclaim for its serene landscapes, Srinagar has gathered notable impetus for its warm hospitality, unique cuisine, and distinct socio-cultural ethos, attracting an increasing number of tourists.

Commenting on the announcement, Praveen Iyer, Co-Founder and Chief Commercial Officer, Akasa Air, said, "We are delighted to launch operations from Sri-



nagar, further expanding our presence across the country. Renowned for its scenic beauty and rich heritage, Srinagar has witnessed a significant uptick in domestic and foreign tourist arrivals over the past few years. Our daily flights connecting Srinagar with Mumbai, a key metro will enhance travel accessibility and provide momentum to the growing demand for air travel between the two cities. As India's fastest-growing airline, we constantly endeavour to provide our customers with seamless travel options, reliable operations, and a warm customer experience at affordable fares."

Commenting on the launch, Belson Coutinho, Co-Founder and Chief Marketing & Experience Officer, Akasa Air said, "This is a very exciting time for us, as we expand our presence in North India and bring the Akasa experience to Srinagar. At Akasa Air, we are on a journey to redefine air travel with an unwavering commitment to service excellence. Our category-defining services such as Café Akasa and Pets on Akasa, together with our brand-new aircraft providing ample legroom and enhanced comfort has been appreciated by millions of passengers from across the coun-

try. We look forward to hosting travellers on the route and offering them a memorable journey on board."

Akasa Air has introduced multiple quality products and differentiated services to ensure an inclusive, warm and comfortable flying experience. Its brand-new fleet provides ample legroom and enhanced comfort and comes with USB ports in a majority of aircraft, allowing passengers to charge their gadgets and devices on the go. Café Akasa, the airline's onboard meal service offers an assortment of healthy and delectable meals, including festive menus

and industry-first options such as Kombucha, to offer customers an indulgent gourmet experience in the skies. Pets on Akasa allows customers to travel with their pets in the cabin or carry them in cargo based on their weight. In addition, in an endeavour to make travel inclusive, Akasa Air has introduced its safety instruction card and onboard menu card in Braille for persons with visual impairment.

Akasa Air's consistent on-time leadership, operational efficiencies and extremely positive customer feedback has made it a preferred carrier in India, resulting in average passenger load factors of over 85% for the past 12 months.

Since its launch in August 2022, Akasa Air has served over 7.75 million passengers and connects with 21 cities, namely Mumbai, Ahmedabad, Bengaluru, Chennai, Kochi, Delhi, Guwahati, Agartala, Pune, Lucknow, Goa, Hyderabad, Varanasi, Bagdogra, Bhubaneswar, Kolkata, Port Blair, Ayodhya, Gwalior, Srinagar, and Doha (Qatar).

# JU's Poonch Campus organizes guest lecture for students of Sericulture



## Top News Report

POONCH, Mar 5: The Department of Sericulture at Poonch Campus welcomed Dr. Javed Iqbal, a distinguished biotechnologist, as the guest lecturer for students from the Department of Sericulture.

Dr. Iqbal, renowned in the field, shared valuable insights and knowledge in an engaging discourse.

Today's lecture witnessed an enthusiastic gathering of students and faculty members eager to benefit from Dr. Iqbal's expertise.

His talk focused on the intersection of Biotechnology and Sericulture, emphasizing the significance of innovative approaches in advancing the field.

Known for his contributions to Biotechnology, Dr. Javed Iqbal highlighted the practical applications of cutting-edge research within the realm of Sericulture.

His engaging presentation not only enriched the understanding of the subject matter but also inspired students to explore new horizons within the field.

The event provided a platform for collaborative learning, fostering a spirit of academic exchange between the Department of Biotechnology and the Department of Sericulture.

Director of Poonch Campus, Prof. Rakesh Vaid, extends gratitude to Dr. Javed Iqbal for his valuable contribution to the academic community.

Notable personalities present on the occasion included Dr. Rubia Bukhari, Dr. Jyoti Angotra, Dr. Palvi Sharma, Kalpana Sudan, and non-teaching staff of Poonch Campus.

# GDC Vijaypur organises Walkathon



## Top News Report

VIJAYPUR, Mar 5: NSS Unit (Khidmat) of Government Degree College Vijaypur under the banner of Mera Pehla Vote Desh Ke Liye guided by the unwavering vision of Principal of the College Dr. (Prof.) Vandana Gupta organised a walkathon on the theme 'Know Your Voting Rights' to create awareness among the young college students/citizens about the importance of their participation in the upcoming elections.

The walkathon was also aimed at imparting

information about the awareness of voting and its rights.

Principal of the College Dr. (Prof.) Vandana Gupta while addressing the students provided knowledge regarding voting rights and its importance for electing healthy and competent government.

Further, she also elaborated upon the initiatives of the government like launching of a new portal for registration of citizens so that they can prepare their voter cards online and also briefed them regarding the process of voting, electoral pro-

cess, including the role of the Election Commission of India, the process of voter registration, the use of Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs), and the importance of ethical voting. The walkathon was joined by a number of college students including NSS volunteers.

The walkathon was organized with the full support and coordination of the senior faculty member of the college Prof. Mamta Gupta (HOD Commerce) and Dr. Anoop Bhagat (HOD Sociology). The event was coordinated by Prof. Poonam Kundan (HOD Environmental Sciences) and Dr. Naseem Chowdhary (NSS PO) and co-coordinated by Prof. Renuka Kundal, Dr. Radhika Rasyal, Dr. Gunjeet Mahiwal, Prof. Sonia Devi, Dr. Neelam Kumari and Dr. Pooja Gupta.

# Restore J&K State back: Dimple asks PM



## Top News Report

JAMMU, Mar 5: Sunil Dimple, President Mission Statehood Jammu Kashmir, in a press conference, asked PM Narendra Modi to announce restoration of J&K princely State back, assembly and parliament elections and employment package for the unemployed youths during his visit to Kashmir.

Dimple said the BJP & home ministry is ready to hold talks with Ladakh people on statehood, reservation of the Ladakh lands, jobs for Ladakhis and is ready for holding assembly elections in Ladakh.

Dimple alleged Gulam Nabi Azad is b-team and puppet in the hands of the BJP.

# GDC Udhampur organises three-day Pulse Polio Awareness Programme

## Top News Report

UDHAMPUR, Mar 5: NCC Wings of J&K 2 (boys) Battalion and NCC Wing of J&K 2 (girls) Battalion and NSS Unit of GDC Udhampur organized the Three-Days Pulse Polio Awareness

the Second day, 02 March 2024, all the NCC Cadets and NSS Volunteers of the College chanted various slogans about Pulse Polio Abhayan.

On day three, 03 March 2024, 15 Cadets, including ten boys and five

and its importance for the overall well-being of the children. This visit of the cadets and NSS Volunteers induced a sense of responsibility and fulfilment of societal responsibility, one of the objectives of NCC and NSS, amongst the cadets.

While addressing the cadets, the principal of the college, Prof. (Dr) Romesh Gupta, appreciated the cadets for their active participation in Pulse Polio Immunization.

He lauded their commitment towards the good health and prosperity of the society.

In his address, he added that being always at the helm of societal and national affairs is the first and foremost duty of each one of us, especially NCC Cadets.

He also applauded the ANOs, Prof. (Capt) Shivani Sharma and Prof. Vijay Kumar, and NSS Pos, Dr. Gurpreet Kour and Prof. Sanjeet Singh for their consistent efforts to instill the ideals of responsibility, altruism and selflessness among the NCC Cadets and NSS volunteers.

The whole programme was coordinated by ANOs J&K 2 Boys and Girls Battalion and NSS POs.



Programme from March 1 to 3, 2024.

The programme was organized under the patronage of the worthy principal of the college, Prof. (Dr) Romesh Kumar Gupta.

On March 1, the NCC Cadets, including 50 boys and 25 girls, participated in the poster-making competition.

Through their posters, the Cadets tried to spread awareness about the importance of Pulse Polio Immunization. On

girls, and 5 NSS Volunteers, while actively playing their supportive role in Pulse Polio Immunization, went to District Hospital Udhampur to help the nursing staff in the immunization of polio drops and get their first-hand experience of the Campaign. While interacting with the parents of the children and other locals presented in the college, the cadets guided and motivated them about polio drops

# PDP Bhadarwah condemns shifting of Offices from Bhadarwah



## Top News Report

BHADARWAH, Mar 5: Bhadarwah Unit of People's Democratic Party (PDP) has strongly condemned the Advisor to Lieutenant Governor Jammu and Kashmir Rajive Rai Bhatnagar for his statement to shift some important offices from Bhadarwah to Doda.

A press statement of the party in this connection said that a large number of workers including locals during a specially convened meeting here criticised the LG administration for neglecting Bhadarwah Additional District in terms of development and instead working at the behest of those who want to see the ruins of this region and against the interests of this mundanely beautiful geographical region of the UT of J&K.

Expressing strong resentment about the irresponsible and unacceptable statement of Advisor to Lieutenant Governor during a meeting of District Development Council Doda about shifting of Principal District and

Session Judge Court from Bhadarwah to Doda, speakers alleged that it has been the brainchild of such elements who have always been averse to the progress and prosperity of this region and want to see Bhadarwah turning in to ruins and rubble, statement said.

Speakers further stated that Bhadarwah which occupied exalted position in the past being epicenter of Provincial status (Wazir Wazarat) now has been reduced to a perimeter ranging from Bhalla to Thanala.

This reduction in the status and centrality of regional dispensation was planned by some vested interests and in this divesting process, essential offices and institutions were shifted out from Bhadarwah to other places in erstwhile district Doda.

"This vicious practice is still pursued and the present move is an offshoot of such mindsets in which even the highest hierarchy of administration is involved. "The deep interest they (administrators) are showing to divest

Bhadarwah of its glory and of course, to snatch its rightful place in the Union Territory is an open evidence of administrative bias," statement added.

They however, demanded that LG Manoj Sinha must intervene in to this crucial issue and keeping in view the aspirations and rights of the people of Bhadarwah, the proposal for shifting of essential and historically important offices from Bhadarwah be set aside otherwise, the peace loving public of this region shall be left with no other option than to launch mass agitation. They further demanded that the arbitrary order for the shifting of JK Board of School Education Office from Bhadarwah to Doda be immediately cancelled so as to instill confidence amongst the people of Bhadarwah.

Prominent participants included Zonal President PDP Zaffar Hussain Wani, Mohammad Salim Butt (Block President), Altaf Hussain Khan (Sr Member), Badri Nath (President ST), Manjeet Kumar (Zonal Youth President), Paras Ram (President Zone Bhadarwah SC), Mehraj Zargar (Block Vice President), Omar Tak (Organiser), Kiran Pandit (Sr Member), Tariq Hussain (Sr Member), Abdul Majid Sheikh (Block Vice President) Gandoh Gwari Bhallessa.

# GDC Kishtwar celebrates Women's Day 2024

## Top News Report

KISHTWAR, Mar 5: The Women Development Cell at Govt. Degree College Kishtwar, under the able convener-ship of Prof. Falak, in collaboration with NSS Unit, Career Counseling and Guidance Cell (CCGC), Govt. Degree College Kishtwar, and the Social Welfare Department Kishtwar, celebrated International Women's Day 2024 with great fervor and enthusiasm.

The event, held under the supervision of Principal Prof. (Dr.) Jyoti Parihar, witnessed an active participation of approximately 150 students.

The event was coordinated by Sonika Devi. The program commenced with a warm welcome address by Prof. Asma Javaid, setting the tone for the day's festivities.

Students showcased their creativity and talent through various activities such as poster making, painting, and a seminar dedicated to Women's Day. A panel of esteemed judges including Prof. Hitesh Kumar,



Prof. Essar ul Ayuob, and Dr. Wasim Akram adjudicated the competitions.

The winners of the competitions were: Painting: Saloni, Priya Manhas, and Pallavi secured the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd prizes respectively.

Poster Making: Rekha Devi, Salma Liyaquat, and Mamat secured the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd prizes respectively.

Seminar: Abroo Wajid, Anurag Sharma, and Salma Liyaquat secured the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd prizes respectively.

Principal Prof. (Dr.) Jyoti Parihar, in her address, emphasized the indispensable role of women across various sectors, acknowledging their contributions to society. She lauded the Women Development

Cell team for their efforts in organizing the successful event.

The event was graced by the presence of esteemed faculty members including Prof. Umar Deen, Prof. Prithvi Raj, Dr. Sehrihs Gazal, Prof. Rishi Kumar, Prof. Vikram Singh, Prof. Yassir, and Dr. Zahoor Din. Representatives from the Social Welfare Department, including Indu Baala, Sanna Jan, Ruchi Parihar, Monika Sharma, Diksha Sharma, Urvi Badyal, and Anwar Alaq Kichloo, also attended the event.

The celebration concluded with a formal vote of thanks by Dr. Bilal, expressing gratitude to all participants and organizers for making the event a grand success.

# Union Minister Vaishnav launches Chakshu, Digital Intelligence Platform



## Top News Report

JAMMU, Mar 5: Union Minister for Communications, Railways and Electronics & IT, Shri Ashwini Vaishnav launched Chakshu and Digital Intelligence Platform (DIP).

Nitin Jain, Additional Director General Telecom, J&K LSA, DoT chaired the live telecast of launch of Chakshu and DIP from J&K LSA, DoT. Chakshu is an online facility that will enable citizens to report the suspected communications which are intended for cyber-crime, financial frauds etc. or any other

such misuse. The reporting shall be done at Sanchar Saathi portal (www.sancharsaathi.gov.in) of Department of Telecommunications (DoT).

Digital Intelligence Platform (DIP), is a secure and integrated platform created by Department for curbing misuse of telecom resources by enabling intelligence sharing, information exchange and coordination among the stakeholders i.e. TSPs (Telecom Service providers), LEAs (Law enforcement agencies), banks and financial institutions (FIs) etc.

## After Kal Penn, Irrfan Khan, Priyanka Chopra paved their way to Hollywood, the new crop of South-Asian actors is solidifying its position like never before

From Hollywood blockbusters to acclaimed television shows, actors of South-Asian origin are increasingly making their presence felt. Gone are the days when actors of colour were often confined to stereotypical roles, playing characters that lacked depth. Now, they are portraying characters that transcend cultural boundaries and resonate with audiences worldwide. Actors like Kal Penn, Kunal Nayyar, Mindy Kaling, Aziz Ansari and Irrfan Khan are the pioneers in this area. The new wave of talent is further challenging these stereotypes with more authentic performances and diverse representations on screen.

Standing tall  
One notable figure leading this charge is British-Pakistani actor Riz Ahmed, whose compelling performances have garnered critical acclaim and accolades across various platforms. Ahmed's portrayal in films like *Sound of Metal* and *Nightcrawler* has demonstrated his versatility and depth as an actor.

Global desi girl  
In an era where diver-



sity and representation are at the forefront of discussions in the entertainment industry, Priyanka Chopra stands as a beacon of change. She broke the stereotypes when she played Alex Parrish in the American TV series *Quantico*. In a role traditionally reserved for Western actors, Chopra mesmerised audiences with her portrayal of a talented FBI recruit navigating through complex missions and personal challenges. She has also acted in series like *Citadel*, *Isn't It Romantic*, *A Kid Like Jack* and *Baywatch*.

Recent additions  
In the recent past, Alia Bhatt and Dhanush also made their Hollywood debut in significant roles in films, *Heart of Stone* and *The Gray Man*, respectively. If Tom Harper's *Heart of Stone* had Hollywood A-listers

Gal Gadot and Jamie Dornan besides Alia, Dhanush shared screen space with Ryan Gosling and Chris Evans for Russo Brothers' ambitious project *The Gray Man*. The Russo Brothers' recent venture, *Citadel* starring Priyanka Chopra is also said to be made into an Indian spin off by the same name. Actors Varun Dhwan and Samantha Ruth Prabhu have been cast for the upcoming series.

Simply superb  
Kamala Khan, the titular character of Ms Marvel, portrayed by a talented Canadian actress of Pakistani descent Iman Vellani, is the first South-Asian superhero of Marvel Cinematic Universe on OTT platform. Kamala Khan brings to life the complexity and richness of a character grappling with her identity, culture, and newfound super-

powers. As a Pakistani-American teenager residing in Jersey City, Kamala's journey resonates with audiences worldwide, offering a fresh perspective on the superhero genre. It also includes big names such as Farhan Akhtar and Fawad Khan.

Universal issues  
Maitreyi Ramakrishnan, who was seen in Netflix series *Never Have I Ever*, is another South-Asian face to watch out for. The show is produced by Indian-American screenwriter-actor Mindy Kaling. With *Never Have I Ever*, she crafted a narrative that resonates with audiences of all backgrounds while celebrating the unique experiences of South-Asian Americans. Ramakrishnan's portrayal of Devi Vishwakumar is not defined by her ethnicity but by her dreams, desires and

the universal struggles of adolescence.

Christmas cheers  
Christmas As Usual is appreciated for its refreshing approach to storytelling and its commitment to representing diverse voices. At the centre of the series is Indian stand-up comedian-actor Kanan Gill. He brings depth and authenticity to his role, portraying a multidimensional character navigating the complexities of family, love, and personal growth during the holiday season.

Colour no bar  
Another series, *One Day*, released recently on Netflix has Ambika Mod as the lead actress. Interestingly, the story isn't about a 'young brown woman and her experience as a young brown woman' in London, but it's about 'a woman living her life and her relationships with her boyfriend, friends and her career.'

The series' success is a reminder of the fact that diversity is now an accepted norm. As Riz Ahmed puts in, "Our differences are what make us unique, but our shared humanity is what connects us all."

## Kanpur's Vaibhav Gupta wins Indian Idol 14, wants to pursue career in playback singing



Kanpur's Vaibhav Gupta has won singing reality show "Indian Idol 14" after besting co-contestants Subhadeep Das Chowdhary from Kolkata and Rajasthan's Piyush Panwar.

Gupta, 19, was awarded with a cheque of Rs 25 lakh from Sony Entertainment Television and a Brezza from co-sponsors Maruti Suzuki India Ltd in a ceremony last night.

The singer says he wants to pursue a career in playback singing.

"When I was a kid, I usually said idol (Indian Idol) is my dream and today it has come true for me.

I am very happy and feel very proud that I have made my father happy. I thought if I work hard for long enough, one day I will get it (The idol trophy) and today I have become the winner of Idol 14," Gupta told agency.

The young singer wants to build his own music studio to kickstart his musical journey with the cash prize he won.

"I will make my dream studio. I will make new songs in the studio and will try my best to reach you with my voice and good music," he said.

## People started seeing me in a different light post 'Maharani': Huma Qureshi

Huma Qureshi believes her OTT show 'Maharani', which is coming up with a third season, was the beginning of a new chapter in her journey as an actor.

Qureshi, who made her acting debut with 'Gangs of Wasseypur' in 2012 and has featured in films such as 'D-Day', 'Dedh Ishqiya' and 'Badlapur', said she could also command a certain fee with the show as she is playing the lead in it.

"Today, because I'm doing 'Maharani' and the show is mounted around my character, I am able to command a certain fee. It is a show that benefited all of us. People started seeing me in a different light.... I can say without hesitation that 'Maharani' was the start of a new chapter in my career," the actor said in an interview.

The first season of 'Maharani' featured Qureshi as Rani Bharti, an illiterate woman, who is handpicked by her husband and politician Bheema Bharti (Sohum Shah) to become the chief minister of Bihar after he is shot and injured.

The second season of the show, directed by Ravindra Gautam, saw Rani Bharti go head to head with her husband who is keen to get the power back in his hands and is worried with his wife's growing popularity as a chief minister. She also has to fight a political rival in Navin Kumar (Amit Sial).

The upcoming season, directed by Saurabh Bhav, will see Rani Bharti take on her enemies after the murder of her husband. Subhash Kapoor and Nandan Singh serve as show-runners and writers of



the show. Qureshi, 37, believes the third season will be bigger, better and bolder as there is more at stake. The actor said the makers have just scratched the surface of the story.

"There is a lot of potential in the series. There are so many stories. As a country, we are obsessed with politics and everything political. There is a lot that can happen. Right now, we just scratched the surface. There is a lot more to go. Maybe we do seven or 11 seasons. Even if this were to be our last, I will be happy and grateful for all the love we have received," she said.

The actor said Rani Bharti will remain a

memorable character in her filmography.

"I always say that if you get five (memorable) roles in your career as an actor you become a legend, everything else is EMI. One is done (for me), four more to go." Qureshi, who has featured in a number of women-led projects be it 'Tarla', or 'Double XL', said a lot of work needs to be done before women can enjoy similar opportunities in the film industry.

"When we talk about female led content, we don't get as many opportunities as those films and shows aren't made often. We have to be twice as good as all the other shows or prove a certain kind of invisible benchmark.

## Jack Black says Kung Fu Panda is his happy place, excited to see its growth

Actor Jack Black, who is returning to his role as Po in the new chapter of action-comedy *Kung Fu Panda 4*, has talked about the franchise tagging it as his 'happy place'.

The franchise revolves around the endearing panda, Po, voiced by Black, who talks about lessons of self-discovery, overcoming fear and the power of teamwork. This time the narrative takes a turn, guiding Po on an internal journey of growth and change.

Talking about playing



Po again, Black said: "Returning to play Po feels like reconnecting with an old friend who's still as awesome and goofy as ever. Po's journey this time around as the spiritual leader adds a whole new layer to his personality. He has a new depth to him, like this whole 'wise and all-knowing' thing, but, at the same time, part of him wonders, 'Can I really do this? Am I wise enough to step into these shoes? Can you be the wisest dude in the room and still crack a joke?' Po thinks

so. And he's out there trying, and that's what makes Po so awesome," he added.

Black said the "most rewarding part" is seeing Po evolve emotionally. "Going from a noodle-slurping warrior to a spiritual leader with a heart as big as his appetite."

Black shared that the Po and the film had profound effect on him. "Kung Fu Panda is like my happy place - Po and the gang are like family. It's the humour, the heart, the whole package that brings me back."

## Ae Watan Mere Watan trailer captures Sara Ali Khan's fights for freedom

The makers of the film *Ae Watan Mere Watan* starring Sara Ali Khan has unveiled the intriguing and impactful official trailer of the film. Directed by Kannan Iyer, *Ae Watan Mere Watan* is written by Iyer, along with Darab Farooqui. The film features Sara Ali Khan in the lead along with Sachin Khedekar, Abhay Verma, Sparsh Shrivastav, Alexx O'Neil, and Anand Tiwari in pivotal roles and a guest appearance by Emraan Hashmi.



## Shweta Tiwari oozes elegance in a chikankari kurta; fans call her 'goddess'

The 'Kasautii Zindagii Kay' fame actress Shweta Tiwari is a vision to behold in the new pictures that she has dropped on social media, oozing grace and elegance.

Shweta, who was recently seen in the web series 'Indian Police Force', shared a series of pictures, wearing a baby pink-coloured chikankari kurta.

The actress opted for a subtle makeup look—glossy pink lips, Kohl rimmed eyes, and blushed cheeks.

Shweta kept her long tresses open, and rounded off the look with small silver jhumkas. She is holding a flower in her hand.

The fans took to the comment section and wrote, 'Cuteness overloaded'.

One fan said, 'goddess queen', another commented, 'ur smile is lit'.



## Congress scared to promote youth, alleges PM Modi at Telangana rally

Addressing a public meeting in Sangareddy district, he also said the "dynastic parties" were targeting him as he was exposing their "scams worth several thousands of crores of rupees."

SANGAREDDY, Mar 5 (Agencies): Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday attacked the Congress, saying it was 'scared' to promote young leaders and appeared to take a veiled dig at AICC President Mallikarjun Kharge when he said the party was appointing people over 75-80 years.

Addressing a public meeting in Sangareddy district, he also said the "dynastic parties" were targeting him as he was exposing their "scams worth several thousands of crores of rupees."

Launching a tirade against dynasty parties, the PM said that the families become strong but the states will be destroyed. Modi also mentioned that he never made any personal attack but raised his voice against dynasty politics.

"Do people with families have the licence to loot?" the Prime



Minister asked. Stating that leaders of dynasty parties only care about their families, Modi said that every family in the country matters to him.

Modi alleged that BRS and Congress are two sides of the same coin and act as "covering fire" for each other. However, this will not go on for long, he

added. "The BJP knows how to do surgical strikes as well as airstrikes," he stressed.

Taking potshots at Congress, Modi said the party never promoted anyone below aged 50. "If they have to appoint someone, they will appoint someone who is 75-80 year old, 85 years. They are afraid that if a 50-year-

old man comes and overtakes, what will happen to the family," he added.

Speaking about the Kaleshwaram Lift Irrigation Project, Modi accused the Congress government of "sitting on the files" as they fear that members of the Congress party were also part of the "scam."

Earlier in the day, the Prime Minister laid the foundation stone and dedicated to the nation multiple development projects worth more than Rs 6,800 crores. The projects span key sectors such as road, rail, petroleum, aviation and natural gas.

Thanking the people of Telangana for their love, the PM said that he will give it back to the state as development. "This is Modi's guarantee," he emphasized.

## NIA raids 7 states in Bengaluru prison radicalisation case

NEW DELHI, Mar 5 (Agencies): The National Investigation Agency on Tuesday launched multiple raids across seven states in connection with a case related to radicalisation of prisoners by a Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) terrorist in Karnataka, an official said.

The raids, being conducted in connection with the Bengaluru prison radicalisation case, are underway at 17 places across seven states and further details are awaited, the official said. In January, the National Investigation Agency (NIA) had filed a charge-sheet against eight people in the case. The charge-sheeted accused included T Naseer of Kerala's Kannur, who is serving life sentence in the central prison in Bengaluru since 2013, and Junaid Ahmed alias "JD" and

Salman Khan, who are suspected to have fled abroad.

The case was originally registered by the Bengaluru City Police on July 18 last year following the seizure of arms and ammunition, hand grenades and walkie-talkies from seven of the accused persons. The seizure was made when the seven men were in the house of one of the accused.

According to the NIA, which took over the case in October last year, the investigations revealed that Naseer, who was involved in several blast cases, had come in contact with the other accused while they were all lodged in the Bengaluru prison during 2017.

Naseer had managed to get all of them shifted to his barrack after a careful assessment of their potential with a view to radicalise and

recruit them into the proscribed terror group, LeT.

The agency had said he first managed to radicalise and recruit Ahmed and Khan to further the activities of the LeT. Thereafter, he conspired with Ahmed to radicalise and recruit the other accused, the official said. He also conspired with Khan to deliver arms, ammunition, hand grenades and walkie-talkies to the others as part of a "fidayeen (suicide)" attack and help Naseer escape from police custody enroute to court, the official said.

Ahmed also instructed his co-accused to steal used police caps for the attack and to commit arson on government buses as a practice run. The plot was foiled with the seizure of the arms in July last year.

## No place for violence in elections, Bengal bureaucracy asked to be impartial: Chief Election Commissioner

KOLKATA, Mar 5 (Agencies): Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar on Tuesday said strict instructions have been issued to the West Bengal bureaucracy to ensure a level playing field for all political parties, and asserted that any form of violence will not be tolerated during the upcoming Lok Sabha polls.

Kumar, addressing a press conference here, said the goal of the Election Commission is to ensure a free, fair and violence-free elections in the state. "There is no place for fear or intimidation in elections. Partisan approach of the bureaucracy will not be tolerated; we have made this clear," he said.

Kumar said sufficient number of central forces will be deployed in West Bengal, and it will be done in an "impartial manner".



"The SPs have been repeatedly told that if there is any complaint of intimidation, they should take immediate action. They have assured us that it will be done. If they don't act, we know what needs to be done to make them act. "Police officials have been instructed to be impartial and be accessible to all political parties at the district level," Kumar said.

## Bihar CM Nitish Kumar files nomination papers for re-election to legislative council

PATNA, Mar 5 (Agencies): Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar on Tuesday filed his nomination papers for re-election to the state legislative council.

Kumar, who is running for a fourth consecutive term, filed his nomination papers in the presence of a host of senior leaders of the ruling NDA, including his deputies Samrat Choudhary and Vijay Kumar Sinha, who belong to the BJP, and Rajiv Ranjan Singh "Lalan" whom he succeeded as the JD(U) national president.

Besides Kumar, nomination papers were filed by his cabinet colleague Santosh Suman



and JD(U) MLC Khalid Anwar.

Suman's father Jitan Ram Manjhi, a former chief minister who heads Hindustani Awam Morcha, was also present.

The Election Commission has announced biennial polls for 11 seats of the state legis-

lative council, the terms of which would end in May.

Of these, the JD(U) had held four, though following a diminution in its strength in the assembly, the party has given up its claim on two of the seats.

Besides Kumar and Anwar, those from the

JD(U) whose terms were nearing expiry are Sanjay Kumar Jha, who recently got elected to the Rajya Sabha, and Rameshwar Mahto, who has been dropped.

JD(U) sources said sitting MLC Khalid Anwar was considered for a second consecutive term.

The BJP is yet to announce its candidates, though Choudhary had said, "We will contest four seats, leaving one for our partner Hindustani Awam Morcha (HAM)."

The BJP held three of the seats for which elections have been announced.

Of the remaining

seats, two are held by the RJD's Rabri Devi, a former chief minister and currently the leader of the opposition in the legislative council, and Ram Chandra Purve, who is deputy chairman of the Upper House.

One seat is held by Prem Chandra Mishra of Congress.

Meanwhile, Choudhary had cryptically said, "Seven is the minimum number of seats that the NDA will contest. If the need arises, we may fight for more."

Filing of nominations will come to a close on March 11, and the last date for withdrawal is March 14. Voting is scheduled for March 21.

## Ex-Gujarat Congress chief joins BJP day after quitting Congress

NEW DELHI, Mar 5 (Agencies): Senior Congress leader Arjun Modhwadia joined the BJP on Tuesday, a day after quitting the Congress party.

Modhwadia was a former Gujarat Congress president and former leader of the opposition. He became a two-time MLA when he was elected from Porbandar in the 2022 Assembly elections.

Along with Modhwadia, two more former MLAs, Amberish Der, and Mulubhai Kandoriya joined the BJP today.

The former Congress leaders joined in the presence of BJP Gujarat State unit President CR



Patil.

Senior Congress leader Arjun Modhwadia had submitted his resignation to the Gujarat Vidhan Sabha speaker on Monday, after being in the party for 40 years. He, in a letter to

Congress president Mallikarjun Khargesaid, said that he felt "helpless to contribute to the people" and hence he resigned from the party.

He shared the letter on X and said, "I hereby relieve myself

from all roles and responsibilities of the Indian National Congress party."

He added that he had voiced dissent when the Congress decided to decline the invitation for the inauguration of Ram Temple in Ayodhya on January 22.

With barely months away from 2024 general election, a trend is evident as numerous leaders from opposition parties are defecting to the BJP. The recent shift is not only a boost for the BJP, but is also diluting the forces of opposition parties who are finding their strength dwindling.

## Justice Abhijit Gangopadhyay announces he's joining BJP after resigning as judge of Calcutta HC



KOLKATA, Mar 5 (Agencies): Abhijit Gangopadhyay announced on Tuesday that he is joining the BJP, hours after he resigned as a

judge of the Calcutta High Court.

Addressing a press conference, he said he would join the BJP on March 7.

"I am joining the BJP as it is a national party, which is fighting against the corruption of the TMC in Bengal," he said.

He sent his resignation letter to President Droupadi Murmu with copies to CJI DY Chandrachud and the Chief Justice of the Calcutta HC TS Sivagnanam in the morning.

Justice Gangopadhyay had on Sunday announced that he will resign on March 5.

## Kerala Woman Set On Fire By Friend After Argument, Dies: Cops

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, Mar 5 (Agencies): A 46-year-old woman died on Tuesday morning succumbing to the over 90 per cent burns she suffered the previous night after being set on fire by a male friend here, police said.

The man, who also suffered around 60-70 per cent burns in the incident, is currently recovering at the Thiruvananthapuram Medical College, an officer of Pothencode police station here said.

Police said that the

man was the victim's friend and came to her house yesterday night and asked her to come out.

After she went outside, an argument ensued between them. This escalated with the man pouring petrol on her and setting her on fire, the officer said.

As the fire spread to his body, the man jumped into a nearby well from where he was rescued by fire and rescue personnel, police said.

Both the victim and the accused were taken to the hospital, but the

woman succumbed to her burn injuries today morning, police said.

A police officer said that initially the case was filed under sections 307 (attempt to murder), 326 (voluntarily causing grievous hurt by fire) and 447 (criminal trespass) of the IPC, but since the woman has died, section 302 (murder) would be added after inquest proceedings are over.

The reason for the incident is not yet known, police said, adding that the victim was a widow living with her daughter and mother.

## No Police Action On Vehicle Theft Complaint, UP Man Sets Himself On Fire

SHAHJAHANPUR, Mar 5 (Agencies): A man set himself on fire outside a police station in Uttar Pradesh's Shahjahanpur allegedly after being upset over police inaction on his pick-up van theft complaint.

He reportedly used petrol to set himself on fire and was rescued by police personnel present at the station. His family claimed that his vehicle was stolen six months ago and that they had filed a police complaint.

The police were not taking proper action in the case of the theft of the vehicle, the family alleged.

The act was also recorded in a video shot by people standing near him. At least 10 to 12 police personnel were seen trying to extinguish the fire using blankets.

A boy was also seen pouring water on him using a bottle, the video showed.

The man, likely in his 40s, has been identified as Tahir Ali, Shahjahanpur Superintendent of Police Ashok Meena said.

He has been admitted to a hospital and is currently better, the officer said.

"We are currently investigating the incident and trying to find out why he took this step," Mr Meena said.

"We will take strict action against those who are at fault," he added.

## Woman slashes boyfriend's genitals, dumps him on road in Bihar

BUXAR, Mar 5 (Agencies): A woman slashed her 25-year-old boyfriend's genitals and dumped him on the road outside her house in Bihar's Buxar district after she believed that he had died.

However, the man, Anil Gond, survived the attack and is undergoing treatment. His condition is critical.

Police are investigating why the woman took the step.

According to the victim's brother, Pramod

Kumar Chaudhary, Anil had gone to his girlfriend's house in Dumraon after she called him over on a call.

When Anil reached her home, the woman attacked him, cut off his private parts and dumped him on the road outside her house.

The victim, battling severe pain, managed to reach a hospital where he contacted his family and told them about the incident.

The victim is being treated at the VK Global

Hospital in Buxar.

"We started an investigation into the matter as soon as we got information about the incident," Dumraon police officer Anisha Rana said.

She said the victim underwent an operation, and he has been kept under observation. "The operation has been done."

The man is critical and being kept under observation.

Attacking someone like this is absolutely barbaric," she said.

## Maldives president Muizzu says no Indian troops to remain on his island, not even in civilian clothing

*Muizzu's statement comes less than a week after Indian civilian team reached Maldives to take charge of one of the three aviation platforms*

MALE, Mar 5 (Agencies): Stepping up his anti-India rhetoric, Maldives President Mohamed Muizzu has affirmed that no Indian military personnel, not even those in civilian clothing, would be present inside his country after May 10, a media report said on Tuesday.

Muizzu's statement comes less than a week after an Indian civilian team reached the Maldives to take charge of one of the three aviation platforms in the island nation, well ahead of the March 10 deadline agreed by the two nations for the withdrawal of Indian military personnel.

Addressing the Baa atoll Eydhafushi residential community during his tour across the atoll, the President stated that due to his government's success in expelling Indian troops from the country, people who spread false rumours, are attempting to twist the situation, a news portal Edition.mv reported.

"That these people (Indian military) are not departing, that they are returning after changing their uniforms into civilian clothing. We must not indulge such thoughts that instil doubts in our hearts and spread lies," the portal quoted Muizzu, widely regarded as a pro-China leader, as saying.

"There will be no Indian troops in the country come May 10. Not in uniform and not in civilian clothing. The Indian military will not be residing in this country in



any form of clothing. I state this with confidence," he said, on a day when his country signed an agreement with China to receive free military aid.

Earlier last month, after a high-level meeting in Delhi on February 2 between the two sides, the Maldivian foreign ministry said India would replace its military personnel operating the three aviation platforms in the Maldives by May 10 and the first phase of the process would be completed by March 10.

In his maiden address to Parliament on February 5, he made similar remarks.

There are 88 military personnel manning the three Indian platforms that have been providing humanitarian and medical evacuation services to the people of the Maldives for the last few years using two helicopters and a Dornier aircraft.

Muizzu rode to power last year on an anti-India stance and within hours of taking oath demanded India to remove its

personnel from the strategically located archipelago in the Indian Ocean.

Edition.mv further reported that while the first troops to depart the country are the Indian military personnel operating the two helicopters in Addu City, the military personnel present in Haa Dhaalu atoll Hanimaadhoo and Laamu atoll Kahdhoo are also expected to leave ahead of May 10.

India had agreed to remove their troops from Maldives under the condition that a number of their civilians equivalent to the military presence are brought to operate the aircraft.

The Opposition has been directing criticism at the administration asserting that the Indian personnel sent to Maldives as civilians are in reality military officials out of uniform and that the government has no way to ascertain otherwise, the portal claimed.

Meanwhile, local media reports also said that Maldives has suc-

cessfully tied up with Sri Lanka to run flights for medical evacuation last week, further indicating that it is bent on removing all Indian troops in whichever category.

Further highlighting that securing true independence is a concept he regards with utmost priority, the President remarked that the State is exerting efforts with due importance "to regain the southern maritime area deprived of the country in addition to expelling Indian troops from the Maldives."

"I am confident we can achieve this. The delay in concluding this task is due to the adverse procedures practiced during the implementation. It was done without even taking the matter to the parliament ... in violation of the Constitution as well," the portal quoted the President as saying.

The Maldives' proximity to India, barely 70 nautical miles from the island of Minicoy in Lakshadweep and 300 nautical miles from the mainland's western coast, and its location at the hub of commercial sea lanes running through the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) gives it significant strategic importance.

The Maldives has been India's key maritime neighbour in the IOR and it occupies a special place in its initiatives such as SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region) and the Neighbourhood First Policy.

## Malaysian Coast Guard Helicopter Crashes Near Island, 4 Rescued

KUALA LUMPUR, Mar 5 (Agencies): Four people were rescued after a Malaysian coast guard helicopter crashed in the Strait of Malacca on Tuesday, the aviation regulator said.

The helicopter was on a training flight when it plunged into water near

Angsa island, the Civil Aviation Authority of Malaysia said without giving a cause.

"A total of four persons including pilots were onboard and there were no fatalities reported.

All survivors were rescued by a rescue helicopter," it said.

Angsa is a rocky island in the Strait of Malacca, a narrow shipping lane which runs between the Indonesian island of Sumatra and Malaysia.

The coast guard in a separate statement said it will launch an investigation into the cause of the crash.

## Hikers To Be Charged \$13 Fee To Climb Japan's Mount Fuji From July

TOKYO, Mar 5 (Agencies): Hikers using the most popular route to climb Japan's Mount Fuji will be charged \$13 each from July, with numbers capped to ease congestion and improve safety, a regional official said Tuesday.

Increasingly large crowds are scaling Japan's highest mountain, which is covered in snow most of the year but draws more than 220,000 visitors each July-September climbing period.

From July 1, an entry fee of 2,000 yen (\$13) will be charged per person to ascend the famous volcano's Yoshida Trail.

Daily entries to the trail will be capped at 4,000 people, with entry

banned between 4:00 pm and 2:00 am, under an ordinance approved Monday by Yamanashi region.

"After Covid restrictions were lifted, we started seeing more people.

We want them to dress appropriately for the mountain and be well prepared," Toshiaki Kasai, an official at the local government, told agency.

"We will ask visitors to monitor social media for up-to-date information about the daily visitor count," he added.

Each summer, reports in Japanese media describe tourists climbing Mount Fuji with insufficient mountaineering equipment.

Some sleep on the trail or start fires for heat,

while many attempt to reach the 3,776-metre (12,388-foot) summit without breaks and become sick or injured as a result.

The active volcano has three other main routes that will remain free to climb.

But the Yoshida Trail -- accessed from Tokyo relatively easily -- is the preferred choice for most holidaymakers, with around 60 percent of climbers choosing that route, according to official data.

Mount Fuji is about two hours from central Tokyo by train and can be seen for miles around.

The mountain has been immortalised in countless Japanese artworks, including Hokusai's world-famous "Great Wave".

## UN envoy says 'reasonable grounds' to believe Hamas committed sexual violence on Oct 7

UNITED NATIONS, Mar 5 (Agencies): The UN envoy focusing on sexual violence in conflict said in a new report that there are "reasonable grounds" to believe Hamas committed rape, "sexualized torture," and other cruel and inhumane treatment of women during its surprise attack in southern Israel on October 7.

There are also "reasonable grounds to believe that such violence may be ongoing," said Pramila Patten, who visited Israel and the West Bank from January 29 to February 14 with a nine-member technical team.

Based on first-hand accounts of released hostages, she said the team "found clear and convincing information" that some women and children during their captivity were subjected to the same conflict-related sexual violence including rape and "sexualized torture."

The report comes nearly five months after the October 7 attacks, which left about 1,200 people dead and some 250 others taken hostage. Israel's war against Hamas has since laid waste to the Gaza Strip, killing more than 30,000 people, according to Gaza's Health Ministry. The UN says a quarter of Gaza's 2.3 million people face starvation.

Hamas has rejected earlier allegations that its fighters committed sexual assault.

Patten stressed at a press conference launching the report that the team's visit was not to investigate allegations of sexual violence but to gather, analyze

and verify information for Secretary-General Antonio Guterres' annual report on sexual violence in conflict and for the UN Security Council.

Her key recommendation is to encourage Israel to grant access to the UN human rights chief and the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Palestinian territories and Israel "to carry out full-fledged investigations into the alleged violations" — and she expressed hope the Security Council would do this.

Patten said the team was not able to meet with any victims of sexual violence "despite concerted efforts to encourage them to come forward." While the number of victims remains unknown, she said, "a small number of those who are undergoing treatment are reportedly experiencing severe mental distress and trauma." However, team members held 33 meetings with Israeli institutions and conducted interviews with 34 people including survivors and witnesses of the October 7 attacks, released hostages, health providers and others.

Based on the information it gathered, Patten said, "there are reasonable grounds to believe that conflict-related sexual violence occurred during the October 7 attacks in multiple locations across Gaza periphery, including rape and gang rape, in at least three locations." Across various locations, she said, the team found "that several fully naked or

partially naked bodies from the waist down were recovered — mostly women — with hands tied and shot multiple times, often in the head." While this is circumstantial, she said the pattern of undressing and restraining victims "may be indicative of some forms of sexual violence." At the Nova music festival and its surroundings, Patten said, "there are reasonable grounds to believe that multiple incidents of sexual violence took place with victims being subjected to rape and/or gang rape and then killed or killed while being raped."

"There are further accounts of individuals who witnessed at least two incidents of rape of corpses of women," Patten said. "Other credible sources at the Nova music festival site described seeing multiple murdered individuals, mostly women, whose bodies were found naked from the waist down, some totally naked," some shot in the head, some tied to trees or poles with their hands bound.

On Road 232 — the road to leave the festival — "credible information based on witness accounts describe an incident of the rape of two women by armed elements," Patten said. Other reported rapes and gang rapes couldn't be verified and require investigation.

"Along this road, several bodies were found with genital injuries, along with injuries to other body parts," she said. "Discernible patterns of genital mutilation could not be verified

at this time but warrant future investigation." She said "the mission team also found a pattern of bound naked or partially naked bodies from the waist down, in some cases tied to structures including trees and poles, along Road 232." People fleeing the Nova music festival also attempted to escape south and sought shelter in and around kibbutz Reim where Patten said there are "reasonable grounds" to believe sexual violence occurred.

The mission team verified the rape of a woman outside a bomb shelter and heard of other allegations of rape that could not yet be verified.

At Kibbutz Be'eri, Patten said, her team "was able to determine that at least two allegations of sexual violence widely repeated in the media, were unfounded due to either new superseding information or inconsistency in the facts gathered." These included a highly publicized allegation that a pregnant woman's womb was reportedly ripped open before being killed with her fetus stabbed inside her, Patten said.

Another was "the interpretation initially made of the body of a girl found separated from the rest of her family, naked from the waist down," she said. "It was determined by the mission team that the crime scene had been altered by a bomb squad and the bodies moved, explaining the separation of the body of the girl from the rest of her family."

## US Says Missiles Fired By Yemen's Houthis Hit Container Ship In Gulf of Aden

CAIRO, Mar 5 (Agencies): One of two anti-ship ballistic missiles fired by Yemen's Houthis at the container vessel M/V MSC SKY II in the Gulf of Aden hit the ship and caused "damage", the U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) said on Tuesday.

Initial reports indicated no injuries and the Liberian-flagged, Swiss-owned container vessel did not request assistance and continued on its way, CENTCOM said in a statement.

A military spokesperson for the Iran-aligned Houthis said on

Monday that they targeted the vessel with "a number of suitable naval missiles". Houthis are targeting Red Sea shipping lanes in support of Palestinians in the Israel-Hamas war in Gaza.

The U.S. military said that Houthis also launched an anti-ship ballistic missile from Yemen into the southern Red Sea, however, it impacted the water with no damage or injuries to commercial or U.S. Navy ships.

CENTCOM forces conducted "self-defence" strikes against two anti-ship cruise missiles that pre-

sented "an imminent threat" to merchant vessels and U.S. Navy ships in the region, the statement added.

The United States and Britain have launched strikes on Houthi targets in Yemen and redesignated the militia as a terrorist group.

Houthis' Red Sea attacks have disrupted global shipping, forcing firms to re-route to longer and more expensive journeys around southern Africa, and stoked fears that the Israel-Hamas war could spread to destabilise the wider Middle East.

## Iran Executed 834 People Last Year, Highest Since 2015: Rights Groups

PARIS, Mar 5 (Agencies): Iran executed a "staggering" total of at least 834 people last year, the highest number since 2015 as capital punishment surged in the Islamic republic, two rights groups said Tuesday.

The number of executions, which Iran has carried out by hanging in recent years, was up some 43 percent on 2022.

It marked only the second time in two decades that over 800 executions were recorded in a year, after 972 executions in 2015, Norway-based Iran Human Rights (IHR) and Paris-based Together Against the Death Penalty said in the joint report.

The groups accused Iran of using the death penalty to spread fear throughout society in the wake of the protests sparked by the September 2022 death in police custody of Mahsa Amini that shook the authorities.

"Instilling societal fear is the regime's only way to hold on to power, and the death penalty is its most important instrument," said IHR direc-



tor Mahmood Amiry-Moghaddam in the report, which described the figure of 834 as a "staggering total".

Iran has executed nine men in cases linked to attacks on security forces during the 2022 protests -- two in 2022, six in 2023 and one so far in 2024 -- according to the rights groups.

But executions have been stepped up on other charges, notably in drug-related cases, which had until recent years seen a fall.

"Of particular concern is the dramatic escalation in the number of drug-related executions in 2023, which rose to 471 people, more than 18 times higher than the figures recorded in 2020," said the report.

Members of ethnic minorities, notably the

Sunni Baluch from the southeast of Iran, are "grossly overrepresented amongst those executed" on drug-related charges, it said.

At least 167 members of the Baluch minority were executed in total, accounting for 20 percent of the total executions in 2023, even though the minority accounts for only around five percent of Iran's population.

"Wrong signal" ECPM director Raphael Chenuil-Hazan said the "lack of reaction" by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) was sending "the wrong signal to the Iranian authorities".

Most hangings in Iran are carried out within the confines of prison but the report said that

in 2023 the number of hangings carried out in public in Iran tripled from 2022, with seven people hanged in public spaces.

At least 22 women were executed, marking the highest number in the past decade, the report said.

Fifteen of them were hanged on murder charges and NGOs have long warned that women who kill an abusive partner or relative risk being hanged.

In 2023, only 15 percent of the recorded executions were announced by official Iranian media, with IHR confirming the other executions with its own sources.

Amiry-Moghaddam expressed concern that a lack of international outrage at the executions, in particular with attention focused on the Gaza war between Israel and Hamas, was only encouraging the Islamic republic to carry out more hangings.

"The inconsistency in the international community's reaction to the executions in Iran is unfortunate and sends the wrong signal to the authorities," he said.







## "This Is So Wrong": Dinesh Karthik Fumes As Tamil Nadu Coach 'Throws Captain Under The Bus'

*Dinesh Karthik wasn't happy to hear Tamil Nadu team's coach's comments criticising the captain R Sai Kishore.*

MUMBAI, Mar 5 (Agencies): It isn't often that one sees the coach of a cricket team publicly criticising its captain. But, the rare incident took place during the Ranji Trophy semi-final match between Tamil Nadu and Mumbai. Tamil Nadu's coach Sulakshan Kulkarni slammed his captain R Sai Kishore's decision to bat first. The statement from Kulkarni triggered a huge row on social media, with fans criticising the coach. Even veteran Indian cricketer Dinesh Karthik took social media, sharing his disappointment at Kulkarni's comments.

"This is soo WRONG. This is so disappointing from the coach...instead of backing the captain who has brought the team to the semis after 7 yrs and thinking it's a start for good things to happen, the coach has absolutely thrown his captain and team under the bus," Karthik said in a post on X (formerly Twitter).

This is soo WRONG  
This is so disappointing from



the coach...instead of backing the captain who has brought the team to the semis after 7 yrs and thinking it's a start for good things to happen, the coach has absolutely thrown his captain and team under the bus.

Kulkarni didn't shy away from putting his captain, Sai Kishore in the line of fire, suggesting it was the latter's decision to bat first that led to the team's loss in the semi-final.

"I always speak straightforward -- we lost the match at 9 o'clock on day one," Kulkarni said after



Tamil Nadu lost the semi-final contest to Mumbai by an innings and 70 runs. "The moment I saw the wicket I exactly knew what we were going to get. Everything was set, we won the toss, as a coach, as a Mumbaikar, I know the conditions well. We should have bowled but the captain had some different instinct."

"When I saw that they had played on a different pitch in the quarter-final and what wicket they gave, (that) moment I realised that this is a seaming-friendly wicket and it was going

to be a very tough match, we would have to play really well to win this game," Kulkarni said.

"Ultimately he [Sai Kishore] is the boss. I can give my feedback and inputs (on) the kind of wickets and Mumbai's mindset also."

Kulkarni said that Tamil Nadu lost the game in the first hour itself after losing to Sai Sudharshan under challenging conditions.

"We were mentally prepared that whoever wins the toss would bowl first," he said. "We knew that we would bowl first. The moment they (TV broadcast) said we would bat first, whatever you say, it goes in the batsmen's minds. That first half an hour (before play) got in the batsmen's minds."

"When you get into the first over, third (fourth) ball, your international player gets out and you see the situation... in the first hour, we lost the game and the plot. It was very difficult to come back."

## Speculation swirls as Dhoni hints at 'new role' in IPL, asks fans to stay tuned



NEW DELHI, Mar 5 (Agencies): Barely two weeks before the start of the IPL, the enigmatic Mahendra Singh Dhoni sent speculation into overdrive by claiming that a "new role" awaits him in the "new season" in a viral social media post.

The former India captain, who led the Chennai Super Kings to their fifth IPL title last season, however, neither men-

tioned the league nor elaborated on the new role, leaving everyone guessing.

"Can't wait for the new season and the new 'role'. Stay tuned!" Dhoni wrote in a rare social media post on Facebook.

Speculation is rife that this season will be Dhoni's final one as a player.

Last year, the 42-year-old mostly came out to bat towards the fag end

of CSK innings.

He has not yet clarified on whether he will captain CSK in IPL 2024.

At the post-match ceremony after winning the final last year, Dhoni was asked if he will retire on a high, but the Ranchi dasher, in his inimitable style, deflected the query by saying that it would amount to taking an easy way out.

He went on to add that he would try to come back next season as CSK captain if his body allowed him.

The wicketkeeper batter, who was spotted at Anant Ambani and Radhika Merchant's pre-wedding celebrations in Jamnagar recently, has not yet arrived at the CSK training camp that got underway in Chennai.

CSK are set to take on Royal Challengers Bangalore in their tournament opener on March 22.

## Pakistani Boxer Embarrasses Own Country, Disappears After Stealing Money In Italy

LAHORE, Mar 5 (Agencies): A Pakistani boxer has disappeared in Italy after stealing money from a teammate's bag, the Pakistan Amateur Boxing Federation said on Tuesday. Zohaib Rasheed has gone to Italy to take part in an Olympic qualifying tournament. A senior official of the federation said they had brought it to the notice of the Pakistan Embassy in Italy and also filed a police report about the incident. "It is most embarrassing for the federation and country the way Zohaib Rasheed has behaved as he had gone there as part of a five-member squad to take part in an Olympic qualifying tournament," the national federation's secretary, Colonel Nasir Ahmed said.

Zohaib had won a bronze medal in last year's Asian Boxing Championships and was regarded as a rising talent in Pakistan.

Nasir said that a female boxer Laura



Ikram had gone out for training and Zohaib took her room keys from the front desk and stole her foreign currency from a purse before disappearing from the hotel.

"The police have been informed and they are now searching for him but he is not in contact with anyone," Nasir said.

This is not the first time a Pakistani athlete has gone abroad with a national squad and slipped away in hope of a better future.

## Flipside: Grand sporting mess: NSFs caught between sports code & court orders

CHENNAI, Mar 5 (Agencies): It is bad and it can get worse. Not just the National Sports Federations (NSFs) that have conducted elections after August 16, 2022 that can be in serious trouble but all federations. This can be inferred from the last three orders related to elections of NSFs passed by the Delhi High Court in February. The way things stand, months before the Olympics, majority of NSFs are in danger of getting de-recognised over sports code violation.

The first case was in connection with the Volleyball Federation of India (VFI) elections. The second was connected with the Rowing Federation of India (RFI). The last was with All India Chess Federation (AICF). The VFI election was stayed. The RFI election was allowed but with a rider as the court had asked the ballots to be submitted to the court without counting.

But the curious case was related to the AICF election. Just before the sports ministry was supposed to file sports code compliance report as directed by the court, the association that filed the petition -- Devbhoomi State Chess Association (Uttaranchal) -- decided to withdraw. Senior advocate Rahul Mehra, who specialises in sports law, was pursuing the matter in Delhi High Court. He said that there have been indications that somebody brokered peace between factions and asked Devbhoomi to withdraw petition. And there was no stay on the election.

What seemed even more baffling were the nominations of candidates for the 15-member executive committee list. There is no representation from any of the chess powerhouses like Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh or Delhi. There are five from Northeast states -- Arunachal, Assam,



Tripura, Mizoram and Manipur -- known for talent in sports like boxing, football, weightlifting, hockey, wushu, contact sports, cycling, etc.

The AICF base is in Chennai and it hosted the Chess Olympiad in 2022.

The three National Sports Federations (NSFs) may be in focus but it's the court orders that are giving all NSFs sleepless nights. Going by various Delhi HC orders in the last three years (since All India Football Federation and Indian Olympic Association cases), almost all NSFs' recognition and existence seems to be threatened, especially those that had approached the court during election. Even the sports ministry is caught in the mess.

This is what one order says: "Whether or not the constitution of the respondent no.1 is in compliance with the National Sports Federation of India and the judgment dated 16.08.2022 in W.P. (C)195/2010 particularly keeping in mind the prescription in the constitution of the respondent no.1 regarding the strength of the Executive Council (EC) and the number of office bearers (Article -- 7(o), 13 and 16)." -- Devbhoomi chess case order by Delhi HC judge Sachin Datta.

Another case: "Learned senior counsel for the RFI, on instructions, from Mr. Raj Laxmi Deo, President, RFI and Mr. N.V. Sriram, Secretary, RFI assures and undertakes to this Court that the RFI shall carry out amendments to ensure full compliance with the Sports

Code as interpreted by this Court vide judgment dated 16th August, 2022 in W.P.(C) No. 195/2010 within twelve weeks." (Delhi HC while hearing RFI case -- Acting Chief Justice Manmohan and Manmeet Pritam Singh Arora)

What seems even more interesting is that the sports ministry's National Sports Development Code of India 2011 (NSDCI) is not the only guideline that the NSFs have to adhere to now. In fact, according to Mehra, NSFs have to follow the 2011 NSDCI as was interpreted by the high court order of India W.P.(C) 195/2010 [Rahul Mehra v. Union of India] dated 16.08.2022.

One senior sports administrator said this will spell doom to not just one or two NSFs but almost all. The tricky part is bringing in line the state and district units. For NSFs, it is easy to follow the sports code as interpreted by the Delhi HC order of 16.08.2022 but for state and district units, it's a colossal challenge. One must also keep in mind that sports is a state subject and every state may have its own guidelines. Most NSFs adhere to age and tenure guidelines and even have athletes in their mix. Athletes' Commission too have been set up.

Mehra said that other than the AIF and the IOA who have challenged the 16.08.2022 order in SC, all other NSFs have to follow the division bench judgement. "Since no one has challenged this in court, the judgement has attained finality and all NSFs are bound by this," he told this daily.

The NSFs (most of them) are already not getting funds from the government directly. Things will get worse if they don't find a solution early. As one pointed out, all NSFs must come together and do something (even challenge it if needed).

16.08.2022 order and consequences

The order is connected to India W.P.(C) 195/2010 (Rahul Mehra v. Union of India) of 16.08.2022 and it was passed by division bench comprising of Delhi HC judges Najmi Waziri and Manmohan. Most NSFs have majority of the 13 provisions listed out in the 16.08.2022 order including age and tenure. If there was ambiguity whether the provisions of the sports code would be applied to the state and district level units it was cleared by another judgment on September 1, 2023.

"It is further made clear that in respect of all future elections, the respondent Union of India shall ensure strict compliance of the judgement delivered in W.P.(C) No. 195/2010 dated 16.08.2022," said the order passed by Delhi HC Chief Justice Satish Chandra Sharma and Subramonium Prasad. Mehra said that after this it is clear that all elections after September 1, 2023 has to be held under sports code as interpreted by the 16.08.2022 order. "Otherwise it will be a contempt of court," he said. He also questioned why the sports ministry continues to recognise such NSFs. He claims that the sports ministry is the biggest defaulter. "It's their sports code and they should have ensured compliance." Even in the case of the withdrawing petition, he said the government would be involved.

What happens if an NSF is de-recognised? The NSF "shall not be able to select the national teams and represent India in any international event or international forum. It shall also not be

allowed to use the word "India" or the National Emblems and Names in team participation; It shall lose its All-India character and may not be able to regulate and control the sports discipline concerned in the country."

What if IF recognises? Problem arises when the international federation recognises the sports ministry derecognised NSF. Since NSFs are autonomous bodies, only they are authorized to send entries to international events. It is at the IF's discretion to accept those entries. And for Olympics and other multi-discipline events, the selection and entries have to be conducted and sent by the NSF recognised by its IF. Or else their entries will be rejected like in the case of karate and taekwondo during 2022 Asian Games last year.

What is NSDCI 2011? It says, "accordingly, after the notification of the 2001 National Sports Policy the Government notified revised Guidelines for Assistance to National Sports Federations (NSFs) in August 2001 and issued subsequent guidelines from time to time, which are legally binding on the National Olympic Committee (NOC), i.e., the Indian Olympic Association (IOA), and the National Sports Federations (NSFs) if they are desirous of regulating and controlling sports in India, or using the name of India or representing India within or outside India, or availing themselves of various benefits and concessions, including financial benefits such as customs duty exemption or income tax exemption that are available to NSFs, including the NOC. Although these bodies may be registered in different states under the Societies Registration Act or the Companies Act, their authority to function as the NOC or NSF will be dependent on compliance with the government guidelines."

## Pakistani Judoka Dies After Suffering Head Injuries

ISLAMABAD, Mar 5 (Agencies): A young female judoka has died in Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province after suffering head injuries during a competition bout.

Fiza Sher Ali, a talented 20-year old student couldn't recover from the head injuries she sustained while competing in the 44kg category fight during a Youth Talent Hunt program in Mardan. "She was a first year BS student in Peshawar and had come to Mardan for the trials and was new to the sport," an official of the Pakistan Judo Federation said.

He said Fiza fell instantly during her match and didn't recover.

"She was given medical treatment at the venue and rushed to the hospital but didn't survive," the official added.

Few days ago, a 16-year old female tennis player from Karachi died in Islamabad from a suspected cardiac condition after taking part in an ITF junior tournament match.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province is considered one of the most difficult provinces for female athletes to make a mark in any sport due to cultural, social and other restrictions in the region.

## Sakshi sees no return to competitive wrestling



NEW DELHI, Mar 5 (Agencies): Olympics bronze medalist Sakshi Malik has ruled out a return to competitive wrestling, saying the long-standing protest

against former national federation chief Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh for alleged sexual harassment has left her mentally tormented.

The 31-year-old had

announced retirement in December after Brij Bhushan's close aide Sanjay Singh was elected president of the Wrestling Federation of India (WFI).

"It's been more than a year, there is so much mental pressure and we have been trying to fight in every possible way to make this protest a success, so I'll not be able to continue wrestling," Malik said. "I got (Olympics) bronze for India and I want my juniors to get silver and gold. I would love to see each and every girl in India pursuing her dreams," she added.

