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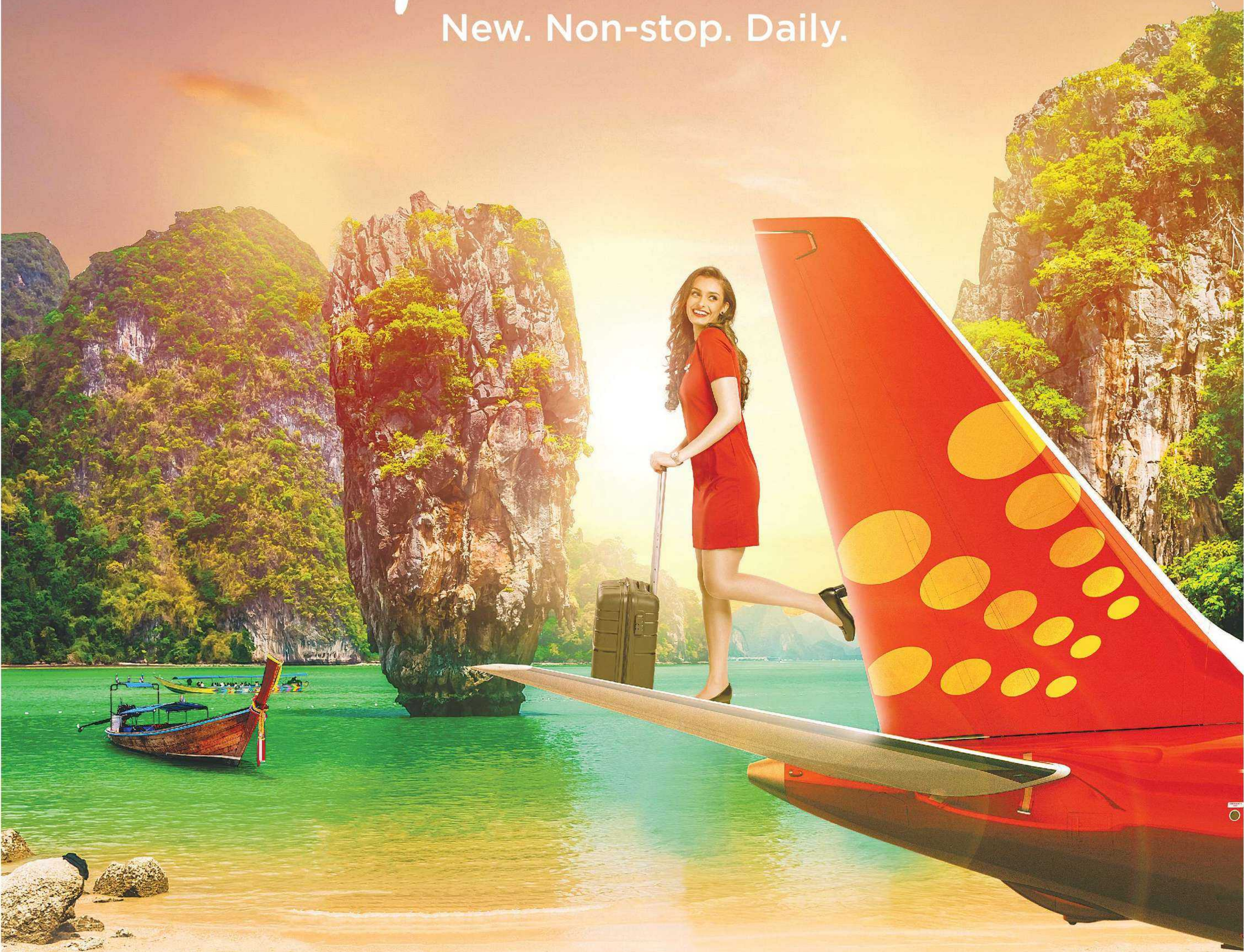


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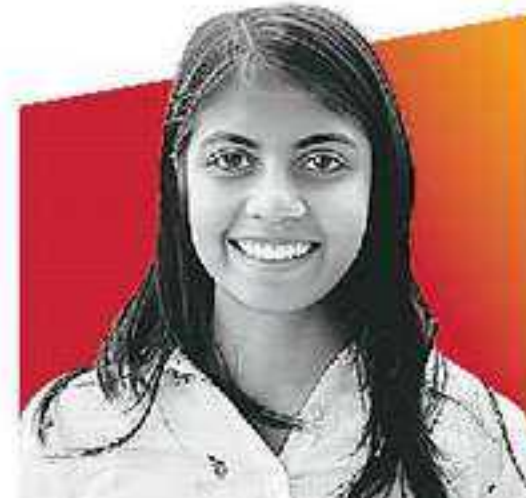
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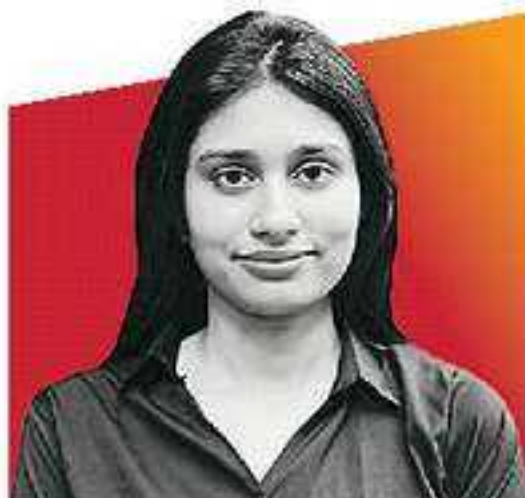
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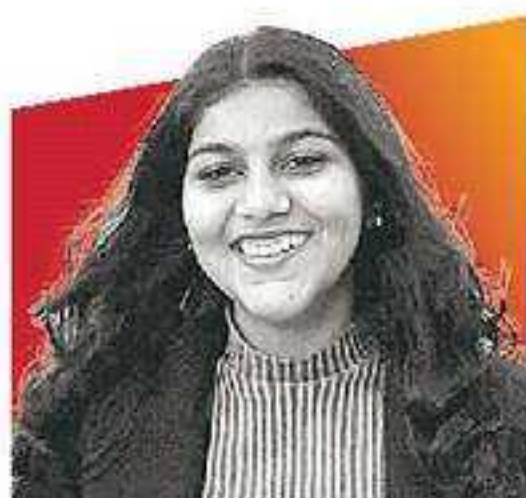
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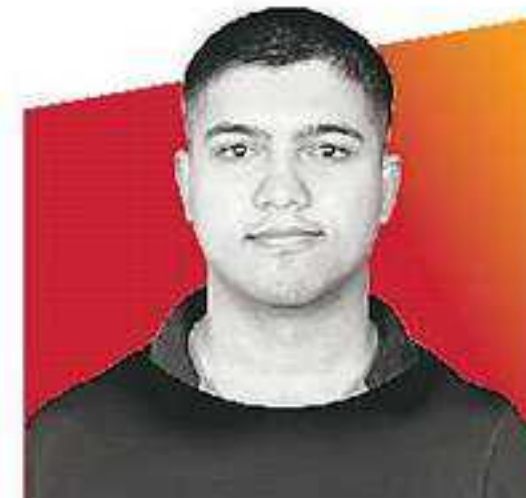
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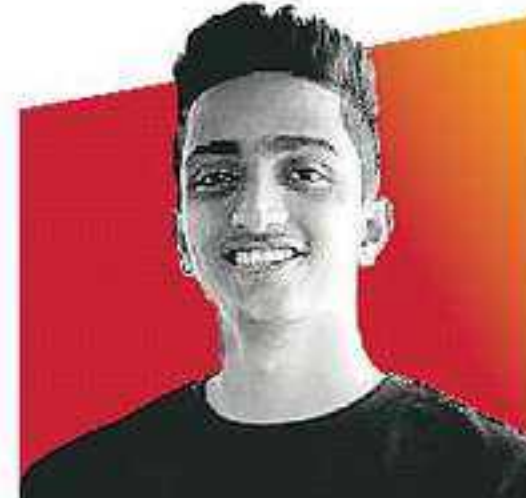
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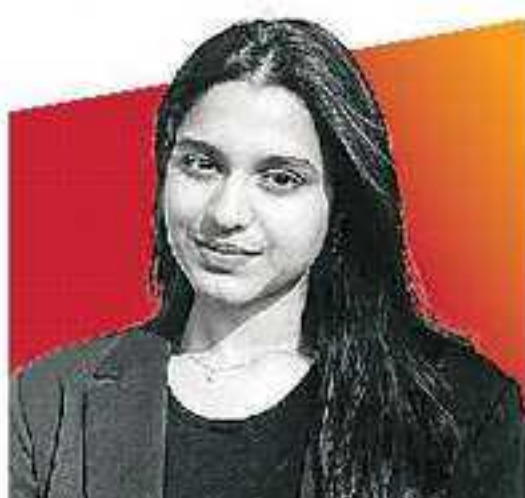
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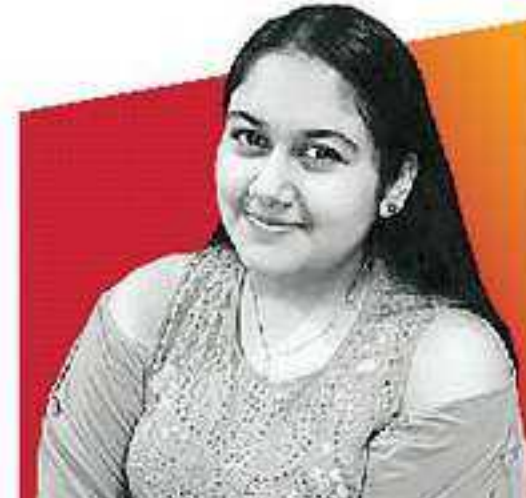
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Fourth phase of voting to seal another 96 seats

HT Correspondent
 letters@hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI: From the once Maoist bastion of Malkangiri, to the glittering urban agglomeration of Hyderabad; from Srinagar that will vote for the first time since the revocation of Article 370, to Indore where the Congress will not fight the election at all — 177 million Indians will line up at 192,000 polling booths on Monday when the country holds its fourth phase of Lok Sabha elections in 96 parliamentary seats.

This is the second-largest phase in the 2024 election cycle in terms of number of constituencies and will be spread out over ten states and union territories. Voting will also be held for the 175 assembly seats in Andhra Pradesh and 28 assembly seats in Odisha.

Votes will be counted for both the Lok Sabha and the assembly elections on June 4.

In these 96 seats, there are 1,717 candidates in the fray, including high profile names such as Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav in Uttar Pradesh, All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen's Asaduddin Owaisi in Telangana, and Congress's Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury in West Bengal and Bharatiya Janata Party's Giriraj Singh in Bihar.

When voting ends on Monday, 379 of India's 543 constituencies will have voted, although there are some polling booths where a repoll will be held, such as Betul in Madhya Pradesh.

Even as the Election Commission has had to contend with

continued on →6



Polling officials board a boat with election material in Chitrakonda, Odisha, on Sunday.

REUTERS

Heavy security arrangements in place as Srinagar goes to the polls

Ashiq Hussain
 letters@hindustantimes.com

SRINAGAR: A hefty security cover blanketed Kashmir ahead of Monday's voting for the Srinagar Lok Sabha seat, the first major electoral contest in the Valley since the revocation of Article 370 in August 2019.

Twenty-four candidate are contesting from the constituency, which has close to 17.5 million eligible voters.

Thousands of security personnel from paramilitary forces and J&K Police have been deployed across the region to ensure peaceful polling, officers aware of the matter said. They added that Road Opening Parties (ROPs), Quick Reaction Teams (QRTs), Static Surveillance Teams (SSTs) have also been stationed as part of the security arrangements.

"We have made all the security arrangements in polling sta-

tions, distribution centres and strong rooms. All the prescribed security arrangements under the guidelines of the Election Commission of India have been made for the Srinagar parliamentary constituency," said Kashmir's inspector general of police Vidhi Kumar Birdi.

A total of 2,135 polling stations have been set up across the constituency, and they will be guarded by 8,500 polling staff, added the officials.

→P8

INDIA HOPES FOR RESOLUTION OF CHINA BORDER ISSUE SOON: EAM

NEW DELHI: As the eastern Ladakh military standoff entered its fifth year, external affairs minister S Jaishankar said India hopes for a resolution of the remaining issues with China and asserted that a return to normal bilateral ties hinges on peace and tranquillity at the border.

In an interview with news agency PTI, Jaishankar said the remaining issues mainly pertained to "patrolling rights and patrolling abilities".

Specifically asked when a resolution to the dragging row can be expected in the backdrop of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's remarks to Newsweek magazine last month, Jaishankar said that he only provided a "big-picture" viewpoint on the matter.

→P10

CANADA ARRESTS FOURTH SUSPECT IN NIJJAR MURDER INVESTIGATION

Anirudh Bhattacharyya

letters@hindustantimes.com

TORONTO: The Canadian authorities have arrested a fourth man in connection with the murder of pro-Khalistan separatist Hardeep Singh Nijjar, an official statement said. The accused was identified as Amandeep Singh, an Indian national. "This arrest shows the nature of our ongoing investigation to hold responsible those that played a role in the homicide of Hardeep Singh Nijjar," an official familiar with the matter said, days after Canadian PM Justin Trudeau said that the probe "was not limited" to the three Indian nationals arrested on May 3.

→P10

Magnetic magnificence



The lights of an aurora australis over Villarrica volcano, in Pucon, Chile. An extreme geomagnetic storm, as energy from the Sun collided with Earth's magnetic field, has set the skies alight in dazzling colours across Europe and the Americas.

REUTERS

La Nina effect may lead to above-normal rains

Jayashree Nandi
 letters@hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI: Conditions have turned favourable for the La Nina weather phenomenon in the Pacific Ocean to start in the next few months, the Climate Prediction Centre of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration of the US has said, which could lead to above average rainfall and floods in India during the monsoon that begins in June.

NOAA issued a La Nina watch last week, saying the phenomenon could form as early as June-August 2024, with higher confidence during the following seasons.

THE LA NINA PHENOMENON IS ASSOCIATED WITH A STRONG MONSOON AND ABOVE AVERAGE RAINS AND COLDER WINTERS IN THE SUBCONTINENT

Experts said the general expectation based on trends during previous La Nina events is that La Nina during monsoon months is likely to cause above-normal rainfall in India, but warned that this also comes

with the possibility of excessive flooding in some parts of the country.

In India, an El Nino is associated with a harsher summer and weaker monsoon. La Nina, on the other hand, is associated with a strong monsoon and above average rains and colder winters in the subcontinent.

La Nina generally tends to follow strong El Nino events, as seen in the past few months, which also provides added confidence in the model guidance favoring La Nina, NOAA said.

In summary, a transition from El Nino to ENSO-neutral is likely in the next month (June). La Nina may develop in

continued on →13

Delhi statehood, China land issue in Kejriwal's guarantees

Paras Singh

paras@hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI: The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) may scrap the Agniveer armed forces recruitment programme, give the army a free hand to resolve India's conflict with China and accord Delhi complete statehood if the INDIA bloc of Opposition parties is voted to power after the ongoing general elections, chief minister Arvind Kejriwal said on Sunday, as he outlined a list of "10 guarantees" that will reinforce the country's foundations.

The guarantees also include round-the-clock free power for the poor, quality government education, improved healthcare and a simplified Goods and Services Tax (GST).

"People have to decide whether they want to trust



Punjab CM Bhagwant Mann and Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal at the party headquarters in New Delhi on Sunday.

SANJEEV VERMA/HT

'Modi ki guarantee' or 'Kejriwal's guarantees'," Kejriwal said during a press conference at the AAP headquarters, two days after being released from Tihar jail.

"He (Modi) made a series of

promises, for instance that he would give everyone ₹15 lakh, provide 20 million jobs, double farmers' income... But none of these were fulfilled. We delivered on free electricity, mohalla

continued on →6



Prime Minister Narendra Modi with BJP leaders at a rally in Barrackpore on Sunday.

SAMIR JANA/HT

Won't let anyone repeal CAA law: Modi at rallies in Bengal

HT Correspondent
 letters@hindustantimes.com

KOLKATA: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday asserted that the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) will not be repealed as long as he remains in power and went on to accuse the Trinamool Congress (TMC) of turning Hindus into "second-class citizens" in West Bengal.

Modi alleged that the TMC was indulging in vote-bank politics, with the "goons of the ruling party" in West Bengal threatening the "tormented women" of Sandeshkhali where allegations

continued on →13

Sandeshkhali a BJP ploy, Modi shouldn't lie about it: Mamata

AMDANGA/AMTA: Accusing PM Narendra Modi of "peddle lies" about Sandeshkhali, West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee on Sunday questioned why he had maintained a stoic silence on the allegations of molestation against governor CV Ananda Bose. "The PM is still peddling lies about

Sandeshkhali. He should be ashamed as the BJP's conspiracy has now become public," she said referring to a purported video in which a BJP leader was heard saying that women were paid for protesting against TMC's Shahjahan Sheikh, the main accused in the case.

→P10

BOMB THREATS RECEIVED AT IGI, OTHER AIRPORTS, DELHI HOSPITALS

HT Correspondent
 letters@hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI: The Indira Gandhi International Airport and at least eight city hospitals on Sunday received hoax bomb threats through email, said officials.

The Jaipur and Ahmedabad airports also received hoax threats on Sunday.

Among the first to report the threat was Burari Hospital in north Delhi, which informed police around 3.15pm. Similar complaints soon started pouring in from other hospitals, with GTB Hospital and Delhi State Cancer Institute (both located on the same premises) in Dilshad Garden reporting a threat around 3.30pm and Sanjay Gandhi Memorial Hospital in Mangolpuri reporting it at 4.23pm.

Similar threats were sent to DDU Hospital, Bara Hindu Rao Hospital, Aruna Asaf Ali Hospital, Dada Dev Hospital and Janakpuri Super Speciality Hospital between 3pm and 6pm, police said.

The email to IGI airport was reported around 6.45pm.

→P3

Bijapur families say those killed weren't Maoists, police deny

Ritesh Mishra and S Kareemuddin
 letters@hindustantimes.com

RAIPUR: Two days after 12 alleged Maoists were killed by security forces in Bijapur district of Chhattisgarh, villagers and activists on Sunday said those killed were locals who were branded insurgents by police.

Village residents gathered outside the Bijapur district collectorate, demanding the dead bodies of their kin, saying they were killed in a "fake encounter" with security forces. Calling the encounter fake, residents said some locals had gone to pluck tendu leaves from the forest and started running when security forces moved towards them.

"They were shot down by the forces while they were running in fear and surprise," said Gurananda, a resident of Pedia village who witnessed the encounter.

CALLING THE ENCOUNTER FAKE, RESIDENTS SAID SOME LOCALS HAD GONE TO PLUCK TENDU LEAVES AND STARTED RUNNING WHEN FORCES CHARGED AT THEM

Police refuted the claims. Those killed in the encounter were Maoists who changed into local attire after seeing police in the jungle, officers said. "They changed clothes and mingled with the villagers. All of the deceased were Maoists, not villagers. The villagers had come to take the dead bodies of the Maoists who were their relatives," said Kamalochan Kashyap, deputy inspector general of police of the South Bastar region.

→FULL REPORT ON P10

{ **ANTI-HANGING DEVICES NOT INSTALLED** }

Kota hostels yet to take suicide prevention seriously

Tracking student suicides in Kota
 Last year, 27 students died by suicide in Kota, the most ever, forcing the admin to initiate a string of preventive measures



Senjuti Sengupta

letters@hindustantimes.com

JAIPUR: Around 300 hostels and paying guest accommodations (PGs) in Kota district of Rajasthan are yet to install a spring device on ceiling fans, as mandated by the administration, to prevent students from taking their lives, a recent survey amid a series of suicides by hanging this year has revealed.

The survey, conducted by the district administration between February and April, also found that the staff at several such

accommodations failed to undergo a mandatory training session to professionally deal with students and keep a check on early signs of stress and depression.

The exercise was carried out by a nine-member panel formed on February 17 to monitor the execution of district and state government guidelines at hostels and PGs that were enforced last year amid a growing number of suicides among students preparing for various competitive exams.

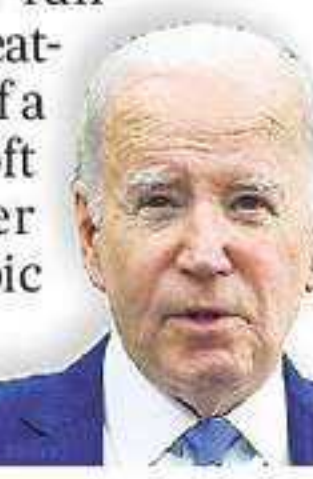
Nine students have died by suicide this year, including eight by hanging.

→P13

CEASEFIRE POSSIBLE IF HOSTAGES ARE RELEASED: BIDEN

MEDINA, U.S.: President Joe Biden said Saturday that a ceasefire in the Israel-Hamas war was possible as soon as "tomorrow" if the militant group released its hostages. "There would be a ceasefire tomorrow if Hamas would release the hostages," Biden said at a fundraiser outside Seattle, at the home of a former Microsoft executive, after avoiding the topic at three events

on Friday.

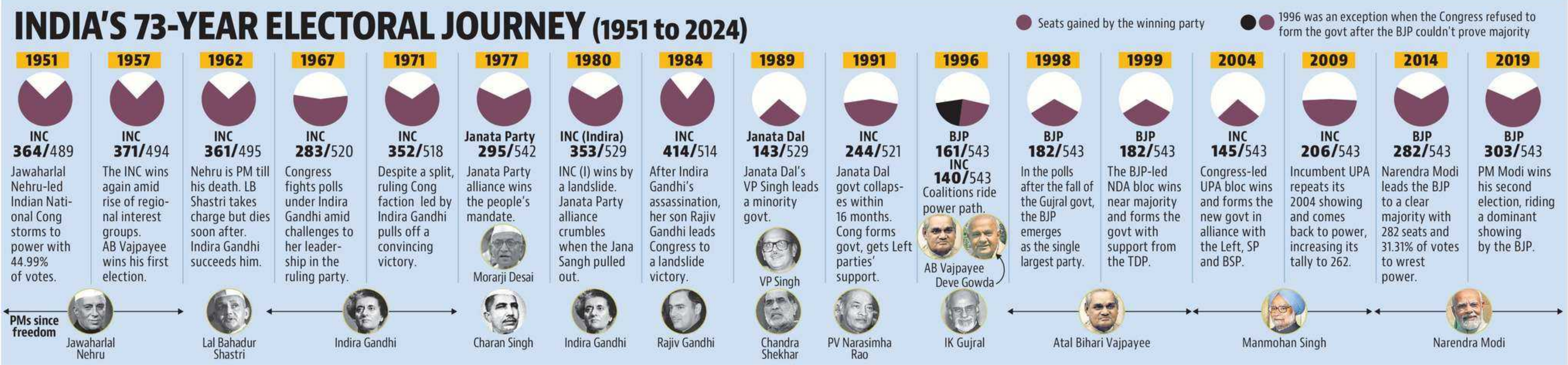
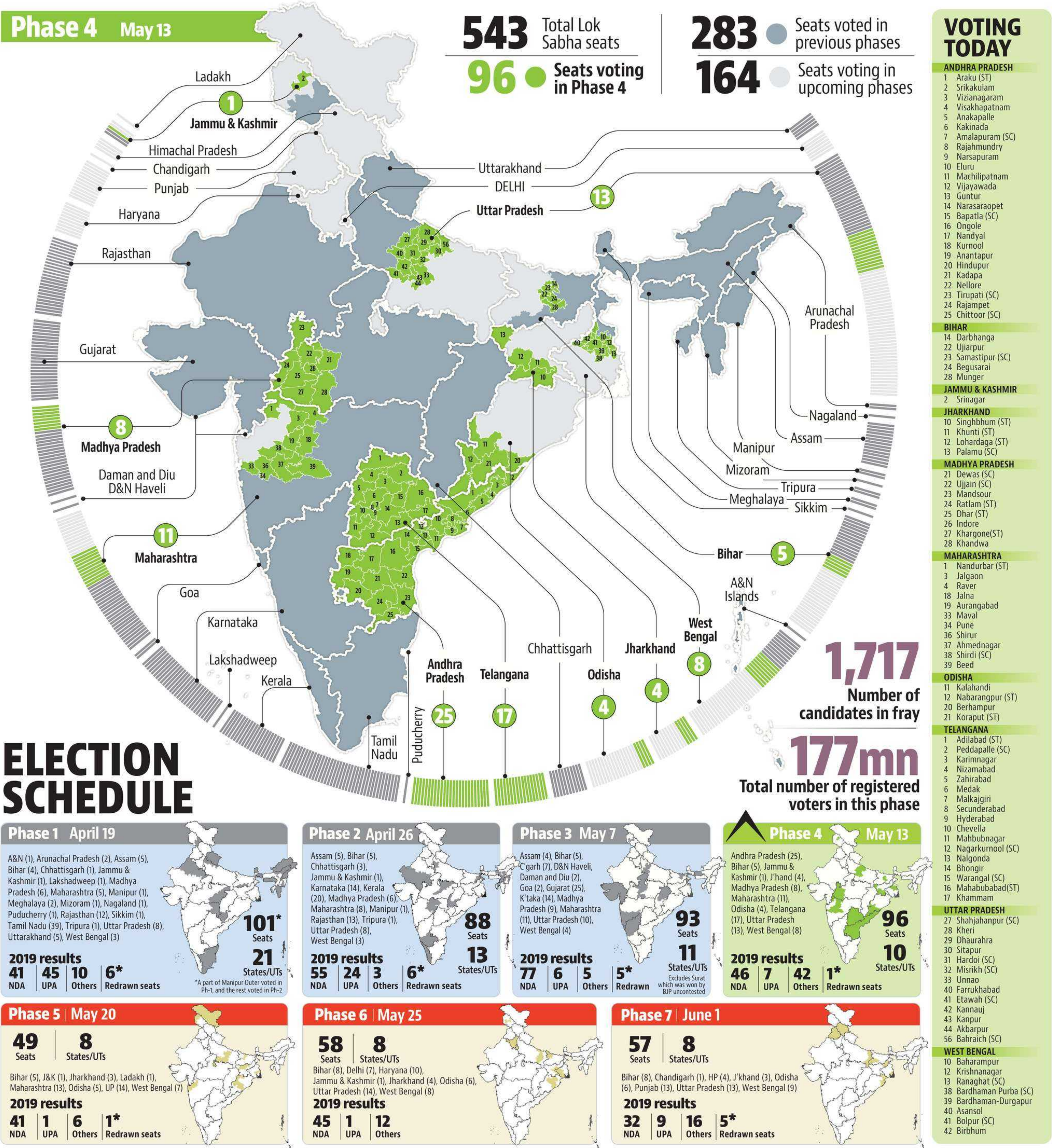


→P15

SPOTLIGHT ELECTIONS 2024

ALLEYES ON ROUND 4 TODAY

A look at what is at stake in the 96 seats that vote in the fourth phase of the 2024 Lok Sabha elections



Bomb threats made to hospitals, airport

HT Correspondent

letters@hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI: The Indira Gandhi International Airport and at least eight city hospitals on Sunday received bomb threats through email, on the lines of threats sent to over 200 schools in Delhi-NCR on May 1, with the threats turning out to be hoaxes, officials said.

Among the first to report the threat was Burari Hospital in north Delhi, which informed police around 3.15pm. Similar complaints soon started pouring in from other hospitals, with GTB Hospital and Delhi State Cancer Institute (both located on the same premises) in Dilshad Garden reporting a threat around 3.30pm and Sanjay Gandhi Memorial Hospital in Mangolpuri reporting it at 4.23pm.

There were also similar threats to DDU Hospital, Bara Hindu Rao Hospital, Aruna Asaf Ali Hospital, Dada Dev Hospital and Janakpuri Super Speciality Hospital between 3pm and 6pm, police said.

The email to the airport was reported at around 6.45pm.



A bomb squad at Burari Hospital; (right) emergency services arrive at Sanjay Gandhi Hospital, in north Delhi on Sunday.

PTI

Police said the emails seemed to be a hoax since no suspicious device was found anywhere. "Checking is going on in all the hospitals. Patients were not evacuated. It was found to be a hoax. The mails were either sent to official mail IDs or medical superintendents. We haven't identified the accused yet" an officer, who did not wish to be named, said.

The Burari Hospital was

started in 2020 as a Covid-19 hospital, but has been pressed into general and other medical services since 2022.

Deputy commissioner of police (north) Manoj Meena said, "An email was received by the hospital's official email ID about a bomb threat. Local police, along with BDT (bomb detection team), were rushed there. Nothing was found."

DCP Meena said, "The infor-

mation didn't come from Hindu Rao and Aruna Asaf Ali. However, we searched over there also as their email addresses were mentioned in the email CC list. Nothing suspicious was found" However, the Burari Hospital was evacuated for the checks. "Luckily, there were no patients on oxygen cylinder, under surgery or in the ICU. Everyone simply walked out and waited while a search was conducted for 1-2

hours. We couldn't find anything," an officer said.

DCP (west) Vichitra Veer said calls were received in the afternoon from DDU Hospital and Janakpuri Super Speciality Hospital. DCP (outer) Jimmy Chiram said his teams, along with BDT, visited the Sanjay Gandhi Hospital and conducted a detailed search. The threat at GTB Hospital was also declared a hoax.

A purported screenshot of the email shows that the threat was sent to 15-20 persons, including doctors, across Delhi hospitals. Police said a case will be registered and the matter will be investigated. "I have placed explosive devices inside your building. They will explode... The group called 'Court' is behind this massacre (sic)," the alleged email, a copy of which was seen by HT, said.

Police are yet to confirm the details of the email.

Meanwhile, CISF officials at the Delhi airport received the threat email, police said.

Usha Rangnani, DCP (IGI Airport) said, "The security operations control centre at IGI Airport received an email concerning an explosive device within the premises. Enhanced security protocols are now in effect and safety measures have been intensified. No suspicious items have been found, as of now."

An airport official said: "The mail came to CISF email ID. A bomb threat assessment committee at the airport committee later found that the email was a hoax."

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2 killed, 3 hurt as car overturns in Rohini

HT Correspondent

letters@hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI: Two men were killed and three others were injured when the car they were travelling in overturned after their driver lost control of the vehicle in Rohini Sector 22, outer Delhi, on Sunday afternoon, police said.

The injured people are undergoing treatment at a government hospital, police said.

Deputy commissioner of

police (Rohini) Guriqbal Singh Sidhu said that the control room was informed of the incident around 12.30pm.

The deceased were identified by their single names as Sanjay, 23, and Ashutosh, 22, while the injured were Sahil, 20, Rashid, 18, and Lokesh Singh, 23. They all stayed in Kishan Vihar in Delhi. Sanjay was a vegetable vendor, and Ashutosh worked as a clothes salesman, police said.

It was not clear who was driving the car during the incident.

60-yr-old help, priest among three held for Jangpura doctor's murder

HT Correspondent

letters@hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI: Three people including a 60-year-old woman who worked as a house help were arrested for allegedly murdering a 63-year-old doctor at his house in Jangpura Extension, south-east Delhi, on Sunday, Delhi Police officers said.

According to police, the other two arrested suspects include a 38-year-old priest from Haridwar and his 30-year-old brother. Police said the accused conspired to execute the crime for nearly two months and had roped in their friends from Nepal, adding that at least four more people are currently at large. The help had been working at the victim's house for over 24 years, they added, and she was assisted by another woman, who also worked as a help at a house in the area, police said.

The victim, Dr Yogesh Chander Paul, was found dead inside his kitchen by his wife Dr Neena Paul on Friday evening. He was allegedly strangled to death with his dog's leash while his dog, Molly, was locked inside the bathroom. Police said Dr Paul was alone at home when the accused entered, tied his hands, gagged him using a cap and killed him. The suspects took cash and gold jewellery from the house.

Deputy commissioner of police (DCP) (southeast) Rajesh Deo identified the 60-year-old help as Basanti (who goes by a single name). The other suspects were identified as the second help, Varsha, and her husband Bhim, who are at large, along with two others whose names were not shared. The arrested

House help for 24 years plotted robbery, murder



The arrested suspects (from left to right) Aakash, Himanshu, Basanti, (inset) Dr Yogesh Paul

- Basanti (one name), the couple's 60-year-old house help worked for the doctor for 24 years
- She hatched the plan to rob and kill the doctor after overhearing conversations about gold jewellery locked inside rooms
- She approached Varsha (one name), a neighbourhood house help. Varsha roped in her husband
- Basanti approached her friend Bisroop Sai, 38, in Haridwar
- Bisroop roped in Himanshu, a priest in Haridwar, who included his brother Aakash
- Himanshu and Aakash brought 4 friends from Nepal into the plan

suspects included the priest Himanshu and his brother Aakash.

Deo said police scanned several CCTV footage to narrow down the suspects. "There were at least five people involved, seen at the spot or near the house. A CCTV map was made using different footage and it was found the accused went to Sarai Kale Khan after the crime. The suspects could be seen as they were carrying big polythene bags," said Deo.

The accused left Sarai Kale

Khan at 5pm. "We found there was a woman with them. Till then, followed random leads. But the family recognised the woman as Basanti. The family has known her for over two decades and they trusted her and did not do police verification," said an officer. Police did not clarify who carried out the murder and who kept a watch.

The crime happened between 1.30pm and 2.30pm, when Dr Paul had returned home and his wife was still at work. Probe revealed that Dr Paul was fol-

THE TWO-MONTH PLAN

Between March and April: Basanti invited Varsha to the house several times on the pretext of taking her help, and showed her the house. During the visits, the two would video call their friends to plan the robbery. In two months, the women prepared a rough map of the house and the neighbourhood so they would easily find the valuables and exits

May 5: Bisroop, Himanshu and Aakash came to Delhi and conducted a recce to choose the right time to commit the crime

May 7: They came to Delhi with the Nepalese friends and checked into a hotel in Sarai Kale Khan. They conducted another recce

Arrested: Aakash, Basanti and Himanshu. Some stolen cash and jewellery have been recovered from their possession

At large: Bisroop, Varsha and her husband. The 4 Nepalese men

What was stolen:
₹4-5 lakh cash | 100gms gold

Haridwar and Varsha. She would use the Messenger app to video call her associates to show them the house, said police.

"From March 15 to April, Varsha visited the house multiple times. Basanti would call her on the pretext of helping her and show her the house. In two months, the women prepared a rough map of the house and the area so the accused would easily find the valuables and find exits," said an officer. Basanti also approached a man named Bisroop Sai, who is an old friend. "We identified him with the help of CCTVs. He roped in the priest and his brother. They also called 3-4 men from Nepal. It was a major operation for them," added the second officer.

Bisroop, Himanshu and Aakash first came to Delhi on May 5 and conducted a recce of the area. Police said they returned on May 7 with the team. They first checked into a hotel in Sarai Kale Khan and then conducted a second recce.

"They followed Dr Paul and killed him when they found him alone inside. They left in pairs to avoid suspicion," said Deo.

Bisroop, Himanshu and Aakash took a bike to Haridwar and the Nepalese nationals returned to Nepal. Police said Varsha and her husband are on the run. They took an interstate bus. DCP Deo said several raids were conducted and they managed to arrest Aakash, Basanti and Himanshu in Delhi and Haridwar. Some cash and jewellery have been recovered from their possession, police said.

The family has told the police that they had ₹4 lakh to ₹5 lakh inside the house along with 100gm gold jewellery.

Motorists in Karol Bagh given highest PUCC challans till April this year: Data

Karn Pratap Singh

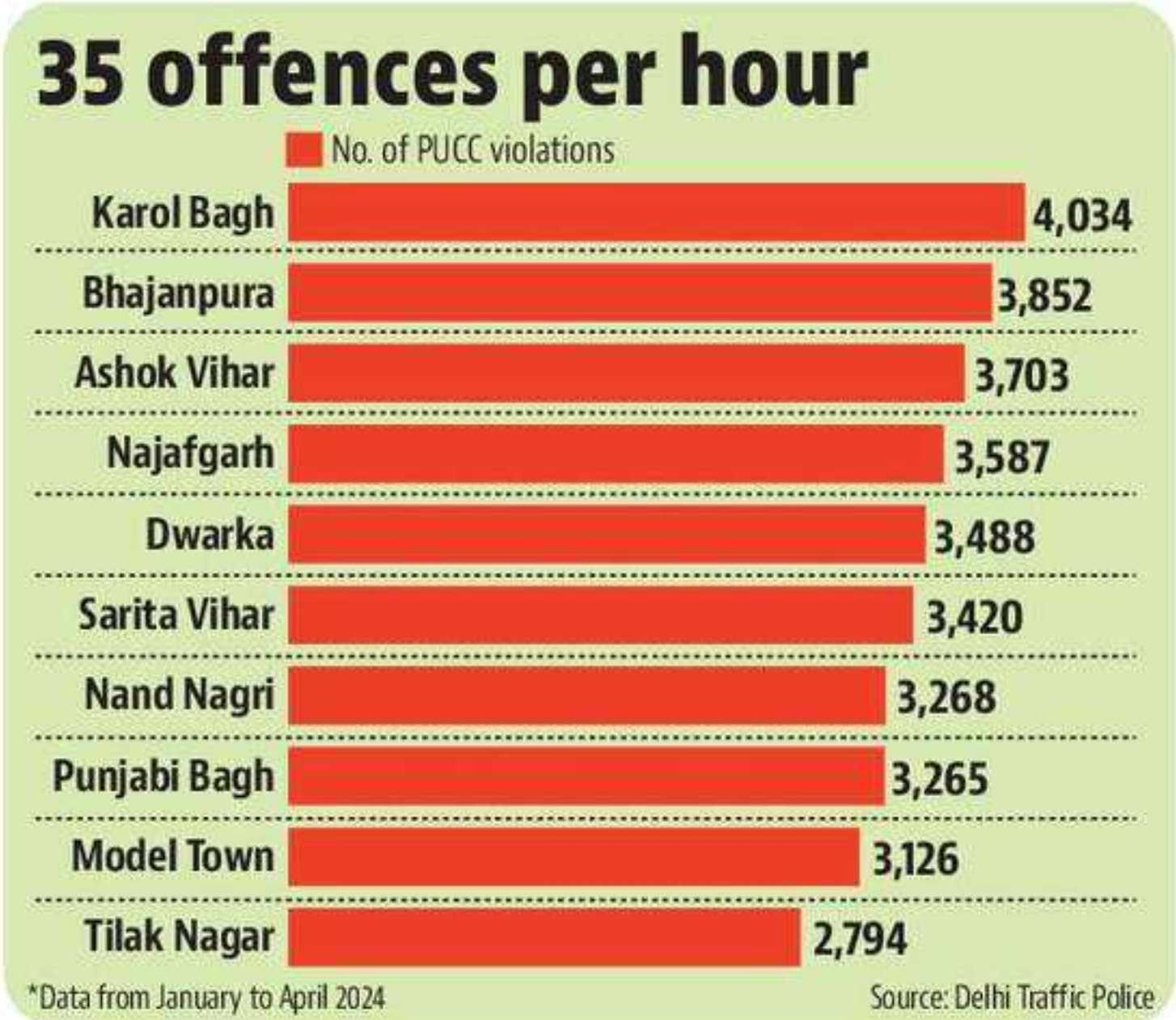
karn.singh@hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI: Between January 1 and April 30 of this year, 101,164 fines were issued to motorists driving their vehicles without the mandatory pollution-under-check (PUC) certificates, indicating that 35 motorists were caught every hour for the violation, according to comparative data shared by the traffic police on Sunday.

The Karol Bagh traffic circle recorded the maximum number of offences, logging 4,034 PUC certificate violations, followed by Bhajanpura, Ashok Vihar, Najafgarh and Dwarka traffic circles, which reported 3,852, 3,703, 3,587, and 3,488 violations, respectively, in the first four months of this year. Of the 10, Tilak Nagar traffic circle reported the lowest, clocking 2,794 fines.

Traffic police officers said that a comprehensive analysis of the PUC certificate violations was done to identify the "hot spots" of maximum violations. Data, collected from all 50 traffic circles, was mined to identify 10 such spots, they said.

"This detailed examination



has pinpointed regions where such traffic violations happen most frequently. By identifying these areas, targeted enforcement measures can be implemented to promote adherence to traffic regulations. By rigorously monitoring and enforcing PUC certificate regulations, we aim to cultivate a culture of compliance with emissions standards among motorists," HGS Dhaliwal, special commis-

sioner of police (traffic, zone-II), said.

Overall, there has been a 30% surge in fines issued for this particular offence in the first four months, according to the data. For the corresponding period in 2023, 78,169 fines were levied, which amounts to 27 tickets per hour.

"This increase stands as a testament to our firm commitment towards ensuring vehicu-

lar emissions compliance and fostering environmental sustainability within Delhi. This trend underscores our intensified efforts aimed at enhancing air quality and curbing vehicular pollution across the city," Dhaliwal said.

Section 190(2) of the Motor Vehicles Act makes it mandatory for vehicles to have PUC certificates. It is a document that testifies that a vehicle complies with emission standards set by the authorities concerned. It is mandatory for vehicles plying in the country to have valid PUC certificates. The owner of a vehicle plying without a valid PUC certificate is liable to be prosecuted and may be imprisoned for up to three months or fined up to ₹10,000, or both.

"It's crucial to recognise that vehicular emissions significantly contribute to air pollution in urban areas like Delhi. Therefore, cracking down on vehicles without valid PUC certificates is imperative to mitigate the adverse environmental effects associated with unchecked emissions," Dhaliwal said.

To be sure, the data identify-

ing the 10 worst traffic circles for PUC certificate violation for 2023 was not shared by the traffic police.

In tandem with enforcement measures, traffic police officials said that they will continue to prioritise public awareness initiatives to educate motorists about the importance of maintaining a valid PUC certificate. Officers said they firmly believe that such initiatives play a pivotal role in fostering voluntary compliance and instilling a sense of environmental responsibility among citizens.

"By working together, we strive towards our collective goal of safeguarding public health and preserving the environment. The increase in PUC certificate challans underscores our steadfast commitment to environmental protection and public welfare. Through proactive enforcement, public awareness campaigns, and collaborative endeavours, we aspire to create a cleaner and healthier environment for all residents of Delhi," a senior traffic police officer, who asked not to be named, said.

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For campaign 'super Sunday', BJP brings in leaders from across India

Jaasveer Gandhiok
letters@hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI: The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) intensified its campaign activities on Sunday and held neighbourhood-level meetings, bike rallies, and padyatras across the city. The campaign on Sunday — called "Super Sunday" — included star campaigners like Assam chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, Rajyavardhan Singh Rathore, Hardeep Singh Puri, and Tejasvi Surya.

Party workers also distributed voter slips during the campaign. Addressing a gathering at the Delhi BJP headquarters — comprising migrants from states in the northeast — Sarma said the present Delhi chief minister had been in Tihar jail for 52 days, a place where only dreaded criminals are locked up, which was indicative of the party's work.

"The Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal has recently come out of jail, so he has a lot to say now. There is no need to pay attention to his words and the people of north-east know how much attention should be paid to the words of a criminal," he said, adding that the party was confident it would cross 400 seats this election.

Sarma said that before Prime Minister Narendra Modi took charge in 2014, the situation in the northeast was terrible. "What the situation was before 2014 and what it is today can be understood by the figures. Since PM Modi took charge, he has visited the northeast 70 times and has come to Assam 27 times. But Manmohan Singh, who was also an MP from Assam, only



BJP's Manjinder Sirsa (centre) leads a bike rally in New Delhi. HT

went there during elections," said Sarma.

Other leaders also highlighted the party's achievements over the last 10 years and compared it to the work of the "corrupt Kejriwal government". Union minister Hardeep Singh Puri addressed a traders' convention in the New Delhi constituency in support of BJP candidate Bansuri Swaraj and asked people to choose between the development model or the "corrupt policies of the Kejriwal government". Assuring people that the party will give a new identity to Amar Colony in Lajpat Nagar, Puri said work will begin soon in the area.

"Delivering better results in the 2024 elections is necessary for this, and it requires choosing between the Modi government's development model, and the Kejriwal government's corrupt policies. On one hand, the Modi gov-

ernment is meeting people and sharing its achievements, but on the other hand, Kejriwal, who is out on interim bail, is only talking about other parties as he has nothing to say about himself or the government," said Puri.

Puri also questioned the efficacy of the Delhi government's Mohalla clinics, asking how many people had been vaccinated through them during the pandemic.

"A government that has been in Delhi for the last ten years has only indulged in corruption in the name of development, while the Modi government has worked to change the direction and condition of the country," Puri added, saying India was on the verge of becoming the fifth largest economy.

Intense campaigning
Campaigning for BJP's Chandni Chowk candidate Praveen Khan-



Himanta Biswa Sarma in the city on Sunday. SANJEEV VERMA/HT

delwal was national president of the Bharatiya Janata Yuva Morcha Tejasvi Surya, who held a roadshow in Azadpur. "The youth of the country understand the development politics of PM Modi and has come to know that the unity and progress of the country are possible only through Modi ji," said Surya, targeting Kejriwal, adding he was a dishonest "U-turn leader without credibility".

"The truth of his claims of good schools, mohalla clinics and clean politics in Delhi is already revealed. The people of Delhi have completely lost their faith in AAP," Surya said.

BJP leader Rajyavardhan Singh Rathore, who campaigned in North West Delhi for MP candidate Yogender Chandolia said the party's goal was youth employment and empowerment. "This is what is connecting today's youth with the BJP," he

said. Earlier in the day, the Delhi BJP had also launched a voter slip distribution campaign, with party leaders going door-to-door in various wards and sharing the party's achievements.

A bike rally, led by Sikh youths, was taken out from the Delhi BJP office to the national office, led by BJP national secretary Manjinder Singh Sirsa was also held.

Delhi's BJP president Virendra Sachdeva launched the party's voter slip distribution campaign from Vinod Nagar in East Delhi with other senior leaders.

BJP leaders, including the party's seven MP candidates, and former Congress leader Arvind Singh Lovely, distributed voter slips.

'If you choose jhadu, I will not have to go back to jail'

Paras Singh

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NEW DELHI: Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal on Sunday attacked the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and Prime Minister Narendra Modi and accused him of "dictatorship" even as he held roadshows in support of Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) candidates in Delhi.

Campaigning for candidates in New Delhi and West Delhi, Kejriwal said he would not have to go back to jail if Delhi chose to vote for the AAP. The roadshows were held in Moti Nagar and Uttam Nagar.

"If you choose the jhadu (AAP's symbol), I won't have to go back to jail. The power is in your hands," said Kejriwal while speaking at Moti Nagar. He was accompanied by Punjab CM Bhagwant Mann.

The AAP national convener said that he was jailed because he worked for the people of Delhi and provided free electricity.

"My fault is that I made good schools for your kids, and arranged healthcare for your family. I made sure that you got free medicine and electricity... BJP does not want this to be done... If I went back to jail, BJP would stop your work, degrade schools and shut down hospitals and Mohalla clinics," he alleged.

Kejriwal continued his attack on the BJP and said he was denied insulin for 15 days in Tihar jail. "It was people's pressure that led to the medicines being provided to me... Country



Arvind Kejriwal and Bhagwant Mann during a roadshow in Moti Nagar on Sunday. SANCHIT KHANNA/HT

cannot be run like this," said Kejriwal. The Delhi CM said if he made 500 good schools, the Prime Minister should have developed 5,000 schools instead of jailing him, adding that the BJP is seeking 400 seats to "change the Constitution and end reservations".

"Like Putin in Russia... They want to change the Constitution. There are no elections in Russia and Putin remains president. They will stop holding elections... Do you want democracy and reservation to end? Vote for broom to prevent it," he added.

He also spoke about New Delhi candidate Somnath Bhatti while accusing BJP MP Meenakshi Lekhi of being inaccessible to people. "Bhatti will be there for you 24 hours. In Malviya Nagar as MLA, he is accessible all the time. He will help you in good and bad times," Kejriwal said.

Mann said that Kejriwal had been missing people of Delhi

while being jailed and has held four roadshows in 48 hours. "He has come out of jail... he has to go back to jail on June 2 but even 20 days are enough for patriots and he would change the country," said Mann.

The second roadshow was held in Uttam Nagar along with INDIA bloc candidate Mahabab Mishra. At Uttam Nagar, Kejriwal said he was out of jail because of the blessings of millions of people. "My life is dedicated to the country. Over these 20 days, I will work 24 hours and ask people to end this dictatorship," he added.

Earlier in the day, AAP youth wing Chhatra Yuva Sagharsh Samiti participated in the "Jail ka jawab vote se campaign" led by Delhi convener Gopal Rai. AAP also conducted a cyclathon in Delhi on Sunday morning.

"We are taking the message to people about the importance of ending the BJP's rule," said Rai.

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CHANGE OF NAME

I, NALIN Bansal S/o Hem Prakash Bansal, R/o E-410, Prateek Edifice, Sector 07, Noida, U.P. have changed my name to Nalin Kumar Bansal for all purposes.

I, MANISHA D/o Shri Babu Lal, R/o Eros Sampurnam, Flat no. 903, Tower B6, Plot no. Gh-01, Sector 2, Greater Noida (West) 201303, U.P. have changed my name to Manisha Gosain for all future purposes.

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I, KARAN Singh S/o Joginder Singh R/o H.No. 894/1, Raja Garden, Old Faridabad, Haryana-121002 have changed my name from Karan Sharma to Karan Singh for all future purposes.

I, PUSHPENDER Meena R/o 23/A Gali No. 2, E Block, Roshan Vihar Najafgarh New Delhi-110043 confirms that I have changed my daughter's name from Maghna Meena to Anshika Meena for all future purposes.

I, MOHAMMAD Hamid S/o Akhlaq Ur Rehman R/o H.No-2737, Gali Chandi Wali, Pahari Bheja, Turkman Gate, Delhi-110006 have changed my name from Mohammad Hamid to Mohd. Hamid for all future purposes.

I, SHYAMAL De F/o No-15703545F LNK Soumen De R/o Vill- Asti, Post- Radhakrishnanpur, Teh- Kharagpur, Dist- West Medinipur, West Bengal- 721140, declare that have changed my name from Shyamal De to Shyamal Kumar Dey and also changed my date of birth from 01-07-1962 to 12-10-1965 for all future purposes vide affidavit before Public Notary Delhi dt 11-05-2024

I, RAJESH Nair, R/o 45 C, Pocket -A-2, Mayur Vihar Phase-3, East Delhi, New Delhi-110096, Have changed My Minor Daughter's Name From Kripa R Nair to Kripa Nair for All Purposes.

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2-term MP faces ex-JNU leader in N-E Delhi

{ **MANOJ TIWARI** } BJP CANDIDATE

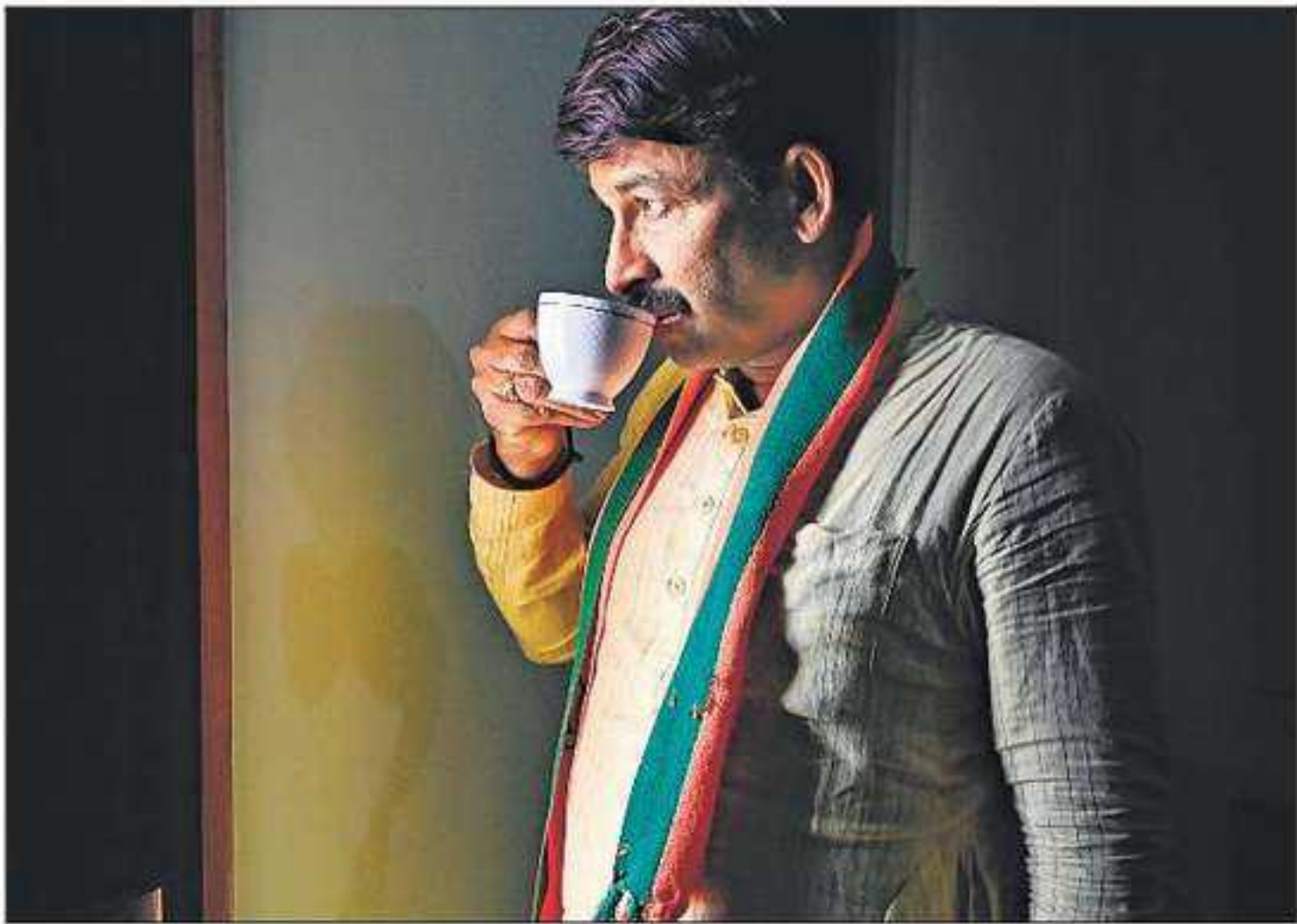
The AAP [government] has caused a lot of pain to the people in Delhi. I have told them how the central government developed the area.

NEW DELHI: Actor, singer and politician — Manoj Tiwari is not new to electoral politics. He first took the plunge in 2009, when he contested against Yogi Adityanath in Gorakhpur on a Samajwadi Party ticket. A battle that he lost. But eventually he came to Delhi and was made the president of the city unit of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). In 2014, the party fielded him from the North East Delhi constituency — a seat which has a concentration of working class neighbourhoods and several unauthorised colonies and is also characterised by a sizeable population of the people from Poorvanchal, a region that Tiwari calls home and where he has earned the status of a superstar with his work in the Bhojpuri cinema. In fact, it is Delhi which first sent him to the Parliament. He represented the North East Delhi seat in 2014, and returned as an MP from the same seat in 2019. This time too, Tiwari is contesting from the seat. He spoke to HT's Alok KN Mishra and Karn Pratap Singh for an interview, discussing his campaign and plans for the area. Edited excerpts:

You are the two-term MP from North East Delhi. You are contesting for the third time. What's different? Is there any anti-incumbency? How is the public responding to your campaign?

People from of my constituency are organising public meetings on their own to support me. Ever since the party has announced my candidature on March 2, I have held 350 public meetings, 15 public meetings on average per day. Around 300 such meetings have been organised by the people themselves. Before the Congress named Kanhaiya Kumar as its candidate from North East Delhi against me people used to wonder who will be my competitor. But, ever since his name has been announced, the people are determined to re-elect me. I am getting a lot of love from the people.

You are the sitting MP here, what problems do you feel are plaguing the



RAJ K RAJ/HT



People raise the issue of poor roads, waterlogging, dirty water supply...I have to explain to them that the AAP government in Delhi is responsible for these problems.

area. How you have worked to fix them over all these years?

People raise the issue of poor internal roads, water logging in parts of the constituency, dirty water bring supplied to households....all works that the Aam Aadmi Party government in Delhi has not done. But only a handful of people, 10 out of 100 people, are raising these issues. I have to explain to them that issues all these issues are to be addressed by the Delhi government. And the people understand when I explain it to them. The people say that PM Narendra Modi has done excellent work and they are going to re-elect him. The AAP has caused a lot of pain to the people of Delhi. I tell the people that the central government has linked North East Delhi with Metro network, the work on Metro Phase IV from Mauipur to Mukundpur is going on, National Highway 709B (Delhi-Saharanpur) is being constructed, central schools have been opened....The people of Delhi did not give the responsibility of fixing issues of internal roads, dirty water supply, overflowing drains....[to the BJP in 2020 assembly polls]

You campaigned for the BJP in various states in 2019 Lok Sabha polls as well. What difference do you see on the ground this time as compared to 2019?

For the ongoing elections, I have campaigned in six states — UP, Bihar, Uttarakhand, Assam, Maharashtra and West Bengal — even as I am contesting from North East Delhi. The wave in favour of PM Narendra Modi is stronger in 2024 as compared to 2019.

In 2019, it was triangular contest between the BJP, the AAP and the Congress. This time the AAP and the Congress have formed a pre-poll alliance. Do you think, it could be a tougher challenge?

We will win by a bigger margin than 2019. The AAP-Congress alliance is just a reactionary tie up, and it has got only negative reactions. The workers of both the AAP and the Congress are feeling cheated.

{ **KANHAIYA KUMAR** } CONGRESS CANDIDATE

Traffic, drainage, crimes against women....I know the issues in North East Delhi better than the incumbent MP, Manoj Tiwari

NEW DELHI: From a student leader at the Jawaharlal Nehru University, Kanhaiya Kumar has come a long way. He is contesting his second Lok Sabha elections, from North East Delhi constituency. He spoke to HT's Vrinda Tulsian about his political journey and the issues in the constituency. Edited excerpts:

Arvind Kejriwal is out on bail. How do you feel about it?

This is very good news; it will positively impact the Delhi elections. I would just say there is no need to panic for the people NDA... You have to pay for what you do. If you want to throttle democracy in this country, you should remember that Gandhi, Ambedkar, and Nehru made this country and the citizens and this country are democratic. This is just the beginning.

You and Manoj Tiwari are both from Bihar but you are termed an outsider. Why?

I am a Bihari. Hearing the word 'outsider' as a Bihari is not new to me... As soon as we take the train and the Bihar border ends... we get called "outsiders". I don't take this as an allegation. This is my truth and I will proudly live it.

Is there pressure within the party? Are the workers upset with your ticket?

Why will there be pressure? If I am an outsider here, where was Modi ji born... was he born in Varanasi? Atal Bihari Vajpayee used to fight elections from Balrampur, Sushma Swaraj ji fought from Karnataka, and LK Advani fought elections from Lucknow. This is not the matter of any one party. Manoj Tiwari himself is not from here. Why does this 'outsider' debate happen in politics?

What are the constituency demands according to you? Especially considering how North East Delhi is so



SANCHIT KHANNA/ HT



I am a Bihari. Hearing the word 'outsider' as a Bihari is not new to me... As soon as we take the train and the Bihar border ends... we get called "outsiders". I don't take this as an allegation...

underdeveloped?

I know more than Manoj Tiwari ji what the real situation is. If it is about who came to Delhi first.

I arrived much before him. He was contesting elections in 2009 against Yogi Adityanath from Gorakhpur. I was in Mukherjee Nagar in 2009. The question is what has the MP of the party done in 10 years? See the conditions of Chauhan Basti and Kadi-pur village. There are traffic problems, drainage issues, construction issues, crimes against women... These incidents happen in the country's capital. Parliament is not very far from here. This constituency was covered with tarpaulin during G20... BJP and Manoj Tiwari were so ashamed of the people that they covered them up.

How do the challenges differ in Delhi compared to Begusarai?

The geography is different and the demography is different so obviously, there are differences but there are similarities too — people in Begusarai and North East Delhi are struggling with inflation and, unemployment.

You mentioned you don't have funds. What does campaigning look like for you till May 25?

We will contest the elections with the support of people through crowdfunding... we will fight for the people with their backing.

This approach follows the Gandhian way. Gandhi ji also used crowdfunding during the freedom struggle, fighting with the support of the people. In the last election also, we relied on crowdfunding.

JNU to Begusarai to Delhi, you finish 10 years in politics next year. How do you reflect on this journey?

I came to Delhi to become a collector but ended up pursuing a doctorate instead. Then I went to jail... from Bihar to Tihar. Despite my intentions to become a teacher, I found myself drawn to politics.

From contesting elections in Begusarai to now doing so in Delhi, my journey has been far from what I had envisioned. Yet, I remain grounded in my beliefs, principles, and the lessons I've gleaned from society.

Fire in congested Chandni Chowk area



A fire broke out inside a building at the Kinari Bazaar in Chandni Chowk on Sunday afternoon. Delhi Fire Services said they sent 13 tenders to douse the blaze, which had spread to the entire building. Police said the building was a shop or storage space that caught fire due to a short circuit. No injuries were reported.

ARVIND YADAV/HT

Arrest part of plan to break AAP: Kejriwal to party MLAs

Paras Singh

paras@hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI: Delhi chief minister and Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) national convener Arvind Kejriwal on Sunday held his first meeting with all party MLAs at his official residence in Civil Lines after his arrest in March and alleged that it was the plan of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) to topple the AAP governments in Delhi and Punjab.

Kejriwal called his arrest a ploy to "crush the AAP", a plan that did not fructify, adding that the party has become more unified after the arrest.

"They [BJP] had all these stories. But the result was the opposite. Our party became even more united instead of breaking away. They could not topple our government, break our MLAs or dent our Punjab government. The narrative all over the country went against them," he said.

Kejriwal added that BJP tried to manipulate several AAP MLAs through threats and

ARVIND KEJRIWAL SAID THE PARTY HAS BECOME EVEN MORE UNITED AFTER THE ARREST

offers. "I got to know about those BJP had approached but no one broke away. All of you remained united and the party is so proud of you. We keep getting news about other parties how their people in Indore and Surat left before elections but nothing works on our party, even ED threats failed," Kejriwal added.

He said that the AAP is the only party working towards the country's future. "People have tried the other parties and this is why we are in this state. AAP has to hold the reins of the country in the future and this is why they are so afraid of AAP..." he added.

The CM has called a meeting of MLAs on Monday. The BJP did not comment on the matter.

CM fires retirement salvo at BJP again

Kejriwal on Sunday, addressing a press conference on AAP's "10 guarantees" for Lok Sabha polls at the party headquarters on Sunday, sought to know from Prime Minister Narendra Modi if the 75-year retirement rule was only for other party leaders or if he would retire next year, and urged him to name his successor.

"PM Modi will retire next year and it is not clear who will fulfil his guarantees. But I am going nowhere," he said, pitching the polls as "Kejriwal ki guarantees versus Modi's guarantees".

On Saturday, Kejriwal said that voting for the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) would be voting for Amit Shah as the Prime Minister, claiming Modi would retire next year.

Reacting to it, Union home minister Shah had said on Saturday that Modi will continue to serve the country in the top post after the Lok Sabha elections and complete his term.

9 INJURED IN FIRE AT THREE-STOREY PLASTIC FACTORY IN BAWANA SEC-1

HT Correspondent

letters@hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI: At least nine people were injured, some of them severely, in blasts from a fire that erupted at a three-storey plastic item manufacturing factory at Bawana Industrial Area Sector 1 in outer Delhi on Sunday afternoon, police and fire department officials said. Twenty fire tenders and over 50 firemen took hours to douse the flames and prevent the fire from spreading to adjacent factories.

Delhi Fire Services chief Atul Garg said that the fire control room was informed around 3pm. Deputy commissioner of police (outer north) Ravi Kumar Singh said that nine people were injured. Five of them were discharged after treatment while the other four are still undergoing treatment. He said a short circuit was suspected cause of the fire.

MCD MAYOR ASKS COMMISSIONER TO FIX UNAUTHORISED PARKING IN CITY

NEW DELHI: Delhi Mayor Shelly Oberoi has written to the commissioner of Municipal Corporation of Delhi, Gyanesh Bharti, demanding action against illegal parking in the city, according to an official statement.

Oberoi has asked the commissioner to give directions to the officials concerned to identify and prepare a list of all the illegal parking spots in the city, take action against them and submit a comprehensive report to her within five days, the statement released on Sunday said.

"It has come to my notice that so many illegal parkings are being run in various parts of Delhi. These are creating nuisance and inconvenience to the public... it has also resulted in huge revenue loss to the corporation..." the statement said.

"...It is desired necessary direction may be given to concerned officer, prepare list of all the illegal parkings... take action and submit the report to the office of undersigned (Mayor) within five days," it added. **PTI**

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Mayank Austen Soofi



‘Room boy’ and his world

Portrait of a CP landmark

{ PRIVATE CAPITAL } Sun sets every evening in Connaught Place (CP). But the sun refuses to set in CP's Sunny Guest House. More than fifty years old, the upper-floor lodge is a lesser-known but lasting CP institution, continuing to survive even as many places of its kind have shut shop in the colonial-era district. It found an honourable mention in the third edition of Lonely Planet India (1993), then titled India: A Survival Kit.

The longtime landmark has its own longtime living landmark—its "room boy," the venerable Murali Lal (real name: Brij Lal). In his 60s, he has been with the guest house since 1985. "I had come to Delhi from Moradabad in search of work, found a job in a garment export factory in Okhla, later I landed here," he says, with chin up, arms crossed. This afternoon, Murali Lal (see photo) is standing by the reception desk, being manned by the guest house's new manager Rishabh. This young man with a tattooed arm remarks that all the nine rooms are currently occupied. Murali Lal notes that "earlier most guests used to be foreign back-

packers." The guest house is quiet, the only sound is the deep whirring of the staircase's air cooler. The staircase winds down into the lane outside through a discreetly positioned door, beside which a fading painted text warns of "touts and misleading information." Much has altered in the CP side-lane outside the guest house. Many similar guest houses shut down one by one. Murali Lal lists some of the names, taking time to dig each out from his memory: Asian Guest House, Gandhi Guest House, Ringo Guest House, Sona Rupa Guest House. Ringo enjoyed a cult status among the foreign backpackers in the 1980s and 90s; sleeping on a rooftop charpoy used to cost 40 rupees.

Illustrating the duties of a "room boy," Murali Lal explains the typical tasks of a hotel housekeeper—making the bed, replenishing the supplies etc. The elderly man confirms he has remained a "room boy" through the years. "This job has provided dal-roti to me and my family for many years."

Soon the sun will start to set, and Sunny's "room boy" will board bus no. 602 for his home in Vasant Vihar.



READ: For more stories by Mayank Austen Soofi, scan the QR code

PHASE 4 OF POLLING

heatwave conditions in previous phases, the poll panel downplayed this risk for Monday.

"The weather forecast indicates that the Parliamentary Constituencies going for polls are likely to experience normal to below normal temperatures (± 2 degrees) and there will be no heatwave-like condition in these areas on the polling day," the EC said, in a press statement.

Among the key battleground states will be Andhra Pradesh, where all of its 25 Lok Sabha seats and 175 assembly constituencies will all see their fates sealed, with a newly minted alliance between the former chief minister Chandrababu Naidu-led TDP, Pawan Kalyan's Jan Sena and the BJP hoping to seize power from a dominant YSRCP.

In 2019, the party, led by Jagan Mohan Reddy had swept to power in the state, winning 22 of the 25 Lok Sabha seats and 151 of the 175 assembly seats.

Since then, Naidu and the BJP have both accused Reddy of corruption, even as the BJP kept its channels open with both regional forces in the run up to the election, eventually picking the TDP as its alliance partner.

While coordination within the alliance has not always been seamless, Naidu will hope that a combination of anti-incumbency and a caste calculus that brings together three parties will be enough to return him to the seat of power in the state.

Jharkhand too also sees the beginning of its Lok Sabha poll schedule on Monday, with four of its 14 seats voting on Monday, and the rest to be held in the three remaining phases.

A key seat among these four is Khunt, where Union tribal affairs and agriculture minister Arjun Munda is hoping to secure a second term, but is against old foe Kalicharan Munda, who he beat in 2019 by a slender margin of 1,445 votes.

The BJP currently holds all four seats.

"This phase is crucial for us also because three of the five seats reserved for scheduled tribes are going to polls. In 2019, we won three of five seats, but were washed out in most of the ST seats in assembly elections. This will be a test of whether the tribal sentiments has been revived for the BJP or is still held by the JMM and the Congress. We think we are comfortable on the general seats. The real battle is here," a senior BJP leader said, asking not to be named.

In Odisha too, there are four Lok Sabha seats, as well as 28 of the 243 assembly seats that will vote on Monday. One key prestige battle is in Berhampur where the BJP is attempting to wrest back a Biju Janata Dal (BJD) citadel that it had last won in 1999. It has also become a key battle because the BJP candidate is Pradip Panigrahy, once the aide of Odisha chief minister Naveen Patnaik.

But away from Berhampur, there are also elections that will be held in the once-Maoist citadel of Swabhimana Anchal in the Nabarangpur Lok Sabha constituency, currently held by the BJD.

"At least 25 BSF companies and 100 other police personnel have been deployed in the district. We have also deployed more forces from other districts. Police personnel have

been given satellite phones. Though the Andhra Pradesh-Odisha border is not seeing much movement of Maoists, we are keeping a close eye. Regular coordination meetings with police of Andhra Pradesh and Chhatisgarh are happening," said a senior Odisha Police officer.

Elections will also be held in eight Madhya Pradesh seats on Monday, including in Indore, which has no Congress candidate in the fray after Akshay Bam, the man the party had given the ticket to, joined the BJP hours before he was scheduled to file his nomination. Of the other seven, three are seats reserved for scheduled tribes — Kharone, Ratlam and Dhar — and two are reserved for scheduled castes — Ujjain and Dewas.

In Bihar's Munger, sitting MP and former JD(U) president Rajiv Ranjan Singh (also known as Lalan Singh) is in battle against Kumari Anita, the wife of gangster Ashok Mahto, of the Rashtriya Janata Dal. While Singh, a close confidant of chief minister Nitish Kumar, has said that he will sail through based on the NDA's development agenda, the electoral battle is a test of the caste combination of both alliances in the fray. RJD state president and former deputy chief minister Tejashwi Yadav has urged "backward class" voters to unite and vote for the RJD candidate, an ostensible response to gangster Anant Singh, who has reportedly canvassed support for Lalan Singh. In the fray in the other seats are union ministers — Giriraj Singh from Begusarai and Nityanand Rai from Ujjainpur.

In Uttar Pradesh, voting will be held in Kannauj, where SP chief and one of INDIA alliance's key leaders Akhilesh Yadav will look to retain the seat against BJP's Subrat Pathak. Elections will also be held in Srinagar on Monday amid tight security in the first such election since the abrogation of Article 370 in August 2019. Security has been tightened across the five districts that

make up the constituency. "We have made all the security arrangements in polling stations, locations, distribution centres and strong rooms. All the prescribed security arrangements under the guidelines of the election commission of India have been made for the Srinagar parliamentary constituency," said Kashmir inspector general of police, Vidhi Kumar Birdi.

The police officer said that thousands of paramilitary personnel, road opening parties, quick reaction teams, static surveillance teams, flying squads and inter district checkpoints have been set up.

Though there are 24 candidates in fray, the constituency will likely witness a triangular contest between the National Conference (NC), whose candidate is Aga Ruhullah Mehdi, the Apni Party whose candidate is Mohammad Ashraf Mir and the People's Democratic Party (PDP), who is being represented by Waheed Para.

Both the PDP and the NC have in recent days accused the Union government-led administration in Jammu and Kashmir of "bias" and "unjust crackdown on party activists", with their leaders saying the local police had rounded up a number of party workers from both their organisations.

KEJRIWAL'S PROMISES

clinics and excellent schools," he said.

"There are some things that should have been completed in the last 75 years... These things are like laying the foundation stone of a nation. Without them, the nation cannot move ahead," Kejriwal added.

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), however, accused the Delhi chief minister of lying and called his guarantees "fake".

Kejriwal has been in a flurry of political activity since being granted 21-days' interim bail by the Supreme Court on Friday. He held a meeting with his party's MLAs on Sunday morning, after which he addressed the press conference, following

it up with roadshows in Moti Nagar and Uttam Nagar.

During the press briefing, Kejriwal — who was flanked by his Punjab counterpart Bhagwant Mann, AAP parliamentary Sanjay Singh, Delhi ministers Gopal Rai, Atishi and Sarabj Bhargava, and senior leader Sandeep Pathak — said the release of the guarantees was delayed due to his incarceration.

He also admitted that he had not run the promises past his coalition partners in the INDIA alliance. However, Kejriwal said he was sure "they will not oppose any of the promises".

"After the INDIA bloc forms the government, I guarantee that I will get all my alliance partners to fulfil these promises," he said.

The AAP is contesting 22 Lok Sabha seats across the country. These include four of seven seats in Delhi, all 13 seats in Punjab (where it will face off against the Congress), two in Gujarat, one in Haryana and two in Assam.

The promises are similar to the six guarantees Kejriwal's wife Sunita revealed during an INDIA bloc rally on March 31.

Elaborating on his 10 guarantees, Kejriwal said that the government will provide people across the country with 24-hour power supply and that the poor will be given 200 free units. He said that the country can produce 300,000mw of power, higher than the summer peak demand of 200,000 MW. "We did this in Delhi and Punjab and will replicate it across the country... It will take around ₹1.25 lakh crore to fulfil this promise," he said.

Kejriwal promised to improve the quality of education in government schools to the extent that they better private ones. "This will need ₹5 lakh crore, which will be equally shared by the Centre and state. Over the five years, it will need only ₹50,000 crore," he said.

He said that thirdly, quality free health care will be ensured for all through mohalla clinics in "every village and locality" across the country and upgrade of district hospitals to multi-specialty hospitals. "We will develop health infrastructure in

every corner of the country," he said, adding that it will cost ₹5 lakh crore over five years.

Touching on India's border conflict with China, he said "rashtra sarvopari (nation-first attitude)" will be adopted and the army given complete freedom to free Indian land from Chinese occupation.

"China has occupied our land... Everyone knows the reality through satellite pictures. Hiding it is not the solution... We will remove China from our land. Firstly, we will use diplomatic channels, and second, we will provide a free hand to the country's armed forces," he said.

He also said that the Agniveer scheme will be discontinued.

"This scheme is bad for the army and youngsters. We will regularise all those who have enrolled under this scheme," he said.

Kejriwal also made agriculture a plank for the polls, promising a "dignified life" for farmers and full compensation for their crops based on the Swaminathan Report.

He said that the seventh guarantee is "full statehood for Delhi", which was one of the AAP's key poll planks during the 2019 elections.

Under the eighth guarantee, he promised the creation of 20 million jobs.

He also touched upon corruption and promised to ensure justice as his ninth guarantee.

Lastly, Kejriwal said trade and industry would be promoted, GST simplified and also taken out of the ambit of the PMLA. "Over the past 10 years, 120,000 high net individuals have left the country due to the central government's terror. All legal and administrative processes will be simplified to ensure trade flourishes," he said.

Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva said the AAP was "peddling dreams and nothing else".

"Not a single new college has been opened in Delhi in nine-and-a-half years and they are promising schools in every village of the country. Mohalla clinics of Delhi have broken down and even the Delhi high court has reprimanded the state government for its poor health services," he said.



Kejriwal with Mann in New Delhi on Sunday.

SANJEEV VERMA/HT

Activists oppose concretising of pond in G Noida

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GREATER NOIDA: The Greater Noida authority has begun concretising the area surrounding a 25-acre water body in Bhola Rawal. However, environmentalists and activists have opposed the move and urged the authority to stop the work and free up the space.

According to environmental experts, the move violates a government order and the National Green Tribunal (NGT) guidelines. Activists said that the water body will be damaged if its banks are concretised, which will also reduce the pond area.

"There is a government order of March 2018 which says that no concretisation is permitted on the catchment of a waterbody. No interlocking tiles are permitted even if the work is carried out, and this is to ensure that the water infiltration and circulation process is not hindered," said environment lawyer Akash Vashishtha.

"The water bodies in the area have already been reeling under encroachments and now, these works have been commenced to concretise the surrounding of the pond located here in Greater Noida," said a local environmental activist requesting anonymity.

The activity is rather reducing the area of the waterbody, said another environment activist Abhisht Gupta, who added: "Local vendors or others may also encroach upon this cemented place later to put up their kiosks."

Greater Noida Industrial Development Authority (GNIDA), meanwhile, clarified that the work is being carried



Officials at the pond.

HT

out due to security concerns and on the request of local residents.

"There is an ancient temple nearby and villagers in large numbers gather in the area who come to visit the temple. Locals in the area had requested that due to visitors thronging the place, there is a risk of slipping into the pond in the absence of a secure boundary," said senior manager (projects) (GNIDA) Rajesh Kumar.

Moreover, rainfall leads to cutting of the boundaries of the ponds as the mud tends to cave in and therefore, the works were initiated, he said, adding: "This is being done for public welfare and being carried out in the supervision of the senior officials."

The National Green Tribunal (NGT) recently directed the Noida Industrial Development Authority and Greater Noida Industrial Development Authority to remove concretisation that has come up at roadsides and road berms, in their respective jurisdictions within Noida and Greater Noida.

The order had come after the Central Pollution Control Board stated that the activity was "posing a threat" to the environment, HT had reported on Tuesday.

G Noida bookshop's website hacked, online payments diverted

Ashni Dhaor

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NOIDA: Cyber fraudsters hacked the website of a bookshop in Greater Noida West to rob people who placed online orders for books, police said on Sunday, adding that they have received a complaint from the owner of the bookshop.

Ashwini Kumar, the owner of Bhartiya Book Mart at French Arcade shopping complex in Sector 16B, said the mobile phone number on his website was replaced by cyber fraudsters two weeks ago, and 20 people who placed online orders for books have been defrauded since then, police said.

"We discovered the hack on May 10 when a man came to our shop asking for books he paid for online. We told him we do not take online payments or give home delivery of books. That is when we realised that our webpage has been hacked and instead of our phone number, some other phone number

has been put there," said Kumar.

Sumit Saxena, a resident of Supertech Ecovillage 1, was cheated of ₹7,000 after he placed an online order for books through the online contact number.

"Bhartiya Book Mart is a well-known shop in the locality. So, when I saw online that they are offering home delivery of books, I placed an order by calling the given number. The person on the phone took my address and told me that the books would be delivered in 10 minutes, and I paid him online. However, when I didn't get the books, I tried to call the number again but that person had blocked my contact number. I went to the bookshop in the evening asking for the books, and that is when I realised that I had been defrauded," said Saxena.

According to Vinod Yadav, in charge of the cybercrime police station in Sector 36, Noida, a first information report will be registered after police complete a preliminary inquiry.

Noida authority urged to clean drains soon

NOIDA: The Federation of Noida Residents Welfare Association (FONRWA), representing 121 sectors of the city, on Friday appealed to the Noida authority to carry out a cleaning exercise of small and big drains across Noida before the monsoon sets in.

In a letter to chief executive

officer (Noida authority) Lokesh M, the association has sought immediate measures before the rains in the city.

Lokesh M told HT that cleaning of drains is a continuous process and he has been personally conducting inspections of various locations to take stock of the situation on ground.

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Aruna Kirpal

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Justice (Rtd.) B. N. Kirpal
Kirkpals, Aroras, Poddars, Bachmanns and Sachdevs

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MRS. VARUNA JOLLY MEHTA
23/07/1975 - 13/05/2021

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We still feel you are among us, guiding us. We all pray for your eternal peace.

ANUSHKA, NITISH, AMIT
FAMILY & FRIENDS

Kejriwal with Mann in New Delhi on Sunday.

SANJEEV VERMA/HT

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A man with unrelenting spirit for living every moment larger than life

If we can imbibe his grit, determination, large heart and fearlessness, we will have carried on his legacy

He will be missed dearly by all who had the privilege of knowing him

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NOIDA: RESIDENTS OPPOSE LIQUOR SHOP NEAR SCHOOL

Ashni Dhaor
ashni.dhaor@hindustantimes.com

NOIDA: The Noida district excise officer on Sunday took cognizance of videos made by Sector 122 residents about a liquor shop that has opened opposite a school and ordered an inquiry, officials said. "The liquor shop has opened across the road from Delhi Public School in Sector 122, Noida," said Itri Jain, a Sector 122 resident whose children go to the same school.

Subodh Kumar, district excise officer of Noida, said, "According to our preliminary inquiry, this liquor shop was previously located elsewhere and has just shifted to its new premises. It had a liquor licence for its previous premises and it has been renewed." The official added that the new shop is located next to the old shop in the same complex and this much change in the location is allowed as per excise rules.

In a letter to chief executive

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SPOTLIGHT ELECTIONS 2024

Shah launches attack on Sonia, Rahul from Gandhis' borough

HT Correspondents

letters@hindustantimes.com

LUCKNOW/PRAYAGRAJ: Union home minister Amit Shah on Sunday attacked the Congress during a Lok Sabha poll rally in the Gandhi family pocket borough of Rae Bareilly, accusing senior leader Sonia Gandhi of "spending over 70% of her MP funds on minorities" and posing five questions before Rahul Gandhi and asking him to make his stand clear on those queries.

Rae Bareilly will vote in the fifth phase of the Lok Sabha elections on May 20. Rahul, a former Congress president, is in the poll fray from the seat that his mother, Sonia, held from 2004 till last month, when she moved to the Rajya Sabha.

"The *'shahzada'* (prince — an apparent reference to Rahul) has come here to seek votes. You have been voting for many years. Have you received anything from the MP fund? If you have not received it, then where did it go? It went to their vote bank. Sonia Gandhi has spent more than 70% of the MP funds on minorities," Shah said.

"You gave the Gandhi family a chance for years, but no development work has been done. They (Congress) do not believe in development. They do not even come to you in your good or bad times," he added.

Canvassing for Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) candidate Dinesh Pratap Singh, Shah urged the people to vote for his party nominee so that Rae Bareilly could be connected with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's "development journey".

Under the MP fund, a Lok Sabha lawmaker is allowed to

RALLY TRACKER

| BJP | |
|----------|---|
| 1 | Narendra Modi , Prime Minister West Bengal: Barrackpore, Hooghly, Arambagh, Howrah |
| 2 | Amit Shah , Union home minister Uttar Pradesh: Kaushambi, Rae Bareilly, Gonda |
| CONGRESS | |
| 1 | Mallikarjun Kharge , Cong chief Maharashtra: Dhule |
| 2 | Priyanka Gandhi Vadra , Congress general secretary Uttar Pradesh: Rae Bareilly |
| TMC | |
| | Mamata Banerjee , West Bengal chief minister Bengal: Barrackpore |

"Before Independence, the poor, Dalits and tribals were treated like slaves. If you give a third term to Modi and Shah, the same situation will repeat..." — **MALLIKARJUN KHARGE**, CONGRESS CHIEF

recommend development works involving expenditure of up to ₹5 crore a year in their constituency.

Intensifying his attack, Shah charged the Congress's first family with "lying" to the people. "This Gandhi family is an expert in lying. They are now promising ₹1 lakh to every woman. In the Telangana (assembly) polls, they had said they would give ₹15,000 to every woman. The women of the state elected them (Congress)... Forget about ₹15,000, they did not even give ₹1,500," he alleged.

Shah posed five questions to Rahul, who is also contesting from Wayanad in Kerala, asking him to make his stand clear on those queries.

"I want to ask five questions publicly — triple talaq, which was abolished by Modi ji... Was it good or bad? Rahul baba, answer the people of Rae Bareilly whether you want to bring back triple talaq?" Shah said. "Instead of a Muslim personal law, should there be a Uniform Civil Code or not? They say that they will bring (back) the Muslim personal law."

Shah also referred to surgical strikes by Indian armed forces on terror establishments across the border and alleged that the former Congress chief had raised questions on it. "Modi ji conducted the surgical strikes, was it good or bad?" Shah said. "I also want to ask him why you did not go to the Ram Temple in Ayodhya. Give an answer."

His fifth question pertained to the Congress leader's opinion on abrogation of Article 370, which gave special status to the erstwhile state of Jammu & Kashmir.

'DALITS, TRIBALS WILL TURN SLAVES AGAIN IF MODI, SHAH RE-ELECTED'

Press Trust of India

letters@hindustantimes.com

DHULE (MAHARASHTRA): Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge on Sunday claimed that a third term for Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union home minister Amit Shah would mean the poor, Dalits and tribals would be "treated like slaves".

Addressing a campaign rally in Maharashtra's Dhule constituency, Kharge accused Modi of failing to deliver on his promises of bringing back black money and providing jobs.

"Before Independence, the poor, Dalits and tribals were treated like slaves. If you give a third term to Modi and Shah, the same situation will repeat. We will become slaves again," he said.

Congress has fielded former MLA Shobha Bachhav against former Union minister Subhash Bhamre of BJP from Dhule Lok Sabha constituency which will vote on May 20.

"RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat had said in 2015 that the Constitution should be changed. Later, many BJP MPs and saffron party leaders also made similar statements," Kharge said. He accused PM Modi of "spreading lies". Modi chest-thumped about bringing back black money from abroad but never delivered on that promise, said Kharge. "He claimed to provide two crore jobs every year but never did. Instead of increasing farmers' income, as per his claims, his wrong policies increased the production cost for growers. That is why Modi should be removed from power," Kharge added.

He also brought up the issue of social unrest in Manipur due to ethnic clashes.

"When the people of Manipur were suffering so much, Modi never uttered a single word about it. He is a coward who did not even visit there. Rahul Gandhi, on the other hand, started his Nyay Yatra from there and also interacted with people. 'Modi lacks saathi, sabka vikaas', but what he did is 'sabka satyanash' (destruction)," he said.

Under a heavy security blanket, Kashmir set for its first major poll since Article 370 move

Ashiq Hussain

letters@hindustantimes.com

SRINAGAR: A hefty security cover marked by increased deployment and vigil has engulfed Kashmir ahead of Monday's voting for the Srinagar Lok Sabha seat, the first major electoral contest in the Valley since the revocation of Article 370 in August of 2019.

Twenty-four candidates, including National Conference's Rulul Mehdi and the Peoples Democratic Party's (PDP's) Waheed Parra are contesting from the constituency, which has close to 17.5 million eligible voters.

Thousands of security personnel from paramilitary forces and J&K Police have been deployed across the region to ensure peaceful polling, officers aware of the matter said. They added that Road Reaction Parties (ROPs), Quick Reaction Teams (QRTs), Static Surveillance Teams (SSTs) have also been stationed as part of the security arrangements.

"We have made all the security arrangements in polling stations, distribution centres and strong rooms. All the prescribed security arrangements under the guidelines of the Election Commission have been made for the Srinagar



Poll officials with EVMs in Srinagar on Sunday.

parliamentary constituency," said Kashmir's inspector general of police Vidhi Kumar Birdi.

A total of 2,135 polling stations have been set up across the constituency, and they will be manned by close to 8,500 polling staff, the officials added.

"At last, Rahul baba should tell the people of Rae Bareilly that do you support the scrapping of Article 370 or not?" Shah said, adding Rahul should seek the votes of the people of Rae Bareilly after answering these questions.

Later, the BJP's top strategist also addressed a poll rally in Pratapgarh, which comes under Kaushambi Lok Sabha constituency in Uttar Pradesh, and continued his attack on the Congress.

Referring to senior Congress leader Mani Shankar Aiyar's controversial remarks on Pakistan, Shah said: "Mani Shankar Aiyar of the Congress, and INDI Alliance leader Farooq Abdullah said Pakistan should be respected because they have the atom bomb and don't demand Pak occupied Kashmir (PoK). Today, I want to ask — is PoK not a part of India? Rahul baba, if you want to be scared of the atom bomb, be scared, we are not scared. Pakistan-occupied Kashmir belongs to India and we will take it."

Attacking the INDIA bloc, Shah said it has no chance of winning the Lok Sabha elections. "Assuming that they do, who will be the prime minister? When a reporter asked this question, the answer was a one-year term on a rotational basis. Rahul baba, this is not a grocery shop," Shah said.

Later in the day, Shah also held a rally in Gonda, which along with Kaushambi, will also vote in the fifth phase on May 20.

Reacting to Shah's remarks, Uttar Pradesh Congress spokesperson CP Rai said: "He speaks such absurd things despite being a Union minister. Why can't he talk about what his party did in the last 10 years?"

The officers added that they have also made special arrangements for the security of polling staff. "They [polling staff] will be accompanied by 1-2 segments of police and another 1-2 segments of central armed forces. Each segment comprises four persons," additional deputy commissioner of Srinagar, Khalid Hussain said.

Officials said that all the polling stations will have facilities for live webcasting of the polling process, which will be broadcasted to district headquarters and the Central Command Centres established at Jammu and Srinagar.

The authorities have also issued orders under Section 144 of CrPc and IPC to restrict the assembly of people from 6:00 pm on Saturday till 6:00 pm on Monday.

"There will be a ban on unlawful assembly as per Section 144 of the IPC, and any procession or rally shall be prohibited," an order by deputy commissioner Srinagar, Bilal Mohi-Ud-Din Bhat, said.

{ ANURAG THAKUR } UNION MINISTER, BJP CANDIDATE FROM HAMIRPUR

'Even Oppn is saying... abki baar 400 paar'

HAMIRPUR: Union minister Anurag Thakur, who is seeking another term from Himachal Pradesh's Hamirpur Lok Sabha constituency and is scheduled to file his nomination on Monday, speaks to **Dar Ovais** on a range of topics, including the political turmoil that hit the hill state earlier this year. Edited excerpts:



Why should the people of Hamirpur vote for you again? What is your poll plan?

The poll plan is (to ensure) stability and continuity of the government. We are going to the public with a list of achievements of the (Narendra) Modi government like Make in India, from 'fragile five to first five economies', making our borders more safe and secure and strengthening our armed forces, and the abrogation of Articles 370 and 35A, which brought a smile on the face of Kashmiris. We also had more than 11 peace accords in the Northeast. In every sector, India's progress is evident. Prime Minister Modi achieved in 10 years what the Congress could not in 60 years. The continuity of the government will help us to continue our developmental and welfare agenda.

After the political turmoil in Himachal earlier this year, following the Rajya Sabha elections, your party has been accused of starting horse-trading politics in the state.

They (Congress) could not manage their own house. Despite having (the support of) 40 MLAs in the Rajya Sabha polls, they lost. We had only 25. And if you also count the independent MLAs, they had 43 and despite that, we won the election. That means they lost confidence and have no moral authority to remain in power. They could not fulfil their promises they made 16 months ago. The women are still waiting for

₹1,500 per month, which they promised to deliver on the first day (of assuming power in the state). Cow dung was not purchased at ₹2 and milk at ₹100 per litre, and the youth has not been given 500,000 jobs. They all feel cheated. That is why you can see the wave in Himachal; we will win all four Lok Sabha seats and all six by-elections.

What went wrong during the 2022 assembly elections in Himachal? Even in your home turf (Hamirpur), the BJP lost all five seats.

Something must have gone wrong (in places) where we could not win the elections but we have progressed from there and have done course-corrections on the shortcomings. You could see yesterday, thousands and thousands of people hit the streets (during the Vijay Sankalp Yatra in Hamirpur) and you could see the enthusiasm and the electrifying crowd. It clearly shows that the people have made up their mind, just not to win but to create history in Himachal.

You are a prominent figure in the central government. Do you envision your future political trajectory leading you towards Himachal? Will you return to state politics someday?

I am very happy to be a member of Parliament from Hamirpur... the kind of love I received



ELECTION INTERVIEW

Blowing off steam



Telangana CM A Revanth Reddy plays football on Sunday after the end of campaigning in the state.

Andhra police books actor Allu Arjun for poll code violation

NANDYALA: The Andhra Pradesh Police booked actor Allu Arjun for allegedly violating the Model Code of Conduct during the silent period in the run-up to polls, said an official on Sunday.

"We have registered a case against Allu Arjun for violating the MCC by going in a rally during the silent period," Nandyala SP K Raghuvendra Reddy said.

The case was registered on Saturday under Indian Penal Code (IPC) Section 188, he said.

{ ODISHA } IN KEY SAMBALPUR SEAT

2 political heavyweights face off in a battle of narratives

Smriti Kak Ramchandran

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SAMBALPUR: The electoral contest in Sambalpur is not just a fight to win a Lok Sabha seat and seven assembly constituencies that are part of it. It is emblematic of the larger battle for power in Odisha, playing out as a fight between two formidable opponents and the scramble to change the narrative and sentiment on the ground.

The elections to choose a parliamentary lawmaker from Sambalpur and legislators from the seven assembly segments will be held on May 25.

Sambalpur, on the banks of the Mahanadi river in western Odisha, is a six-hour journey from Bhubaneswar. The political churn taking place in the capital is mirrored on the ground in Sambalpur, which draws its name from a local deity, goddess Samleswari.

"People in this part of the state harbour a notion of being different, if not superior, from their counterparts in the coastal and the southern regions. This time, there is little that sets the mood on the ground apart from what is happening in Bhubaneswar or Cuttack. There is a clear divide between the people supporting the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and Biju Janata Dal (BJD)," said Ashok Sahu, a local trader.

What has added an element of

"thrill" to the election, he said, was the contest between one of BJP's most recognised faces in the state, Union education minister Dharmendra Pradhan, and the BJD's organising secretary, Pranab Das, for the Lok Sabha seat. "Both are tall leaders with their clout and support on the ground. And both are seen as contenders for a top post in the state. So, it is a clash of two big leaders just as there is between (chief minister) Naveen Patnaik and (Prime Minister) Narendra Modi," Sahu said.

The Congress has fielded Nagendra Pradhan, who won the seat in 2014 on a BJD ticket. In 2019, the parliamentary seat was won by BJP's Nitesh Ganga Deb.

Many residents who have supported the BJD are now open to giving the BJP a chance, primarily for two reasons, Sahu said. "The first is that people are upset that VK Pandian is in the driver's seat. And the second is the growing popularity of Prime Minister Narendra Modi," he said.

Just as the BJP raised the issue of Odia *asmita* (pride) by alleging that an outsider, Pandian, a trusted aide of chief minister Patnaik, is seeking to take control of the state, in Sambalpur, too, the party tried to raise the issue of "outsider" Das trying to wrest control of the seat. "But it backfired. Das, who is from Jajpur, was quick

to point out that Pradhan was born in Talcher (which is in Angul, a three-hour drive from Sambalpur). So that issue is now laid to rest," he laughed.

Poll promises

The contest is now driven by promises. Pradhan's road map for the region includes a fillip to the handloom sector that Sambalpur is famous for, setting up a food processing industry and enhancing the minimum support price for farm produce.

"Our manifesto for the state clearly lists our vision for the state. And this will also be reflected in Sambalpur. It is an agrarian society; we will boost rural economy. The process of buying produce will be simplified," Pradhan said. Slamming the BJD for "neglecting" the state and its people, he said, had the party focussed on welfareism in the past 24 years, there would have been no shortfall of amenities."

In his speeches and outreach, the BJP leader focuses on Sambalpur's potential to emerge as an agro-food processing cluster, and a hub for horticulture, fisheries and animal husbandry. "There are five university clusters here, we have an IIM (Indian Institute of Management), engineering and medical colleges, we plan to create a knowledge hub here. This will be a knowledge and tech-driven



Union minister Dharmendra Pradhan on his way to file his nomination from Sambalpur Lok Sabha seat on May 2.

economy and we are looking to create a new ecosystem of start-ups, logistics and service industry," he said. Migration, a key challenge the state faces in the absence of jobs and employment avenues, is all too prevalent in Sambalpur. The local textile industry and the presence of steel plants have not generated enough jobs to allow the youth to stay closer to home. And the BJP promises to change that. "We will create a global workplace. We have the talent pool for it. There is scope for work from home and we need to reverse migration," Pradhan said.

BJD's counter

The BJD, however, is taking the battle to the BJP camp, alleging that after 10 years of being in the

Modi cabinet, Pradhan has not been able to give an account of the jobs created and the avenues for livelihood.

Das, who is popularly known as Bobby, wants Pradhan to explain why Sambalpur could not get funds under corporate social responsibility while he helmed the ministry of petroleum and natural gas as the longest serving minister. He questioned the delay in infrastructure development, pointing out how NH-55, the main link between Bhubaneswar and Sambalpur, is being constructed at a snail's pace.

In his speeches, the BJD candidate claims the dereliction in completing the work is responsible for hundreds of deaths every year. Das also lashed out at the BJP for what he claims is the doublespeak on the issue of welfare of tribal communities. The imposition of GST on collection of tendu leaves is cited as an example of that.

The BJD also accuses the BJP of fanning communal fire. On April 12 last year, dozens of people were injured, and several houses and shops burnt when violence broke out following a stone pelting incident during a Hanuman Jayanti procession. Both sides blamed the other for perpetrating the violence.

"It was a classic case of BJP trying to fan the flames," a local BJD leader said, declining to be named. "They want to create a fissure in society by introducing the communal element."

But Pradhan had a quick rebuttal. "Who attacked the yatra? Where was the administration and law and order? In this zilla (district), a cabinet minister (health minister Naba Kishore Das) was gunned down by a policeman," he said. "Will they (BJD) teach us what peace loving means?"

Shadow on state elections

The incident has, however, cast a shadow on the assembly polls in Sambalpur. Residents complain that both the MP, Nitesh Ganga Deb, and the legislator, Jayanarayan Mishra, were conspicuous by their absence.

"A bike rally was organised by the Hanuman Jayanti Samanyavaya Samiti, which had some BJP and VHP (Vishva Hindu Parishad) members too. It was attacked by stone pelters, there was violence and several of our young men were imprisoned. The BJP MP and MLA did nothing to bail them out," said area resident Umesh Sahu, a trader. "This was despite them

being supporters of the party." The BJP had won three of the seven assembly constituencies of Sambalpur, Rengali and Deogarh, while Chhendipada, Rairakhol, Kuchinda and Athmalik were bagged by the BJD.

Bigger role for contestants

As the election draws close, there is curiosity about the fate of Pradhan and Das in their respective parties. Both are considered front-runners for top state positions.

"Pradhan is fighting the Lok Sabha polls, but there seems to be consensus on the ground that if the party wins the state election, he will be the chief ministerial candidate..." said Sandip Diger, an entrepreneur. Having steered the party's election campaign in states such as Uttar Pradesh and Karnataka, Pradhan's candidacy is also perceived as a plan to further strengthen the party's hold in the western region of the state and give a fillip to its performance in the coastal belt as well.

Similar sentiments are expressed for Das, who is considered close to Patnaik. "His name was counted among the leaders who were expected to succeed Patnaik. The fact that the BJD chose him to take on Pradhan is an indication that he is being groomed for a top position in the state. He is putting on a good fight," said the BJD leader cited earlier.

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News, interviews, and the latest election-related analysis — scan to follow India's festival of democracy

SPOTLIGHT ELECTIONS 2024

Four charts that help decode crucial Ph 4 of LS elections

By Abhishek Jha

Ninety-six parliamentary constituencies (PCs) across nine states and the UT of Jammu & Kashmir will go to polls today in the fourth phase the 2024 Lok Sabha elections. In terms of number of PCs going to polls, this is the second largest phase in the 2024 election cycle. After today's voting, polling will be over in another three states: Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, and Madhya Pradesh. On a cumulative basis, this will mean voting concluding in 379 parliamentary constituencies (PCs) across 23 states and UTs since the beginning of the elections. Here are some key facts about today's phase of elections.

The contrasting INDIA, NDA alliance equations in Phase 4

Nishant Ranjan

letters@hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI: The Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance (INDIA), led by the Congress, is facing significant intra-alliance conflicts in the fourth phase of polling compared to the previous phase, an analysis of candidate affidavits by the Hindustan Times shows. In contrast, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) remains largely unified, with only minor conflicts in two constituencies.

To be sure, even the intra-alliance conflicts in INDIA are largely notional outside the eight parliamentary constituencies (PCs) in West Bengal, where the Trinamool Congress (TMC) failed to partner with the Congress and the Communist Party of India (Marxist) or CPI(M).

In the 96 PCs voting today, the NDA has fielded 97 candidates across 95 PCs, with a notional intra-alliance conflict in just two PCs. These conflicts are in a constituency each in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, where the Republican Party of India (Athawale), a party with no Lok Sabha MP, has fielded a candidate against the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) and the BJP, respectively. On the other hand, no member of the alliance is contesting the Srinagar seat in Jammu & Kashmir.

The alliance arithmetic of the NDA in the current phase also shows another interesting trend. While the BJP continues to be the biggest partner in the alliance in even this phase, it is contesting the smallest proportion of PCs in any phase so far: It is fighting in 72.9% of the seats voting in this phase, compared to 75.5%, 79.5%, and 87.1% of the PCs that voted in the first three phases.

This trend is explained by the BJP having given 17 of Andhra Pradesh's 25 PCs to the TDP, the second largest constituent in the

Alliance arithmetic in phase 4

CHART 1 NDA constituents in the fourth phase of elections (Contesting PCs)

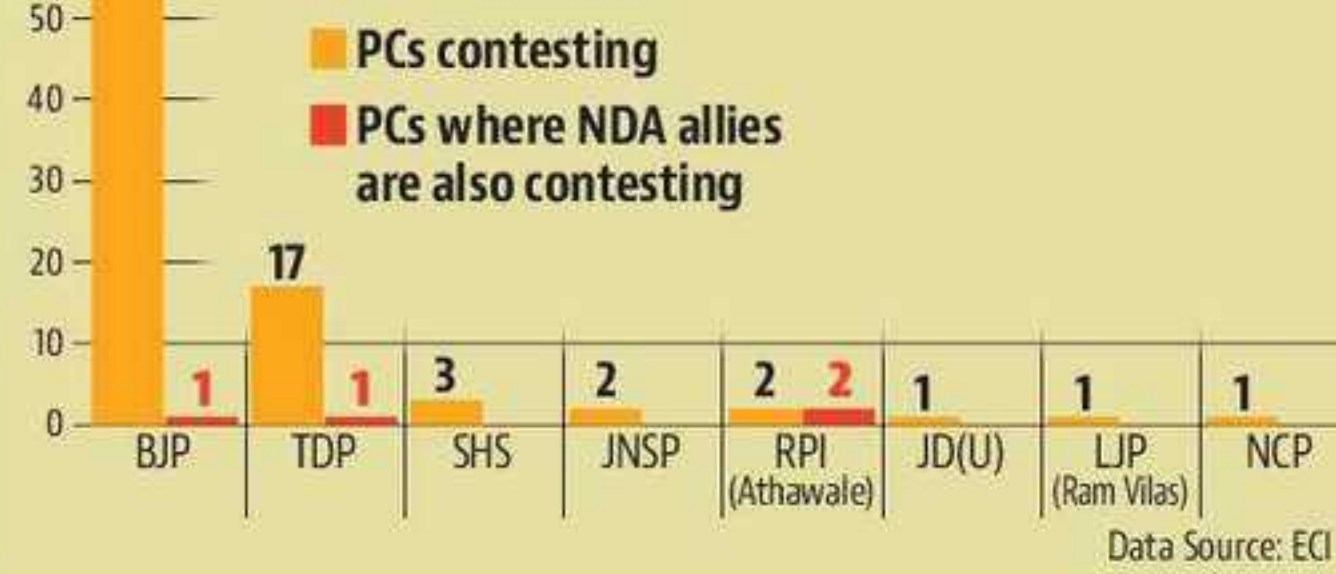
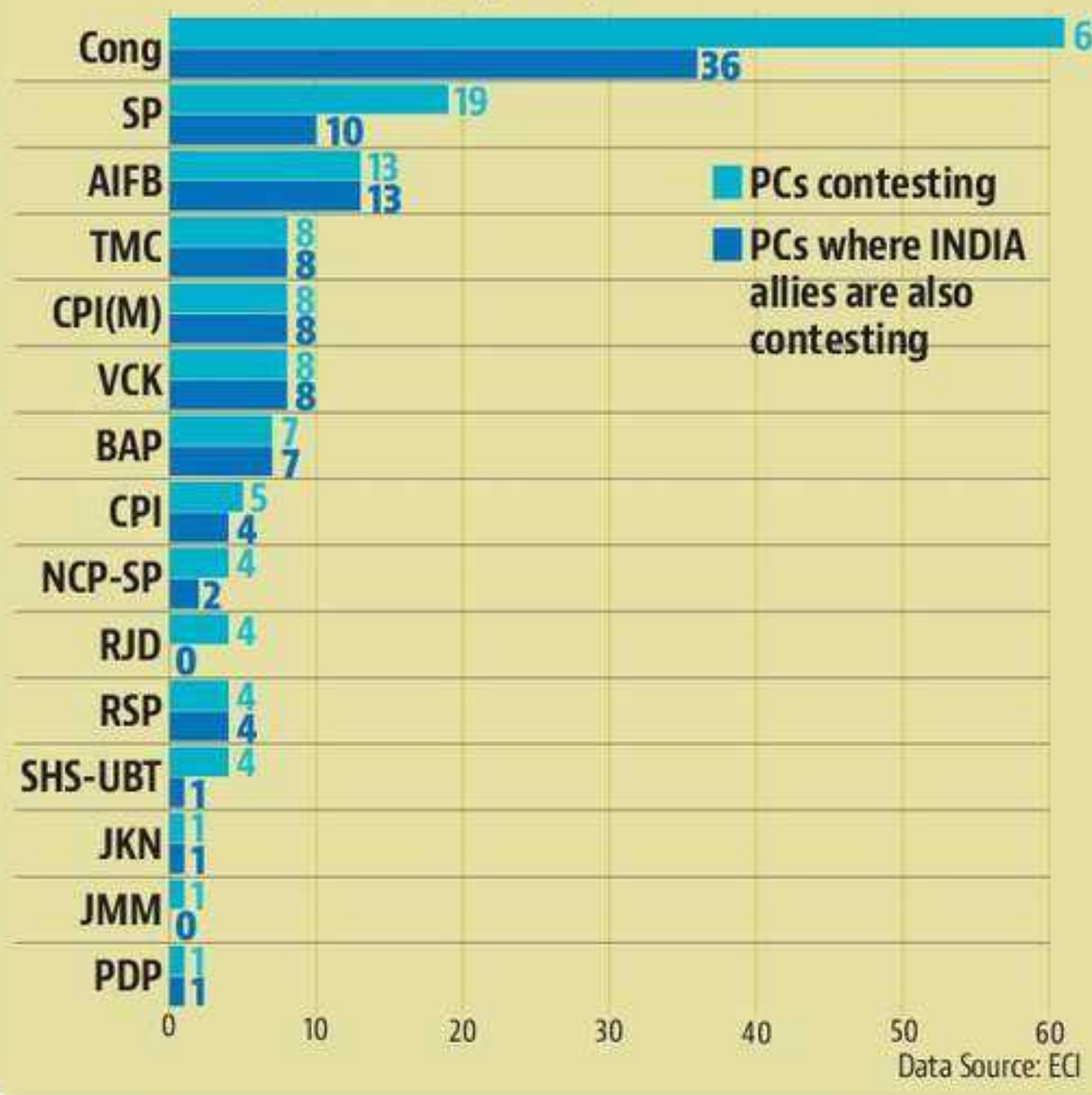


CHART 2 INDIA constituents in the fourth phase of elections (Contesting PCs)



NDA in this phase of polls. The TDP is also the second largest constituent of the NDA at the all-India level. All other NDA members are contesting three seats or less in this phase.

To be sure, this is partly a reflection of the fact that Bihar and Maharashtra elections

(where the BJP has shared seats roughly equally with allies) are staggered over seven and five phases. In the voting scheduled today, only 11 and five PCs of Maharashtra and Bihar are voting.

In sharp contrast to the NDA, the INDIA group has fielded 148

candidates across 95 PCs, with intra-alliance conflicts in 48 seats. The INDIA alliance has no candidate in Indore, where the Congress candidate withdrew his nomination, and no other INDIA member is contesting.

To be sure, intra-alliance conflicts in a large proportion of constituencies is not necessarily a result of Congress failing to concede seats to allies, at least not in every such PC. The party is contesting just 61 of 96 seats in the current phase (63.5%). It had contested 54.9%, 79.5%, and 73.1% PCs in the first three phases.

So why are there a large number of intra-alliance conflicts in the INDIA group despite the Congress not contesting a high proportion of seats? The party is not contesting a higher proportion of seats because it is the smaller partner in Bihar, Jharkhand, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, and West Bengal; and is contesting just 10 of the 41 seats in these states going to polls in the current phase.

However, in West Bengal, the party has made a formal seat-sharing arrangement only with the CPI(M). Here the Congress and CPI(M) are in conflict with the TMC in all the eight seats of the state going to polls. A similar conflict is between the Jammu and Kashmir National Conference (NC) and the Jammu & Kashmir Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) in Srinagar.

Other conflicts for the INDIA alliance are because of its smaller constituents fielding candidates in PCs where they do not have a formal seat-sharing arrangement. The All India Forward Bloc (AIFB), for example, is contesting 13 PCs, all in conflict with other INDIA members. Six of these PCs are in Andhra Pradesh, three in Telangana, two in Uttar Pradesh, and one each in Maharashtra and Odisha. Similarly, Bharat Adivasi Party (BAP), Revolutionary Socialist Party (RSP), and the

Viduthalai Chiruthaigal Katchi (VCK) are in conflict in all seven, four, and eight PCs they are contesting, respectively.

The Communist Party of India (CPI) is also in conflict in four of the five PCs (all except Begusarai in Bihar), Samajwadi Party (SP), on the other hand, has created a similar conflict in seven Andhra Pradesh PCs and one Odisha PC, while it faces such a conflict from CPI and AIFB in two PCs in Uttar Pradesh.

Who had won these PCs where INDIA members are in conflict in 2019? Half of these 48 PCs were won by parties that were neither in a BJP-led alliance nor in a Congress-led one. The YSRCP had won 14 PCs, the TRS seven, and the TDP, BJD, and the AIMIM had won one PC each. The BJP had won another 15 PCs. INDIA members of 2024 had won only eight of these 48 PCs in 2019: the Congress two PCs, the TMC four, and the undivided Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) and Shiv Sena had won one each. To be sure, this seat distribution in conflict PCs is partly a reflection of the overall 2019 performance of non-NDA, non-INDIA parties in the PCs voting today. If PCs are grouped by the seven phases of 2024 elections, non-NDA and non-INDIA parties had the highest share in 2019 in the fourth phase PCs.

elections onhtapp



CHARTS AND GRAPHS
17 elections, a billion votes, and what they yielded — track in microscopic detail on Charts & Graphs

1 A challenge and opportunity for both BJP and Congress

In 2019, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Congress along with their allies won just 53 out of the 95 PCs voting in this phase. The Srinagar PC is not comparable because Jammu and Kashmir PCs were redrawn in a delimitation exercise after the 2019 elections. The biggest gains for the parties not aligned with either the BJP or the Congress came from the states of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana. The Yuvajana Sramika Rythu Congress Party (YSRCP) won 22 PCs in Andhra Pradesh, the Telangana Rashtira Samithi (now Bharat Rashtira Samithi or BRS) won nine in Telangana, the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) won three in Andhra Pradesh and the All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM) won the Hyderabad PC in Telangana. All these parties, except the TDP, are still not aligned with either the BJP or the Congress. While the BJP would be looking to replicate its 2014 victory in alliance with the TDP in Andhra Pradesh, the Congress would be hoping to build on its 2023 victory in Telangana assembly elections. Another 12 PCs voting in this phase are in West Bengal and Odisha. The eight West Bengal seats have been important for BJP's inroads in the state. It won zero out of eight in 2009 and three in 2019. Similarly, the four PCs of Odisha were divided equally between the Biju Janata Dal (BJD) and the Congress in 2009 and won by the BJD alone in 2014. In 2019, both the BJP and the Congress won one PC each and the BJD two.

2019 winners of fourth phase PCs of 2024 Lok Sabha elections

■ NDA: BJP ■ NDA: Others
■ Others ■ Boundary redrawn since 2019
■ UPA: Congress ■ UPA: Others

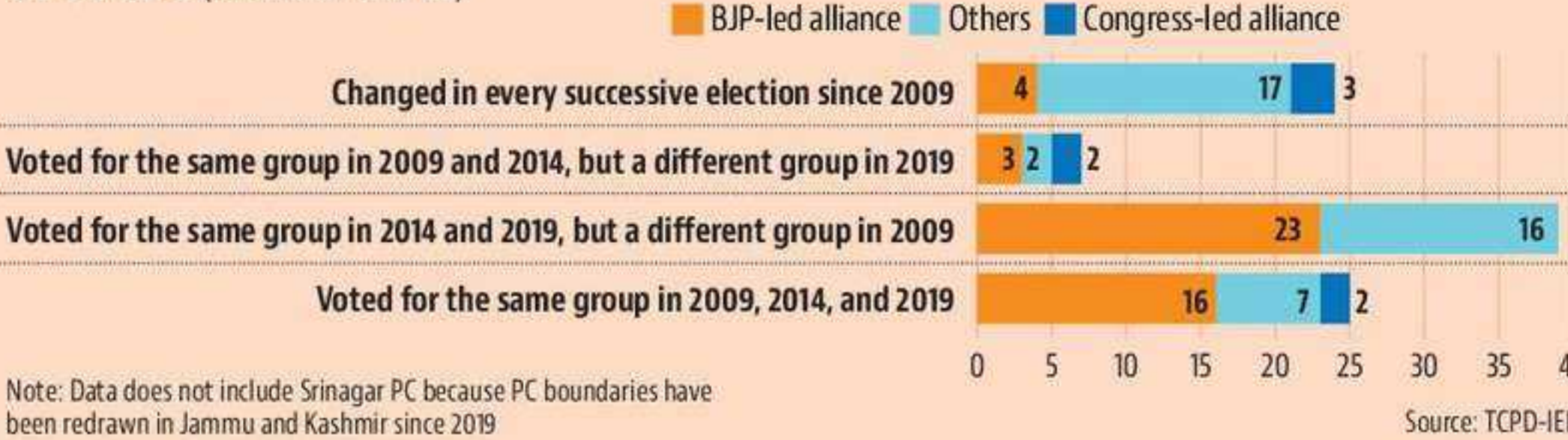
| | NDA: BJP | NDA: Others | Others | UPA: Congress | UPA: Others | Boundary redrawn | Grand Total |
|-----------------|----------|-------------|--------|---------------|-------------|------------------|-------------|
| Andhra Pradesh | 0 | 0 | 25 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 25 |
| Bihar | 3 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 5 |
| Jammu & Kashmir | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Jharkhand | 3 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 4 |
| Madhya Pradesh | 8 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 8 |
| Maharashtra | 7 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 11 |
| Odisha | 1 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 4 |
| Telangana | 4 | 0 | 10 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 17 |
| Uttar Pradesh | 13 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 13 |
| West Bengal | 3 | 0 | 4 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 8 |

Source: TCPO-IED

2 Phase 4 seats have changed hands more often those in phase 2, 3

As expected from the relatively recent origin and success of the YSRCP and the BRS in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, there has been a significant PC-level churn in the seats voting on Monday. Only 25 of the 95 PCs (26%) for which this comparison is possible voted for the same group from 2009 to 2019, if parties are grouped as a BJP-led alliance, Congress-led alliance, or others. In the first, second, and third phase PCs of 2024, this fraction was 16%, 43%, and 53%. This trend — that of low long-term incumbency in fourth phase PCs — also holds true if incumbency trends are seen at party-level. What happened in PCs that did not vote for the same group from 2009 to 2019? 39 voted for the same group in 2014 and 2019, but not in 2009; seven voted for the same group in 2009 and 2014, but changed their group in 2019; and the remaining 24 PCs have changed hands between groups in every election since 2009. Who won the PCs across these four categories of PCs in 2019? As expected from the overall trends, BJP and allies were the biggest winner across each category except in the 24 PCs that changed hands in every election. Parties not aligned to the BJP and the Congress were the biggest winners in this category and the second-biggest winners in other categories. To be sure, these statistics need to be read with the fact that the YSRCP was founded by the son of YSR Reddy, under whose leadership the Congress won 2004 and 2009 elections in Andhra Pradesh.

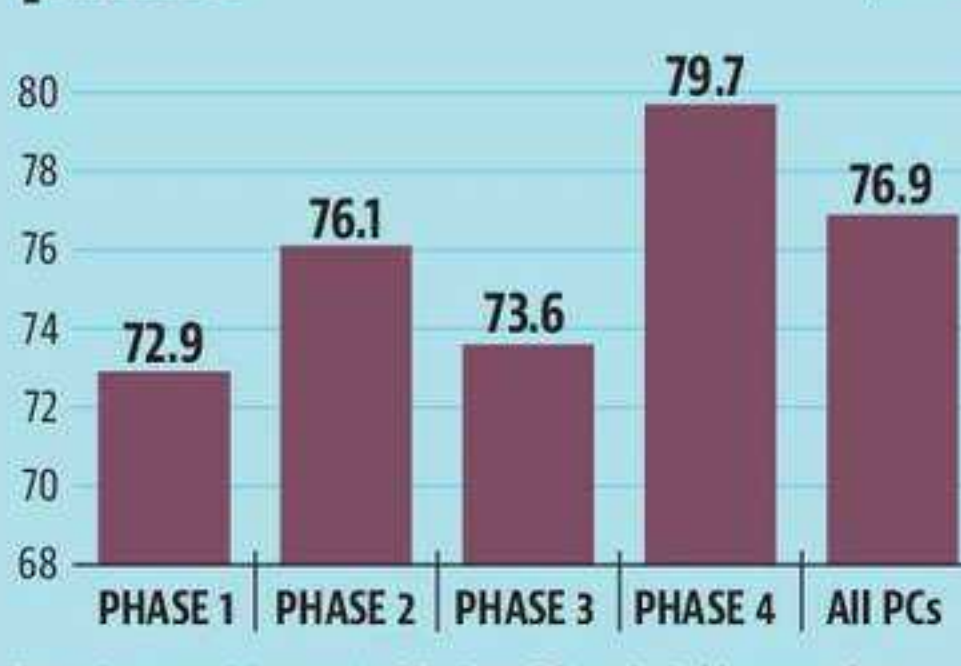
2019 winners in fourth phase PCs by anti-incumbency trends (Number of PCs)



3 One of the most rural phases of this election...

This can be seen from both the overall proportion of rural population in the PCs voting today and the median (the middle value in a series) proportion of rural population across these PCs. According to 2011 census data aggregated to PC level by How India Lives, the overall share of rural population in the PCs voting today is 72.7% and the median share of rural population across PCs is 79.7%, second and third highest among the seven phases.

Median share of rural population in PCs of phase



4 ...that has turned out enthusiastically to vote in the past

The average turnout in the PCs voting today (this comparison is only possible for the 95 PCs other than Srinagar) has been higher than the national average in each of the past three Lok Sabha elections. To be sure, the gap in turnout between the PCs voting today and the national average has decreased over time. Among the PCs of the seven phases, the PCs of the fourth phase had the highest turnout in 2009 and 2014, but the second highest turnout in 2019.

Turnout in Lok Sabha elections (%)



SP FIELDS BJP MP RAMESH BIND FROM MIRZAPUR TO TAKE ON ANUPRIYA PATEL

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LUCKNOW: The Samajwadi Party (SP) on Sunday fielded sitting Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) MP Ramesh Bind from Mirzapur seat, which will vote in the last phase of the Lok Sabha elections on June 1.

Bind is the lawmaker from Bhadohi and was not fielded from the seat. The BJP nominated Vinod Kumar Bind, instead, from Bhadohi, which will also go to the polls on June 1.

In Mirzapur, Ramesh Bind has been pitted against BJP-ally Apna Dal (Sonelal) lawmaker Anupriya Patel.

"Ramesh Bind's nomination came amid speculation that he may quit the ruling party and join the Samajwadi Party," a person aware of the details said, seeking anonymity.

On May 7, Apna Dal (Sonelal) released its list of candidates, fielding Union minister of state for commerce and industry Patel from Mirzapur seat.

In the last parliamentary elections, the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) won 64 seats, with BJP winning 62 and Apna Dal (Sonelal) winning two seats, mainly Mirzapur and Robertsganj.

MUMBAI: There is no anti-incumbency against Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led government, despite being in power for 10 years, Maharashtra deputy chief minister Devendra Fadnavis said. In an interview to Shailesh Gaikwad and Surendra P Gangan, the BJP leader spoke about various issues in these polls. Edited excerpts:

This is seen as a silent election. Turnout too is said to be lower than 2019.

There is less noise among the voters, for a reason. Modi ji has created a loyal voter base. In 2014, voters saw hope. In 2019, they saw delivery on the promises. In 2024, they are confident of Modi government's performance once it is back in power. They are now silently voting for him. A fake narrative is being peddled that the turnout was low and people were unhappy. Only four of 24 constituencies (24 of the 48 Maharashtra seats have voted in 3 phases so far) saw less voting than 2019.

Do you think anti-incumbency is a factor?

There is no anti-incumbency. People want Modi as PM again. It could be about some individual candidates, but people have said they are not voting for candidates but for PM Modi.



There seems to be a reaction from the people over splits in Shiv Sena and NCP.

I don't think so. Who is unhappy? Workers of erstwhile Shiv Sena or [Sharad] Pawar loyalists in NCP. That is not the mood of the people. People know the feud was started by Uddhav Thackeray and not us. The credit for the two splits should go to the respective party heads.

Can you elaborate?

My view is that he (Thackeray) wanted to be chief minister right from the day one. In MVA government, Thackeray was insecure about the popularity of Eknath Shinde among his MLAs. Attempts were made to cut Shinde to size. He was left with no alternative but to revolt against Thackeray. Ajit Pawar faced similar situation. On three-four occasions, he was put forth for negotiations by Sharad Pawar, who later changed stance. Ajit dada was made to look

like a villain as Pawar wanted to hand over reigns of the party to Supriya Sule. We didn't have a hand in the splits. Of course, we took the advantage of the same as a political party.

Will the Maratha-OBC divide affect your party?

Both OBCs and Marathas are with us. Attempts to create a divide are being made by a section of people whose politics is based on casteism. It won't help them.

Dalits and Muslims seem to be at unease over claims that the BJP would change the Constitution if re-elected.

No government can change the Constitution. This is a verdict of a full bench of the Supreme Court. This narrative is not being set for the first time...I don't think it will sell much.

Isn't your party hostile towards Muslims?

PM is not targeting Muslims. He is just exposing the Opposition, which is misleading the community. We are asked about Muslim candidates, but the Congress has not fielded a single Muslim candidate in 10 major states, including Maharashtra. They need only the

votes of minorities, but don't want to give them representation. This is what we have been pointing out.

The BJP initially sought votes on its performance at the Centre, but changed its discourse midway to Hindu vs Muslim etc. Why?

Modi's 80% speech is on the developmental work and 20% is on other issues. We speak on these issues because opposition makes them up and we have to counter them as certain percent of the people may believe them.

What would be senior Pawar and Thackeray's roles after the polls?

Pawar understands politics so he has made his arrangement (for) after June 4. He has given a statement that regional parties would merge with the Congress. If you see his history, he left Congress four times since 1978, returned and quit again after gaining strength. He will go to Congress to regain his strength. I won't be surprised if Thackeray follows him.

Is reconciliation with Thackeray possible?

I don't think that is a possibility now... He is not leaving any scope for reconciliation.

{ POLL PREPARATIONS }

BJP deploys veterans to mentor contenders in key seats

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NEW DELHI: The BJP has deployed a system to get all its first-time contestants mentored by party veterans in all things electoral, senior leaders said on Sunday.

The system, they said, was a throwback to the Mahabharata in which Krishna was charioteer (sarathi) to Arjuna on the battlefield of Kurukshetra. His role was not just to drive Arjuna's chariot but to be his guide, advising him on the practical as well as moral aspects of warfare. This idea of the sarathi has been revived in the party's campaign plan for the general elections to help fresh contenders and also those facing a particularly difficult contest, said the leaders cited above.

Lok Sabha speaker Om Birla has been assigned this role for

commerce minister Piyush Goyal, who is making his electoral debut in Mumbai North constituency. Rajasthan BJP chief CP Joshi is doing the same for Dharmendra Pradhan in Odisha's Sambalpur and former education minister Ramesh Pokhriyal Nishank is the sarathi for newcomer and Sushma Swaraj's daughter Bansuri Swaraj, who is contesting the New Delhi Lok Sabha seat.

"It is such a beautiful coincidence. When I joined politics, I worked under didi (Sushma Swaraj). As chief minister or as cabinet colleague, she would be the person we would turn to for help," Pokhriyal said. "Now, I have the opportunity to help her daughter, and I am so grateful for that opportunity."

After arriving in the Capital for this assignment last week, Pokhriyal has been meeting people in her constituency. He has been meeting



BJP workers at a roadshow in Amritsar on May 10. AFP

party workers and booth managers to make sure that all arrangements are on track. It's all behind-the-scenes work, but it's one that's a crucial responsibility because it ensures senior leaders are held accountable for the successes of those they are mentoring.

Unlike Pokhriyal, who is not contesting the polls, Joshi had his own fight in Rajasthan's Chittorgarh, but was assigned Pradhan's constituency, which votes towards

the end of the election cycle. "When I was in Rajasthan in my constituency, all the big leaders came to help my campaign," Joshi said. "Now it is my turn to go and help out. It's an honour."

This system of mentoring seems to be an extension of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh's philosophy of pravasi karyakartas, or workers who are assigned areas outside of their usual zone of operation for poll campaigns. The objective is to keep the organisation active and strong. All sarathis are strictly behind the scenes, a trait that distinguishes them from star campaigners.

BJP's Gujarat leader Alpesh Thakore, for instance, was a star campaigner in his home state. Now he's the sarathi for Anirban Ganguly, a right-wing intellectual who is fighting for the first time in Kolkata's Jadavpur constituency.

"My candidate is a first timer. So for two days, we will first have to learn the issues and local concerns," Thakore said.

The mentoring isn't just for newcomers but also for seasoned politicians. For instance, animal husbandry minister Sanjeev Balyan has been assigned Amethi, which is Smriti Irani's seat that she is fighting to retain. Both seniors and juniors are treated equally and help is assigned wherever needed, a BJP leader said, seeking anonymity. Some of the other sarathis are Pratima Bhowmik in Ranaghat in West Bengal, Biplob Deb in Koraput in Odisha, former Uttarakhand chief minister Trivendra Singh Rawat in Kendrapara in Odisha, and Rajendra Rathore in Malkajgiri in Telangana, Tamilisai Soundarajan in Hyderabad, Madan Dilawan in Puri and Gajendra Shekhawat in Jalandhar.

New video adds fuel to fire as Sandeshkhali furore simmers

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KOLKATA: The Trinamool Congress released a new video purporting to show a Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader speaking of plans to continue the unrest in Sandeshkhali, where fresh violence took place on Sunday as the political battle between the two parties heated up, especially with Prime Minister Narendra Modi holding a spate of rallies in West Bengal over the weekend.

The new video, released by the TMC late on Saturday, purportedly shows Gangadhar Koyal, a BJP mandal president from Sandeshkhali in North 24 Parganas districts, saying he would need at least 50 pistols and 600 cartridges to create unrest in around 50 polling booths under his jurisdiction ahead of the Lok Sabha polls.

HT could not independently verify the veracity of the video.

The 46-minute video was uploaded by TMC spokesperson Riju Dutta on X. In the video, Koyal can also be seen purportedly sharing details of the amount of alcohol and funds he would need in the run-up to the general elections.

"It would cost ₹2.5 lakh to arrange alcohol for 50 booths with ₹5,000 for each booth. Around 30% women and 70%



A clash broke out between TMC and BJP workers in Sandeshkhali on Sunday.

ANI

men would consume alcohol. This is the minimum requirement," he is heard saying.

Koyal was first seen in a purported sting video released by the TMC on May 4, in which he had claimed that the Sandeshkhali unrest was orchestrated by the BJP and the party had paid village women to lodge fake complaints of rape against TMC leaders. He had also claimed that ₹2,000 were paid to the women.

"At least 72 women received a one-time payment," he is heard claiming in the fresh video released on Saturday.

The BJP hit back, sharing a

video on X on Friday in which one woman, who was featured in the sting video, claimed that she was threatened to make the statements adding that the sting video was doctored.

The video war is only a part of the spiralling confrontation between the two sides. The ruling party, led by Mamata Banerjee, filed a complaint with the Election Commission of India (ECI) seeking criminal proceedings against National Commission for Women (NCW) chief Rekha Sharma and BJP leaders, including Piyali Das, for "commission of serious offences of forgery, cheating, fraud, intimi-

dation and criminal conspiracy upon innocent women of Sandeshkhali."

TMC's leader and parliamentarian Derek O'Brien separately released a "fact-check" report, calling the prime minister the "Lyn King" over the allegations pertaining to Sandeshkhali.

"We often fact check Narendra Modi... The Lyn King" just ended his third and fourth speeches. So much of deceit, falsehood and hate, that even our fact check meter broke down," the TMC Rajya Sabha member said in a post on the microblogging platform.

"Two Sandeshkhali videos exposed BJP's conspiracy to malign Bengal and humiliate women. Concocted by Bengal LoP Suwendu Adhikari. Bribed and forced women to sign a blank paper and file false rape complaints. BJP shelters molesters: Brij Bhushan Singh, Prajwal Revanna, Unnao, Kathua, Hathras," the document shared by O'Brien read.

In the rallies, Modi accused the Trinamool Congress of indulging in vote-bank politics and said that "goons of the ruling party" were threatening the "tormented women" of Sandeshkhali, an allusion to the BJP-released video.

Modi alleged that under the TMC rule, Hindus have become "second-class citizens" in West

Bengal and asserted that "as long as there is Modi, no one can repeal the CAA".

On Sunday, fresh violence erupted in Sandeshkhali with BJP workers, mostly women, attacking TMC workers, alleging they were making fake videos. The Sandeshkhali police station was also gheraoed. BJP's Basirhat Lok Sabha candidate Rekha Patra led the attack on TMC worker Dilip Mallick and staged a protest outside the police station.

State minister Shashi Panja accused the BJP and Patra of creating massive trouble in Sandeshkhali and said, "Violence is going on under her leadership. This is Modi's guarantee. If Modi can threaten the women in his speech, then under his command, such things are going on in Sandeshkhali."

Sandeshkhali emerged as an unlikely battleground since the beginning of the year when a local TMC strongman, Sheikh Shahjahan, was accused of widespread extortion and instances of sexual abuse that he and his aides unleashed on the local community. The incidents spanned multiple court cases and attacks on federal investigation agencies, whom the chief minister Mamata Banerjee's party accuses of acting at the behest of the BJP that rules at the Centre.

{ TOLD TO APPEAR TOMORROW }

ED summons J'khand min after cash seizure

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RANCHI: The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has summoned Jharkhand's rural development minister and Congress leader Alamgir Alam as part of its money laundering probe, nearly a week after recovering over ₹35 crore in cash from locations linked to his office on special duty (OSD) Sanjeev Lal and the latter's aides, people familiar with the matter said on Sunday.

The 70-year-old Congress leader has been asked to record his statement under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) at the ED's zonal office in Ranchi on May 14, an official from the agency said.

ED has already arrested Lal (52), a state administrative service officer, and his domestic help Jahangir Alam (42) in connection with the case registered by it in September 2020. The probe pertains to alleged irregularities and payment of "bribes" in the state rural development department.

On May 6, the agency raided at least six locations in Ranchi



Alamgir Alam

and recovered ₹35.23 crore in cash, largely from the residence of Jahangir Alam. The seizures also included ₹10.05 lakh from Lal's house apart from ₹3 crore from the residence of a builder allegedly linked to the OSD.

While seeking the remand of Lal and his domestic help, the agency had informed a special PMLA court in Ranchi that the former collected "commission" on behalf of some influential people and government officials from "top to bottom" in the rural department are involved in the alleged bribery case, the ED official cited above said, requesting anonymity.

"Elections are going on. ED is investigating the matter.

Being the minister of the department, they can interrogate me. I don't want to say anything about this. People are understanding everything," minister Alam was quoted as saying by ANI.

The summons against the senior Congress leader came even as he had distanced himself from the activities of Lal, pointing out that he had earlier served with two Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) ministers of the state government too.

"Sanjiv Lal is a government employee and is my personal secretary. Lal has already been a personal secretary of two former ministers. We usually appoint personal secretaries based on experience and it is not right to comment on the raids before the ED investigation is completed," Alam had told reporters on May 6.

A Congress leader close to Alam questioned the timing of the ED summons, which came a day before the first phase of polling in the state. "The summons has been issued a day before the first phase of elections in Jharkhand and this is not fair," the leader added.

Hope remaining issues with China are soon resolved: EAM

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NEW DELHI: As the eastern Ladakh military standoff entered its fifth year, external affairs minister (EAM) S Jaishankar said India hopes for a resolution of the remaining issues with China and asserted that a return to normal bilateral ties hinges on peace and tranquillity at the border.

In an exclusive interview to PTI, Jaishankar said the remaining issues mainly pertained to "patrolling rights and patrolling abilities".

Specifically asked when a resolution to the dragging row can be expected in the backdrop of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's remarks to Newsweek magazine last month, Jaishankar said that he only provided a "big-picture" viewpoint on the matter.

"I would not link it to the prime minister's interview per se. I think the prime minister was giving a big-picture viewpoint and his big-picture viewpoint was a very reasonable viewpoint which is — after all as neighbours, every country wants good relations with its neighbours," he said.

"But today, our relations with



S Jaishankar

China are not normal because the peace and tranquillity in the border areas has been disturbed. So he (PM) was expressing the hope that the Chinese side should realise that the present situation is not in its own interest," Jaishankar said.

Modi had said that the border situation needs to be addressed urgently and that stable and peaceful ties between India and China are important for not just the two countries, but for the entire region and world.

Jaishankar said diplomacy is a work of patience and India continues to discuss the issues with the Chinese side.

"I would say that we need to resolve those issues if the relationship is to come back to normal," he said during the interview on Thursday.

The Indian and Chinese militaries have been locked in the

standoff since May 2020 and a full resolution of the border row has not yet been achieved though the two sides have disengaged from a number of friction points. India has been consistently maintaining that peace and tranquillity along the LAC were key for the normalisation of overall ties.

Asked why bilateral trade volume with China is going up when New Delhi has been insisting that the ties cannot be normal when the border situation is abnormal, Jaishankar suggested that such a scenario has arisen as adequate attention to the manufacturing sector was not given before 2014.

"I think it is common sense that if there is no peace and tranquillity in the border, how can you have a normal relationship," he said. "After all if somebody is at your front door in an unfriendly manner, you are not going to go out there and act as though everything is normal. That to me is a straightforward proposition," Jaishankar added.

The ties between the two countries nosedived significantly after the clash in the Galwan Valley in June 2020, marking the most serious military conflict between them in decades.

Canada arrests 4th Indian in connection with Nijjar's murder

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TORONTO: The Canadian authorities on Saturday arrested a fourth man in connection with the murder of pro-Khalistan separatist Hardeep Singh Nijjar, an official statement said.

The Integrated Homicide Investigation Team (IHIT) identified the accused as 22-year-old Amandeep Singh, an Indian national, and said that he was in the custody of the Peel Regional Police (PRP) in Ontario on unrelated firearms charges since November of last year.

"IHIT pursued the evidence and gained sufficient information for the BC Prosecution Service to charge Amandeep Singh with first degree murder and conspiracy to commit murder," the release said.

Amandeep's arrest comes days after the Canadian authorities said that their investigation into Nijjar's murder "was not limited" to the three Indian nationals — Karan Brar, 22, Kamalpreet Singh, 22 and Karanpreet Singh, 28 — who were arrested on May 3. They have also been charged with first degree murder and conspiracy to commit murder.

"This arrest shows the nature of our ongoing investigation to hold responsible those that played a role in the homicide of Hardeep Singh Nijjar," IHIT officer in charge, superintendent Mandeep Mooker said.

India-Canada relations hit an all-time low last September after Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau alleged there was a potential link between



Amandeep Singh

Indian government agents and Nijjar's killing outside a gurdwara in Surrey in June 2023. India has constantly rejected the assertions, saying that such statements reflect the political space given in the North American country to separatism and extremism.

On May 3, assistant commissioner David Teboul, the commander of the Federal Policing Program in the Pacific Region, said there were "separate and distinct investigations ongoing" in connection with Nijjar's murder, including "investigating connections to the government of India".

External affairs minister S Jaishankar has called Nijjar's killing and the arrests related to it as Canada's "internal matter".

On May 7, India's high commissioner to Canada, Sanjay Verma, said that the two countries are using diplomatic channels "not open to public" to try and find solutions to issues of concern to both sides. Verma also said national security threats emanating from Canada and the pro-Khalistan activities of Canadian citizens are the "two red lines" for India.

NGT SEEKS REPLY ON DAL LAKE'S 'DETERIORATING CONDITION'

Press Trust of India

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NEW DELHI: The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has sought a response from several authorities, including the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) and the Jammu and Kashmir Pollution Control Committee, regarding the "deteriorating conditions" of the Dal Lake in Kashmir.

The green panel was hearing a matter in which it has taken suo motu cognizance of a media report that said, "...the condition of the Dal Lake in Kashmir was deteriorating because of municipal sewage, pollution and urbanisation and its impact on the lives of Hanji people (those living in houseboats)".

A bench of NGT chairperson justice Prakash Shrivastava and expert member A Senthil Vel said, according to the report, sewage has destroyed fish in the lake. At one time, people used to drink the lake water, but today it cannot even be used for washing faces.

"The news item mentions that 70 per cent of the sewage generated in Srinagar city finds its way into the lake and the sewage treatment plants (STPs) are heavily over-utilised and under-maintained. The destruction of the fish has impacted the business and life of Hanji people," it said, noting the report.

In an order passed on May 8, the tribunal said the news report raised a "substantial issue" regarding compliance with environmental rules.

No proof given by ED to declare Choksi a fugitive, says lawyer

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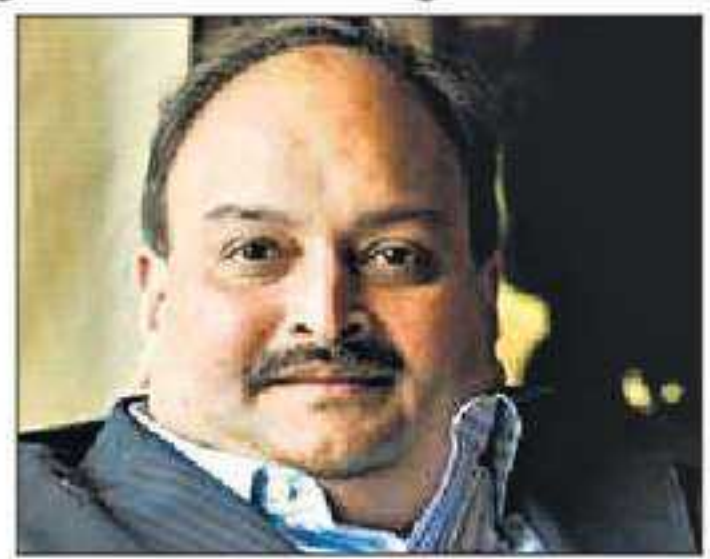
MUMBAI: The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has not brought on record material documents in the proceedings required to get diamond merchant Mehul Choksi declared as a fugitive economic offender (FEO), the lawyer of the diamantaire has argued in a special Mumbai court.

ED had in July 10, 2018 approached the special court to declare Choksi, who is currently residing in a Caribbean country, to declare him a fugitive under the FEO Act, which would enable it to confiscate his properties. Choksi, who fled India in 2018, is accused in the ₹12, 500 crore Punjab National Bank scam.

In December 2019, a Mumbai court declared the scam's co-accused and Choksi's relative, diamond merchant Nirav Modi, as a FEO on a similar plea by ED, which has probed the case's money-laundering aspect since February 2018 on the basis of an FIR by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI).

The CBI's probe has looked into aspects of the scam related to the alleged offences of criminal conspiracy, cheating and corruption under the various provisions of the Indian Penal Code and Prevention of Corruption Act. The FEO Act came into being in August 2018.

Choksi cannot be declared a FEO as the ED could not bring on record material documents to



Mehul Choksi

establish that he had left the country in January 2018 to avoid prosecution, his counsel Vijay Aggarwal argued on Friday before the special court. The diamantaire had no intention to leave the country to avoid prosecution, Aggarwal claimed. Choksi did not come under the ambit of the definition in the FEO Act as he neither left the country to avoid criminal prosecution, nor is he refusing to return back to India to face criminal prosecution, the lawyer argued.

There is no material on record to show that in January 2018, Choksi was aware he would be facing criminal prosecution as at the time no case was registered nor any summons issued to him to join any investigation, Aggarwal argued.

Choksi left the country for "medical treatment in the month of January 2018", which was prior to the registration of a case by CBI on February 15, 2018, and the registration of an Enforcement Case Information Report by ED a day later on February 16, 2018, Aggarwal further argued.

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RAIPUR: Two days after 12 alleged Maoists were killed by security forces in Chhattisgarh's Bijapur district, villagers and activists on Sunday said those killed were area residents who were branded as insurgents by police.

The villagers gathered outside the Bijapur district collectorate, demanding the dead bodies of their kin, saying they were killed in a "fake encounter" with security forces. Police refuted the claims. Those killed in the encounter were Maoists who changed into local attire after seeing police in the jungle, officers said.

On Friday, security forces said they gunned down 12 Maoists, including Budhu Oyam and Kallu Punem, both members of military company number 2 of the banned Communist Party of India (Maoist) outfit who carried rewards of ₹8 lakh each on their head. Others killed in the encounter were Gangaloor area committee member of Maoists, Lakhe Kunjam, and



The arms and other items recovered by the security personnel during the encounter in Bijapur district on Friday.

PTI

member of military platoon number 12, Bhima Karam, who had rewards of ₹5 lakh each on their heads.

The other deceased, militia platoon commander Sannu Lakom and vice-head of the Janata Sarkar (people's government) Avlam, were carrying a bounty of ₹2 lakh each, said Jitendra Yadav, superintendent of police of Bijapur district, adding that six others were lower-rung members of the banned outfit.

Villagers on the other hand claimed area residents were gunned down by the security forces and the encounter was fake. Some villagers had gone to pluck tendu leaves from the forest and started running when security forces moved towards them, said Gurananda, a resident of Pedia village who witnessed the encounter.

"They were shot down by the forces as they were running in fear and surprise," Gurananda alleged. Another villager, Raju from

Korchuli village, said they have come to take the bodies of their relatives. "Lalu Kunjam, who was killed, was not a Maoist but a farmer," Raju said. "He was running away after seeing the police, when he was shot down."

Rakesh Alvam of Pedia village said his younger sibling Moto Alvam was hit by a bullet when he was plucking tendu leaves. "The police cordoned off Pedia village and one other village Itaavar. My brother... was hit by a bullet fired by the police. All those killed in the encounter were villagers, not Maoists, and they were picked up from these two villages and killed," Rakesh Alvam said.

He also identified the deceased in a press note issued by Bijapur police and said that all were residents of Itaavar and Pedia villages.

Activists said they will take legal action. Police have killed innocent villagers and the encounter was totally fake, according to Soni Sori, a tribal activist working in the Bastar region of the state.

"Those killed include villagers who were plucking tendu leaves in the jungle. They started running

when they saw police and the jaws shot them. I talked to some family members of the deceased and they told me some of the villagers were also picked up from their houses and killed in the jungle," said Sori.

"We will file a petition in the high court because the police have killed innocent villagers," she said. To be sure, police stuck to their position that those killed were Maoists.

"They changed clothes and mingled with the villagers. All of the deceased were Maoists, not villagers. The villagers had come to take the dead bodies of the Maoists who were their relatives," said Kamalochan Kashyap, deputy inspector general of police of the South Bastar region.

A total of 70 people were brought to Gangaloor police station for questioning, out of which around nine were hardcore Maoists, he claimed.

As many as 104 Maoist insurgents have been killed till May 12 this year, more than the 22 and 30 killed in all of 2022 and 2023, respectively.

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{ COPS CLAIM HE SEXUALLY EXPLOITED THEM } 6 minors apprehended for killing Ajmer cleric

Press Trust of India
letters@hindustantimes.com

JAIPUR: Six minors have been detained for the murder of a mosque cleric, who allegedly sexually exploited them, in the Ramganj area of Rajasthan's Ajmer district, police said on Sunday.

Mohammad Tahir, 30, was beaten to death on the night of April 26.

Superintendent of Police (Ajmer) Devendra Vishnoi said the probe stalled before the six minors, who lived with him in the mosque, were questioned. They confessed to have murdered the cleric as he used to

POLICE SAID THE MINORS MIXED SLEEPING PILLS IN TAHIR'S FOOD AND BEAT HIM WITH STICKS

exploit them sexually. The minors have been detained, he added.

Police said the minors mixed sleeping pills in Tahir's food and beat him with sticks. Later, they informed police that three masked men entered the mosque and attacked him, they said. Tahir used to teach children in the mosque.

BSF foils two major infiltration bids from across B'desh border

HT Correspondent
letters@hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI: Two major infiltration attempts by different groups of 12-20 people from Bangladesh were foiled by the Border Security Force (BSF) jawans after brief exchange of fire on the intervening night of May 11 and 12, people aware of the matter said on Sunday afternoon.

The force said that BSF would launch a "strong protest and call a flag meeting" at the border with their counterparts, Border Guards Bangladesh (BGB), as the mass infiltration took place just a day before the

fourth phase of polling in West Bengal is scheduled to be held. Amresh Arya, DIG, South Bengal Frontier, said that hours before the infiltration, the force received information that groups of Bangladeshi nationals were trying to enter India by crossing the Kodalia river, flowing along the Indo-Bangladesh border.

Both incidents were reported at Ranaghat border outpost under the BSF's 68 Battalion. Officials said that it is unusual for large groups of infiltrators to attempt to enter India illegally and that the timing, that too twice on the same night, by the groups is suspicious

"Based on tip-off, our jawans started monitoring the border. At around 11.25 pm, the jawans saw a group of 18 to 20 people coming from the Bangladesh side towards India in the Kodalia river. As soon as they crossed the river, the BSF jawans challenged them to turn back but all the infiltrators ignored the warning and continued to move forward. BSF jawans threw a stun grenade to stop the infiltration, but when the infiltrators did not stop, the jawans fired non-lethal weapons in the air. As soon as they heard sounds of the fire, all the infiltrators ran back towards Bangladesh," DIG Arya said.

KHATTAR DARES OPPN PARTIES TO PARADE MLAs

CHANDIGARH: With the opposition parties claiming that the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government in Haryana has lost majority, the ruling party on Sunday dared them to parade their MLAs if they have the numbers.

Former chief minister ML Khattar also indicated the BJP government was not averse to a floor test and that six MLAs of the Janmukh Janta Party (JJP) are with it.

After the withdrawal of support by three Independent MLAs to the BJP government in Haryana, the Congress has demanded the dismissal of the BJP government in the state and fresh assembly elections under the President's rule. PTI

Annexure-III

OFFICE OF THE REGISTRAR, UNLAWFUL ACTIVITIES (PREVENTION) TRIBUNAL, 'A' BLOCK BASEMENT, DELHI HIGH COURT, SHER SHAH ROAD, NEW DELHI-110003

NO.11490-I/TeH/DHC Dated: 7th May, 2024

RE: Notification S.O.5532 (E) dated 31st December, 2023 issued by the Central Government under sub-section (1) of Section 3 of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention), 1967 declaring Tehreek-e-Hurriyat, Jammu and Kashmir (TeH) as an 'unlawful association' and Gazette Notification No. S.O.179 (E) dated 16th January, 2024 published in the Gazette of India, Extraordinary Part II, Section 3, Sub-section (ii) in exercise of powers under sub-section (1) of Section 5 read with sub-section (1) of Section 4 of the Act.

PUBLIC NOTICE

NOTICE is hereby given to the general public that the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Tribunal presided over by Hon'ble Mr. Justice Sachin Datta, Judge, Delhi High Court, will hold sitting at Hight Court Complex, Jammu, Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir on 18th May, 2024 at 10.00 a.m. onwards.

All those, who are interested in giving evidence, may file their affidavits (in duplicate) with the undersigned and shall remain present in person on the above date for their cross examination, if any, before the Hon'ble Tribunal.

Venue- Hight Court Complex, Jammu, Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir

E-mail id: k Kapoor.ravi1105@gmail.com

Postal Address: Office of the Registrar, Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Tribunal

'A' Block Basement, Delhi High Court, Sher Shah Road, New Delhi-110003

Sd/-
(Sanjay Pokhriyal)
Registrar
Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Tribunal

Annexure-IV

OFFICE OF THE REGISTRAR, UNLAWFUL ACTIVITIES (PREVENTION) TRIBUNAL, 'A' BLOCK BASEMENT, DELHI HIGH COURT, SHER SHAH ROAD, NEW DELHI-110003

No. 11489-T/MLJK-MA/DHC Dated: 7th May, 2024

RE: Notification S.O.5462 (E) dated 27th December, 2023 issued by the Central Government under sub-section (1) of Section 3 of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention), 1967 declaring Muslim League Jammu Kashmir (Masarat Alam faction)/MLJK-MA as an 'unlawful association' and Gazette Notification No. S.O.167 (E) dated 15th January, 2024 published in the Gazette of India, Extraordinary Part II, Section 3, Sub-section (ii) in exercise of powers under sub-section (1) of Section 5 read with sub-section (1) of Section 4 of the Act.

PUBLIC NOTICE

NOTICE is hereby given to the general public that the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Tribunal presided over by Hon'ble Mr. Justice Sachin Datta, Judge, Delhi High Court, will hold sitting at Banquet Hall, M.A. Road, Srinagar, Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir on 20th May, 2024 at 11.00 AM and on 21st May, 2024 at 10.30 AM onwards on both dates.

All those, who are interested in giving evidence, may file their affidavits (in duplicate) with the undersigned and shall remain present in person on the above date for their cross examination, if any, before the Hon'ble Tribunal.

Venue: Banquet Hall, M.A. Road, Srinagar, Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir

E-mail id: k Kapoor.ravi1105@gmail.com

Postal Address: Office of the Registrar, Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Tribunal

'A' Block Basement, Delhi High Court, Sher Shah Road, New Delhi-110003

Sd/-
(Sanjay Pokhriyal)
Registrar
Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Tribunal

DIP-J-458-24

PACE NEWS | Hindustan Times MEDIA MARKETING INITIATIVE

Ramjas International School hosts Avant Garde: A Celebration of India's diverse Folk Art

the occasion, along with school Circulation Head, HT, Indra Director Rachna Pant, Principal Narayan Das, whose presence Richa Sharma, and other and appreciation of the students' dignitaries, marking the unveiling remarkable artworks went a of an extraordinary art exhibition. long way in motivating and Talented students, guided by art inspiring the young artists. Ram teachers, Vibhuti and Bidisha, Bahadur Rai, President, Indira intricately crafted each artwork on Gandhi National Centre of Arts display. The exhibition featured also appreciated the art work of captivating pieces ranging from the students. Through this intricate Madhubani designs to collaborative endeavor, Ramjas vibrant Warli paintings, each International School reaffirmed resonating with India's rich cultural its dedication to fostering heritage. A felicitation ceremony creativity, innovation, and the honored the esteemed guests, enduring spirit of artistic exploration.

In a crescendo of creativity, **Ramjas International School** organized the 'Avant Garde' Art Exhibition, welcoming esteemed guests, distinguished dignitaries, parents, faculty members, and students to the inauguration held at AIFACS, Rafi Marg. Commemorating 50 years of excellence, this 5 day event showcased India's rich tapestry of traditional art forms, celebrating the country's diverse folk art. Chief Guest Mugdha Sinha, IAS, and Special Guest Kishore Chakraborty, a renowned artist, graced

Founder's Day Celebration at Lovely Public English School, Yojna Vihar

program attended by the students, faculty and distinguished guests. Dr. S. D. Malik was welcomed with an invocation song, followed by a heartfelt address by the students. Mr. Satyam Malik, Director of the school, felicitated the Chairperson with best wishes and gratitude on behalf of the entire staff and students.

The day concluded with an award ceremony of the cultural fest which was a resounding success. It served as a fitting tribute to the chairperson's dedication in promoting a vibrant and inclusive school community where winners of the various competitions were recognized and presented with trophies and medals. It was indeed a day filled with joy, gratitude, and deep admiration as we honored the visionary who dedicated her life to the pursuit of education and enlightenment of our educational institution.

Lovely Public English School, Yojna Vihar held a resplendent celebration, in honor of the birthday of their esteemed Chairperson, Dr. S.D. Malik. The entire school community came together to mark this special occasion and appreciate her vision and mission that led to the establishment of the school.

The celebration became more vibrant as the day was blessed to organize an Inter Branch Cultural Fest "Global Gala" on the same day which added exuberance and amazing glorious moments to the occasion. The competition ensued into a scintillating global musical extravaganza and activities like tribal face painting, enactment of any European celebrity and PowerPoint presentation on various cultures of the world. The day began with a special

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Appointment of Chairperson Recruitment & Assessment Centre (RAC)

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Recruitment and Assessment Centre (RAC)

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Advt. No. 150

Closing date: 30 days from the date of publication of this advertisement in Employment News

Recruitment and Assessment Centre (RAC) is a corporate body of **DRDO** under **Min. of Defence** which is engaged in a wide range of selection activities related to recruitment, assessment and training of scientists of DRDO on regular basis. It also extends the similar selection services to Aeronautical Development Agency (ADA) and other allied agencies. RAC was set up on 23 July 1985 after DRDO was granted exemption from the purview of Union Public Service Commission (UPSC).

RAC is looking for a qualified candidate with an established and proven track record for appointment to the post of **Chairperson RAC (Level 17 of Pay Matrix in the 7th CPC)** that corresponds to apex scale of Rs. 80,000/- of 6th CPC).

Job Description:

Chairperson RAC is mainly responsible for formulation of policies related to recruitment and assessment of DRDO Scientists. Chairperson RAC is also responsible for providing guidance so as to ensure objectivity and confidentiality in execution of all selection activities so as to achieve highest level of satisfaction of all stakeholders.

Eligibility:

Eminent Retired/Serving persons (Scientists, Technologists, Civil Servants and Academicians) at the level of Secretary to the Govt. of India are eligible to apply.

Selection Process:

The Chairperson will be appointed on re-employment on contract. The Chairperson will be selected through a high level Search-cum-Selection Committee appointed by the Government of India, in accordance with extant DOP&T instructions, with the approval of Appointments Committee of Cabinet (ACC).

The Search-cum-Selection Committee will have the authority to consider any other name(s) for the appointment to the said post apart from considering biodata received against this advertisement.

Duration of Appointment:

Appointment will be made for a period of **three (03) years** or till attainment of **65 years of age**, whichever is earlier.

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How to Apply:

The format of biodata can be downloaded from RAC website and duly filled biodata can be sent to **'The Director, Recruitment and Assessment Centre, Lucknow Road, Timarpur, Delhi - 110054'** by Speed Post so as to reach within **30 days** from the date of publication of this advertisement in Employment News.

For details please visit RAC website: <https://rac.gov.in>. For any query in this regard, please contact through email at director.rac@gov.in

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| 17. | Jagdish Kumar Verma | Independent | NIL | NIL | NIL | NIL | NIL | NIL |
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07-SOUTH DELHI PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCY, SOUTH DELHI

Kota hostels yet to take steps to check suicides by students

Senjuti Sengupta
letters@hindustantimes.com

JAIPUR: Around 300 hostels and paying guest accommodations in Kota district of Rajasthan are yet to install a spring device on ceiling fans, as mandated by the administration, to prevent students from taking their lives, a recent survey held amid a series of suicides has revealed.

The survey, conducted by the district administration between February and April, also found that the staff at several such accommodations failed to undergo a mandatory training session to professionally deal with students and keep a check on early signs of stress and depression.

The exercise was carried out by a nine-member panel that was formed on February 17 to monitor the execution of district and state government guidelines at hostels and PGs, which were enforced last year amid growing instances of suicides among students preparing for various competitive exams.

Nine students died by suicide this year, including eight by hanging. Last year, the overall count stood at 27—the highest since 2015, when the administration began keeping a track of such cases —

9 STUDENTS HAVE DIED THIS YEAR IN INDIA'S COACHING CENTRE HUB. LAST YEAR, OVERALL COUNT STOOD AT 27, THE HIGHEST SINCE 2015

with four of them taking their lives in a similar manner.

"A survey of all 4,500 registered hostels and PGs in Kota conducted between February and April this year showed that around 300 of them are yet to install spring-loaded ceiling fans as mandated by the district administration," Rajasthan Administrative Service (RAS) officer Sunita Daga, who is the nodal officer of the panel, said. "Another 300 hostels and PGs were found not undertaking the mandatory training sessions for the staff. A total of 126 such accommodations were found violating both the guidelines," she added.

The RAS officer said that around 1,000 hostels were found operating without any fire no-objection certificate.

Kota is the centre of India's test-prep business, estimated to be

worth ₹10,000 crore annually, according to officials in the district administration. Students from around the country arrive here in huge numbers after completing Class X, and register in residential test-prep institutes. They also enroll in schools, most of which are largely for purposes of certification.

Students attend classes only in the test-prep institutes, which prepare them for their Class XII examination, but more importantly, entrance examinations such as National Eligibility Entrance Test (NEET) and Joint Entrance Examination (JEE). Some students find the grind stressful, especially because they are away from their families.

Amid a surge in suicides among students, the district administration on August 18 last year ordered all hostels and PG accommodations to install spring-loaded fans in rooms "to provide students mental support and security".

Days later, on September 28, the Rajasthan government announced a series of measures to prevent suicides among students, such as a mandatory screening test, the alphabetical sorting of students into sections instead of a ranking-based one, and the admis-

sion of students who are in Class IX or higher.

Daga said that around three hostels have been sealed so far for violating the guidelines and notices were issued to several others for a similar reason.

"Notices were issued in the last three months and these accommodations have been given a month's time to fix all these issues. Our team is keeping an eye on them. Any violations will attract strict action. Our primary goal is to save as many lives of students as possible," she added.

The RAS officer said that in most cases, the installation of an anti-suicide device in ceiling fans was a common violation. "The hostel staff also did not participate in our mandatory training sessions," she said.

"The session helped several other hostel staff to save multiple lives in the last five months. According to our survey, around 1,500 students were found depressed by the hostel staff after they arrived in Kota. Around 70 students were prevented from taking the extreme step. We are holding an additional awareness programme for the ones who are not following these norms," she added.

{ GREENPIECE } STRESSING NEED TO MAKE A PUSH FOR SUSTAINABLE FASHION CHOICES

Bharati Chaturvedi
letters@hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI: The Met Gala 2024 was themed on 'Sleeping Beauty: Reawakening Fashion'. To me, that meant reawakening fashion to new realities of the climate emergency.

Possibly one of the most influential fashion and art events on the planet, the Met Gala was set up to make the connect and underscore the relevance and contribution of fashion to the arts.

One might ask, how something as important as the Met Gala can, in fact have an impact on the public perception of fashion. And counter fast fashion.

The theme already gestures and acknowledges the power of nature, with floral gowns and more. Events like this cannot dictate but they can nudge. There were dresses combining three kinds of sand. They were dresses gesturing to sustainability crafted into flowers and the best, celebrities wore vintage fashion. In an age when Indians think twice about wearing a 30 year old saree, seeing an equally old gown being glorified is a gesture to sustainability and reuse. Such choices also underscored the shallowness of fast fashion and the glory of classics. While many of us can't possibly wear such glorious classics, we can reuse clothes with flair.

The Met Gala has the power, the influence and the energy to get the world re-aligned on what sustainable fashion is, in ways that are creative and offer pleasure. That offers the fashion world many options, ranging from materials to reuse to future use to absence of sequence, non-synthetic materials, everything can find a voice. I hope in the coming few years organisers of the Mela will also become the leading voice on sustainability with beauty.

(The writer is the founder and director of Chintan Environmental Research and Action Groups)

MET GALA HAS THE POWER TO NUDGE PEOPLE TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE FASHION CHOICES

Badrinath opens for devotees



The doors of the Badrinath temple in the Garhwal Himalayas in Uttarakhand opened for devotees on Sunday after remaining closed during the winter season.

PTI

Charting Rahul's strengths, weaknesses as a politician

HT Correspondent

letters@hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI: The third phase of India's 44-day long polls took place last week with voting held in 94 constituencies across 12 states. Thus far, the elections have been marked by lower-than-expected turnout, intensifying communal rhetoric, and a sharp debate about inequality and redistribution.

Against this backdrop, the New York Times Magazine recently published an essay by the journalist Samanth Subramanian titled, 'Time Is Running Out for Rahul Gandhi's Vision for India.' The essay was based on a reporting trip in February of this year in which Subramanian travelled Uttar Pradesh with

Rahul Gandhi, the former president of the Congress Party who remains its most prominent face. Subramanian, author of several award-winning books including *This Divided Island: Life, Death and the Sri Lankan War* and *A Dominant Character: The Radical Science and Restless Politics of J.B.S. Haldane*, reflected on his time following Rahul Gandhi on last week's episode of Grand Tamasha—a weekly podcast on Indian politics and policy co-produced by HT and the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

On the podcast, Subramanian

spoke to host Milan Vaishnav about Gandhi's motivation for undertaking a sequel to his 2022-2023 *Bharat Jodo Yatra*. "The yatra is not an entirely novel concept. It's been used many times in Indian political history," he noted. "But I think Rahul saw this as a something that he was particularly good at, which is to talk to people one-on-one, and to kind of shy away from these big rallies and big speeches, which he's not very good at." In his profile, Subramanian calls Gandhi a "fidgety orator" who has trouble shrugging off the ordinary disturbances of a rally.

Subramanian said even Gandhi's harshest critics grudgingly accepted that his first yatra was something of a success. "I heard so many stories of people who accompanied him on the yatra finding this connection with the Congress party as an institution, particularly outside of the Hindi heartland. I think this kind of energised him...and energised the party. I heard plenty of people from opposition parties say that was the first time they really thought of Rahul as a politician."

Subramanian explained that Gandhi was reluctant to give him and other journalists direct access on his latest yatra, an aloofness that Subramanian says has become all too common. "Increas-

ingly, a culture has grown in India and in many other parts of the world where a politician doesn't really feel the need or the obligation to sit down with journalists and to do an interview." But he stresses this scepticism runs especially deep in India. "It's not just politicians—it's public figures of every stripe. Indian cricketers haven't given extended interviews or profiles to journalists for ages. Indian film stars stopped offering that kind of access as well."

The author chalked this up to a culture that is wary of the press and the media but also the fact that elites have their own media channels now. "Rahul doesn't need the *New York Times* to get his message out," Subramanian explained. "He has his YouTube channel, Instagram, and Twitter. But I think, beyond that also, perhaps sensibly, Congress and Rahul have seen that their constituency isn't really the *New York Times* readership...The readers who are on the Upper West Side [of Manhattan] don't really matter to him that much when he has a YouTube channel that is tailored to his exact needs on which he can curate the message that goes out."



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Urgent need to halt deforestation, check further land degradation by 2030: UN forum on forests

Jayashree Nandi

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NEW DELHI: There is an urgent need to halt deforestation and prevent further land degradation by 2030 for the world to stay on the path of sustainable development, UN Forum on Forests said in a declaration at the conclusion of its 19th session on Friday.

The declaration, which is yet to be released, also reaffirmed the UN Strategic Plan for Forests 2017-30 as a global framework for action to protect and sustainably manage forests and trees outside forests, to halt deforestation and forest degradation and contribute to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and other international forest-related instruments, processes, commitments and goals.

During the meeting, India shared the launch of its Green Credit Programme that provides incentives to entities to take up tree plantation and restoration of degraded forests, the environment ministry said on Sunday.

"During the session, India high-

DURING THE MEET, INDIA SHARED THE LAUNCH OF ITS GREEN CREDIT PROGRAMME THAT PROVIDES INCENTIVES TO TAKE UP TREE PLANTATION

lighted the country's significant advancements in forest conservation and sustainable forest management which led to consistent increase in forest cover over the past 15 years. Globally, India ranks third in the net gain, in average annual forest area, between 2010 and 2020," it said.

However, both the increase in the country's forest cover, due to ambiguities in definition, and the Green Credit Programme, have been issues of contention.

Corporations and other private entities can take up plantations on degraded land, including open forest and scrub land, wasteland and catchment areas of water bodies

identified by state forest departments, a notification by the ministry said, in a move that has attracted criticism from experts and environmentalists who point out that a lot of such land already has thriving biodiversity, which will now be at risk from plantations, HT reported on February 27. The plantations will help generate green credits, which can be traded and used as leadership indicators under corporate social responsibility, the February 22 notification said.

The ministry issued a draft notification on trading in green credits in June last year. Green Credit Rules, 2023 were notified under various sections of the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986, on October 12. The Centre on February 26 notified the methodology to calculate green credits against tree plantations.

The February 22 notification stated that the land parcel identified for plantation must be at least five acres and free from all encumbrances. Any person or entity undertaking tree plantation to generate green credits may apply

to the administrator overseeing the programme, who will assign land identified by forest department to the applicant and ask for a proposal for undertaking tree plantation for green credits. The administrator will then issue a demand note on the cost of plantation and other costs to the applicant. Once this is paid, the forest department will carry out tree plantation in line with the management plan.

The issue of forest cover has been contentious because experts have said India's definition of forest cover counts plantations and orchards as well. The government considers an area of one hectare or more with at least 10% canopy cover, irrespective of land use and ownership, including all land that meets the forest thresholds—tree crops, fruit orchards, bamboo and agroforestry — as a forest. India's definition of forests is accepted by UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and Food and Agriculture Organisation for their reporting and communications, according to the Forest Survey of India.

LA NINA

June-August (49% chance) or July-September (69% chance), according to NOAA projections.

Much of India's monsoon rains are spread over July and August. Consistent and moderate amounts of rain — as opposed to heavy or very heavy rainfall days — is crucial for a country where nearly half of the farmland lacks irrigation. Good rains can help keep prices of staples such as sugar, pulses, rice and vegetables under control, in turn restraining the sticky inflation problem.

The weather bureau has already forecast above normal monsoon at 106% of the long-period average, a year after this number was below normal at 94%.

The India Meteorological Department's (IMD) Monsoon Mission Coupled Forecasting System has also indicated the likely development of La Nina conditions during the monsoon season. It has also said that at present, neutral Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD) conditions are prevailing over the Indian Ocean. The latest MMCFs forecast indicates that positive IOD conditions are likely to develop during the monsoon season.

"We've seen a quick switch from El Nino to La Nina several times before in our 1950-present record, especially after a strong El Nino. This tendency is one source of confidence in the prediction that La Nina will develop later this year," NOAA said.

The current El Nino event, which developed in June 2023, was at its strongest between November and January, the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) said in March. It displayed a peak value of about 2°C above the 1991-2020 average sea surface temperature for the eastern and central tropical Pacific Ocean. This made it one of the five strongest El Nino events ever, though it was weaker than the 1997-98 and 2015-2016 events, the WMO added. The El Nino event was preceded by three consecutive years of La Nina conditions (2020-23) — a rare "triple-

dip" phenomenon that had widespread impacts on the ocean and climate across the globe.

DS Pai, head of the climate service division at IMD, said it will take a few months for the SST anomalies to transition to the La Nina threshold of below -0.5°C in the equatorial region of the Pacific Ocean.

"With the establishment of La Niña sometime during the monsoon, we can expect flooding rains in parts of the country, including the west coast, the Himalayan foothills, and the core monsoon region in central India," Pai said. "IMD has already forecast an above-normal monsoon at 106% of the long-period average with a model error of ± 5%."

Mahesh Palawat, vice president of climate change and meteorology at Skymet Weather, said the forecast of positive IOD conditions, along with the expected transition from El Nino to La Nina, is expected to create conditions for a good monsoon in India. "Heat wave conditions will also be relieved. Due to ongoing western disturbances, we are also not expecting any heat wave conditions over north-west India immediately," Palawat said.

MODI IN BENGAL

of sexual abuse against TMC leaders have surfaced.

Suggesting that the performance of the Congress in the ongoing Lok Sabha polls will drop to an all-time low, the Prime Minister said that the party will get fewer seats than the age of the "Shehzada", a veiled attack at the 53-year-old Rahul Gandhi.

Modi said under the TMC regime, West Bengal has turned into a centre of "corruption" and a "cottage industry of bomb-making".

"While Modi talks about water in every household, TMC talks about bombs in every household," he added.

"TMC has surrendered to vote-bank politics in West Bengal, where you cannot even mention the name of Lord Shri Ram or celebrate Ram Navami.

Hindus have become second-class citizens in West Bengal," he alleged.

Criticising the TMC for opposing the CAA in West Bengal, Modi said, "CAA is a law to give citizenship to victims; it does not take away anyone's citizenship. But parties like Congress and TMC have painted it with the colour of their lies."

"As long as there is Modi, no one can repeal the CAA," he said.

He also stepped up his attacks while referring to recent developments at Sandeshkhali in the North 24 Parganas district, which has emerged into a political battleground since local Trinamool strongman Sheikh Shajahan was accused of running a widespread extortion operation, which allegedly included attacks and even sexual assault.

"The entire nation is watching what's happening in Sandeshkhali. First the state police shielded the culprits. Now the TMC has started a new game. TMC's goons are terrorising and threatening women in Sandeshkhali just because the culprit's name is Shahjahan Sheikh. Guns and explosive are being recovered from his house but in a bid to appease the vote bank, TMC is making efforts to give him a clean chit," Modi said while addressing the first rally of the day at Barrackpore in North 24 Parganas.

The allegations pertaining to Sandeshkhali have now turned into a war of sting operations and videos, with the state's ruling TMC releasing what it said was evidence of BJP having engineered the entire saga, while the BJP has said that people were being coerced into retracting their allegations.

Shahjahan was arrested on February 29 on the orders of the Calcutta high court. He was later handed over to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI).

On May 4, a purported sting video was released by the TMC in which Gangadhar Koyal, a local BJP leader from Sandeshkhali was seen allegedly saying that there were no rapes and women were paid to lodge false complaints of sexual assault.

Addressing his second rally of the day at Chinsurah in Hooghly, Modi said, "TMC is using every trick in Sandeshkhali, but none of the oppressors will be spared."

Hitting back at a rally in Uluberia, Howrah, chief minister Mamata Banerjee said, "I have seen many Prime Ministers such as Atal Bihari Vajpayee, Manmohan Singh, I K Gujral and HD Deve Gowda and Rajiv Gandhi. But I have never seen a Prime Minister like Modi who spreads so much slander. He would get 120 out of 100 in telling lies. He always abuses me and the TMC. He became Prime Minister twice by lying. The BJP leaders are the biggest leaders of thieves. It is guarantee of a liar."

Modi addressed four back-to-back rallies at Barrackpore, Chinsurah, Arambagh and Sankrail in the eastern state.

He also mounted an attack on the INDIA-partners saying that corruption is their common character alleging that TMC has taken up corruption as a full-time business which it runs openly.

"You would certainly make the BJP-NDA cross the 400-mark. But write it down that in this election the Congress will get fewer seats than the age of its shehzada," Modi said.

Modi claimed Congress and TMC are competition for appeasement.

Speaking at another rally in Arambagh in Hooghly district, the PM said, "TMC thinks it has a monopoly over Bengali culture, but the truth is that this is the land of Maa Durga and Maa Kali." He claimed that in West Bengal, it has become a crime to take the name of Ram Mandir.

"There is no freedom of expression under the TMC rule," he alleged, adding that opposition and independent voices were being stifled.

Asserting that nobody can provide reservations based on religion, he guaranteed the people of West Bengal that "reservations for SC, ST, and OBC will not be touched. Nobody can stop you from celebrating Ram Navami. Nobody can stop the implementation of CAA."

Hindustan Times

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OPINION

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{ OUR TAKE }

Not just a case of shoot and scoot

The conspiracy in the Dabholkar murder must be unearthed and the masterminds punished

A special court in Pune convicted two men for the 2013 murder of Narendra Dabholkar, a physician and rationalist, who campaigned against religious superstitions, Friday. The court, however, acquitted three others, including Virendrasinh Sharadchandra Tawade, whom CBI named as the “main conspirator”, for want of evidence. Dabholkar’s family has said they will appeal against the acquittals. The probe alleged that all five persons were linked to Sanatan Sanstha, a Hindutva outfit, though the latter has claimed that the convicts were “Hindutva activists” but have never been involved with the organisation.

The acquittals are disturbing for multiple reasons. The court has come down heavily on CBI for shoddy investigation and accused the officer of “negligence” while invoking UAPA provisions in the case. It held that “there was a lot of scope for suspicion” against Tawade, but the prosecution “failed to provide evidence for it”. The Dabholkar murder was reportedly the first in a series of high-profile killings of Left-leaning, anti-Hindutva activists and writers over four years: from Kolhapur-based CPI leader and former MLA, Govind Pansare, in February 2015 to Dharward-based Lingayat scholar and former vice-chancellor of Hampi University MM Kalburgi in August 2015, and editor of *Lankesh Patrike*, Gauri Lankesh in Bengaluru in September 2017. Uma Pansare, Govind Pansare’s wife, was with him when he was shot but survived with a bullet injury. Sachin Andure and Sharad Kalaskar, convicted for shooting Dabholkar, as well as Tawade, are accused in the Pansare case. Kalaskar is also an accused in the Gauri Lankesh murder.

The cases have been mired in politics, and the political churn in Maharashtra and Karnataka has cast its shadow on the investigation, arrests, framing of the chargesheets, and the pace of the trials. Investigators have spoken about a conspiracy that links these high-profile killings. These killings need to be seen as political murders aimed at throttling free speech and creating a climate of fear against the independent pursuit of rational and scientific knowledge. For instance, Dabholkar and the organisation he headed, the Maharashtra Andhashraddha Nirmoolan Samiti, were in the bad books of right-wing outfits because they championed the 2005 Maharashtra Anti-Superstition Bill, which the latter felt targeted Hindu traditions and practices. The shooters, it appears, are low-level functionaries brainwashed and turned into assassins by the masterminds, who are operating in the shadows. A closure in these murders is possible only when the conspirators too are nabbed and punished.

Andhra’s titans clash over welfare, caste

The big electoral battle in Andhra Pradesh, which is headed for the polling booth today, is between two regional outfits, the Yuvajana Sramika Rythu Congress Party (YSRCP) and the Telugu Desam Party (TDP). But there is also a side track that is no less interesting: Two national parties, the BJP and the Congress, are battling to stay relevant in a state that sends 25 MPs to the Lok Sabha. If the BJP is trying to find a foothold with help from the TDP, the Congress is seeking to retrieve the space it lost after the state was bifurcated in 2014 by claiming the legacy of its late chief minister (CM), YS Rajasekhara Reddy, through YS Sharmila, its new state chief and the sister of present CM YS Jagan Mohan Reddy.

Neither Jagan Mohan Reddy nor TDP supremo Chandrababu Naidu can afford to lose the assembly election. Both leaders have been mired in corruption scandals and served prison stints. Public office may help in battling these cases. Key to Reddy’s campaign is welfare. Critics call his schemes a fiscal disaster but the CM hopes that the *navaratnalu* (nine gems), mostly focused on rural voters, will help him defeat anti-incumbency. What distinguishes Reddy’s welfare politics is the focus on delivery. The 2.56 lakh plus village and ward volunteers he recruited at the state’s expense to keep track of schemes and facilitate the delivery of public goods and services have also been an arm of his political outreach.

The elections will test if Reddy’s welfare politics has the traction to override the social alliance of Kammas and Kapus that Naidu has stitched by aligning with actor Pawan Kalyan’s Jana Sena Party. Reddy’s failure to build a state capital can, however, hurt his prospects.

In bird flight patterns, portents of a disaster

Climate crisis is resetting the bird migration compass and calendar, with grave consequences for biodiversity

Over the seven days to May 12, the Forest Survey of India (FSI) reported 342 large forest fires in India, with 209 in Uttarakhand alone. These fires are mostly triggered by human carelessness or miscreants. Once the wind takes over the parched land, with above-normal temperatures, such fires become uncontrollable and wreak havoc. March to June is the peak breeding time for birds. Death by wildfires takes an unprecedented toll on breeding bird populations. This is true for other larger and smaller taxa, especially for the slow-moving ground-dwelling species. It is hard to fathom the consequences for the ecological economy of a region.

A warming world is changing bird life for sure. Especially during the migration of bird species from the colder northern latitudes to the warmer tropics for food and shelter. In a global melting pot, as genes (with coded adaptive messages) are passed from one generation to the next, some bird populations may not wish to take the arduous journeys when food is available throughout the year. While the phenomenon of bird migration will not cease to exist anytime soon, there are more and more reports of birds staying back either in their summer breeding habitats or vice versa — in their winter homes or somewhere

in between. If you happen to go for a walk in the Okhla Bird Sanctuary in Delhi, a few long-distance visitors from the Arctic region, Ruffs, Wood Sandpipers, Green Shanks, Little and Temminck’s Stints are still lingering way beyond from their usual time of departure. And we don’t know why!

May 11 is observed as World Migratory Bird Day, a day when the spotlight is on the protection of migratory birds and their habitats. This year, the campaign has an added focus on the state of insect populations — food for migratory birds — declining due to excessive pesticide usage and light pollution.

Taej Mundkur, senior advisor, Wetlands International, says that a population of the migratory Bar-headed goose is not flying further north to their breeding grounds in Mongolia. The freezing conditions over the Tibetan plateau have transformed to more warmer climes giving way to agricultural expansion and unlocking food in plenty for the foraging geese to settle down. Long-term research states that while four of China’s six wintering populations of “grey” geese declined during the last decade, that of Bar-headed geese in the Tibet Autonomous Region has more than doubled. Similar narratives of geese not flying further north also come from Afghanistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

Birds are wired to migrate with food and nesting resources on their radar. Now with these examples, there is a clear trend pointing to a timing mismatch between migrants and their food sources. And these may be the reasons behind contracting or

expanding bird populations. Specialist feeders are declining while generalists with a greater ability to adapt are expanding on a planet in flux. A classic local example is the Bank myna (the name comes from river bank), which has moved to colonise toll plazas and railway stations as its natural habitat flood plains are taken up for development. The toll plazas provide easy pickings, food grains from trucks.

Long-term data from years of bird banding and satellite telemetry, traditional and modern tools to track birds, have helped ornithologists demarcate bird flyways on the globe and how different bird populations migrate seasonally from North to South. There are nine such flyways, scientific models for the conservation of bird species and their habitats. The Indian subcontinent sits at the base of the Central Asian Flyway (CAF), wintering home to populations of 600 plus species of migratory birds. Among these, 240 species of migratory birds are in decline. There are also gains like the case of the Bar-headed goose mentioned here.

While the Indian landmass offers diverse habitats for migratory birds, all such habitats are rapidly on the decline, due to our insatiable “developmental” needs. Increasing temperatures with extreme weather events are said to accelerate the further disappearance of bird habitats. Like the Bank myna or the Bar-headed goose, how others will take to newer conditions is still to be seen.

The State of Indian Birds (2023) report says 217 species are stable or



While the Indian landmass offers diverse habitats, these are rapidly on the decline, thanks to our insatiable development needs HT ARCHIVE

have increased in the last eight years and 204 species are in decline in the past three decades. The report says that birds of open ecosystems, rivers, and coasts have declined the most. But as migration patterns change, the population estimation models must be expanded and redesigned.

In February, at the 14th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species (COP14/CMS) in Samarqand, Uzbekistan, it was agreed that India will host a coordinating office to act as a platform for capacity building, knowledge sharing, and research with all 30 range countries. The ministry of environment, forest and climate change is the implementing agency and may be working on a plan but time is of the essence with extreme weather a top global risk for 2024 and the news of the Indian Ocean moving towards a state of near permanent marine heatwaves.

Extremely high April temperatures over eastern and peninsular India reflect the severity of the climate crisis. At the same time, the Supreme Court has stated that everyone has “the fundamental right to be free from

the adverse effects of climate change”. It also highlighted the critical role of forests in mitigating climate crisis, citing forests as a national asset linked to India’s financial security. It referred to the Reserve Bank of India report, *Macroeconomic Impact Of Climate Change In India* (2023), which stated, “Climate change manifested through rising temperature and changing patterns of monsoon rainfall in India could cost the economy 2.8% of its GDP and depress the living standards of nearly half of its population by 2050.” These two recent judgments within a month clearly raise concerns over the state of the environment.

But is the climate alarm and what’s to be done about it for our survival alone? Definitely not. We are intrinsically linked to the fate of a vast diverse set of species sharing the human-altered world, fighting for survival and keeping the natural environment running through their complex ecological roles. We owe it to them as much as to ourselves.

Ananda Banerjee is an author, artist and wildlife conservationist. The views expressed are personal

Map that threatens to derail India-Nepal ties

Territorial claims between contiguous States are not a new phenomenon, but highlighting them on currency notes or national emblems has living consequences and is a matter of seriousness when the ties are friendly and close. The government of Nepal has just approved a map of the country to be printed on the country’s new 100-rupee note. This has rightly drawn criticism from India as the map of Nepal was amended in May 2020 to explicitly highlight its claims on Indian territories in Uttarakhand. Those tensions had barely calmed down before the latest one boiled over.

Nepal and India are bound by strong civilisational and economic ties, and repeatedly upsetting these through such action hardly bodes well for the people of Nepal or its economy. Nepalese politicians have no hesitation in indulging in brinkmanship over ties with India for their own personal benefit. This was certainly the case in 2020 when then Prime Minister (PM) KP Sharma Oli played the nationalist card of “safeguarding” Nepal’s territory with the map revision in a bid to avoid ouster.

The 2022 elections threw up a hung parliament, with the Nepali Congress, led by former PM Sher Bahadur Deuba, having 88 members in a house of 275, while Oli’s Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist), or CPN-UML, had 79. This allowed Prachanda, the leader of the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist Centre), to assume prime ministership with just 30 members of parliament. Initially, it was an alliance with Oli’s party but it soon moved to the Nepali Congress, and in February 2024, back to Oli’s party. In the shifting sands of Nepalese politics, where no one is untouchable, observers speak of several other possibilities, including the Nepali Congress and the Unified Marxist-Leninist tying up or combinations involving smaller parties. But these are not easy to stitch together.

Historically, India has been more comfortable when the Nepali Congress is a part of the ruling dispensation in Kathmandu. This was certainly so when the Prachanda-Deuba combination was in office through much of 2023. Prachanda also went the extra mile to

reach out to New Delhi by donning the *daura suruwar*, the traditional Nepalese dress associated with the monarchy and visiting the Mahakaleshwar temple in Ujjain, Madhya Pradesh, during a State Visit. As a Maoist, such displays were out of bounds for him earlier.

The present alliance with the CPN-UML may be electorally advantageous to Prachanda, but Oli apparently has the upper hand. The map on the currency notes is certainly reminiscent of Oli’s 2020 act with the map in the national emblem, and he can’t be oblivious to its long-term negative and intractable consequences for Nepal. There is little doubt that he would have been urged on such a move by his Chinese backers.

Interestingly, as this latest shenanigan unfolds from Nepal, a new book, *Kathmandu Chronicle*, that seeks to “reclaim” India-Nepal relations”, is out in the bookstores of Delhi and Kathmandu. The authors are KV Rajan, the longest-serving Indian ambassador in Kathmandu, and Atul Thakur, a young scholar and observer of Nepal. The book provides a “diplomatic gleaning” of

India-Nepal history since India’s Independence and charts the frequent ups and downs in these ties. The book discusses the role of the British in pushing a certain wedge in the civilisational ties between India and Nepal by bringing in facets of a nation-State scenario and issues of identity. Many today are oblivious of the Great Game involving the British and Russian Empires in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The role played by Pakistan, directly and through its proxies such as the D Company, in recent years appear to be forgotten in today’s times, but these bear recalling. While noting the ever-present China angle in the way Nepal positions itself vis-à-vis India and not overlooking the influences of the West, the book views India-Nepal ties through an Indian lens. It underscores Nepal’s strategic location and provides interesting anecdotal accounts of interactions on ties with the royal family, Nepal as a Hindu State, the hijacking of IC-814, and the coup by King Gyanendra.

In 2020, the whipped-up nationalist fervour had only one or two Nepalese MPs voting against the amendment to the national emblem that incorporated the new map featuring areas of India. Hopefully, a debate in the Nepalese parliament on the issue of incorporating its map in the currency notes will see large numbers of its members oppose a move that could debase the Nepalese currency in the eyes of the people of its most important economic neighbour.

Rajan and Thakur note that “India does not fashion its policies on the basis of reciprocity expectations, but some reciprocity in terms of respect for vital interests is a necessary underpinning for sound relationships”. They suggest the need for Nepal and India to accept their special relationship as a “real asset” and work on the benefits of growing together. Diplomacy is obviously the key to the way forward, but “the style of diplomacy matters as much as the substance”.



Nepalese politicians haven’t shied from brinkmanship on ties with India HT ARCHIVE

Manjeev Singh Puri is a former ambassador of India to Nepal. The views are personal

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{ STRAIGHTFORWARD }

Shashi Shekhar



Voter turnouts do not predict poll outcomes

The recently concluded third phase of the general election has reaffirmed a consistent trend: The Hindi heartland states, along with Maharashtra, continue to lag in participation in the grand festival of democracy. Why is this happening? Let us examine this starting with Noida, a city in Gautam Buddha Nagar district of Uttar Pradesh, where I reside. By midday, the polling stations here were deserted. Only 53.63% of registered voters exercised their franchise in this forward-looking metropolis. Women’s participation was also quite low, though literacy and self-reliance among women in Noida are greater than in the rest of the country. Noida was not alone; this was pretty much the situation across India. Why did they not carry out their democratic responsibility?

Election Commission of India data shows that only 66.14% of votes were cast in the first phase, and 66.71% in the second. Some blamed the excessive heat for the low turnout in the third phase, too, but that is far from reality. Statistics show that vote percentage had increased in the four general elections held between 2004 and 2019. The previous two elections showed a significant increase in this regard.

Fans of Prime Minister (PM) Narendra Modi credited him with this. When the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) announced Modi as its PM candidate in 2013, many were drawn to his oratory skills and the “Gujarat Model”. The saffron party won a simple majority for the first time. Modi repeated this in 2019. But now, given that the turnout was low in the first two phases, should the Opposition’s claims that his magic has diminished be considered true? Not at all.

According to a survey conducted by an English magazine shortly before the elections, Modi was the top choice of 52% of people. It claimed that no one has been able to compete with Modi in the last decade. Many other surveys also made such announcements. Besides, one other fact needs to be considered. Kerala, like North and West India, saw a lower turnout. The BJP is not anywhere in the primary contest there. What could be the cause of this?

There are numerous explanations for this. One is the carelessness of certain members of the party, including MPs, leading to the revival of factors such as caste in the election. Modi

had “bulldozed” caste boundaries in the last two elections. Another is the rapid formation and breaking of coalitions, and the preference given to leaders from the “outside”. It has broken party workers’ morale. Until the last election, these people had left no stone unturned to get voters to the polling booth.

The scenario is no different in other parties, too. The Opposition has not been able to forge a working alliance. Also, parties such as those led by Sharad Pawar and Uddhav Thackeray saw their rebel factions joining the National Democratic Alliance (NDA). Rahul Gandhi and the Congress party are now contesting the election on the shoulders of regional satraps. His Kanyakumari-to-Kashmir yatra, which ended early last year, made some ripples but failed to inspire the passion that the Congress requires.

Besides, some leaders’ alleged misconduct has also offended voters. Former PM HD Deve Gowda’s son HD Revanna and grandson Prajwal Revanna stand accused in a sex scandal. The Janata Dal (Secular) has ousted Prajwal and party leader HD Kumaraswamy has stated that if they are proven guilty by the SIT probe, stricter measures will be taken. Further, incidents such as the last-minute withdrawal of a Congress candidate from Indore and the earlier cancellation of a Congress candidate’s nomination from Surat, as well as the withdrawal of other candidates, have harmed public trust in democracy. The huge amount of money recovered from a Jharkhand minister’s associates, as well as the poisonous language used by politicians, have also shaken the common man’s belief in democracy. Political parties should take these issues seriously.

In the current election, is the low turnout an indication of a shift in voters’ trust? Answering this is impossible as turnout does not determine outcome. Indira Gandhi returned to power with an overwhelming majority in 1971, despite a drop in turnout of about 6%. In the next election, in 1977, the vote share climbed by more than 5%, but she lost. We should also note that there was an improvement at the national level during the third phase. What is the guarantee that this trend won’t gain momentum?

Shashi Shekhar is editor-in-chief, Hindustan. The views expressed are personal.

NEW DELHI
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MAY 13, 2024

Hindustan Times

WORLD

15

Switzerland's Nemo wins Eurovision; Israeli fans decry contest as 'political'

Agencies

letters@hindustantimes.com

MALMO: Swiss singer Nemo won the 68th Eurovision Song Contest on Sunday with "The Code," an operatic pop-rap ode to the singer's journey toward embracing a nongender identity.

Switzerland's contestant beat Croatian rocker Baby Lasagna to the title by winning the most points from a combination of national juries and viewers around the world.

Nemo, 24, is the first nonbinary winner of the contest that has long been embraced as a safe haven by the LGBT community. Nemo is also the first Swiss winner since 1988, when Canadian chanteuse Celine Dion competed under the Swiss flag.

"Thank you so much," Nemo said after the result from Saturday's final was announced soon after midnight. "I hope this contest can live up to its promise



Nemo in Malmo, Sweden, on Sunday. REUTERS

and continue to stand for peace and dignity for every person."

Israeli fans slam Eurovision snub

Meanwhile, music fans who gathered in Tel Aviv on Saturday to watch the Eurovision contest decried juries' snubs of Israel as "obviously political".

The mood was electric at the packed Layla bar in Tel Aviv as

the show got underway, with the crowd going wild when Israel's contestant Eden Golan appeared on screen. As Golan performed her song "Hurricane", many at Layla, which bills itself "the best gay bar in Tel Aviv", voiced hope that she would win.

That would send the message that "maybe we are not hated so much, and that the music really won", Tal Bendersky, 23, draped in an Israeli flag, told AFP.

But as votes started ticking in, and it became clear that few of the juries representing the 37 countries with voting rights were offering Golan even a handful of votes, spirits fell.

"This is clearly political," said Guy, a 20-year-old who declined to give his last name since he did not want his family to know he was at a gay bar.

But Israel's victory was unlikely due to controversies surrounding its participation amid the ongoing Gaza war.

Israel hits Rafah, fights Hamas from resurging in north Gaza

Rafah is considered Hamas' last stronghold and the last refuge in Gaza for a million civilians

Agencies

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RAFAH: Israeli forces pushed deeper into Gaza's southern city of Rafah on Sunday and battled Hamas in parts of the devastated north that the military said it had cleared months ago but where militants have regrouped. Rafah is considered Hamas' last stronghold. It is also the last refuge in Gaza for more than a million civilians. Some 300,000 Palestinians have fled the city following evacuation orders from Israel, which says it must invade to dismantle Hamas and return scores of hostages taken in the October 7 attack against Israel that sparked the war.

Neighbouring Egypt issued its strongest objection yet to the Rafah offensive, saying it intends to formally join South Africa's case at the International Court of Justice alleging Israel is committing genocide in Gaza, which Israel rejects. The foreign ministry statement cited "the worsening severity and scope of the Israeli attacks against Palestinian civilians."

Gaza has been left without a functioning government, leading to a breakdown in public order and allowing Hamas' armed wing to reconstitute itself even in the hardest-hit areas. On Sunday, Hamas touted attacks against Israeli soldiers in Rafah and near Gaza City.

Israel has yet to offer a detailed plan for postwar governance in Gaza, saying only that it will maintain open-ended security control over the enclave of about 2.3 million Palestinians. Internationally mediated talks



Displaced Palestinians travel in a vehicle as they flee Rafah, after Israeli forces launched a ground and air operation in the eastern part of the southern Gaza city, amid the ongoing conflict between Israel and Hamas, in Rafah, in the southern Gaza Strip on Sunday. REUTERS

over a cease-fire and hostage release appeared to be at a standstill.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in a Memorial Day speech vowed to continue fighting until victory in memory of those killed in the war. Netanyahu has rejected postwar plans proposed by the US for the Palestinian Authority, which administers parts of the Israeli-occupied West Bank, to govern Gaza with support from Arab and Muslim countries. Those plans depend on progress toward the creation of a Palestinian state, which Israel's government opposes.

The October 7 attack killed around 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and took another 250 hostage. Militants still hold

about 100 captives and the remains of more than 30.

US President Joe Biden has said he won't provide offensive weapons to Israel for Rafah, and his administration says there is "reasonable" evidence that Israel had breached international law protecting civilians.

However, Israel has rejected those allegations, saying it tries to avoid harming civilians. It blames Hamas for the high toll because the militants fight in dense, residential areas.

Full-scale Rafah assault 'cannot take place'

Meanwhile, Volker Turk, the UN high commissioner for human rights, said in a statement on Sunday, a full-scale Israeli

assault on the southern Gaza city of Rafah "cannot take place", as it could not be reconciled with international law.

"The latest evacuation orders affect close to a million people in Rafah. So where should they go now? There is no safe place in Gaza," he said.

A full-scale offensive could have a "catastrophic impact... including the possibility of further atrocity crimes," he added.

Israel lacks 'credible plan' to safeguard Rafah

On Sunday, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken too said that Israel lacked a "credible plan" to protect some 1.4 million Palestinian civilians in Rafah and warned an Israeli attack could

create an insurgency by failing to kill all Hamas fighters in the southern Gazan city.

"Israel is on a trajectory potentially to inherit an insurgency with many armed Hamas fighters left or if it leaves a vacuum filled by chaos, filled by anarchy and probably refilled by Hamas," Blinken said on NBC's Meet the Press. Hamas fighters, he said, are returning to northern Gaza areas that Israel claimed to have cleared, and an assault on Rafah "risks doing terrible harm to civilians" without ending the Hamas presence there.

Israel's planned invasion of Rafah has deepened tensions in its relations with its main ally in generations.



A man walks past wreckages of cars and a motorcycle caused by a flash flood in Agam, West Sumatra, Indonesia, on Sunday. AP

37 killed, 18 missing in Indonesia flash floods

Agencies

letters@hindustantimes.com

PADANG: Heavy rains and torrents of cold lava and mud flowing down a volcano's slopes on Indonesia's Sumatra island triggered flash floods that killed at least 37 people and around 18 were missing, officials said on Sunday.

Monsoon rains and a major mudslide from a cold lava flow on Mount Marapi caused a river to breach its banks and tear through mountainside villages in four districts in West Sumatra province just before midnight on Saturday.

The floods swept away people and submerged over 100 houses and buildings, National Disaster Management Agency spokesperson Abdul Muhari said.

Cold lava, also known as lahar, is a mixture of volcanic material and pebbles that flow down a volcano's slopes in the rain.

By Sunday afternoon, rescuers had pulled out 19 bodies in the worst-hit village of Canduang in Agam district and recovered nine other bodies in the neighboring district of Tanah Datar, the National Search and Rescue Agency said in a statement.

The agency said that eight bodies were pulled from mud during deadly flash floods that also hit Padang Pariaman, and one body was found in the city of Padang Panjang.

Flash floods on Saturday night also caused main roads around the Anai Valley Waterfall area in Tanah Datar district to be blocked by mud, cutting off access to other cities, Padang Panjang Police Chief Kartiyana Putra said on Sunday.

The disaster came just two months after heavy rains triggered flash floods and a landslide in West Sumatra's Pesisir Selatan and Padang Pariaman districts, killing at least 21 people and leaving five others missing.

The 2,885-metre Mount Marapi erupted late last year killing 23 climbers who were caught by a surprise weekend eruption. The volcano has stayed at the third highest of four alert levels since 2011, indicating above-normal volcanic activity under which villagers must stay more than 3 kilometres from the peak, as per Indonesia's Center for Volcanology and Geological Disaster Mitigation.

Indonesia bus crash

Meanwhile, a bus slammed into cars and motorbikes after its

brakes apparently malfunctioned in Indonesia's West Java province, killing at least 11 people, mostly students, and injuring dozens of others, officials said on Sunday.

The bus, carrying 61 students and teachers, was returning to a high school in Depok, outside Jakarta, the capital city of Indonesia. The incident occurred late Saturday following a graduation celebration held in the hilly resort area of Bandung, said West Java police spokesperson Jules Abraham Abast.

As the bus careened down a steep downhill road, it spiralled out of control, veering across lanes and colliding with multiple cars and motorbikes before ultimately slamming into an electricity pole, recounted Abast.

The accident claimed nine lives on the spot, with two others succumbing to their injuries later in the hospital, including a teacher and a local motorist, Abast said.

Fifty-three other people were hospitalised with injuries, including some in critical condition, he said.

"We are still investigating the cause of the accident, but a preliminary investigation showed the bus's brakes malfunctioned," Abast said.

Alabama party shooting leaves 3 dead, 12 wounded

STOCKTON (ALABAMA): At least three people were killed and 12 were wounded on Saturday night in a shooting at a party in south Alabama. Andre Reid with the Baldwin County Investigation Division told WALA-TV that about 1,000 people were attending a May Day party near Stockton when an altercation started and gunfire erupted. Reid said most of the victims were "younger people." No arrests reported yet. AP

Nepal man scales Mount Everest for record 29th time

KATHMANDU: Nepali climber Kami Rita Sherpa reached the top of Mount Everest for the 29th time since 1994, on Sunday, breaking his own record for the most summits of the world's highest mountain. "Kami Rita reached the summit this morning. Now he has made a new record with 29 summits of Everest," Mingma Sherpa of



Kami Rita Sherpa. AP

Seven Summit Treks, his expedition organiser, told AFP.

Earthquake of magnitude 6.4 jolts Mexico

MEXICO CITY: An earthquake of magnitude 6.4 on the Richter scale struck 17 kilometre WSW of Brisas Barra de Suchiate, Mexico, on Sunday, the United States Geological Survey (USGS) reported. The tremors were felt at around 17:09 (local time). The depth of the earthquake was registered at 75.4 kilometre, and the location was detected at 14.452°N and 92.363°W, respectively, according to the USGS. No casualties or material damage reported yet. ANI



Evacuees from the town of Vovchansk arrive at an evacuation point in Kharkiv region, on May 12, 2024. AFP

Thousands leave as Russia renews assault on northeast Ukraine

Associated Press

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VILCHA: Thousands more civilians have fled Russia's renewed ground offensive in Ukraine's northeast that has targeted towns and villages with a barrage of artillery and mortar fire, officials said on Sunday.

The intense battles have forced at least one Ukrainian unit to withdraw in the Kharkiv region, capitulating more land to Russian forces across less defended settlements in the so-called contested "gray zone" along the Russian border.

By Sunday afternoon, the town of Vovchansk, among the largest in the northeast with a prewar population of 17,000, emerged as a focal point in the battle.

Volodymyr Tymoshko, the head of the Kharkiv regional police, said Russian forces were in the outskirts of the town and approaching from three directions. "Infantry fighting is already taking place," he said.

A Russian tank was spotted along a major road leading to the town, Tymoshko said, illustrating Moscow's confidence to deploy heavy weaponry.

An Associated Press team, positioned in a nearby village, saw plumes of smoke rising from the town as Russian forces hurled shells. Evacuation teams worked non-stop throughout the day to take residents, most of whom were elderly, out of harm's way.

At least 4,000 civilians have fled the Kharkiv region since

Friday, when Moscow's forces launched the operation, Governor Oleh Syniuhovov said in a social media statement.

Heavy fighting raged on Sunday along the northeast front line, where Russian forces attacked 27 settlements in the past 24 hours, he said.

Ukrainian soldiers said the Kremlin is using the usual Russian tactic by launching a disproportionate amount of fire and infantry assaults to exhaust their troops and firepower.

By intensifying battles in what was previously a static patch of the front line, Russian forces threaten to pin Ukrainian forces in the northeast, while carrying out intense battles farther south where Moscow is also gaining ground.

It comes after Russia stepped up attacks in March targeting energy infrastructure and settlements, which analysts predicted were a concerted effort to shape conditions for an offensive.

Meanwhile, a 10-story apartment block collapsed in the Russian city of Belgorod, near the border, killing at least two people and injuring 20 others. Russian authorities said the building collapsed following Ukrainian shelling. Ukraine has not commented on the incident.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said that halting Russia's offensive in the northeast was a priority, and that Kyiv's troops were continuing counteroffensive operations in seven villages around the Kharkiv region.

SOUTH AFRICA BUILDING COLLAPSE DEATH TOLL RISES TO 19

Agence France-Presse

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JOHANNESBURG: The death toll from a building collapse in South Africa climbed to 19, municipal authorities said on Sunday, with 33 people still unaccounted for, nearly a week after the structure came crashing down. Rescue teams have been working tirelessly since an apartment block under construction in the southern city of George crumbled on Monday afternoon while a crew of 81 were on site.

Twenty-nine people have been rescued alive, so far.

On Saturday an unexpected survivor emerged after 116 hours from underneath the rubble of the collapsed building, municipal authorities said.

Provincial authorities described it as a "miracle" as they rushed against time with rescue efforts.



American producer Roger Corman. AP

HOLLYWOOD PRODUCER ROGER CORMAN DIES

Agence France-Presse

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WASHINGTON: American movie director and producer Roger Corman, best known for churning out hundreds of low-budget films, has died at the age of 98. He died at his home in Santa Monica, California on Thursday, his family told Variety.

Corman earned a reputation in Tinseltown for jumpstarting the careers of Martin Scorsese, Robert De Niro, Francis Ford Coppola, and Jack Nicholson.

He also specialised in low-budget films, and created classics like "The Little Shop of Horrors" and Edgar Allan Poe adaptations starring Vincent Price.

{ **XENOTRANSPLANTATION** } TRANSPLANTATION OF ORGANS FROM ONE SPECIES TO ANOTHER IS A GROWING FIELD

First patient to get gene-edited pig kidney transplant dies

Agence France-Presse

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WASHINGTON: The first living patient to receive a genetically modified pig kidney transplant has died two months after the procedure, the US hospital that carried it out said.

"Mass General is deeply saddened at the sudden passing of Mr. Rick Slayman. We have no indication that it was the result of his recent transplant," the Boston hospital said in a statement issued late on Saturday.

In a world first, surgeons at Massachusetts General Hospital in March successfully transplanted the genetically edited pig kidney into Slayman, who was 62 years old at the time and suffering from end-stage kidney disease.

"Slayman will forever be seen as a beacon of hope to countless transplant patients worldwide



A nursing practice specialist, prepares pig kidney for transplant at Massachusetts General Hospital, March 16, Boston. AP

and we are deeply grateful for his trust and willingness to advance the field of xenotransplantation," the hospital statement said.

Organ shortages are a chronic problem around the world and Mass General said in March that there were over 1,400 patients on its waiting list for a kidney transplant.

The pig kidney used for the transplant was provided by a Massachusetts biotech company called eGenesis and had been modified to remove harmful pig genes and add certain human genes, according to the hospital.

Slayman, who suffered from Type 2 diabetes and hypertension, had received a transplanted human kidney in 2018, but it

began to fail five years later.

'He inspired so many'

When the hospital announced the successful transplant in March, Slayman said he had agreed to the procedure "not only as a way to help (him), but a way to provide hope for the thousands of people who need a transplant to survive."

In a statement posted on Mass General's website, his family said while they were "deeply saddened at the sudden passing of our beloved Rick" they took "great comfort knowing he inspired so many."

The family said they were "comforted by the optimism he provided patients desperately waiting for a transplant".

On average, 17 people die each day while waiting for an organ transplant.

The transplantation of organs from one species to another is a

growing field known as xenotransplantation.

About a month after Slayman's procedure, surgeons at NYU Langone Health in New York carried out a similar transplant on Lisa Pisano, who had suffered heart failure and end-stage kidney disease.

Pig kidneys had been transplanted previously into brain-dead patients, but Slayman was the first living person to receive one. Genetically modified pig hearts were transplanted in 2023 into two patients at the University of Maryland, but both lived less than two months.

Mass General said Slayman's transplant had been carried out under a policy known as "compassionate use" that allows patients with "serious or life-threatening conditions" to access experimental therapies not yet approved by the US Food and Drug Administration.

Telcos turn FPI darlings on tariff hopes, Vi FPO

Foreign investors pumped \$991 million in April, a Mint analysis showed

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MUMBAI: Foreign investors poured nearly a billion dollars into telecom stocks in April, their most-favoured sector for the second month in a row, as optimism returns to a sector blighted by flat tariffs, steep debt and protracted litigation. Market experts believe that many of the factors that revived interest in the sector are here to stay, signalling further momentum.

After investing about \$960 million in telecom services and equipment companies in March, foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) pumped \$991 million in April, a Mint analysis showed, betting on the revival



FPIs jostled for shares in Vodafone Idea's ₹18,000 crore follow-on public offering (FPO).

of Vodafone Idea Ltd, expected tariff hikes and rising phone usage.

FPIs jostled for shares in Vodafone Idea's ₹18,000 crore follow-on public offering (FPO), India's largest, also sparking interest in tower company Indus Towers, which stands to gain from the telco's planned rollout of 4G and 5G networks.

Bharti Airtel picked up as well, as investors eye long-awaited tariff hikes later this year.

"In April, foreign investors showed interest in telecom stocks, likely due to their participation in the FPO of Vodafone Idea," said Abhilash Pagaria, head, Nuvama Alternative & Quantitative Research. The debt-laden telco's FPO

anchor book attracted prominent names like GQG Partners, Fidelity Investments, UBS Fund Management, Jupiter Fund Management, Abu Dhabi Investment Authority, Morgan Stanley Investment Funds and Societe Generale. Other than FPIs, mutual funds and domestic financial institutions also queued up for Vodafone shares. FPIs remain bullish on No.2 telecom operator Bharti Airtel and Indus Towers on hopes of higher average revenue per user (ARPU), Pagaria said.

"According to Nuvama Alternative math, Indus Towers is expected to make it to the MSCI Standard Index in the May review, potentially attracting close to \$250 million in further investments," said Pagaria, who believes that overall, optimism prevails in the sector.

Shares of Bharti Airtel and Indus Towers have surged 26% and 66% respectively so far in 2024, while Vodafone Idea's stock has dropped 21%.

AI Express expected to resume ops from today

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NEW DELHI: Air India Express, which had to cancel over 170 flights last week, is expected to resume normal operations from Monday, according to two officials close to the development. The section of cabin crew that had reported sick has returned to work, but reinstating flights will be challenging, the officials said.

"We have the (crew) crisis behind us. The airline will resume normalcy by Monday evening," one of the officials said on condition of anonymity.

"We have been trying our best to resolve the issues that led our crew to report mass sick leave and a few related announcements are expected soon," he added.

An airline spokesperson remained did not respond to requests for a comment.

The airline terminated around 25 cabin crew members on Wednesday night for having participated in what the company said was a "pre-meditated and concerted" disruption of ser-



The airline is said to have suffered a loss of ₹35 crore due to cancellations.

vices, when dozens of them called in sick. However, it withdrew the termination letters on Thursday after a conciliation meeting between the airline management and the crew unions, mediated by the chief labour commissioner (CLC).

The Tata Group-owned airline, a sister service to Air India, cancelled flights after the staffing problems created a cascading impact.

Flyers at many airports, especially those in smaller towns that the carrier serves, were stranded on Wednesday and Thursday, and the airline extended refunds

to those affected.

"The crew is in the process of returning to duty and they will be resuming regular roster from Monday evening or latest by Tuesday morning," an airline official said, asking not to be named.

"Rostering the crew after having such a disturbed situation is a lengthy process and takes time for the network to resume normalcy. To ensure faster resumption, we had issued a hotline number where the crew who reported sick could register themselves for their medical and other due procedures before they could be brought back into the network."

An industry veteran, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said such disruptions not only tarnish the brand image but also cause financial losses. "The Air India Express management is still trying to reinstate flights, despite all crew returning. The airline is said to have suffered a loss of around ₹35 crore due to the issue, which should have been handled in time," he said.

To be sure, the airline has not officially disclosed any details of financial implications.

WIPRO AIMS TO END ACRIMONY WITH FORMER TOP EXECUTIVES

Varun Sood & Jas Bardia
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BENGALURU: New CEO, new chapter. Less than a month after Srinivas Pallia replaced Thierry Delaporte in the corner room of Bengaluru-headquartered Wipro Ltd, the company is attempting to settle lawsuits it had filed against two former senior executives, according to a review of court filings and two executives aware of the development.

Jatin Dalal, former chief financial officer of Wipro, and Mohd Ehteshamul Haque, the company's former senior vice president and head of healthcare and medical devices business, were sued by India's fourth-largest IT services company for breach of employment contracts.

Both had joined rival Cognizant Technology Solutions Corp less than 12 months after resigning from Wipro. The company has now initiated processes in the courts to close the lawsuits.

Dalal, who quit as CFO on 21 September 2023, joined Teaneck, US-headquartered Cognizant last December. Earlier, in August 2023, Haque had joined Cognizant as its chief commercial officer shortly after leaving Wipro in June 2023. "I believe the change of leadership has promulgated a different approach to former executives," said Ray Wang, founder of Constellation Research, a California-based technology research and advisory firm. "The services business ultimately comes down to relationships and capability. A combative approach is a short-term approach, not a long-term approach. Great companies know that their alumni can be a great asset when treated well. I believe that Srin and the team are taking a different and wise approach," added Wang.

Wipro had sought ₹25.1 crore in damages from Dalal in a suit filed in Bengaluru civil court. After initially opposing his request for arbitration, Wipro is now working to settle this dispute with its former employee, according to two executives who spoke on condition of anonymity.

India to make 25% of all iPhones by 2028

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NEW DELHI: Apple aims to broaden its production base in India, and targets to make a quarter of all its iPhones in the country over the next 3-4 years as it builds a network of local vendors instead of sourcing inputs from Chinese suppliers.

People aware of the company's plans told Mint that the Cupertino-headquartered tech giant has already begun work on building the supply chains even as the majority of its production will be undertaken by Foxconn Technology Group and Tata Electronics, which will scale up their manufacturing capacities as well.

"India is an important market for them. Till December 2023, they are already doing 14% of their total iPhone production from India that is being supplied locally and for exports. They're now planning to raise the levels to 24-25% by the end of 2027 or 2028," one of the people said, asking not to be named



As of FY24-end, about \$14 billion worth of iPhones were made in India, contributing 14% to global production.

as the discussions were private.

JP Morgan analysts had estimated in 2022 that a quarter of all Apple products would be made outside China by 2025, from 5% then. As of FY24-end, about \$14 billion worth of iPhones were made in India, making up 14% of the global total. India produces iPhone models 12, 13, 14, and 15.

Taiwan's Foxconn Technology Group, the world's largest contract manufacturer and the largest one for Apple, accounts

for the lion's share of iPhones made in India. Last year in October, Tata Electronics acquired Taiwanese iPhone maker Wistron's manufacturing unit in India. Wistron InfoComm Manufacturing (India) Pvt. Ltd, for \$125 million. Tata Electronics currently makes a far smaller number of iPhones, but intends to scale its manufacturing capacities. It is also in discussions to acquire Indian operations of another iPhone maker Pegatron. The Taiwanese

company has one existing iPhone production plant and another under construction, in Tamil Nadu.

A second person aware of the discussions said that the acquisition may be completed within the next few months, which will give the Tata Group company significant foothold in the Apple supplier ecosystem. "It will make Tata the only Indian EMS (electronics manufacturing and services) player for Apple. With Tatas making their own chip fabrication and assembly units, supplies of chips to Apple can also be explored," the person said, asking not to be identified.

"Apple makes roughly 200 million iPhones a year. A quarter or 50 million iPhones from India within three to four years seems steep, since the premiumization trend won't last long. Even if it is 30 million units, it would be substantial, and it is the most likely candidate to cross ₹1 trillion revenue from India operations," said Faisal Kawoosa, chief analyst and founder at research firm Techarc.

Govt saves \$25 bn on crude import

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NEW DELHI: Russian crude supplies and lower international oil prices helped India to save over \$25 billion worth of foreign exchange in the year ended March 31 compared to 2022-23, although it imported almost similar quantities in the two financial years, according to government data.

India imported crude oil worth \$132.40 billion in 2023-24 compared to \$157.50 billion spent in 2022-23. The country imported 232.7 million tonnes (MT) of crude oil in 2022-23, which fell marginally by 0.08% to 232.5 MT, but savings in terms of value shot up about 16%.

There were two key reasons for the significant savings –

lower average cost of India's crude oil imports in 2023-24 compared to 2022-23, and purchase of highly discounted Russian oil, experts said.

The value of savings in Indian currency was about ₹1.64 lakh crore. India imported crude oil worth over ₹12.60 lakh crore in 2022-23 and ₹10.97 lakh crore in 2023-24. It imported more than 87% crude oil paid in dollars.

India's average cost of various types of crude oil imports, called the Indian basket, in 2023-24 was \$82.58 a barrel, \$10.57 a barrel less than \$93.15 per barrel in the preceding fiscal year, according to provisional data.

The composition of the Indian basket represents an average of Oman and Dubai for sour grades, and Brent for sweet grade.

Imports of petroleum products also saw a dip in terms of value from \$28.2 billion in 2022-23 to \$25.1 billion in 2023-24. Imports of petroleum products include LPG, naphtha, bitumen and fuel oil.

Gross imports, which include both crude oil and petroleum products, also saw a declining trend in value terms, even as import quantities increased. While 277.3 MT of gross petroleum imports in 2022-23 were worth \$184.4 billion, gross import in 2023-24 was 280.5 MT worth \$155.8 billion.

India, one of the global crude oil refining hubs. It exported products worth \$47.4 billion (62.2 MT of total quantities to Africa and Europe in 2023-24 compared to \$57.3 billion (61 MT) in 2022-23.

IOC, BPCL, HPCL REPORT ₹81K CR PROFIT IN FY24

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NEW DELHI: State-owned fuel retailers Indian Oil Corporation, Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd reported bumper profits totalling about ₹81,000 crore in the financial year 2023-24 FY24, which far exceeded their annual earning in pre-oil crisis years.

The combined standalone net profit of IOC, BPCL and HPCL in April 2023 to March 2024 (FY24) was better than their annual earning of ₹39,356 crore in pre-oil crisis years, regulatory filings by them showed.

All the three companies posted the highest ever standalone as well as consolidated net profit in FY24.

The retailers have resisted calls to revert to daily price revision and pass on softening in rates to consumers on grounds that prices continue to be extremely volatile - rising on one day and falling on the other - and that they needed to recoup losses incurred in the year when they kept rates lower than cost.

IOC in 2023-24 posted a standalone net profit of ₹39,618.84 crore, according to the company's regulatory filing.

Why nomination scores over joint holding or either/survivor in MFs

Joint holding and either/survivor holding creates practical challenges (online transactions may not be possible) and legal challenges in case of disputes due to shared ownership

Compiled by Anil Postle
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| | Sole holder + nominee | Joint holding | Either or survivor |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|
| Ownership | Sole holder | Shared, equal rights | Shared, equal rights |
| Who can be joint holder/nominee*** | Anyone | Anyone | Anyone |
| Tax applicability | Sole holder | First holder** | First holder** |
| Tax disputes | Not applicable | Can arise due to both names in AIS | Can arise due to both names in AIS |
| Joint bank account needed? | No | No | No |
| Purchase/redemption online | Yes. Sole holder can transact online | No. All holders must sign physically**** | Yes. Either party can transact online |
| Inheritance | Nominee can claim* | Transfers to second holder# | Transfers to survivor(s)# |
| Legal risks | None | Divorce, disagreements | Divorce, disagreements |

Notes

**Unless funds come from the second holder. There is also risk of AIS mismatches due to PAN of second holder being captured

*Nominee is a custodian for the heir

Legal intervention is required in case of disputes, until then survivors may be limited/no access

***Family member or friend, anyone is eligible

****Many platforms and AMC websites are not geared for multiple OTPs

#Will/Succession can override such transfer



Graphic: Pranay Bhardwaj/Mint

Liberalised visas lure Indians to new destinations

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NEW DELHI: Radhika Khanijo is busy planning vacations this summer for a few uber-wealthy clients to a destination that hadn't been on her luxury travel firm's radar ever before: South Korea. The Asian country is suddenly on the map of Indian travellers, says the founder of Welgrow Travel, and part of the reason is its easy visa process.

"South Korea is seeing a big rise in travel demand from discerning travellers. We were never catering for travel to this country till last year," said Khanijo, also explaining why the visa process is a boon for last-minute planners. "There is no appointment procedure and clients can just submit their visas (online). Their visas take just seven working days to proc-



MakeMyTrip registered 33% year-on-year growth for bookings in April across newly minted visa-free destinations.

ess, with low rejection rates."

Khanijo is also bundling in travel to Japan for one client. As the process of obtaining Schengen visas for travel to European countries such as Greece, Italy and Switzerland became exasperating, Indians

turned to other destinations that have easier visa processes.

Thailand set the ball rolling in November, when it eliminated visa requirements for Indian travellers and permitted a 30-day stay until May this year. Last week, it extended this

scheme till November this year.

According to a spokesperson for travel agency Thomas Cook India, the elimination of the visa cost for Thailand is an important consideration for the value-conscious Indian.

Then, Sri Lanka rolled out a similar scheme, offering visa-free access to Indians as well as nationals from six other countries till the end of May. Malaysia has declared visa-free entry for Indian and Chinese citizens till December.

MakeMyTrip registered 33% year-on-year growth for bookings in April across newly minted visa-free destinations as well as countries allowing e-visas, such as Kazakhstan, Angola and Japan.

A spokesperson for MakeMyTrip said Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan are two major draws this summer, followed by Georgia, Langkawi, and Kuala

Lumpur in Malaysia. Bhutan, Hong Kong, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Kenya.

"Surprisingly, many European nations that are in recession are putting visa restrictions instead of easing them up. Slowly Indian travellers are realising these issues and are opting to travel elsewhere," said Subhash Goyal, chairman of STIC Travel, one of India's largest travel agencies.

The surge in outbound travel from India is emblematic of the country's growing middle-class and increase in their disposable incomes. Outbound travel from India is projected to grow at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 11.4% between 2023 and 2032 to \$44.8 billion, according to a report titled 'Outbound Tourism in India' by business advisory Nangia Andersen Llp. In 2022, the market stood at \$15.16 billion.

{ THE CROSSWORDS }

CRYPTIC CLUES

ACROSS

- Correct attire for army manoeuvre (5,5)
- A picking-up-point (5)
- Lack of interest makes me brood (7)
- A part that can't be matched (7)
- Victor loses his head going round the bull (5)
- Character-forming person (6)
- Dormant fish turned into a snake (6)
- Intriguing bunch of politicians (5)
- Removed the soap from a small restaurant (7)
- Anything in New York is slightly wicked (7)
- In three-quarters of an hour two hundred take place (5)
- Please try a new blend on its own (10)

DOWN

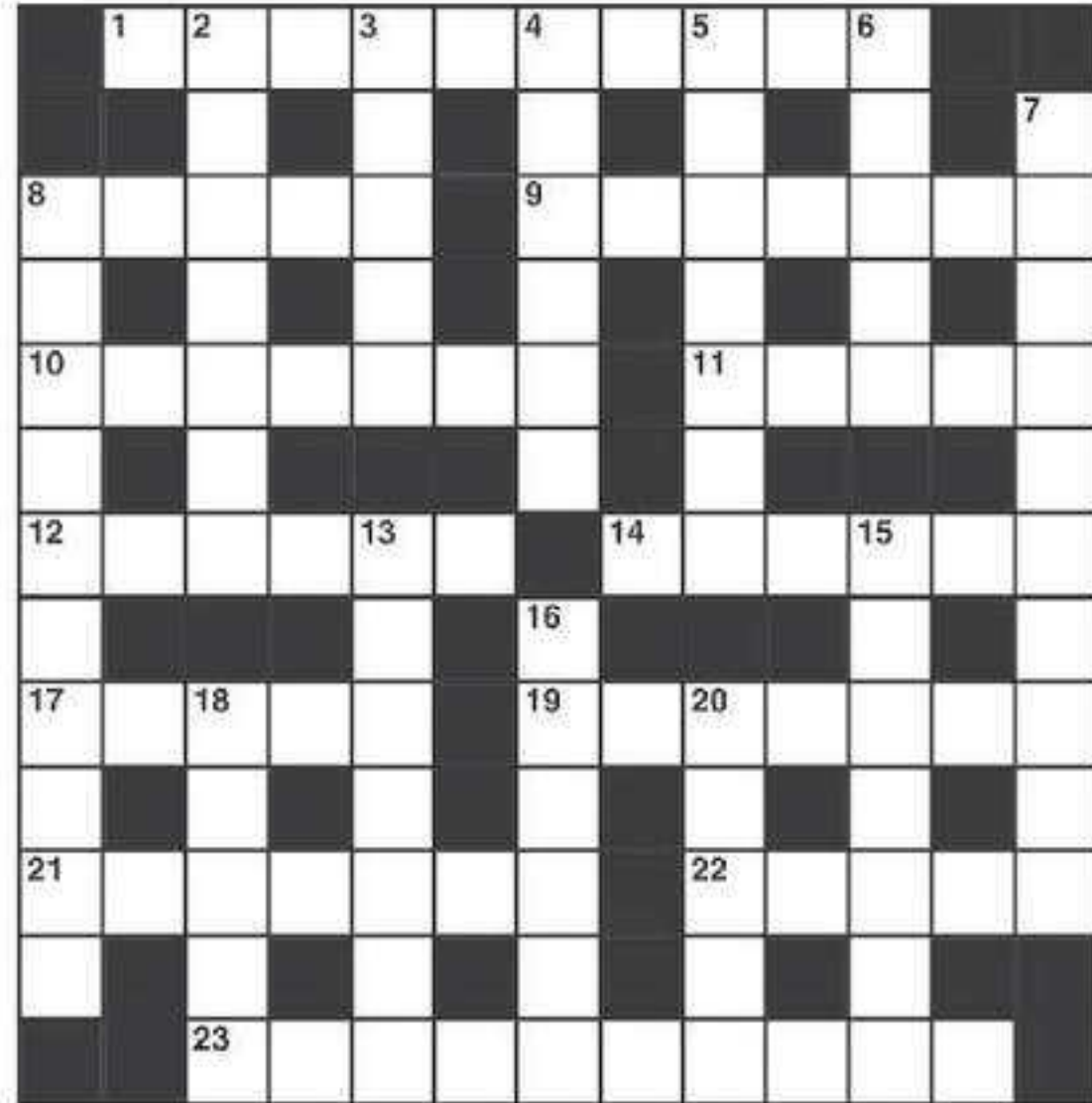
- Tidy description of a friar? (2,5)
- A huge development in a city (5)
- Be up in time for a parliamentary occasion (6)
- Wager is about insects (7)
- The chairman's seat? (5)
- Piece of rough material that could be smoother (5,5)
- Not having a good time he was easily beaten (4,6)
- He may call for you at an American hotel (7)
- Latch that is about right (7)
- Guest who finishes the course? (6)
- Music in the Depression (5)
- A place to see pigeons flying (5)

YESTERDAY'S SOLUTIONS (16857)

CRYPTIC
UNREST
S U O C F I U E
A D M I T T E R S P R E E
G B A T E E L N D
E K A C T E Y E S O R E
S G A L A F D
N O T H I N G L E F T
S U D I A L
N O T A B L E B A R G E
A L R A E E E A
C H I N A S H R I N K S
K V C Y A E E
S K E W E R F L O W E D

QUICK
A R C T I C R A N C I D
S H N D C R E
S O A N D S O C R U E L
U R O U R C U
C O P Y L B E A R I N G
H B L A F
O F F T H E S H E L F
S O O D Y G E T O N
C A R I B O U G E T O N
F E U T I W Y
T R E N D C H E R I S H
C I G H N S O
H A T R E D B E S T O W

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QUICK CLUES

ACROSS

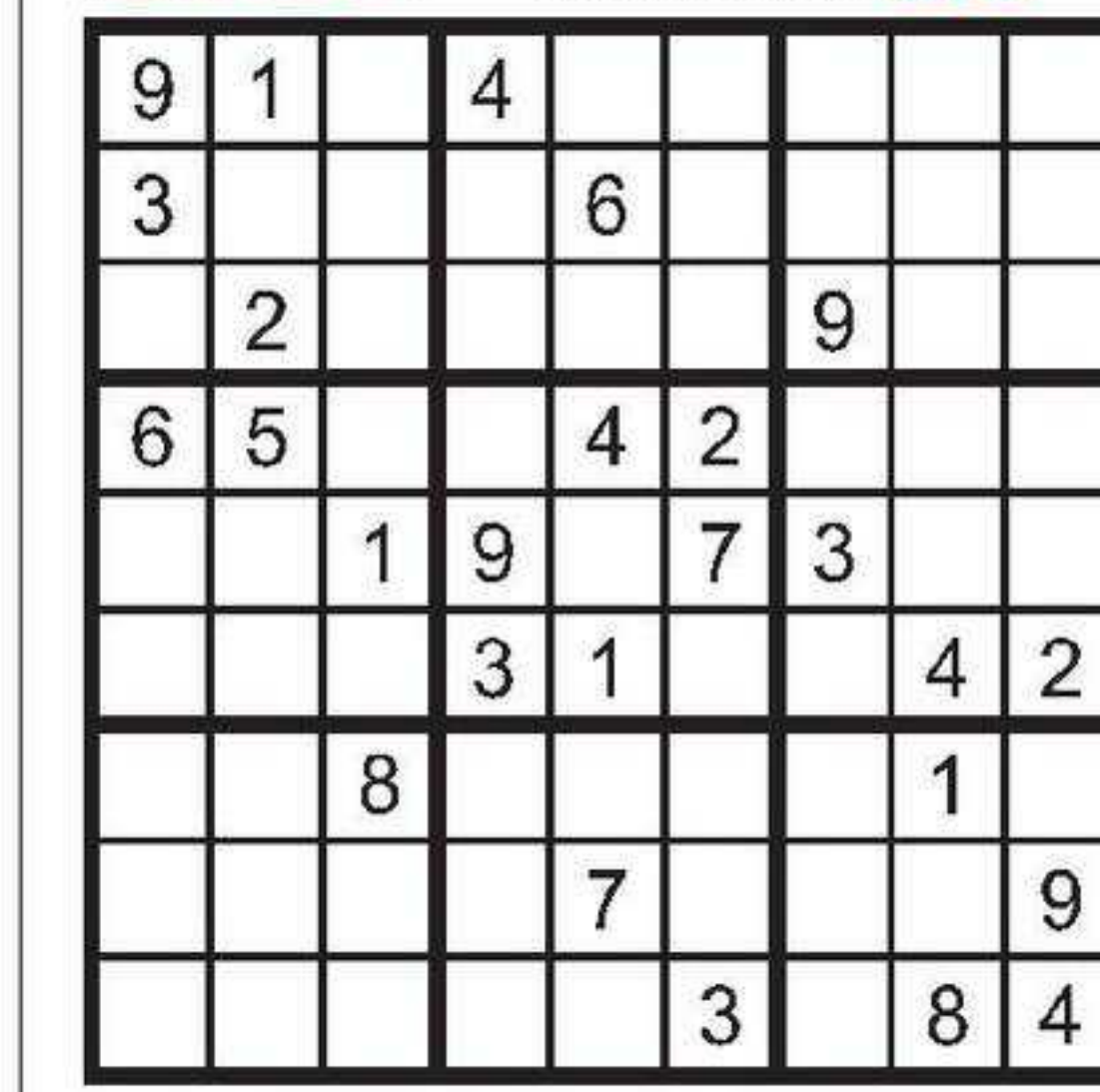
- Obstinately impetuous (4-6)
- Subdued in tone (5)
- Throb (7)
- Give up completely (7)
- Open to bribery (5)
- Diminish (6)
- Small amount (6)
- Be pre-eminent (5)
- Generous (7)
- Self-important person (7)
- In good condition (5)
- Impartial (4-6)

DOWN

- To rebuke (7)
- Sensational (5)
- To swell (6)
- To rescue (7)
- Attracted (5)
- Wealthy (4-6)
- Naively idealistic (6,4)
- To clash (7)
- Luck (7)
- Grasp tightly (6)
- A spice (5)
- American buffalo (5)

{ SUDOKU }

DIFFICULTY LEVEL ★★★



Fill in all the squares in the grid so that each row, column and each of the 9X9 squares contains all the digits from 1 to 9.

{ WEATHER }

TEMPERATURE HIGH • LOW

MONDAY
Generally cloudy
sky with Light Rain
or Drizzle
38°C | 24°C

TUESDAY
Partly cloudy sky
39°C | 25°C

WEDNESDAY
Partly cloudy sky
41°C | 25°C

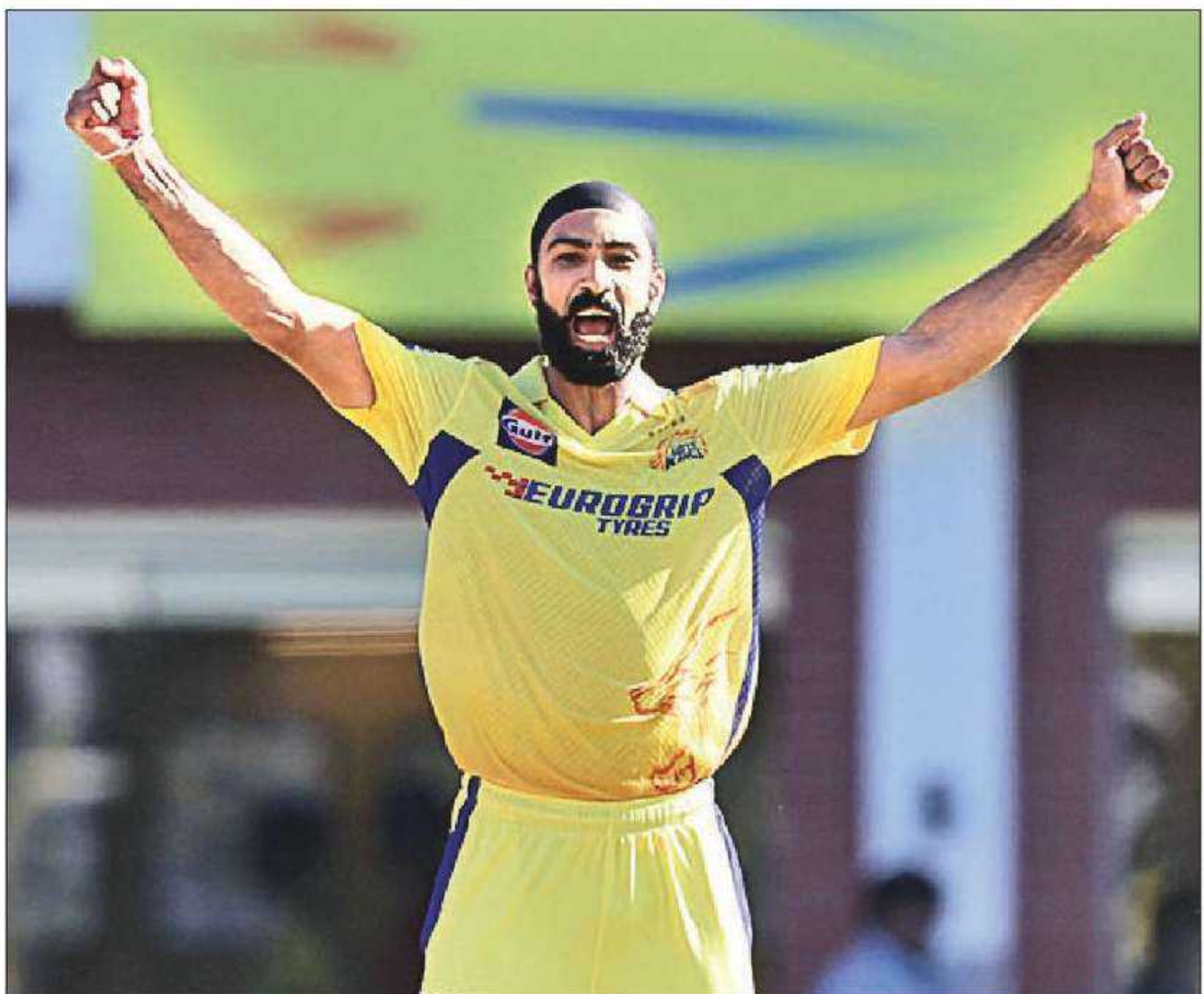
ALMANAC

Today is 13th May 2024

4 Dhu Qadah, 1445
06 Vashakha, Shukla
Paksha 06
Sunset: Monday
at 07:03 pm
Sunrise: Tuesday
at 05:30 am
Moonrise: Monday
at 05:24 am

TEMPERATURE IN FOUR METROS

Delhi 38°C | 24°C
Mumbai 32°C | 27°C
Kolkata 33°C | 23°C
Chennai 37°C | 28°C



Simarjeet Singh celebrates a wicket on Sunday. The CSK pacer finished with figures of 3/26. BCCI

Simarjeet chokes RR, sets up easy Super Kings win

Vivek Krishnan
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NEW DELHI: This was Chennai Super Kings (CSK) following the playbook at home with aplomb. Unlike the batting-friendly surfaces on offer in Chennai earlier this season — far from the norm over the years — the 22-yard strip for the game between CSK and Rajasthan Royals (RR) on Sunday afternoon was sluggish and ripe for a low-scoring game. In such circumstances, CSK are usually invincible.

And CSK did just as expected — notch up a fairly comfortable five-wicket win at the MA Chidambaram Stadium with 10 balls to spare. While pacer Simarjeet Singh (4-0-26-3) was the pick of the CSK bowlers and choked Rajasthan to 141/5, skipper Ruturaj Gaikwad saw the chase through by staying unbeaten on 42 (41 balls, 1x4, 2x6). The result helps CSK move to third with 14 points after 13 matches. RR have 16 points from 12 matches, but a third consecutive defeat means they are yet to seal a playoff berth.

Having seen the Rajasthan batters struggle to raise the tempo, CSK knew they had to take advantage of the fielding restrictions in the chase. The Kiwi pair of Rachin Ravindra and Daryl Mitchell facilitated that even as Gaikwad anchored the innings, helping CSK move to 56/1 after six overs. With only 86 more runs needed in 14 overs with nine wickets in hand, it should have been a walk in the

park for the hosts from thereon. The nature of the pitch, however, enabled Rajasthan's bowlers to create some uncertainty in the middle overs. While Yuzvendra Chahal trapped Mitchell leg-before in the eighth over, Moeen Ali succumbed to the growing pressure — CSK had gone 32 balls without a boundary at the time of his dismissal. It eventually became 39, leaving CSK with 50 runs to get off 42 balls.

That is when Shivam Dube stepped up to bring the asking rate down even further. Known to be destructive against spin, he was exactly that as R Ashwin was played for a six and two fours. Although Ashwin tossed one up later in the 14th over to get Dube caught at long-on, the left-hand batter's 11-ball 18 was enough to ease the nerves in the CSK camp.

Rajasthan were set back by the laboured start to their batting effort. Jos Buttler and Yashasvi Jaiswal ensured they didn't lose a wicket in the first six overs, but at no stage during their opening partnership did they threaten to take the game away. At 42/0 after six overs, well short of the powerplay scores that have become de rigueur this year, it was clear that they had to get going soon. Jaiswal tried to go after Simarjeet in the seventh over, but it was not for the first time this season that he was dismissed trying to pull a back-of-a-length delivery.

Buttler fell to the same bowler two overs later. Perhaps under

pressure to manufacture a boundary, he moved across his stumps for an attempted ramp. But with Tushar Deshpande stationed on the long leg boundary, it was always a risk. It turned out to be so as Deshpande covered a few yards to his right to complete a fine catch.

That the ball wasn't quite coming onto the bat was apparent when Sanju Samson and Riyan Parag were batting. Both are excellent players of spin and have the firepower to unleash the big shots in the middle phase, but they couldn't find their timing. The situation could have worsened for the visitors in the 12th over when Parag miscued a reverse sweep off Ravindra Jadeja to Maheesh Theekshana at deep backward point. Much to the relief of the batter and the RR dugout though, the Sri Lankan spilled a straightforward catch. Even though Parag made Ravindra Jadeja pay with a slog sweep for six over mid-wicket in the bowler's next over, the big over that RR were searching for never really arrived. Samson also fell to Simarjeet, after not getting enough elevation on his shot to clear Gaikwad at mid-off. It left the onus of delivering a strong finish on Parag and Dhruv Jurel, and while they added 40 runs in 29 balls for the fourth wicket, CSK were always in control of the proceedings.

Brief scores: RR 141/5 (R Parag 47*; Simarjeet Singh 3/26). CSK 145/5 in 18.2 overs (R Gaikwad 42*). **CSK won by 5 wickets.**

Royal Challengers win by 47 runs at home to keep playoffs hope alive with Delhi

Aditya Chaturvedi

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MUMBAI: There was an air of uncertainty inside the M Chinnaswamy Stadium halfway through Royal Challengers Bengaluru's clash with Delhi Capitals on Sunday. It was a must-win game for the hosts but from 110/2 in 10 overs, they had stumbled to a total of 187/9. The visitors had the momentum and RCB, for the second year running, were staring at a league stage exit.

Despite a valiant 39-ball 57 by DC's stand-in skipper Axar Patel, though, RCB rode on a fine spell by pacer Yash Dayal to turn things around and keep their playoff hopes alive with a 47-run victory. It was a fifth successive win for RCB and tied them with DC on 12 points. Both teams have one game remaining, and depending on other results they can still qualify.

On the face of it, the pitch looked a belter. There was no grass on it, unlike a couple of previous games at the Chinnaswamy, and the sheen suggested there would be plenty of runs. But there was some dampness in it too, which offered some help to the pacers as the ball stopped and came. RCB, asked to bat first, however got a decent start thanks to Virat Kohli.

The former skipper, who became the first to play 250 IPL games for a single franchise, hit a couple of sublime strokes although Faf du Plessis fell early. His duel with his Delhi state-mate Ishant Sharma was particularly interesting as he went after the senior pacer. But Ishant had the last laugh, getting Kohli to edge one to the 'keeper (27, 13 balls).

Rajat Patidar (52 off 32) joined Will Jacks (41 off 29) then and RCB got an 88-run partnership — their biggest of the night. Their job, however, was made a lot easier due to some poor bowling by Delhi.

Kuldeep Yadav, who bowled by far the most expensive spell of the match (1/52), was unfortunate as a couple of catches were dropped off his bowling. But overall he struggled to get his length right. The left-arm wrist spinner kept tossing the ball too



RCB's Cameron Green celebrate the wicket of DC's Tristan Stubbs at the M Chinnaswamy Stadium on Sunday. BCCI

| Team | P | Won | Lost | NRR | Pts |
|-----------------------------|----|-----|------|--------|-----|
| 1 Kolkata Knight Riders (Q) | 12 | 9 | 3 | 1.428 | 18 |
| 2 Rajasthan Royals | 12 | 8 | 4 | 0.349 | 16 |
| 3 Chennai Super Kings | 13 | 7 | 6 | 0.528 | 14 |
| 4 Sunrisers Hyderabad | 12 | 7 | 5 | 0.406 | 14 |
| 5 Royal Challengers | 13 | 6 | 7 | 0.387 | 12 |
| 6 Delhi Capitals | 13 | 6 | 7 | -0.482 | 12 |
| 7 Lucknow Super Giants | 12 | 6 | 6 | -0.769 | 12 |
| 8 Gujarat Titans | 12 | 5 | 7 | -1.063 | 10 |
| 9 Mumbai Indians | 13 | 4 | 9 | -0.271 | 8 |
| 10 Punjab Kings | 12 | 4 | 8 | -0.423 | 8 |

far up in search of spin and was hit for six sixes.

There was an 11-ball period from the ninth over when DC performed what could only be described as hara kiri. Rishabh Pant, suspended for the game, sat in the dugout with a look of resignation as his team dropped four catches during that brief phase.

The visitors, however, fought back brilliantly in the second half of the innings thanks to their pacers. Ishant, Khaleel Ahmed, Mukesh Kumar and

Rasikh Salam used the slower ball effectively to stifle the run flow. Cameron Green (32* off 24) struck around but the in-form Dinesh Karthik was dismissed for a second-ball duck with the hosts scoring just 18 runs in the last three overs.

"I felt the pitch was a bit two-paced when I went in to bat. The ball was holding a bit, especially the slower once. So, it made things a bit difficult," said Patidar during the innings break. "We can surely defend this total easily if we bowl in the right



areas."

Delhi got off to a horrendous start in the chase and the pitch had little to do with it. David Warner, who had missed the last five games due to a thumb injury, came on as substitute but lasted just two deliveries. Jake Fraser-McGurk, Abishek Porel and Kumar Kushagra also were dismissed soon after and DC were tottering at 30/4 in the fourth over.

Axar, in at No.6, looked determined and went on the offensive in a 56-run partner-

ship with Shai Hope. RCB picked a couple of more wickets but Axar kept going and brought up a 30-ball half-century, his second this season. Needing 64 off the last six overs, DC had a glimmer of hope but it wasn't to be as RCB regained control with Yash Dayal (3/20) delivering the standout spell.

Brief scores: RCB 187/9 (W Jacks 41, R Patidar 52, C Green 32*; K Ahmed 2/31, R Salam 2/23). DC 140 in 19.1 ovs (A Patel 57, Y Dayal 3/20, L Ferguson 2/23). RCB won by 47 runs.

Vinesh must select a weight category for trials: WFI president

Avishek Roy

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NEW DELHI: India will have only one men's freestyle wrestler besides five women competitors at the Paris Olympics. After Aman Sehrawat (57kg) qualified on Saturday, Indian hopes of more men coming through at the World Olympic Qualifier in Istanbul were dashed as Sajeet Kalkal (65kg) and Jaideep Ahlawat (74kg) lost in the repechage rounds.

Wrestling was India's most successful sport at the Tokyo Olympics with Ravi Dahiya (57kg) and Bajrang Punia (65kg) winning silver and bronze respectively. But the sport in India has been in turmoil in the last one year due to protests. No national camps were held during the period and the level of training in the Olympic year has taken a toll.

With Sujet not qualifying, it was the end of the road for Punia too as far as Paris is concerned. Dahiya (65kg) though remains in contention as Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) president Sanjay Singh said on Sunday that selection trials to pick the final squad will be held early next month.

"Selection trials will be held on June 10. Some wrestlers are training overseas and once they return we will hold the trials. It will be in the format as given in our policy where a challenger will be selected from the top four eligible wrestlers and there will be three bouts with the quota winner. The quota winner will have to win once while he gets two opportunities if he loses to the challenger," he said.

Dahiya, who was coming back

from a knee injury, lost the selection trials to Sehrawat in Sonapat in March. But he will get an opportunity to wrestle the Paris berth from Aman in the trials.

In women, India have quotas through Vinesh Phogat (50kg), Antim Panghal (53kg), Anshu Malik (57kg), Nisha Dahiya (68kg) and Reetika Hooda (75kg). At the controversial selection trials in Patiala, Vinesh finished in the top four in 53kg while winning the trials in 50kg. She had said she is more comfortable in the 53kg class.

At the Asian Qualifiers in Bishkek, Vinesh booked an Olympics qualification berth in 50kg. It remains to be seen if she sticks to 50kg or decides to challenge Antim in 53kg. WFI president Singh said she will have to pick one weight class in the trials.

"We will go by the UWW (world body) rule which says a wrestler can compete in only one weight category. She has to choose between 50kg and 53kg; whichever weight she gives her weigh-in, she can compete in that," said Singh.

In Patiala, Vinesh, the face of the wrestling protest with Sakshi Malik and Bajrang Punia, had refused to give trials in front of WFI officials. She had a showdown on the issue with the ad hoc committee running WFI. Vinesh has refused to acknowledge WFI saying the new body is a proxy of former president Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh and that they are out to finish her career. At the Asian qualifiers, Vinesh went with her own coach and physio.

It remains to be seen if she puts forward any condition for the selection trials.

Knights' success smells of team spirit

What has worked for KKR this season

Kolkata Knight Riders on Saturday became the first team to qualify for the IPL playoffs this year. Here's a look at why the twice winners have been successful

Salt-Narine opening combo

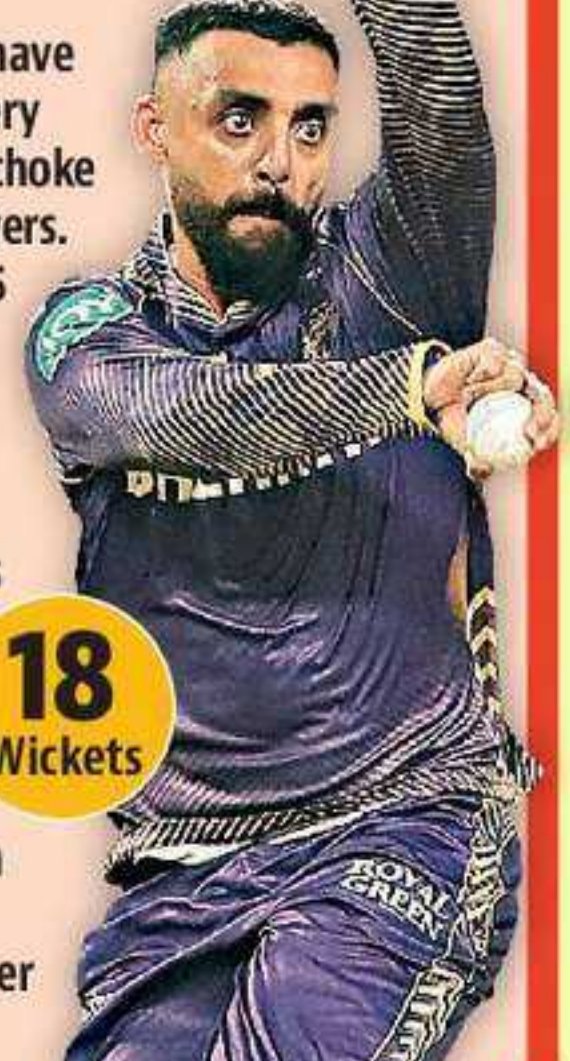
Going into IPL 2024, neither Phil Salt nor Sunil Narine were seen as certainties to open. Salt was Jason Roy's replacement while Narine batted down the order in 2023. But both have been terrific, giving rapid starts to lay the foundation for huge totals. KKR's average powerplay run rate is 11.09, next only to Sunrisers

STRIKE RATE
Sunil Narine
182.93
Phil Salt
182.00

| TEAM | RUN RATE |
|------|----------|
| SRH | 11.61 |
| KKR | 11.09 |
| DC | 10.69 |
| RCB | 10.04 |
| MI | 9.51 |

Spin twins

For over a decade, KKR have relied on Narine's mastery over line and length to choke batters in the middle overs. The mystery spinner's 15 wickets in 12 matches at an economy of 6.63 are worth their weight in gold. Add Varun Chakravathy's 18 scalps (econ 8.34) and it is clear why KKR rate their spin twins so highly. Injuries have dogged Chakravathy in the past, but he has overcome them to deliver close to his best



Surprise package Harshit

At the IPL auction, KKR shelled out a record ₹24.75 crore for Mitchell Starc to bolster their pace attack. The Australian left-arm has blown hot and cold, but the emergence of 22-year-old Delhi pacer Harshit Rana has been a welcome development. Rana has taken 16 scalps in 10 matches, showing the sort of spark that may convince KKR he is a long-term prospect



Dhiman Sarkar

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KOLKATA: It was almost lam on Sunday but there were enough at Eden Gardens to fill some of India's smaller cricket theatres. As Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR) sent balls into the stands and lapped the ground, signing off from where they won five of their seven games, the crowd moved towards the high perimeter railing and waved back. This reaction is usually reserved for Shah Rukh Khan who was not there for the final home game, against Mumbai Indians (MI).

Nine wins from 12 games and a net run rate that is nearly four times better than the next best team made KKR the first team to qualify for the playoff. They are one win away from equalling their best league season in the history of the Indian Premier League (IPL). That was in 2012 when the league phase had 16 games, two more than now. Team effort backed by a management that backs players, said KKR vice-captain Nitish Rana.

The website Sportskeeda has listed similarities between the title-winning run in 2012 and now: beating MI at Wankhede, doing the double on Royal Challengers Bengaluru and a former Delhi player being in charge. Like then, KKR have notched up four successive wins in the league but even 2012 had begun with two losses. KKR have not lost twice in a row this term. And 2024 may be the first time KKR end the league phase as table-toppers.

"Team mein woh dum dikha raha hai (can see that old verve in the team). They have a very good chance this time," said Piyush Chawla when asked if KKR

could win a third IPL title. Now with MI, Chawla had won it with the Knights in 2014, hitting the winning runs and celebrating arms spread wide like he did on Saturday after dismissing Andre Russell.

Chawla spoke about the efficiency of KKR's spinners Sunil Narine and Varun Chakravathy, instrumental in transforming MI's chase from cruise to crash, and the consistency of their batters.

Narine starting in fifth gear wasn't new but his scoring a century in an aggregate of 461 — he was sixth on the run-scorers' list till Sunday's games — is proof of having worked on batting. He is 39 runs short of being the first player to 15 wickets and 500 runs in an IPL season. Phil Salt (435 runs) has been able company and batting down the order solid when not spectacular.

The latter's not unusual when barring Narine and Salt, Russell and Rameshwarthi Singh have been in the mood but it is the stability Venkatesh Iyer, Angkrish Raghuvanshi and Manish Pandey as Impact Player against MI away provided that has been equally important. Else, it could have been difficult to cope with the absence of Nitish Rana, second-highest scorer with 413 runs in 2023, and the lack of impact of Rinku Singh (top scorer in 2023 with 474). Explains why Rana said he had a sleepless night prior to the game. "I was returning after 10 games in a team that was doing well," he said.

And though not being able to defend 261 and 223 stays a blot, proof of how the bowling has been lies in KKR being able to absorb Mitchell Starc's general lack of effectiveness at both ends of the innings. KKR haven't lost after the defeat to

Punjab Kings, restricting three of their next four opponents to less than 150 and Delhi Capitals to 153. Fast bowlers have taken 20 of the 35 wickets that have gone to bowlers in those games. Like with KKR's batting, contributions have come from Harshit Rana, Vaibhav Arora, Russell, and occasionally Starc.

The defeats to Chennai Super Kings and Punjab Kings were one-sided but the loss to Rajasthan Royals came off the last ball. KKR also pulled off close wins against Sunrisers Hyderabad and Royal Challengers Bengaluru, off the last ball and due to Salt's goalkeeper-like flying dive to effect a run out, but it was how they pulled things back twice against MI that sums up their campaign this term.

"T20 is about momentum and we didn't get that from the beginning," said Chawla. The reverse has been true for KKR. "There is belief in the dressing room that someone will step up. For that credit must go to Chandrakant Pandit (coach) and Gauti bhai (Gautam Gambhir, the mentor)," said Rana. "I am a prime example, out for 10 games but they backed me to make an impact in a crucial game."

There were positives from 2023 and mistakes this time, said Rana, circling back to the loss against Punjab Kings. "That night only three or four ate in the dressing room. 'Sab dukhi thei' (everyone was sad). Tonight, Salt was so angry at himself on getting out. I was padding up and felt that I should be able to do what he, an in-form player, couldn't.

"But every time we have felt down as a team, someone was there to put a hand on our shoulder. That wasn't the case for the past one or two years," said Rana.

HT

Pragg ends 4th, Carlsen triumphs

WARSAW: Grandmaster R Praggnanandhaa proved himself better than his peers and finished fourth while Magnus Carlsen came up with a rousing 8/9 performance on the final day to seal his place at the top of the table in the Superbet rapid and blitz tournament, a part of the Grand Chess Tour.

Deeksha sets natl record in 1500m

NEW DELHI: Indian track athlete KM Deeksha set a new national record in the women's 1500m while Avinash Sable finished second in men's 5000m event at the Sound Running Track Fest in Los Angeles. The 25-year-old Deeksha finished third in the final clocking 4:04.78, bettering the previous record of 4:05.39 set by Harmilan Bains in 2021. Sable finished second in the men's 5000m with a time of 13:20.37.

Esha, Anish win in Olympic selections

NEW DELHI: Esha Singh and Anish Bhanwala registered their second win at the Olympic trials, in the women's 25m pistol and men's 25m rapid-fire pistol respectively in Bhopal on Sunday. Anish had won the first trials in the event in Delhi. Esha had claimed the second trial in the women's 10m air pistol.

Ahead of Paris Olympics, Parveen counting on clarity and ringcraft

The 57kg boxer has high hopes building up for the Games, having overcome doubts and expanded her attacking range

Rutvik Mehta

rutvik.mehta@htlive.com

MUMBAI: "Arrey, mat poochiye (don't ask!)" Parveen Hooda shoots back at the mention of home.

Home, in Rohtak's Rurki village, is where the boxer hasn't been in months. Plans to make a dash last weekend stood cancelled because training took precedence. For her birthday last month, her parents offered to go where she is — the national camp in Patiala — but a three-session day played party pooper there too.

"I do miss my family, my home. But then I think *abhi bas 2-3 mahine hai, phir aaram se ghar pe rahungi* (there are just 2-3 months to go, then I can relax at home)," she said.

That feeling aside, Hooda, one of the four Indian boxers to have qualified for the Paris Olympics so far, is relishing this build-up phase. At 24, the 57kg boxer is already a medal winner at the World Championships (2022, bronze), Asian Championships (2022, gold) and the Asian Games (2023, bronze). Yet it was the Olympics that had been a "dream for so many years".

"There is a sense of pressure, but also of excitement," she said. "I'm focussing on every little detail in training. I'm con-



Know Parveen Hooda

AGE: 24 | HOMETOWN: RURKI, HARYANA

MEDAL CABINET

| WEIGHT CATEGORY | BRONZE 2023 | BRONZE 2022 | GOLD 2022 |
|-----------------|-------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| 57kg | Asian Games | World Championships | Asian Championships |

- Rose to prominence when she beat veteran Sarita Devi in domestic trials in 2019
- Won bronze at 2022 Worlds in Turkey and gold at Asian Championships in Jordan in 63kg
- Had to switch weight categories after that because 63kg wasn't part of the Olympics
- Dropping down to 57kg, she won bronze at last year's Asian Games to also secure the Paris quota

fident I'll do well there."

That confidence stems from Hooda's steady rise in international boxing, her growth trajectory meeting morale-boosting checkpoints at those big events over the last couple of years. From each of those competitions, including the Asian Games where she lost in the semi-final but secured the Paris quota, she returned richer by more than merely medals.

"The biggest thing I learnt was to not have any self-doubts. I beat some top boxers in these events, and that gave me a lot of motivation and faith. The experience of competing at that top level was also helpful in how to fight with these boxers," Hooda said.

Preparing for Paris, she is using that experience to build her technical side of boxing. The defeat in Hangzhou, to Chinese Taipei's multiple-time Worlds medallist Lin Yu-ting, compelled her to look beyond her strength of counterattacks. She has now improved in going for attacks — rather than wait for counters — early, as well as fighting from all ranges.

"Earlier, I would rely on my counter game. I realised that you can't have just one style of play. I've developed my attacking and close-range game since the Asian Games. Now I can fight from all distances — middle, close, long."

Making alterations isn't new to Hooda. Graduating from

youth to seniors, she had made the 63kg division her own, becoming the 2021 national champion and a Worlds and Asian medallist the following year. But with 63kg not in the Olympics, she had to take the difficult call of either going up a weight class or dropping down.

Protein-rich diet

With the Paris Games in mind, 57kg "was my best option". It meant ramping up her training load and sticking to a strict protein-rich, carb-checking and junk-shedding diet to reduce weight. Bigger sacrifices had to be made.

"I love *chai*, and I had to give it up completely for two

months," she said, smiling. "It was a huge challenge initially to suddenly shed six kilos. But my aim and dream was the Olympics, *toh karna pada* (so, I had to do it)."

So far, only women boxers have qualified from India for the Olympics. World champion Nikhat Zareen (50kg), Preeti Pawar (54kg) and Lovlina Borgohain (75kg) are the others. No male boxer from the country has qualified.

From 2019 when she stamped her presence in Indian boxing by defeating Sarita Devi in a domestic trial to 2024 when she stands on the cusp of living that Olympics dream, Hooda is a different boxer. Not as much in terms of skills as in the mind.

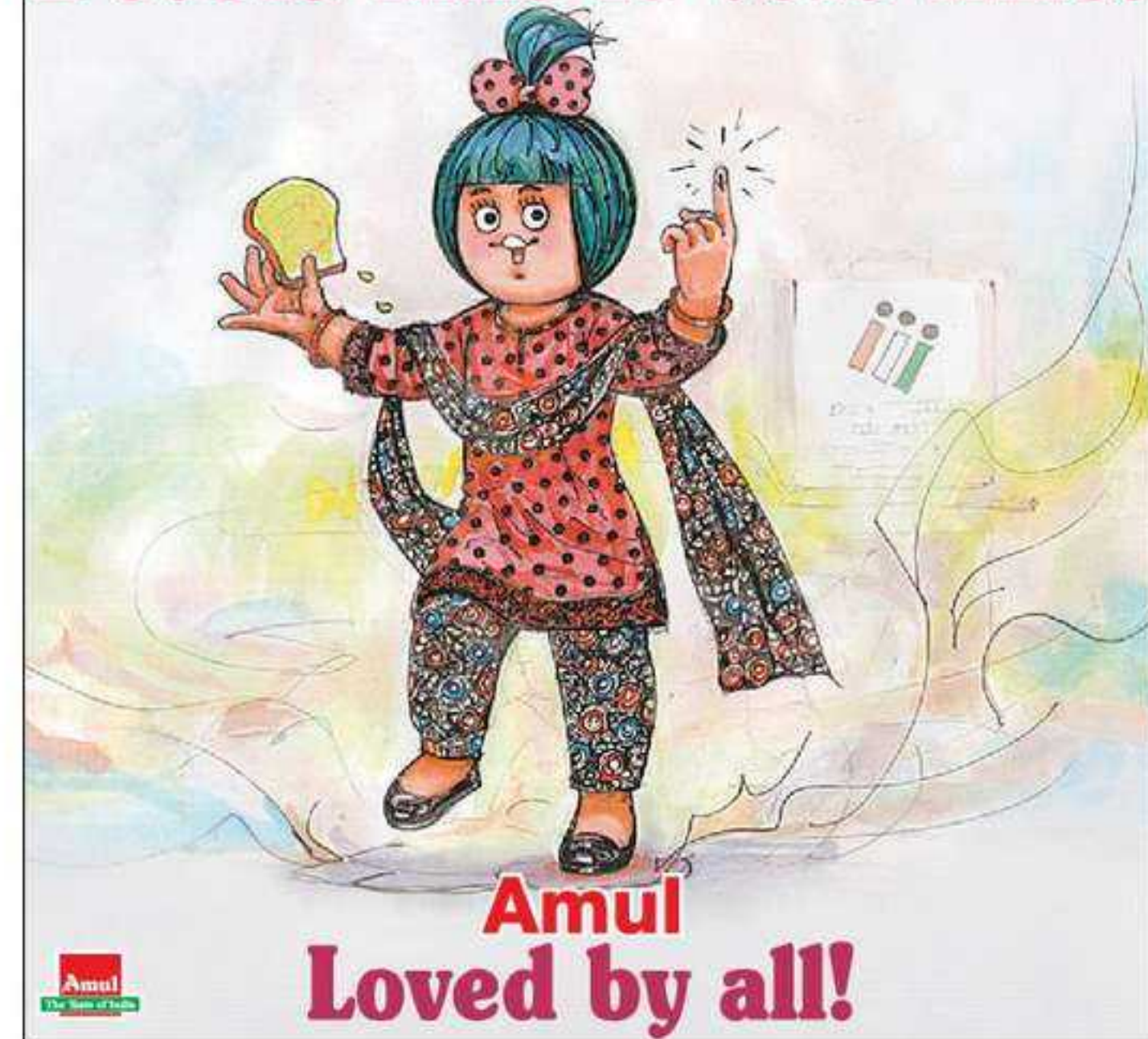
"My game was good even then, but I lacked confidence. Now, after winning a few medals in international competitions, my belief has risen. I'm no longer nervous before bouts."

Blocking external distractions comes naturally to the woman from Rurki.

She's cut down heavily on phone time, doesn't like to socialise anyway, and finds "*shanti* (peace)" inside the ring. Working on her mental strength, through sessions with a psychologist, though remains the youngster's focal point gearing up for her first Games experience.

"Even if I feel more pressure there, I want to be in a position mentally to handle it. Because no matter how strong we have trained, if we are down even slightly in the mind there, *sab palat sakta hai* (everything can flip)."

Devote time to vote time!



Novak exits Rome, to undergo scans

Agence France-Presse
sportsdesk@hindustantimes.com

ROME: Novak Djokovic described his shock third-round elimination from the Rome Open by outsider Alejandro Tabilo on Sunday as "concerning", two days after he was hit on the head by a bottle which he said has caused nausea and dizzy spells.

Djokovic's bid for a record-extending 41st Masters 1000 title was ended in just over an hour by Chilean Tabilo, who is ranked 32nd in the world and claimed his first win over a top-10 opponent, 6-2, 6-3.

The 24-time Grand Slam winner said that his subdued performance on a court where he has won six titles might have been due to the blow suffered while greeting fans on Friday night. He had initially laughed off being accidentally struck on the head by a hard water bottle following his second-round win

over Corentin Moutet, by wearing a cycling crash helmet to training on Saturday morning.

"I don't know, to be honest. I have to check that. Training was different. I was going for kind of easy training yesterday. I didn't feel anything, but I also didn't feel the same," Djokovic told reporters.

"Today under high stress, it was quite bad — not in terms of pain, but in terms of this balance. Just no coordination. Completely different player from what it was two nights ago."

Djokovic also said that he would have scans to "see what's going on" before the French Open in Paris, where he will head not just worried by the after-effects of the bottle incident but also his form.

The last time Djokovic got to Roland Garros without a title to his name that season was in 2018, when his first honour of the campaign came at Wimbledon.

Arsenal grind out victory against Man United to stay in title hunt

Agencies

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MANCHESTER: Arsenal kept their Premier League title dreams alive by ending an Old Trafford hoodoo to grind out a 1-0 win at Manchester United on Sunday to move back top of the table.

Leandro Trossard scored the only goal on 20 minutes as Arsenal won for just the second time in 17 games away at United to go a point clear at the summit. Manchester City still have the destiny of the title in their own hands as the defending champions have two matches left to Arsenal's one.

However, the Gunners kept the pressure on Pep Guardiola's men ahead of their tricky trip to

STANDINGS

| TEAM | P | W | D | L | GD | Pts |
|-------------|----|----|---|----|----|-----------|
| Arsenal | 37 | 27 | 5 | 5 | 61 | 86 |
| Man City | 36 | 26 | 7 | 3 | 58 | 85 |
| Liverpool | 36 | 23 | 9 | 4 | 43 | 78 |
| Aston Villa | 36 | 20 | 7 | 9 | 20 | 67 |
| Tottenham | 36 | 19 | 6 | 11 | 12 | 63 |

Tottenham on Tuesday.

Defeat further dented United's chances of competing in Europe next season. Erik ten Hag's men showed more spirit than in a dismal 4-0 defeat to Crystal Palace on Monday, but have now won just one of their last eight Premier League games. United remain eighth in the table, three points adrift of both Newcastle,

who they face on Wednesday, and Chelsea. Arsenal have been in scintillating form in 2024 to remain in the race for their first league title in 20 years.

Mikel Arteta's men have won 15 and drawn one of their 17 league games since the turn of the year. But Arsenal were far from their flowing best as the expected onslaught of an injury-ravaged United never materialised under unusually stifling heat in England's north-west.

The manner of defeat at Palace had increased the scrutiny on United boss Ten Hag.

He made three changes to the team swept aside at Selhurst Park as Scott McTominay, Sofyan Amrabat and Amad Diallo came in.

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