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WARRANTY 5 YEARS

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West Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee in Howrah. PTI

'SEXUAL HARASSMENT'
Got pen drive, another video: Mamata attacks Governor over allegations

ATRI MITRA
KOLKATA, MAY 11

WEST BENGAL Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee Saturday claimed she has "another video, pen drive" of Governor CV Ananda Bose, who has been accused by a Raj Bhavan contractual staffer of sexual harassment. Her attack comes days after the Raj Bhavan showed CCTV footage of the premises from May 2 — the day of the alleged incident — to around 100 people. At an election rally in Hooghly, Banerjee said: "The Honourable Governor says '*didigiri nahi chalegi*'. That is true, *dadagiri and didigiri nahi chalegi*. But the Governor must first resign. Who is he to torture women? He recently called the press and showed a few edited videos. Why didn't he show the entire footage? I ask the press to go through the footage carefully." She said: "I got another video... pen drive. More scandal. Scandal after scandal... My God... If he calls me to Raj Bhavan, I will not go. If he calls me to meet him on the streets, I will do that. But, after hearing about the scandals, even sitting next to you is a sin." Bose has said the charges are "engineered narratives" meant to "stop my fight against corruption and violence in Bengal". On Monday, he had hit out at Banerjee, saying, "I always took

DAY AFTER RELEASE ON INTERIM BAIL, CITES PM 'RULE' OF RETIREMENT AT 75

If you vote for BJP, you are voting for Amit Shah (as PM), not Modi: Kejriwal



Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal and Punjab CM Bhagwant Mann in Mehrauli on Saturday. Tashi Tobgyal. FULL COVERAGE, PAGE 4



party headquarters here, a day after his release on interim bail, the AAP national convenor said: "These people ask the IN-DIA bloc who will be your Prime Minister? I ask the BJP who will be your Prime

Minister?... Modi ji is turning 75 on September 17 next year. He made a rule in 2014 that people in the BJP must retire at 75 years... So, I want to ask the BJP who is your Prime Ministerial candidate?"

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

NIRMALA, NADDA, YOGI ALSO HIT BACK

BJP top brass counters: Modi to complete 3rd term, remain leader

No age bar, no confusion, says Shah; Opp in panic, aim to mislead: Nadda

VIKAS PATHAK & SREENIVAS JANYALA
NEW DELHI, HYDERABAD, MAY 11

THE TOP brass of the BJP rushed in Saturday to rally around Prime Minister Narendra Modi after Delhi Chief Minister and Aam Aadmi Party leader Arvind Kejriwal's claim that the purported age-bar of 75 in the BJP would mean that Modi, 73, could, if he got a third term, step down in September 2025, mak-



Home Minister Amit Shah in Hyderabad Saturday. PTI

ing way for Amit Shah to become Prime Minister. CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



Prime Minister Narendra Modi during a public meeting in Odisha's Kandhamal district on Saturday. PTI

Cong spreading fear over Pak, tally will fall below 50: Modi

SUJIT BISOI
BHUBANESWAR, MAY 11

PRIME MINISTER Narendra Modi on Saturday said "the country has decided that the Congress will not even be the Opposition party as its numbers will fall to below 50", pointing out that the party needs at least one-tenth of the total Lok Sabha seats to be the main Opposition party. Addressing a rally at Odisha's Phulbani under Kandhamal Lok Sabha constituency, Modi reiter-

ated that the NDA would cross the 400-mark while the BJP would break its past record. "You take my word on record," he said. Modi also accused the Congress of spreading fear by repeatedly stating that Pakistan has nuclear weapons. Speaking on the anniversary of the Pokhran tests 26 years ago, Modi hailed former prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee and said that "Indians across the entire world had taken pride in it". "That was the time when

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

MAHARASHTRA

Farmer pain, few jobs, Maratha quota are issues, but Modi rises above these

SANDEEP SINGH & PVAIDYANATHAN IYER
MAVAL, SHIRUR, AHMEDNAGAR, AURANGABAD, MAY 11

IN THE HEART of Ahmednagar, 250 km east of Mumbai, businessman Machhindra Darkunde, 42, who produces edible oils, acknowledges that farmers are in pain and the Maratha community is upset over reservation.



Machhindra Darkunde, a small businessman in Ahmednagar district

"My people are angry that Modiji didn't refer at all to reservation during his rally here four days ago," he says and then promptly rises to explain. "But the people have to understand that if he makes a promise here, he will have to promise in other states too. How can he do that?" says Darkunde, a Maratha himself. In Maharashtra, the most industrialised state in India, which accounts for almost 10 per cent

CONTINUED ON PAGE 11

Complaint on turnout 'our EVM moment', had to respond, says EC official

ASAD REHMAN & RITIKA CHOPRA
NEW DELHI, MAY 11

RESPONDING TO the scathing rejoinder from the Election Commission (EC) regarding his allegations about voter turnout data, Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge wrote back to the poll watchdog Saturday, stating that although he has "misgivings" about the language used in the EC's letter, he will not dwell on that issue as he understands "the pressures" EC is "working under".

However, a senior officer of the Commission told *The Sunday Express* that Kharge's accusations were akin to the EC's "EVM moment of 2019", one where the fundamental integrity of the process was being questioned without any evidence. And so the institution had to put its foot down to unequivocally make its case. On Friday, in a response uncharacteristic of the poll

CONTINUED ON PAGE 11

As Patnaik, his schemes put BJD on course, BJP banks on promise of change to close Odisha gap



BJD's VK Pandian campaigns in Odisha's Hinjili. Sujit Bisoi

LIZ MATHEW & SUJIT BISOI
SAMBALPUR, HINJILI, MAY 11

"WE HAVE good schemes for women, elderly people and youngsters. Naveen (Patnaik) babu has taken care of us very well," said Sharat Kanar, a resident of Kadligarh village in Sambalpur district, a first-time voter in the simultaneous Odisha Assembly

(147 seats) and Lok Sabha (21 seats) elections beginning May 13.

"It's true that more needs to be done to provide jobs to youths because many of us have to migrate from Odisha. So we have to give one more chance to Modi at the Centre, but Naveen babu is just fine for Odisha," he said, making his choices clear. At Charichhak in Boudh district, Duryodhan Sahu, who runs

CONTINUED ON PAGE 11

'Today we can stand without fear, look Brij Bhushan in the eye, and tell him: We are not going anywhere'

VINESH PHOGAT
SPECIAL TO THE EXPRESS

RIGHT FROM the morning of Friday, May 10, my fellow wrestlers and I were waiting to know what happens in court. We had logged in online but the connection had snapped for a while. Later in the afternoon, it

was someone from our team of lawyers who informed Sakshi (Malik) that charges have been framed. I was at training when I got the news.

The framing of charges (sexual harassment and outraging modesty of women) against former Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) president and BJP MP Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh is a win for us but our battle will continue in court. Today we can stand without fear, our head held high, look him in the eye, the man we were afraid of for so many years. Brij Bhushan has got the message that we are not go-



Vinesh Phogat after beating Kyrgyzstan's Laura Ganikeyzy last month at the Asian Olympic Qualifiers in Bishkek to win a Paris Olympics quota. United World Wrestling/Kadir Caliskan

"Most sportspeople must have thought we were mad to protest like we did.... I hope with the framing of charges, their thought process has changed"

ing anywhere until women wrestlers get justice.

The framing of charges also sends a strong message that women can take on powerful men and they don't have to be afraid. Protesting against someone so

CONTINUED ON PAGE 11

DECISION 2024
PAGES 6, 8, 9

● YSRCP, TDP and Jana Sena are BJP's 'B' team in Andhra Pradesh: Rahul Gandhi

● 65.68% voting in third phase, 57% seats saw a decline in turnout

● NDA needs 400-plus seats for UCC, Mathura temple: Himanta

NAUSHEEN
RANK-9, IAS-2023

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“Main desh ke logon ko aagah karna chahta hoon, Modi ji apne liye vote nahi maang rahe hain, Modi ji Amit Shah ko Pradhan Mantri banane ke liye vote maang rahe hain. Main pooshtna chahta hoon Modi ji se aur Amit Shah ji se, yeh Modi ki guarantee poori kaun karega? Kya Amit Shah Modi ki guarantee poori karenga? Vaise to mujhe nahi lagta inki sarkar ban rahi hai, lekin jo BJP ko vote dena jayen, woh yeh soch ke jaana ki ap Modi ji ke naam pe vote nahi de rahe, ap Amit Shah ke naam pe vote de rahe ho (I want to warn the people of the country that Modi ji is not asking for votes for himself, he is asking for votes to make Amit Shah the Prime Minister. I want to ask Modi ji and Amit Shah ji, who will fulfill Modi's guarantee? Will Amit Shah fulfill Modi's guarantee? Although I do not think that their government will be formed, but whoever goes to

vote for the BJP should think that you are voting in the name of Amit Shah, not Modi(ji)," he said.

"Pradhan Mantri ji ne ek bahut khatarnak mission chalu kiya hua hai. Iss mission ka naam hai 'one-nation, one-leader'. Desh ke saare नेताओं ko khatarnak karna chahte hain Modi ji, aur do star ke upar iss mission ko chala rahe hain. jitne vipaksh ke नेता hain unko jali bhejenge, aur jitne BJP ke नेता hain unko nipta denge, unki rajdeshi khatarnak kar denge (The Prime Minister has launched a very dangerous mission. The name of this mission is 'one-nation, one-leader'. Modi ji wants to eliminate all the leaders of the country and is running this mission at two levels. All the Opposition leaders will be sent to jail, and all the BJP leaders will be disposed of, their politics will be ended)," Kejriwal said.

"If they win the elections, Mamata Didi, Tejashwi Yadav, (M

K) Stalin, Pinarayi Vijayan, Uddhav Thackeray and all the Opposition leaders will be in jail... They ended the politics of (L K) Advani ji, Murli Manohar Joshi and Sumitra Mahajan. These people did not make Shivraj Singh Chouhan the (Madhya Pradesh) Chief Minister, they ended his politics. They ended the politics of Vasundhara Raje, (M L) Khattar Saheb, Raman Singh... It is now Yogi Adityanath's turn," he said.

"Agar ye chunav jeet gaye, mere se likhva lo, do mahine ke andar Uttar Pradesh ka Mukhya Mantri badal denge ye. Yogi Adityanath ki raajneeti khatm kareng, unko bhi nipta denge. Yehi taanashahi hai doston. Ek hi taanashah bachega iss desh main (If he wins the election, take it in writing from me, he will change the Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh within two months. Yogi Adityanath's politics will be

ended, he will be disposed of. This is dictatorship. Only one dictator will survive in this country," Kejriwal alleged.

Kejriwal said he was making these statements after thinking over the issue for the last 50 days (since his arrest on March 21). "Main 140 crore logon se bheekhi maangne aaya hoon. Mere deshon ko taanashahi se bacha lo (I have come to beg of the 140 crore people. Save my country from dictatorship). The Supreme Court gave me 21 days (to campaign). One day has 24 hours but I will work for 36 hours. My entire being is devoted to my country," he said.

Arrested in the Delhi excise policy case on March 21 by the Enforcement Directorate and subsequently placed in judicial custody, Kejriwal was granted interim bail until June 1 — the last phase of voting in the ongoing Lok Sabha elections — by the Supreme Court on Friday. He has to surrender on June 2. The court, however, barred him from visiting his office or the Delhi secretariat, and signing official files unless absolutely necessary for

obtaining the Lieutenant Governor's approval.

"They (BJP) sent me to jail. The Prime Minister says he is fighting corruption, but he has inducted the country's biggest thieves and dacoits in his party. People who Modi ji would accuse of committing a Rs 70,000 crore scam were inducted in the BJP 10 days later. He makes someone the Deputy CM, someone a minister, and closes all ED and CBI cases against them, and yet he says that he is fighting corruption," Kejriwal said.

"Modi ji, if you want to fight corruption, learn from Kejriwal; he has fought the battle against corruption. In 2015, when our government was formed in Delhi, someone sent me an audio clip of one of our ministers on WhatsApp. In that audio clip, my minister was demanding Rs 5 lakh from a shopkeeper; nobody from the media or the Opposition knew about it. I handed over my own minister to the CBI and sent him to jail. This is the fight against corruption," Kejriwal said.

"What did you do? You wel-

come all the corrupt people in the party and you dare to call yourself a crusader against corruption? By arresting me, the BJP has sent the message that they can arrest anyone, even if there is no case against them," he said.

Responding to the BJP's criticism on not stepping down from the CM's post after his arrest, he said: "I don't have any love for posts... When I became the CM for the first time, I resigned within 49 days. So, why didn't I resign when I was arrested? The AAP has won Delhi with unprecedented margins. They know they cannot defeat us even for the next 20 years. They conspired so that I would resign and the AAP government would fall. I said I won't resign, I will run the government from jail... Even Jharkhand CM Hemant Soren shouldn't have resigned... This is my protest against their taanashahi (dictatorship)," he said.

Predicting an electoral loss for BJP in the Lok Sabha polls, Kejriwal said the INDIA bloc would form the government and AAP would be a part of it.

India had showcased its strength to the world. The Congress's mindset on the other hand was to scare the country. They would say 'be careful... Pakistan has an atom bomb'," said Modi. "Today, the condition of Pakistan is such that they can't even handle the (nuclear) bomb... they are now out to sell it... But people know that it's not of good quality, so it's not being sold," he said.

"These people did not have the courage to take strong action against terrorists after the 26/11 Mumbai attacks. Why? It's because the Congress and the INDI Alliance thought that if they take strong action... it will upset their vote bank," Modi said.

Referring to Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, Modi said, "You see his speech from 2014, 2019 and 2024 elections. He keeps on reading the same script. The Congress needs one-tenth of total Lok Sabha seats to be the Opposition party. The country has decided that the Congress will not even be

Later, addressing a rally at Bargarh, Modi said the Odisha government has been outsourced. "Who runs the BJP government in Odisha? Do you know the entire government has been outsourced? There is a super CM (referring to V K Pandian) here who is above the democratically elected government and the CM. Do you want the state to go to the hands of those who have no understanding of Odisha? Whose responsibility is it to save Odisha?" he said.

Addressing another rally in Chatra, Jharkhand, Modi said the Opposition had "already accepted defeat" as the INDIA bloc leaders were planning to merge small parties to attain Opposition status. "A statement by a big alliance leader that all small parties should merge with the Congress after the elections shows their desperation," he said.

Modi also accused the Opposition of "insulting" President Droupadi Murmu after

One by one, Home Minister Amit Shah, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and party president JP Nadda rebutted Kejriwal's remarks to say there was no "confusion" in the party on this issue.

"Arvind Kejriwal and NDI alliance need not feel happy about Narendra Modi turning 75. No such thing is mentioned in the BJP's constitution. Modi ji is going to complete this term and Modi ji will continue to lead the country into the future. There is no confusion within the BJP; they want to create confusion," Shah said in Hyderabad.

Nadda said the party's constitution had no age bar to occupy a post. "The opposition should have no illusions. Modi ji is our leader and will continue to lead us into the future," he said.

Kejriwal and the Opposition alliance are in panic over their impending defeat, Nadda added, and their aim was to "mislead and confuse" the country by using the PM's age as an "excuse".

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh wrote on X: "The nonsensical statements made by Arvind Kejriwal on the BJP after his release on interim bail show that BJP and NDA under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi will secure a remarkable victory... The BJP and NDA are contesting

the elections under PM Modi, who will become Prime Minister again and complete his third term.”

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman also took to X to attack Kejriwal’s claim that Modi sidelined Uday Advani, Murlu Manohar Joshi, Sumitran Mahajan, Shivraj Singh Chouhan, Vasundhara Raje, Manohar Lal Khattar and Raman Singh — and that Yogi Adityanath would be the next.

“Height of shamelessness! Most of the founding members of AAP are no longer with it,” she said tagging Prashant Bhushan, Kumar Vishwas and Yogendra Yadav. “Most fed frightened by brazen corruption that continues to stink around it... A person who is ordered to surrender to go back to Tihar on charges of corruption insinuates!”

BJP insiders said Hema Malini, Preneet Kaur and Ranjit Chautala were party candidates at the age of 75 or above. What provoked the leadership, they said, was that Kejriwal had aimed to put a question mark on the central plank of the party’s campaign — a vote for PM Modi’s “guarantee”.

Even as Kejriwal alleged that Modi was trying to inaugurate a “one-nation-one-leader” polity by trying to stifle opposition — an argument other

Opposition leaders have also made — he took it further saying Modi was trying to undermine other BJP leaders too.

This was an echo of how Modi has, for years, claimed Congress leaders from Sardar Patel to even P.V. Narasimha Rao while training his guns solely on the Nehru-Gandhi family. Likewise, Kejriwal sought to attack only Modi and Shah, distancing other BJP leaders from the duo.

Kejriwal's claim that Modi, if he returns to power, would also replace Yogi Adityanath as UP CM is being interpreted as a move to add to the disquiet among a section of Rajput voters of the BJP in UP and Bihar.

There have been some protests by Rajputs in western UP over their diminished representation in ticket distribution in the early phases in UP, apart from clear signs of Rajput anger in north and western India over Parshottam Rupala's statement that was interpreted as running down the community. Both UP and Bihar, where polls are spread over all seven phases, have Rajput voters. Two UP Rajput leaders, Rajnath Singh and Adityanath himself, rushed to counter Kejriwal.

Saying the "entire propaganda" of the Opposition had failed, Yogi Adityanath accused it of making a

“desperate” attempt to target the BJP using the “excuse of Modi’s age.”

Adityanath said Modi was the leader of 140 crore Indians, adding, “*Phir ek baar Modi sarkar; baar baar Modi sarkar* (Modi government once again; Modi government again and again).”

So far, the BJP’s campaign has revolved around a one-leader campaign. Kejriwal’s broader national messaging went hand in hand with a focused outreach to that chunk of Delhi voters which votes for Modi in the Lok Sabha and Kejriwal in the Assembly polls.

Earlier, in Hyderabad, Shah said that “Narendra Modi has 23 years of experience as CM and PM and he has ensured development of the country.” He added: “He has worked tirelessly for the upliftment of the poor. Today, internal security has improved; we have a tight grip over terror and Naxalites. On one hand, we have a PM who comes from a poor background, a tea seller, and on the other we have leaders born with a silver spoon in their mouth, products of dynasty politics.”

He also said that the interim bail to Kejriwal is not a clean chit: “The Supreme Court has given interim bail to Kejriwal only for election campaign purposes. On June 2, he has to surrender before the investigation agency.”

she stand that her politics is not my cup of tea. Now, because of the humiliating remarks that have been made against me, I am forced to tell you, Mamata Banerjee's politics is dirty. Still, I will pray to God to save her, but this is difficult even for God. I will never accept this 'Didigiri' on the distinguished office of the Governor," he had said.

Banerjee also claimed that allegations of sexual assault from Sandeshkhali are part of a conspiracy orchestrated by the BJP. "They have spread so many lies. People have seen how the BJP orchestrated the Sandeshkhali conspiracy. Modi babu instigated the

issue. For a woman, her dignity matters more than the money. What they have done is one of the most depraved crimes and no one could ever do," she claimed.

"Complainants did not even know what they were being made to write or that they were signing fake rape complaints. This used to happen in earlier days, and should not happen in this century. The women are now stepping out and telling the truth," she claimed. "In exchange for money, women were tricked into writing false complaints without their knowledge or consent. There cannot be a bigger crime than this."



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PET DOG FOUND LOCKED IN BATHROOM

Doctor's murder after 'friendly entry' leaves Jangpura Ext shaken


WHAT TRANSPIRED AT C-14 ON FRIDAY AFTERNOON



1.30 PM: Dr Paul arrives at his house for lunch from his clinic, a 10-minute walk

1.32 PM: CCTV footage shows three men entering the premises. Two more wait outside

ONCE INSIDE, the men attacked the doctor, gagged him, tied him up with a rope, covered his face with a blanket, and strangled him with a dog leash




HIS DOG was locked inside a bathroom

4 PM: Footage shows the men leaving with bags

6.30 PM: Dr Paul's wife Neena comes home from work, finds her husband's body on the floor

6.50 PM: PCR call made



The house at Jangpura Ext where Dr Yogesh Chander Paul (top) lived. *Express*

ARNABJIT SUR
NEW DELHI, MAY 11

ON USUAL days, Dr Neena Paul, a gynaecologist at a government hospital, comes home from work around 6.30pm. A resident of up-scale Jangpura, she lived on the upper ground floor in a builder flat in the locality with her husband Yogesh Chander Paul, 63, a well-known physician. Their daughter had moved to Noida after marriage three years ago, and the couple had been on their own since. They had a canine company though: six-year-old Molly, a beagle.

But on Friday, when Dr Neena returned from her shift, she sensed something amiss. The main door of the house was ajar. She raised an alarm, prompting neighbours to gather, and one of them decided to check inside.

What the neighbour saw shook her bones. "It was gory," she said. "Dr Paul's body was lying horizontally on the kitchen floor. His hands were tied behind his back. He had been strangled with a leash of his pet. He had been gagged with a cap. His face had been covered by a *chaddar* (bed cover)." She further said, "One of the lenses of his spectacles was found lying outside the kitchen. They had hit him on the face, perhaps," she added.

The murder of the affable Dr Paul who used to run a clinic a 7-minute walk away from his home in C block, Jangpura Extension, and was popular for reserving half-an-hour everyday to check patients for free, has left the locality shaken.

Said Mehek Sethi, a lawyer who lives a floor above the Pauls: "He would start his work day at 10am and get back home around 1pm."

After spotting Dr Paul's body, the neighbours started looking for Molly who was nowhere to be seen. But then, they heard a whimper from a bathroom, which was locked from outside. "The killers had locked her there and left," said Sethi.

Eyewitnesses also said they found "every cupboard and almi-

rah lying open" and belongings scattered on the floor in all four bedrooms.

Locality not new to crime

Most of Dr Paul's neighbours are professionals – a number of them lawyers, which explains the scores of law offices dotting the neighbourhood.

Kapil Kakkar, who heads the RWA (Residents' Welfare Association), said the locality has witnessed several instances of thefts recently. "Some time ago, a tyre of a car was stolen. Last year, side view mirrors of a car were stolen," he said. "But we had never thought that something this brutal could ever happen in our locality". He said the murder and burglary has caused a lot of panic among residents.

The building that Dr Paul lived in had witnessed a burglary incident in the past. "In 2017, it happened in our flat. We were away and the burglars broke open the door and stole valuables, including furniture. They even removed toilet seats," Sethi said. "Apparently, they had told people that they were movers and packers so as to avoid attention as they loaded stuff on their vehicle".

A senior police officer, part of the murder investigation, told *The Indian Express* that in Dr Paul's case, "there were three burglars who entered the flat, wearing snapback caps with white scarves around their neck". Besides, there were two more roaming about the street to keep watch.

"The apartment building doesn't have any CCTV cameras," the police officer said.

"However, the CCTV footage from a camera at the house right across clearly shows three men entering the building within two minutes after Dr Paul returned from his clinic 1.30pm," the officer added.

'Clear that they were waiting for him'

"It is clear that they were waiting for him and had done a reconnaissance earlier. It is a premeditated crime," the officer said.

Sethi, the neighbour, said Dr Paul followed a strict schedule. "He used to go for a walk at 8am and leave for his clinic at 9.30am," she said.

Dr Paul had set up the clinic after a stint at a private hospital 20 years ago. He preferred to walk to his clinic.

"He had two cars but he loved to walk," said Sethi.

The police said they have found that the entry by the burglars was "friendly". "The door wasn't broken," a police officer said, adding the shoemarks of one of the burglars was found inside the washroom. "CCTV footage shows that they (burglars) left the apartment only at 4 pm, carrying bags," the officer said. The police are tight-lipped about what has been looted from the apartment.

Police are questioning the Pauls' part-time house help and the attendant at the clinic of the deceased.

Lawyer Sethi said that Dr Paul was like a family doctor to the entire locality.

"He used to provide free treatment to the underprivileged everyday for half an hour... He was full of life, always smiling," she recalled.

A family friend, Anil Aggarwal, said the Pauls had accompanied his family to Ayodhya recently.

Talking about security measures in the area, Kakkar, the RWA president, said, "There are eight CCTV cameras installed by the police around Jangpura Extension. Besides, most of the houses have their own cameras."

The police had earlier taken a few measures to thwart burglaries in the area. "From 11 pm to 6 am, the area turns into a fortress. The police would lay barricades and shut every entry/exit point. The only road open is from the Defence Colony flyover side," a resident said. "It seems even the police didn't expect burglars to strike in broad daylight. There is hardly any police presence during the day," he added.

DCP (Southeast) Rajesh Deo said the police have some "very strong leads" in the case. "The investigation is at a crucial stage, so at this point in time, we cannot share the details," he added.

19-year-old girl buried in wall collapse, two men crushed by trees: Storm kills three, injures 23 in Delhi

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, MAY 11

THREE PERSONS were killed and 23 injured in incidents ranging from building damage to the uprooting of trees due to the storm that hit the national capital region late on Friday evening.

According to the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD), 16 incidents of trees being uprooted were reported to the civic body between Friday evening and Saturday morning while the New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC) recorded 78 complaints.



People walk past an uprooted tree in New Delhi, Friday. *PTI*

Delhi Fire Services (DFS) received 50 calls between 9 and 11 pm on Friday night related to storm-related incidents, according to officials.

Among those who lost their lives

were Shireen, 19, a resident of Abul Fazal Enclave, who died after a brick wall fell on her, and 30-year-old Hari Om, who was crushed by a tree in Rohini Sector 16. Jaiprakash, a two-wheeler rider, was reported to have died after a tree branch fell on him near the Janakpuri flyover.

According to officials, across agencies, as many as 152 calls – including an estimated 130 made to the DFS regarding incidents of uprooting of trees, electricity poles and hoardings – were collated in this regard till Saturday.

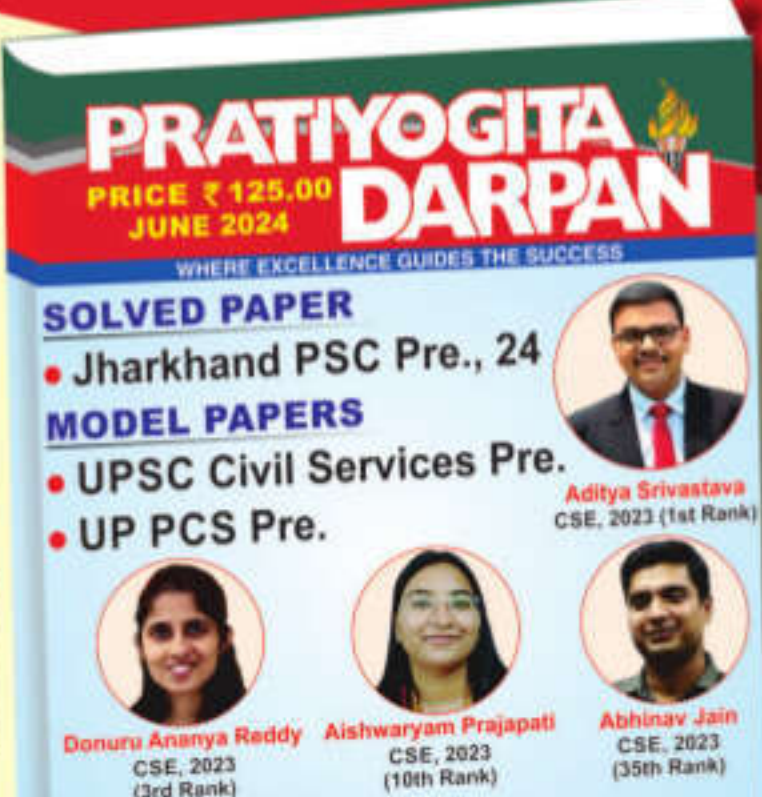
Officials added that around 55 calls related to the collapse of portions of buildings and structures in the capital were logged and 202 calls were received regarding power disruptions as the storm swept the city.

According to the IMD forecast on Friday, a dust/thunderstorm with rain and gusty winds was expected over the NCR later in the day. The impact of the weather feature, mainly strong winds, was expected to damage plantation, cause partial damage to vulnerable structures, etc.

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2 held for duping man of Rs 2 cr with promise of Rajya Sabha seat

New Delhi: Delhi Police has arrested two persons for allegedly duping a man of Rs 2 crore after promising to get him a Rajya Sabha seat in exchange for Rs 5 crore, said officials.

Narender Singh (63), the complainant, alerted the authorities that on April 25, Naveen Kumar Singh (43) and Nanak Das (48) had promised to procure him a Rajya Sabha seat through the President Quota.

Naveen even sent over two forged documents, claiming that they were from the President's office, to Singh to win his trust, the official said. Singh ended up paying Rs 1.25 crore to Naveen and Rs 75 lakh to Das.

During questioning, Naveen revealed that he had bought some property in Bihar using his share of the money, said police.

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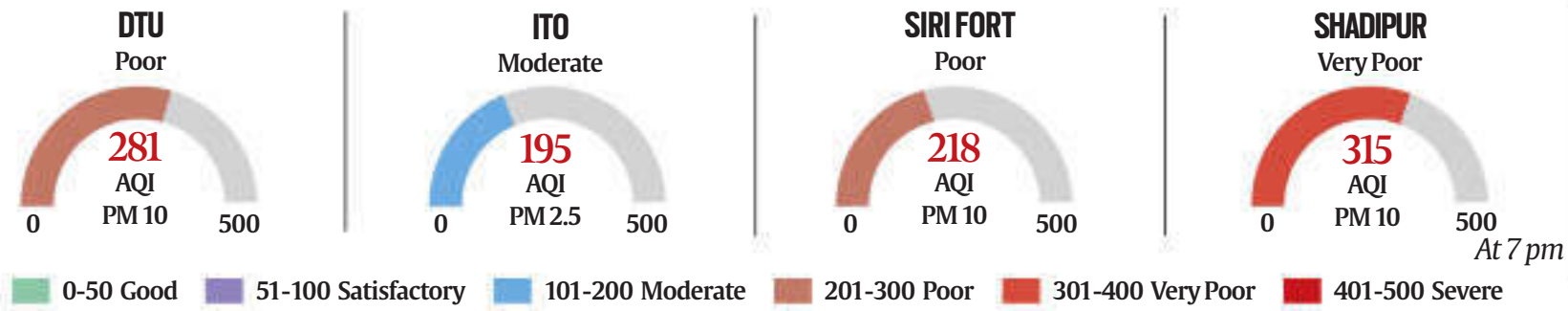
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CM HITS THE STREETS, HOLDS TWO ROADSHOWS IN DELHI

‘Will start Rs 1,000 scheme for women soon’

AAP chief takes on PM, accuses him of wanting to change the Constitution

GAYATHRI MANI
NEW DELHI, MAY 11

“I CAME straight from work to see Arvind Kejriwal... till yesterday, it felt like a one-sided affair... but now, it feels like a proper election...,” said Sonia, a resident of Geeta Colony in East Delhi.

The 32-year-old was among several people who thronged the streets to catch a glimpse of the Delhi Chief Minister during his roadshow in Krishna Nagar — a BJP stronghold — on Saturday evening, a day after his release from Tihar Jail on interim bail. From their balconies, several residents showered Kejriwal with flower petals as his convoy passed by while others held up posters that read, ‘I love you Kejriwal’, and ‘babbar sher aa gayay’.

Standing atop a car along with his Punjab counterpart Bhagwant Mann, Kejriwal said, “I told you I would be back soon... When I went to jail, everyone was worried about what would happen to the Rs 1,000 per month (honorarium for women)... I want to tell all my mothers and sisters that I am here now, I will start (it) soon...”

Hitting out at the BJP for arresting him and denying him insulin in jail, he added, “... I was thinking why was I arrested? I am a small person and have a small party... My only fault is that I constructed schools, hospitals, roads, mohalla clinics... I gave you free medicines... but they did not give me insulin for 15 days in Tihar despite several requests... I’m now alive because of all your prayers and blessings...”

The CM held the roadshow in support of AAP’s East Delhi candidate Kuldeep Kumar, who is up against BJP’s Harsh Malhotra. The Assembly constituency of Krishna Nagar, which has an old association with the RSS, comprises a trader community and a Punjabi population. In the 2020 Assembly polls, AAP’s SK Bagga won the seat.

Calling the Supreme Court’s decision of giving interim bail ‘god’s miracle’, Kejriwal issued an appeal ahead of the Lok Sabha election in Delhi: “Friends, we have to end this dictatorship... these people (BJP) are asking for 400 seats... *ander se pata chala ye Russia ke tarah samvidhan badalna chahte hain...* Like there is only Putin in Russia... they want only Modi in India...”

He then went on to accuse the BJP and the Prime Minister of wanting to change the “Constitution”. He said, “... Whichever state I go to, I ask for votes based on the work we have done in Delhi. But they (BJP) ask votes in the name of *mangalsutra...* because they have not done anything in the last 10 years...”

Harpal Singh, a hotel owner and resident of Krishna Nagar, nodded his head in agreement. “Things will change now... the BJP is finished not only in Delhi but the entire country... people are tired and angry with the BJP...”

Among the crowd were several women from nearby localities



(Anti-clockwise from above) Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal and his Punjab counterpart Bhagwant Mann at a roadshow in Mehrauli, Saturday; the CM, his wife and other party leaders at Navgrah Mandir in Connaught Place. Tashi Tobgyal

ties like Shanti Mohalla, Geeta Colony, Trilokpuri and Kanti Nagar. Pooja Devi, 65, a resident of Trilokpuri said, “... what has Modi done for the people of Delhi? Nothing... BJP does not even give ration on time... Kejriwal has done a lot of work in schools, hospitals and colonies... We are getting free electricity and water.”

Kejriwal, meanwhile, expressed confidence in the victory of the INDIA bloc: “Surveys show the Modi government is not coming back on June 4... in Delhi, they will lose all seven seats... The INDIA bloc will form the government at the Centre and AAP will be part of it...”

“... God has given me 21 days. I will roam the country day and night, work 24 hours to end this dictatorship... *mera tan, mann, dhan or mere sharir ka katra katra aur khoon ka ek ek katra, mere zindagi ka ek ek pal me desh ke naam hai...*,” he added.

Mohan Lal, 53, who runs a *lassi* and cold drink shop, expressed skepticism at the statement. “He has got bail for just 21 days... let’s see what he does to change the politics of Delhi... we are all BJP supporters... His release does not matter a lot in Krishna Nagar...”

Earlier in the day, Kejriwal

visited the Hanuman Temple, and the Shiv and Navgrah temples in Connaught Place and held a roadshow in South Delhi’s Mehrauli in support of party candidate Sahiram Pahalwan.

At one of the temples, a priest, on condition of anonymity, termed Kejriwal’s visit a “political affair”. A supporter of BJP’s ‘Ram Mandir’ cause, he said he only sees Modi as the “sole capable leader to lead the country right now”.

KN Joshi, a priest, claimed that while the Delhi CM frequented the Hanuman Mandir before, it was his first visit to the Shiv temple nearby. “(Former Deputy CM) Manish Sisodia was a regular at this temple even before the foundation days of AAP... Temples are not political spaces, we welcome everyone, be it from AAP, BJP, Congress,” he added. Meanwhile, temple workers seemed rather disinterested in the whole affair. Kiran, a sweeper who had been there since morning, accused all political parties of over-looking “jhuggi jhopdi people”. “We have been living in huts for years, drinking non-potable water... what have they done for us so that we should care?” she asked. (inputs from Himanshu Harsh, an intern with The Indian Express)

AAP will be part of govt formed on June 4: Mann

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, MAY 11

PUNJAB CHIEF Minister Bhagwant Mann told hundreds of people gathered at the party office Saturday that the AAP will be part of the government that will be formed at the Centre after June 4, when results of the ongoing Lok Sabha polls will be declared.

The AAP office was overflowing, with several supporters and workers standing outside the gates to hear what the AAP chief and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal had to say, a day after he was released on interim bail.

As a group of people raised slogans that went, “*Taanashahi ka ek hi kaal, Kejriwal, Kejriwal* (Only Kejriwal is the nemesis of dictatorship)”, Mann said, “I have been telling everyone, Kejriwal is not just a person but a thought. You can arrest a person but not a thought. He is the nemesis of dictatorship.”

He also thanked all those who stood with the party at its lowest hour. “Those who stand with you when you are down are organic supporters, the ones who leave are welcome to go,” he said.

Alleging that BJP and Prime Minister Narendra Modi had changed the tone and tenor of their campaign after the first three phases had concluded, Mann said, “This time, after three phases, Modi ji has realised that it’s not ‘*ab ki baar 400 paar*’ but ‘*ab ki baar shayad beda bhi nahi paar*’. The tone of his speeches is changing.”

Asking the people of Delhi to come out and meet “their own Kejriwal”, Mann said, “He (Kejriwal) was only retired hurt and not out. He has come back. The bat is the same, the pitch is the same. He will hit the same sixes and fours,” he said.

Mann also attended two roadshows with Kejriwal in South Delhi’s Mehrauli and East Delhi’s Krishna Nagar.

Kejriwal is cultivating lies, alleges BJP

New Delhi: The BJP Saturday accused CM Arvind Kejriwal of “cultivating lies” as soon as he got interim relief and termed the AAP “the mother of corruption”.

Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva alleged the CM’s public address, in which he took on PM Narendra Modi and BJP, was an exercise in deceit. “Kejriwal, who has come out of jail for poll campaigning, can’t go to the Delhi Secretariat nor can he sign any file... He has spent 50 days in jail and it is clear from his face that he has committed corruption. He has been granted interim bail only for campaigning. After all, what celebration will he have after June 1?” he asked. **ENS**

Modi vs Kejriwal, *nari shakti* in slums: How BJP plans to take Delhi again

JATIN ANAND
NEW DELHI, MAY 11

HIGHLIGHTING Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his achievements at the Centre, stoking “latent resentment” against the AAP government’s withdrawn excise policy among women in the city’s slums and JJ clusters — with two weeks to go before Delhi votes, and with Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal out on interim bail, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has revamped its Lok Sabha campaign in the Capital, according to party insiders.

Modi, party sources said, was likely to address two large gatherings in the city over the coming days — one of which was expected to be aimed at “eclipsing” the INDIA bloc’s rally at Ramlila Maidan on March 31. “The PM is likely to address one large rally at Shastri Park in Northeast Delhi — which will be at the intersection of the Northeast, Chandni Chowk and East Delhi Lok Sabha seats. Another large gathering is planned to showcase the PM’s popularity through the sheer number of those in attendance compared to the rally put together by around two dozen INDIA leaders last month,” a party leader said.

“Over the coming days, the party and its senior leadership are expected to become more vocal and aggressive on the issue of corruption and target the AAP, specifically, to bring it to the centre of the political discourse instead of other INDIA bloc parties,” another party leader said. The BJP also plans to deploy regional leaders from across the

country at smaller gatherings in specific pockets of the city where voters from states and communities represented by them reside.

In the meantime, the party will also step up its outreach in Delhi’s slums and JJ clusters where it has traditionally been weak in comparison to the Congress and then the AAP, both of which have joined forces for the Lok Sabha polls in the capital.

According to sources, apart from stepping up its door-to-door campaign among beneficiaries of Central welfare schemes in such localities, the BJP will specifically seek to communicate “the misuse and corruption” of the AAP government in addition to targeting Kejriwal himself.

“We have already been communicating with women in such pockets on how the PM’s policies and schemes at the Centre have transformed their lives; over the coming days, we will underline how Kejriwal, currently a common criminal out on bail, was responsible for impacting their lives and households the opposite way,” the leader said, adding that the party would specifically step up its outreach in this respect in the Chandni Chowk, Northeast and West Delhi Lok Sabha seats.

“The AAP can claim popularity in such areas based on its power and water subsidies, but our surveys of such areas posit there is not just resentment but a lot of anger against its government which, through its 1 plus 1 scheme on alcohol, plunged women’s husbands and sons into lifelong addiction,” a senior BJP leader alleged.

At 2 rallies, BJP ministers attack AAP on ‘corruption’

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, MAY 11

ACCUSING IT of being entrenched in corruption and lax in administration, Ghaziabad MP General V K Singh (retd) and Union Minister Arjun Meghwal took on the AAP-Delhi government on Saturday, alleging that Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal has not done even “10% of the work” done by the previous governments.

Both senior BJP leaders addressed public gatherings in favour of the BJP’s Northwest Delhi Lok Sabha candidate Yogender Chandoliya and West Delhi candidate Kamaljeet Sehrawat. “There is a government in Delhi that is only engulfed in corruption, instead of working. Whatever the previous governments did, even 10% of that work has not been done

by the Kejriwal government,” Singh alleged.

“It is our responsibility now not to elect people from Delhi who are only involved in corruption. The Modi government has done so much work in Delhi in 10 years that the previous governments did not. To reduce pollution, the AAP government made many promises, but the Modi government has reduced pollution in Delhi by constructing the Eastern-Western Peripheral Road,” he added.

Meghwal said people wanted to re-elect PM Narendra Modi for the sake of development of the country.

“PM Modi has directly benefited the people with many schemes, whether it is Ujjwala Yojana, Jan Dhan Yojana, Startup, or other schemes. By providing free grains, the Prime Minister has ensured that no one goes hungry,” he said.

SUNDER NAGRI

At cradle of CM’s politics, residents recollect man who sat on 15-day fast

ABHINAYA HARIGOVIND
NEW DELHI, MAY 11

AROUND THE time that Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal addressed party workers and supporters at the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) headquarters on Saturday, a day after his release on interim bail, 16 km away in Northeast Delhi’s Sunder Nagri — the cradle of the AAP chief’s politics — it was business as usual. Wares were arranged in roadside stalls, shopkeepers took naps, and lunch was made and had at homes.

“*Unke jail jaane se, ya bail se, kuch farak nahi padega...* in Delhi, these elections are about Kejriwal,” said Sultan Singh, 60, summing up his response to the Chief Minister’s arrest and bail.

Banshidhar, 67, chimes in that the support for the AAP is not only because it began making its presence felt in the area first but because “they have worked even after that”.

Down the street from where Banshidhar lives, Kejriwal had gone on a 15-day fast against high power and water bills in 2013, before announcing that the party would contest its maiden election — the AAP went on to win 28 seats in the 70-member Assembly and form the government with outside support from the Congress.

The current MLA of the area’s Assembly constituency of Seemapuri, Rajendra Pal Gautam, is from the AAP. For the Lok Sabha polls, the Congress — in alliance with AAP — has fielded former JNUSU president

Kanhaiya Kumar from the constituency.

“Kejriwal’s fast was over high bills... now we don’t get electricity bills. The party has also grown since then... there are more supporters. They are stronger now. *Ab log unki sunte hain* (now people listen to Kejriwal). It is not just about AAP in Delhi and BJP at the Centre now. Both have worked at their own levels,” said Banshidhar, who used to run a dye-making business.

On the Chief Minister’s arrest and bail, he added: “It is happening around the time of the election. People will see through such things.”

Sunder Nagri, which lies close to Delhi’s border with Uttar Pradesh, is divided into multiple blocks, some of which are on the Delhi Urban Shelter Improve-



At Sunder Nagri in Northeast Delhi. Express

ment Board’s list of JJ clusters. While a market runs through one of the central lanes, the by-lanes are narrow and cramped

and dotted by multi-storey houses — closely packed — with small grocery shops and a few bakeries running on the ground

floors. The area has open drains, some filled with garbage, running through some of the by-lanes. There are both government schools as well as a few small private schools.

JJ colonies such as the ones in Sunder Nagri are part of the AAP’s core voter base.

While residents now get free water and electricity, and fewer power cuts, Singh, who used to work as a tailor, said not much else has changed. “What can change? These are the same jhuggis, the same narrow lanes,” he said.

A few lanes away, Wasim Ahmad, 30, who runs a grocery store, agreed. “It’s a JJ Colony. There are issues of cleanliness and that can be better, but what more can change in such colonies? We have been hearing this ‘Hindu-Muslim’ a lot more

over the past few years, more than what it was like when I was a child... but this area has remained peaceful,” he said.

As for the CM’s arrest, he added: “They are talking about corruption. But who is not corrupt today? We remember the protest he had here... nobody knew him before that, and now people support him.”

While Delhi’s polling date is just two weeks away — May 25 — most parts of Sunder Nagri, however, were bereft of campaign paraphernalia such as posters or flags. “We haven’t seen much campaigning. In these inside lanes, nobody has come so far,” Ahmad said.

Salman, 35, who deals in scrap, is more cautious about declaring support in the area for the AAP. “They started working here,

but the area still has supporters across parties. From here, Santosh (Koli) was more popular than Kejriwal. Everybody knew her,” he said.

Koli, who had been part of Kejriwal’s NGO, Parivartan, died after an accident in 2013, a few days after she was made the AAP candidate for Seemapuri in its maiden assembly election. Kejriwal’s protest against high electricity bills in 2013 was launched from her house in Sunder Nagri.

Another resident of the area, who runs a grocery store and did not want to be named, also remembered Koli. “She was very popular and used to help the women out here... on Kejriwal, I don’t know about the bail and have not been paying attention to it,” she said.



Nursing Beyond Tomorrow: Embracing the Future of Healthcare

ADVERTORIAL



International Nurses Day (IND) is commemorated annually on 12 May, with the International Council of Nurses (ICN), which represents more than 130 national nursing associations worldwide and over 28 million nurses, selecting a theme for the occasion.

This year's theme, "Our Nurses. Our Future. The Economic Power of Care." reflects upon the economic power of care, which creates healthy people and societies and drives healthy economies. According to the ICN, the theme was selected to empower nurses through advocating for economic recognition and societal impact and viewing nursing as an investment rather than an expense. The aim is to "reshape" perceptions regarding the economic and societal advantages of nursing.

Adequate funding in nursing is crucial, especially during financial crises and global challenges like the COVID-19 pandemic, conflicts, and the climate crisis. ICN calls on policymakers, healthcare administrators, and the public to recognize the substantial economic value nursing contributes to society, advocating for policy changes and increased investment to harness the full potential of nursing to improve health outcomes, promote well-being, and drive economic prosperity.

The evolving role of nursing professionals in shaping the future of healthcare is constantly being explored. In the rapidly evolving healthcare landscape, nursing stands at the forefront, poised to embrace the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead. As we peer into the future of healthcare delivery, it becomes evident that nursing will play a pivotal role in shaping the course of patient care, clinical innovation, and professional leadership. Artificial intelligence, cutting-edge technologies like telemedicine, and wearable health devices have revolutionized healthcare delivery. Nurses are embracing and leveraging these advancements for quality patient care to improve outcomes. Incorporating electronic health records (EHRs) and telehealth platforms into daily practice enables nurses to deliver care remotely, reaching underserved populations and improving healthcare services.

As the healthcare landscape evolves, nurses are also committed to evidence-based practice (EBP), integrating the latest research findings and clinical evidence into the decision-making processes of patient care. By staying abreast of emerging evidence and best practices, nurses ensure that their care delivery aligns with current standards and guidelines, optimizing patient outcomes and

promoting continuous quality improvement. Moreover, the future of nursing extends beyond the walls of traditional healthcare settings, encompassing a broader focus on population health, community engagement, and social determinants of health. Nurses will increasingly find themselves at the forefront of preventive care initiatives, health promotion campaigns, and all the efforts in a collaborative manner to address the root causes of health disparities.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), there is a substantial global shortage of nurses (5.9 million); this shortage is particularly acute in low- and middle-income countries, where the ratio of nurses to population is significantly lower than in high-income countries.

ABOUT SGT UNIVERSITY AND ITS FACULTY OF NURSING

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The Faculty of Nursing, SGT University, Gu-

This year's theme, "Our Nurses. Our Future. The Economic Power of Care." reflects upon the economic power of care, which creates healthy people and societies and drives healthy economies.

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Furthermore, the organization ensures alignment with high environmental stan-



Promoting Renewable energy



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HARNESSING RENEWABLE ENERGY

In renewable energy, JK Lakshmi Cement has significantly increased the use of renewable energy sources, including solar power and waste heat recovery in its cement production processes. It has not only increased its green power share to 37% of its total power requirement in FY 2022-23 but also implemented several noteworthy initiatives by installing floating solar panels and commissioning solar power plants to contribute to the goal of meeting all electrical energy requirements through renewable energy by 2040.

At JK Lakshmi Cement's Durg plant - with a group-level Thermal Substitution Rate (TSR) of 7% at present, and aiming for a group-level TSR of 20% by 2030 - nearly 80% of energy needs are met with renewable sources like solar power. Currently, the JK Lakshmi Cement Group is at 40% renewable energy use for electricity across the group, with a firm target of reaching 100% by 2040. The company's commitment extends to focusing on blended cement to reduce greenhouse gas emissions further and implementing pre- and co-processing systems to achieve its goals.

Furthermore, the utilization of Waste Heat Recovery Systems (WHRS), which enables capturing waste heat and converting it into usable energy, has increased JK Lakshmi Cement's green energy consumption beyond 50% and significantly reduced the com-



Creating carbon sink through plantation

pany's environmental footprint. JK Lakshmi Cement's commitment to innovation continues to inspire others in the sector to adopt similar practices, setting a precedent for the entire cement industry's sustainability journey while fostering a collective culture of environmental stewardship within the industry.

PROMOTING CIRCULAR ECONOMY

In a bid to promote the circular economy, the company works closely with suppliers ensuring adherence to sustainability standards and regularly invests in new technologies that reduce reliance on traditional raw materials. Additionally, the company has imple-



mented alternate fuel processing capabilities to enhance the circular economy and aims to reach a thermal substitution rate of 20% by FY 2029-30.

FOCUS ON WATER CONSERVATION

Alongside transitioning to renewable energy, and actively exploring a circular economy through waste heat recovery and the use of alternative raw materials, water conservation is another primary focus of JK Lakshmi Cement, wherein it has rainwater harvesting, recycling systems and other efficient usage practices in place.

While the company's water positivity level is currently at 4X and targets 5X by 2025, it ensures that its manufacturing facilities operate Zero-Liquid-Discharge plants. More-



Achieving water positivity

over, the renowned company is also exploring innovative carbon capture and utilization technologies and engaging in biodiversity conservation and ecosystem restoration initiatives around its production facilities while recycling its hazardous waste, converting its solid organic waste into compost and treating its wastewater for reuse.

GREEN AND 'SMART' BUILDING SOLUTIONS AND PRODUCTS

JK Lakshmi Cement is committed to offering 'SMART' building solutions with contemporary, sustainable, ready-to-use and timesaving products facilitating faster and cleaner construction. With the increasing demand for these innovative solutions, it foresees significant growth and plans to expand its product line accordingly.

Pioneering the terms of trial & development of LC3 (Limestone calcined clay cement), the company plans to launch it to the market shortly. Marching ahead with its vision to become the best-in-class construction solutions provider company, JK Lakshmi Cement is also relentlessly pursuing the goal

of increasing the share of green cement in its product portfolio. The organization is committed to making continued investments in research and processes that contribute towards better and environment-friendly cement production practices.

DIGITALIZATION

By wholeheartedly embracing the deployment of cutting-edge technologies over the past few years, JK Lakshmi Cement has demonstrated its exemplary commitment and leadership in the realm of digitalization. Its dedicated teams have successfully executed multiple digital projects, enabling the organization to access information at lightning speed while optimizing its business processes. This has resulted in not only tangi-

ble value creation but also enhanced the company's operational efficiency and given it a competitive edge with regard to offering a distinctively superior customer experience. JK Lakshmi Cement's forward-thinking approach has played a key role in propelling the company ahead, helping it maintain its competitive edge in today's dynamic business landscape.

COMMUNITY INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT THROUGH EFFECTIVE CSR PROJECTS

Community development through effective corporate social responsibility (CSR) projects is a core value of JK Lakshmi Cement - an organization driven by the belief that its long-term viability and ability to produce value are tied to how much it contributes to the life of the communities in which it operates. Acting on its long-standing commitment to improving the quality of life for communities that are near its plant locations, JK Lakshmi Cement directly benefits over 2.25 lakh individuals annually through a number of projects in education, healthcare, skill development, and environmental conservation.

Long before the CSR Law came into existence, JK Lakshmi Cement made it a priority and commitment to serve society and improve the quality of life for communities at large. Over the years, the organization has been at the forefront of pioneering and delivering numerous CSR projects for those in need and vulnerable communities and families. It has been unwavering in its commitment to enhancing the lives of marginalized communities near its plant locations through high-impact and need-based CSR projects in key areas of nation-building - education, healthcare, skill development, livelihood intervention, water and sanitation, rural development and environmental conservation.

In light of its CSR vision aiming to foster strong community relationships while creating sustainable positive change in the quality of life for neighbouring communities, JK Lakshmi Cement continuously implements innovative solutions in health, education, livelihoods and rural development, wherein more than 65% of its project beneficiaries are women, girls, children, and other vulnerable groups.

ALL-ENCOMPASSING COMMITMENT TO SUSTAINABILITY

Having been honoured with the Golden Peacock Award for CSR Excellence, JK Lakshmi Cement's commitment to sustainability extends beyond compliance with regulations, as it continuously collaborates with local authorities, environmental experts, and com-



Focusing our sustainability initiatives on key areas, including decarbonization, operational and resource efficiency, circularity, and stakeholder experience, we are forging ahead to ensure the improvement of the triple bottom line – Planet, Profit, and People – while offering 'SMART' building solutions with contemporary, sustainable, ready-to-use and timesaving products facilitating faster and cleaner construction.

— Mr. Arun Shukla
President & Director –
JK Lakshmi Cement Ltd.

munity organizations to develop sustainable solutions that ensure a positive impact on surrounding communities. By focussing on improvement, the company aims to bring down its environmental footprint further while contributing to the well-being of local communities.

With a belief in collective responsibility for sustainability and ensuring unprecedented progress, JK Lakshmi Cement has been at the forefront of adopting the best environmental practices aligned with sustainable development goals while integrating environmental concerns into its core operations to ensure a sustainable future and create a long-lasting system that benefits generations to come.

6 GOVT & POLITICS

Poll panel takes cognizance of complaint against Chandrababu over PwD ‘jibe’

DAMINI NATH
NEW DELHI, MAY 11

THE ELECTION Commission has taken cognizance of a complaint seeking action against Telugu Desam Party chief N Chandrababu Naidu for using derogatory language for Persons with Disabilities while attacking his political rival, Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy, sources told *The Indian Express*.

The EC has sought reports on the incidents highlighted by the National Platform for the Rights of the Disabled (NPRD) in its complaint on Wednesday (May 8), the sources said. The rights group said it was condemnabale that politicians were continuing to allude to disabilities to attack their opponents, despite the EC’s 2023 advisory to parties to refrain from using derogatory language while referring to PwDs.

The complaint cited recent reports of Naidu saying that Jagan’s “mental condition” was “not sound” and that he was “psycho in behaviour”. The group also complained about a National People’s Party leader Kiritenberth Marak allegedly insulting a disabled person during a Lok Sabha elections campaign in Meghalaya. EC sources said the Commission had asked for reports on both matters, and that an FIR had already been registered against Marak at Tura police station under the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016.

The NPRD sought action in its complaint against Naidu and Marak as well as its March 29 complaint against Rajasthan BJP president C P Joshi, for comparing the condition of the Congress in the state to people “walking on crutches”.

Meghalaya gets first woman police chief

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
GUWAHATI, MAY 11

MEGHALAYA IS all set to get its first woman head of police with Idhashisa Nongrang, a 1992-batch IPS officer, being appointed its next DGP.

The outgoing DGP, L R Bishnoi, will demit office on May 19, following which Nongrang will take charge on May 20. Nongrang, who is currently Meghalaya Director General of Civil Defence and Home Guard, has been appointed to the top post for a period of two years.

She had been one of three officers in the running for the top position and several political parties in the state had voiced their support for her being appointed to the position.

Congratulating her, Chief Minister Conrad Sangma wrote in a social media post, “Breaking barriers and making history, Smti Nongrang becomes the first tribal lady from our state to hold this position, a moment of immense pride for all of us. Wishing her all the best in her new role!”

BJP’S CONTROVERSIAL SURAT LS SEAT WIN

Kumbhani surfaces, says ‘Cong betrayed me’, paper rejection ‘appropriate answer’

KAMAAL SAIYED
SURAT, MAY 11

THE CONGRESS candidate from Surat Lok Sabha constituency, Nilesh Kumbhani, whose nomination was rejected by the Election Commission after his proposers and those of his substitute candidate Suresh Padsala claimed that their signatures have been forged on nomination papers, surfaced in Surat after nearly three weeks on Friday.

Claiming that he “did not know that nomination forms can get rejected due to signature issues”, Kumbhani said that the rejection of his candidature “had avenged his betrayal by the Congress in the 2017 Assembly elections”. Kumbhani, who was suspended from the Congress for six years last month, had been associated with the party for 25 years and had contested Surat

65.68% turnout in LS third phase, 57% seats saw a decline in voter participation

Male turnout in 93 constituencies was 66.89%, female 64.41%

DAMINI NATH
NEW DELHI, MAY 11

MORE THAN half of the 93 constituencies that went to polls in the third phase of the Lok Sabha elections on Tuesday witnessed a decline in the voter turnout as compared to 2019.

The Election Commission on Saturday released the final voting figures for the 93 seats at 65.68%, which is a 1.32 percentage point decrease from the turnout in the same seats in the last Lok Sabha polls.

According to the EC data, the turnout increased in 40 seats, while the remaining 53 (or 57%) saw a decline in the voter participation. The turnout of male voters was almost 2.5 percentage points higher than female voters at 66.89% and 64.41% respectively.

Of the 10 seats that saw the biggest dip in turnouts this time,

BIGGEST DECREASE IN TUNOUTS IN PHASE -3

CONSTITUENCY	(% POINTS)*
Bardoli (Gujarat)	-9.08
Dahod (Gujarat)	-7.25
Dadra and Nagar Haveli	-7.06
Ahmedabad East (Gujarat)	-7.04
Navsari (Gujarat)	-6.74
Vadodara (Gujarat)	-6.58
Gandhinagar (Gujarat)	-6.28
Hathras (UP)	-6.05
Maheasana (Gujarat)	-5.92
Amreli (Gujarat)	-5.67

*Decrease in turnout from 2019

BIGGEST GAP IN MALE-FEMALE VOTER TUNOUT*

Porbandar	11.12	Sagar	9.85
Jamnagar	11.03	Ahmedabad East	8.76
Kheda	10.79	Rajgarh	8.62
Rajkot	10.02	Amreli	7.82
Surendranagar	9.85	Kachchh	7.69

(*Percentage points that male turnout is higher than female)

eight were from Gujarat (Bardoli, Dahod, Ahmedabad East, Navsari, Vadodara, Gandhinagar, Maheasana and Amreli). Bardoli in southern Gujarat reported the

biggest decline in turnout — of 9 percentage points. Gandhinagar, from where Union Home Minister Amit Shah contested as the incumbent, saw a decline of

6 percentage points. Polling in 25 of the 26 Lok Sabha seats in Gujarat was held in the third phase; in Surat, the BJP candidate was elected unopposed following the rejection of the nomination papers of the Congress candidate and withdrawal of nominations by other candidates.

Turnout of women voters was higher in 16 constituencies spread across Assam, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Goa, Karnataka, West Bengal and Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu. In 2019, 18 of these same 93 seats had a higher female turnout than male voters.

Out of the 10 seats where the gap between male-female turnout was the highest, nine were in Gujarat. Male turnout in Porbandar, Jamnagar, Kheda and Rajkot was more than 10 percentage points higher than the female turnout.

While mostly the turnout patterns were same for male and female voters, in a handful of seats the trends diverged. In Gwalior, for instance, the male turnout increased by 7 percentage points, while the female turnout decreased by 2.6 percentage points. Last time,

Gwalior was among the seats with higher female turnout (4 percentage points), but this time the male turnout was over 4 percentage points higher than female voters.

Amid criticism from the Opposition for delaying the release of the official turnout figures for phase one and two, the EC had issued a statement on Tuesday night that the provisional turnout in the third phase had been 64.4% as at 11.40 pm and the final figures would be released by Saturday.

The day after polling, the Voter Turnout app of the EC showed the turnout had reached 65%.

“The final turnout will only be available post-counting, with counting of postal ballots and its addition to the total vote count,” the EC said in its statement on Saturday. Of the 11 states and UTs that saw polling in phase three, four had higher female turnout than male — Bihar, Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu, Goa and West Bengal. The male turnout was higher in Assam, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh.



Congress leader Rahul Gandhi with party leader Y S Sharmila, in front of a statue of former CM Y S Rajasekhara Reddy, in Andhra Pradesh’s Kadapa on Saturday. PTI

BJP stands for Babu, Jagan, and Pawan, Modi has remote: Rahul

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
KADAPA, MAY 11

HITTING OUT at Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy and other opposition parties in the state, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Saturday said BJP stands for Babu (TDP chief Chandrababu Naidu), Jagan and Pawan (Jana Sena founder Pawan Kalyan). Addressing a poll rally here, the Congress leader alleged the remote control of the three leaders is with Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Invoking the name of former Chief Minister Y S Rajasekhara Reddy (YSR), Rahul said the former’s political walkathon (padayatra) across Andhra was the inspiration for his nationwide Bharat Jodo Yatra.

“Today, Andhra Pradesh is run

by the ‘B’ team of BJP. The BJP’s ‘B’ team means B for Babu, J for Jagan and P for Pawan. Remote control of these three people is with Narendra Modi,” Rahul said.

He further said these leaders were under Modi’s control as the latter has ED, CBI and other enforcement agencies at his disposal.

The Congress leader said Rajasekhara Reddy was like a brother to his father Rajiv Gandhi and both leaders shared a personal relationship.

Rahul said as and when the INDIA bloc will come to power at the Centre after the Lok Sabha elections, they will accord a 10-year special category status to Andhra Pradesh and fulfil other promises such as completing the Polavaram project, Kadapa steel plant and others. He promised to waive self farm loans, free education, Rs 5 lakh housing loan for the poor.

Accept invite to debate PM: Rahul

New Delhi: After two former judges and a senior journalist invited Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Rahul Gandhi to a public debate, the Congress leader Saturday said that he or party chief Mallikarjun Kharge would be pleased to participate.

Rahul said he and Kharge agreed “such a debate will help people understand our respective vision”. “It is also critical to put to rest any unsubstantiated allegations attributed to our respective parties.... Accordingly, either myself or the Congress President would be pleased to participate in such a debate,” he said in his letter to former SC judge Madan B Lokur, former HC Chief Justice AP Shah and journalist N Ram. **ENS**

BJP can’t win hearts of Odisha people in next 10 yrs: Naveen hits back at Modi

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
BHUBANESWAR, MAY 11

ODISHA CHIEF MINISTER Naveen Patnaik on Saturday asserted that the BJP will return to power for the sixth consecutive term after the Assembly elections in the state and the BJP win not be able to win Odisha in the next 10 years.

Naveen made the comment while reacting to Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s remarks that the Odisha CM “can’t tell names of all 30 districts of the state without seeing a paper”.

The PM made the remarks during a rally at Phulbani under Kandhamal parliamentary constituency earlier in the day. Underlining that Odisha’s strength is 100 times that of Gujarat, Modi asked as to why the state is backward while Gujarat made rapid progress. He said he needed only five years to make Odisha the number one state in the country.

Naveen, in a video message, said that the people of Odisha know what he remembers and what he doesn’t and the BJP will form the government again with the blessings of Lord Jagannath and the people of the state”.

He also took a dig at the PM’s claim that a BJP CM will take oath on June 10. “Not June 10, BJP cannot win the hearts of people in the next 10 years,” said the BJP president. The CM asked the PM if he remembers the promises he made during the 2014 and 2019 polls. “Even though Odia is a classical language, you forgot about the language. You have allotted Rs 1,000 crore for Sanskrit language but zero to Odia. I had sent two proposals seeking classical recognition to Odissi music and you have rejected them twice. Why has not a single eminent Odia personality been honoured with Bharat Ratna,” he asked.

Naveen also taunted the PM over his promises like doubling farmers’ income, coastal highway for Odisha, not increasing royalty



Naveen Patnaik

on coal. He said remembering Odisha only during elections will be of no use. The CM also questioned Modi’s promises such as controlling price rise, providing 2 crore jobs and increasing mobile networks in Odisha.

The PM, who is believed to have cordial relations with Naveen, took a dig at him saying he had “no knowledge about the state”. “Naveen Babu is the CM of Odisha for so many years... I want to challenge Naveen Babu... You make him (Naveen) stand anywhere and tell him to spell out the names of districts (of Odisha) and their headquarters without paper. The CM, who cannot tell names of the districts without paper and their headquarters... can he understand your plight? Can you leave your children’s fate in such hands?” he said.

Declare BJP’s CM face, dares Pandian

Senior BJP leader V K Pandian on Saturday challenged the BJP to declare its CM candidate for Odisha and claimed that the party would get less than 10% votes if it names any of its current state leaders. Campaigning in the Sundergarh Lok Sabha seat, Pandian said the BJP has been “day-dreaming” about forming a government in Odisha since 2014. “When elections come many leaders come as election tourists, and then they are not seen for five years,” he said. Pandian claimed the BJP was unable to declare its CM candidate because it knows the day it will announce, its vote share will go below 10%.

WITH PTI INPUTS

BJP will hit four and six in Himachal: Anurag Thakur

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
HAMIRPUR, MAY 11

UNION INFORMATION and Broadcasting Minister Anurag Thakur on Saturday said the BJP will hit a four and six in Himachal Pradesh by winning all the four Lok Sabha seats and by-polls in six assembly constituencies in the state.

Thakur, the BJP candidate from Hamirpur Lok Sabha seat, said that people were happy with the performance of the BJP led government at the Centre and wanted to make Narendra Modi the prime minister for the third term. “We constructed the Ram Mandir. The Congress says it will build a mosque. The opposition parties said that they would crush Sanatan and equated it with HIV Aids and malaria,” Thakur said addressing



Anurag Thakur in Hamirpur on Saturday. PTI

a huge gathering at Gandhi Chowk in Hamirpur. “Like the Mughals and Britishers came and left, the Congress is also going. Sanatan tha, sanatan hai and sanatan rahega,” he added.

Thakur said the Congress says Pakistan has nuclear bomb, but the truth is that Islamabad is struggling for food as the grand old party is struggling for votes.

It’s about rights, not elections: Backward Classes panel chief on questioning Muslim OBC quota

NIKHIL GHANEKAR
NEW DELHI, MAY 11

BEING A constitutional body, the National Commission for Backward Classes (NCBC) sought clarification from the Karnataka government over Muslim Other Backward Classes (OBC) quota without any political or electoral motivations, said its Chairperson Hansraj Ahir in an interview with *The Indian Express*.

A former Union minister, Ahir said that the commission is concerned only with the protection and fair implementation of OBC rights.

“Our correspondence with them (Karnataka) has been going on for the past 7 to 8 months. We are only corresponding with the chief secretary and not the political leadership,” Ahir said.

Responding to why the commission had flagged the issue

now as Muslim OBC quota in Karnataka existed for decades, Ahir said, “we do not want to go into the past, we have sought present-day data.”

He added that the commission had sought to know how all Muslims were put in the bracket of backward classes and had received incomplete information from the state.

“The commission is not on the issue of religion, but caste... They (Karnataka) should clarify how an entire community has been considered backward,” Ahir said.

The issue has created a political firestorm during the ongoing Lok Sabha elections with PM Narendra Modi repeatedly accusing the Congress of “snatching away” the rights of Dalits and OBCs to pass on the reservation to the Muslims. The BJP has also alleged that Congress wants to provide reservations on religious



Hansraj Ahir

grounds. Karnataka CM Siddaramaiah dubbed the BJP’s allegations a “blatant lie”.

Ahir cited UG and PG medical courses admission data as one of the grounds for the claim that Muslims were overrepresented in the accrual of benefits under OBC quota. This formed one of the key reasons for NCBC to seek clarifications from the Karnataka government.

Earlier, in an interview with

The Indian Express, Siddaramaiah said that the policy of giving reservations to Muslims began in 1994 based on a Backward Classes Commission report and it was in line with constitutional provisions. Karnataka provides 4% OBC quota to all Muslims in category II-B of the quota matrix. This does not include those falling in the creamy layer with annual income of Rs 8 lakh or above.

In 2023, the Basavaraj Bommai-led government had cancelled this quota to divide it among Vokkaligas and Lingayats at 2% each, but didn’t implement it after the SC called the decision “hasty”.

Another issue linked to the OBCs in the current elections is the Maratha reservation in Ahir’s home state of Maharashtra. When questioned about the churn and concern among OBC groups in Maharashtra over issu-

ing of Kunbi (OBC) caste certificates to members of the Maratha community, Ahir said since the state government is seized of the matter, the commission can only intervene if it receives complaints and petitions.

“We look at the issues of the central list of OBCs recommended by state governments. I can speak on that, but I do not have any reason to object to the current list of Maharashtra,” he said. OBC groups have expressed concerns that issuing Kunbi caste certificates to all Marathas will encroach on their quotas and impact their political representation.

Ahir was tight-lipped on the caste census, a major poll plank of Congress, and said that the commission cannot make recommendations on such an issue. “Doing a (caste) census is the policy prerogative of the government,” he said.

8 DECISION 2024



‘No one supports corruption, more evidence coming after seizures’

UNION AGRICULTURE and tribal affairs minister ARJUN MUNDA, 56, is again taking on Congress leader Kali Charan Munda in the Lok Sabha elections from the Khunti seat in Jharkhand, where he had defeated the latter by just 1,445 votes in 2019. In an interview with ABHISHEK ANGAD, he speaks on issues ranging from farmers' welfare and tribals' concerns to corruption. *Excerpts:*

Is there any proposal to give a legal guarantee to MSP, or anything being done to ensure assured income to farmers?

The basic thing is that by MSP the farmers will get a minimum income for their produce in an open market. However, it is not that all produce will be procured by the government. So the government has given MSP for major crops. We have formed a committee for a long-term solution and their suggestions will focus on the issue of increasing produce in India and reducing the dependency on pesticides and chemical fertilisers. Unlike the last government, we are not working to do any favour to farmers but on how do we raise the potential of farmers and the farming community. Regarding giving MSP a legal guarantee, there is an expert committee which will look into it.

Tribals generally suffer from malnutrition and anaemia. In Jharkhand, there has hardly been any improvement on these indicators.

We have started to analyse the root cause of anaemia in the tribal areas. Is there any food supplement deficit or is it genetic? We have started the tests for seven crore people to find sickle cell carriers, and we have the results of one crore people. In Khunti, we had conducted mass testing of more than 60,000 people where 80% were found to be anaemic. Funds have been allocated to all governments with direction that all districts start health camps. We are conducting research through the CRISPR system and Rs 61 crore has been given to ICMR for research to find a solution such as how to rectify the diseased cells and regenerate.

The medicine Hydroxyurea – for treating sickle cell anaemia patients – is now available in India at a much cheaper price, introduced during my tenure.

There seems to be tribal sentiments in the state against the jailing of JMM's ex-CM Hemant Soren. Will this impact the elections?

I don't think anyone will support corruption, and more evidence is coming after the seizure of crores in cash from the rented house of a minister's PA. The corruption issue is now public and people see how it has spread.

As compared to other BJP leaders, you seem to be less critical of Hemant Soren on social media.



THE EXPRESS
INTERVIEW
ARJUN MUNDA
UNION MINISTER AND
BJP'S KHUNTI MP

Personal criticism is not my nature and I use positive energies around me. Personal politics does not have any place (for me), and I deal with ideology.

As an MP, what has been your report card for Khunti?

I have worked to regain respect and glory of Khunti – a place which is of historical significance – and worked towards its development. We are trying to make eco villages in Khunti, because people in ancient times lived in eco villages. People living in the villages strengthen the environment and that is why I have selected 254 villages in my constituency for their development. This is a national project, and Jharkhand has been given funds but the work is too slow, the funds have reached the districts but the implementation is very slow.

In your constituency, the Mahato community plays a key role and there has been a demand from Kudmi Mahatos for ST status.

Kudmi communities have played an important role in the state, and they have shown patriotism during the Lok Sabha elections... The demand is there, but I don't see it from the political lens. We need to see what lies at the root of the demand. However, the implementation is not the function of one institution. The state government plays an important role in preparing a report on this issue with facts. Only after this, other institutions will deliberate.

In areas affected by Left Wing Extremism, basics like clean drinking water, pucca roads, electricity are still a dream for many. Locals also complain about your visibility.

If we talk about statistics, then as an MP I have 1,700 days to visit a total of 5,000 revenue villages and their colonies. As an MP we visit villages, but we cannot visit all... The lack of facilities is because the state institutions are not working. The Central government deals with policies and resources, but the implementation has to be done by the state, which is lacking.

FROM AMBEDKAR'S BIRTHPLACE IN MP TO HIS RESTING PLACE IN MAHARASHTRA

Dalits close ranks amid 'threat' to Constitution

With Dalit bodies in Maharashtra fragmented, the community has been reeling under lack of leadership, but Ambedkar and Constitution are unifying factors

SHUBHANGI KHAPRE
MUMBAI, MAY 11

AT CHAITYA BHOOMI near Dadar Chowpatty in Mumbai, overlooking the Arabian Sea, there is a continuous stream of visitors in and out of the B R Ambedkar memorial on a bright summer day earlier this week. Holding colourful flowers topped with blue candles, men, women and children kneel before Ambedkar's bust with folded hands, each lighting a candle as a mark of respect to the architect of the Indian Constitution.

A visit to Chaitya Bhoomi – where Ambedkar's last rites were performed after his death in 1956 – is incomplete without a halt at the makeshift stalls packed with books written by Ambedkar.

Harshala Sakhre, a 15-year-old who completed her Class 10 board exam this year, stopped at one such stall to buy a copy of the Constitution. Presenting a copy of the Constitution on weddings or birthdays is becoming a trend among Dalits in Maharashtra.

Accompanied by her parents, who chose to celebrate their wedding anniversary by paying a visit to Chaitya Bhoomi, Harshala's father Ganesh, a self-employed decorator, says, "The current debate on the Constitution has triggered greater curiosity and awareness among the next generation."

While acknowledging apprehensions in the Dalit community over the "threat" to the Constitution, Ganesh says, "Is it so easy to replace the Constitution? Will they be able to justify it?"

He is referring to the heat being generated over the Constitution in the campaigning by the ruling BJP as well as the Opposition INDIA alliance for the ongoing Lok Sabha elections.

While Prime Minister Narendra Modi has maintained in his speeches at poll rallies that the Constitution is sacrosanct and will not be changed, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi and other Opposition leaders have claimed the BJP with a large majority in



Chaitya Bhoomi in Mumbai's Dadar Chowpatty. *Express*

Parliament would be a "threat" to the Constitution.

With both camps engaged in a heated debate, Dalits across Maharashtra are reaffirming their resolve to safeguard the Constitution by paying their tributes at the Ambedkar memorials among other things. They see Ambedkar as an icon who gave them their identity and dignity.

Karan Kedar, who inherited a five-decade-old book stall from his family, says, "The Constitution is the soul of democracy." He says he fears those trying to undermine the Constitution and replace it with Manusmriti are "pushing India 1,000 years back".

The ongoing debate, along with instances of atrocities against Dalits across the country, has not gone unnoticed. But with Dalit organisations fragmented, the community has been facing a leadership challenge for several decades.

As per the 2011 Census, Scheduled Castes constitute 13% of the population in Maharashtra and is broadly divided into Mahars (neo-Buddhists), who account for 57% of all Dalits, Matangs (20%) and Chamars (17%).

Dalits are represented in the state mainly by two parties – the

Republican Party of India (Athawale) or RPI(A) led by Union minister Ramdas Athawale, and the Vanchit Bahujan Aaghadi (VBA) led by Ambedkar's grandson Prakash Ambedkar. While

Athawale claims to have the support of over 50% of Dalits, the VBA claims to represent large sections of Dalits, tribals and OBCs.

In 2014, when the RPI(A) allied with the BJP, the move took many within the party by surprise. At the time, Athawale argued the new generation of Dalits was open to political experimentation. Ten years on, Athawale has been tasked by the BJP-led NDA with



holding public meetings and rallies to assuage Dalits over the Constitution issue. On Wednesday, he lodged a complaint with the Election Commission against Rahul Gandhi over his attack on the BJP in the row.

Arjun Dangle, a prominent Dalit writer, says while Dalits are united on the Constitution issue, factors like unemployment could also lead to a consolidation against the BJP. "There is a strong undercurrent within the community against the BJP. There is anger and a sense of betrayal," Dangle said.

In Ghatkopar's Ramabai Ambedkar Nagar, one of Mumbai's oldest slums and the largest Dalit colonies in Maharashtra, Ambedkarites prepare for a door-to-door campaign to keep Dalits under one umbrella.

Hiraman Gaikwad, 64, standing near the life-size statue of Ambedkar in the colony, says, "For us, Ambedkar is everything. How can we compromise on his Constitution?" Gaikwad was among 26 people who were injured in the 1997 police firing, in which 10 people were also killed, following protests over the desecration of an Ambedkar statue.

Ramabai Ambedkar Nagar was once a hub for the Dalit migrants who came to the metropolis in search of livelihoods, starting in the 1960s. Then, it was a swamp with no roads or electricity. Today, there are pucca houses and well-lit roads, says Shantaram Shukdeo Patole, a cobbler. However, a redevelopment project promised in 2005 remains on paper only, says Amol Sonawne, a member of the Panchsheel Kruti Samiti.

Sonawne says that over the years, Dalit karyakartas have multiplied manifold but its leadership has not broadened. However, Ambedkarite leader Shyam Gaikwad says, "The 2024 Lok Sabha polls will see Dalits collectively standing up for their rights without any leader. The Dalit movement is never imprisoned by individual leaders or partisan politics."

In Dhar, Muslims caught in quota debate crossfire

ANAND MOHAN J
DHAR (MP), MAY 11

IN MADHYA Pradesh's Dr Ambedkar Nagar town, formerly known as Mhow, golden busts of Gautam Buddha and B R Ambedkar mounted on blue columns serve as a shrine for the Dalit community in the slum cluster of Rajendra Nagar.

Sitting inside the shrine, Divya Wahurwagh, 18, whispers a prayer for her admission in an LLB course, wishing to become a lawyer like her idol. "Dr Ambedkar was born in my village. He went abroad and studied. I also want to leave Rajendra Nagar. No one in my family has been able to leave this slum," Divya said.

As per the 2011 Census, Scheduled Castes account for 13% of the population in Dr Ambedkar Nagar, where the Dalit icon was born and spent three years before his family shifted to Maharashtra. But amid the discourse around Ambedkar and the Constitution, Divya says the BJP and Congress are playing a "dangerous game". "It's sad that people are playing politics in Ambedkar's name. Of course the Constitution won't be changed, nor will reservation be given to Muslims," she said.

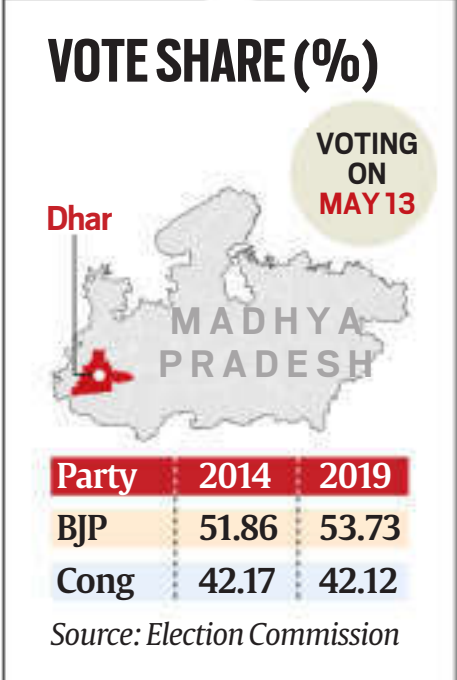
Located 24 km from Indore, the town is part of the Dhar Lok Sabha constituency, which votes on May 13. Over the years, it has gained prominence with politicians making a beeline to it, from Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Congress MP Rahul Gandhi.

In the ongoing Constitution debate, while Rahul Gandhi alleges the BJP wants to "throw away" the Constitution, PM Modi claims the Congress wants to "rob" reservation from OBCs and give it to Muslims.

The insecurities surrounding the reservation debate, in the context of the Constitution, has percolated across this region, where there is resentment among Dalits against both parties for playing politics over the Constitution.

Where once stood the Dalit icon's home is now a spacious hall with white marble and a golden Ambedkar statue. Here, those in charge of running the Bhim Janm Bhoomi have accused each other of financial misappropriation.

Sukhdev Dabar, a BTech grad-



uate who gives tours of the Janm Bhoomi site, says, "Both parties claim to be the biggest Ambedkar bhakts and want to save the Constitution. Here, committee members are accusing each other of stealing money. This is the reality. Everyone makes speeches and takes advantage of Babasaheb."

Located 50 km away is the Bhojshala temple and Kamal Maula mosque complex, where a sizeable number of Muslims living in the area feel anxiety and fear as they claim to be "painted as villains" in the reservation debate. Though MP has a small proportion of Muslims, they make up about 16% of Dhar's population.

At the Bhojshala-Kamal Maula complex, an Archeological Survey of India team has been excavating the site after a High Court order.

Nilesh Kumar, 55, a cobbler, says, "It's all Hindu-Muslim now. No one wants to ask about the engineers roaming around selling tea, and the price of dal breaking records. The Bhojshala and reservation issues have come after the Congress won seats here," he said.

The BJP won Dhar in the last two polls with sitting MP Savitri Thakur facing Congress tribal leader Radheysyam Muvel this time. Of the eight Assembly segments in Dhar, the Congress won five in the 2023 Assembly polls.

In Islampur village, Sharukh Soni, 29, says the distance between Hindus and Muslims has grown over the course of this election. "Moderate Hindus and Muslims have become hardliners. Can we take anyone's rights away? We are not a vote bank, we are also humans. We must not become like Pakistan. That is the real fight," he says.

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KEY SEATS
LED BY PRIYANKA, HOW CONGRESS IS CAMPAIGNING IN RAE BARELI

GROUND REPORT

In Kadapa, Jagan sits pretty despite challenge from sister Sharmila, TDP

PUSHKAR BANAKAR
KADAPA (ANDHRA PRADESH), MAY 11

SPARSE BANANA and lime plantations as well as drylands line most of the 70-km stretch from Kadapa to Pulivendla, until a sprawling *sachivalayam* (secretariat) and a medical college named after "son of the soil" late Y S Rajasekhara Reddy announce that one has entered Pulivendla, the home town of Chief Minister and YSRCP supremo Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy.

The Pulivendla Assembly seat in Kadapa district has been held by the family of former CM Y S Rajasekhara Reddy, Jagan's father, for over 45 years. Its incumbent legislator Jagan holds a firm grip among its nearly 3 lakh voters. In 2019, he had defeated the TDP's candidate by 90,110 votes.

"Why would we vote for someone else this time? What has changed this time that will lead us

to change our almost 50-year-old loyalties?" says a local resident at a sugarcane juice stall. Others gathered there nod in agreement.

This time, Jagan will be up against M Ravindranath Reddy, known as BTech Ravi, of the Telugu Desam Party (TDP). The TDP had got 27% and 23% of the votes in the 2014 and 2019 Assembly elections, respectively. In contrast, Jagan's vote share had increased to 73.5% in 2019 from 68.8% in 2014.

A little further from the main road near the huge Mahatma Gandhi statue, a group of locals has gathered around the YSRCP workers, who are explaining Jagan's welfare schemes. "Anna, *maaku enduku cheptunnavu? Maa vote YSR ke* (Brother, why are you telling us? Our vote is for YSR)," 35-year-old Swati tells them.

The YSRCP, which was floated by Jagan in 2012 after he walked out of the Congress following his father's death in 2009, enjoys the same support here that the



Cousins Avinash (left) and Sharmila are facing each other in the Kadapa Lok Sabha seat. *Express*

Congress did during the YSR era.

About 20 km away from Pulivendla is Vemula mandal. Here too, the support for Jagan is unwavering but with some riders. "He has developed Pulivendla town but not surrounding mandals as much. This time when he becomes CM, he must implement the Pulivendla Minor Irrigation Scheme," 44-year-old Chengal Reddy says. Similar sentiments are expressed by many in the vil-

lages of Vempalle mandal, around 30 km from Vemula.

An aide of Ravi admits it would be difficult to breach the YSRCP fortress. "This is a legacy seat for the YSR family and we are aware of the challenges but what happened with B Tech Ravi in the Y S Vivekananda Reddy (Jagan's uncle) murder case has bolstered his prospects," he says.

Ravi, who has been slamming Kadapa MP Y S Avinash Reddy

and the CM over the Vivekananda Reddy murder case, was grilled by the police in December 2019 in the case. Former Kadapa MP Vivekananda Reddy was found dead under mysterious circumstances at his Pulivendla home weeks ahead of the 2019 polls. The case was later taken on by the CBI and a trial has been pending in a CBI court in Hyderabad.

The case again hogged the limelight after a Kadapa court last

month restrained the Opposition leaders, including Andhra Congress chief and Jagan's sister Y S Sharmila, from mentioning the case as it "defames" Jagan and his cousin Avinash, who is again the YSRCP's candidate from the Kadapa Lok Sabha seat. Despite the court order, Sharmila has continued to rake up the issue. "I am just stating what is already in the public domain," she said.

Meanwhile, the battle for the Kadapa Lok Sabha seat is seen as a test for the "true claimant of YSR's legacy". The Vivekananda murder case seems to have taken precedence over other issues. Sharmila, contesting the Kadapa seat as the Congress's face, has forced an intra-YSR family contest here for the first time as its members began contesting the seat in 1989 without ever losing the seat so far. She has sought to frame the contest as a "justice vs crime" battle.

With Vivekananda's daughter Sunitha Narreddy by her side, Sharmila has been invoking YSR

VOTING ON
MAY 13

and urging voters not to vote for Avinash, who has been named as an accused in the murder case. "I decided to enter the fray to fight for justice for my uncle," she tells a gathering at Pamulur.

However, several locals do not seem to be impressed. "The YSR family is revered here. She should have stood by her brother and her family," says Lekha, a homemaker. A banana plantation owner Muthireddy says Sharmila has no claim on YSR's legacy. "We see YSR in Jagan. (Sharmila) is no match for him. Moreover, she went away and returned with the Congress, which is a changed party after YSR's death," he says, referring to her brief political stint in neighbouring Telangana.

Pulivendla is among the seven Assembly segments under the Kadapa Lok Sabha constituency, which has elected members of the


YSR family with a over 50% vote share in every election since 1989. Around 70 km away in Kadapa, Avinash addresses a gathering, where he showcases the YSRCP government's schemes, urging people not to vote for those who "divide families".

"Kadapa is an important area of focus for us as it has a sizeable population of minorities. They have been traditional voters of the Congress and with Sharmila's entry, she may split some pro-YSRCP votes," says a close aide of Avinash. Minorities, including Muslims and Christians, make up about 19% of the population in the seat.

The TDP has fielded C Bhupesh Reddy from the Kadapa Lok Sabha seat and hopes a split of votes between the cousins would improve its chances. "We have a solid 30% vote base here and a split in votes will help us. Plus, we have the votes of (allies) Jana Sena Party and BJP on our side too," says M Bhupal Reddy, a local TDP leader in Badvel.

9 DECISION 2024





Assam CM Himanta Biswa Sarma.
File

Himanta: NDA needs 400-plus seats for UCC across country, Mathura temple

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
BEGUSARAI (BIHAR), MAY 11

ASSAM CM Himanta Biswa Sarma on Saturday said the NDA needs to win more than 400 seats in the LS polls to implement UCC in the country and to construct a grand temple at the Krishna Janmasthan in Mathura. Addressing a rally in Begusarai, Sarma slammed the Congress and its allies for "raising question mark" on Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK). He said, "...The NDA under the leadership of PM Narendra Modi has to win 400 plus seats to implement the UCC in the country, for the construction a grand temple at Krishna Janmasthan in Mathura and also to ensure PoK, which is a part of India, returns to India."

Hitting out at Congress and its allies, Sarma said, "Congress leader Rahul Gandhi and RJD supremo, Lalu Prasad, did not attend Pran Pratishtha of the Ram Lalla at Ayodhya. Let me make it very clear that neither Rahul nor Lalu will ever be able to visit Ram temple in Ayodhya..." The Assam CM accused the Congress of giving religion-based reservation. "They (INDIA bloc leaders) are indulging in politics of appeasement and raise issues that support Pakistan. Congress leader Mani Shankar Aiyar recently said India should not raise the PoK issue and respect Pakistan as it possesses an atom bomb. Even if Pakistan has a nuclear bomb, I am confident that it must have passed its expiry date. Our government at the Centre has made it clear PoK belongs to India and no force can snatch it," said Sarma, adding the NDA needs over 400 seats to save the quota granted to the OBCs, SCs and STs.

PARTY HOPPER

Former Haryana MLA joins Cong

Kaithal (Haryana): Former MLA Satvinder Singh Rana, who had contested the 2019 Assembly polls unsuccessfully from Kalayat on AJP ticket, joined the Congress on Saturday. Congress General Secretary Randeep Singh Surjewala welcomed him into the party fold. Rana resigned from the JJP last month. Hitting out at JJP and BJP, he alleged both failed to protect the interests of farmers, youth and traders during their alliance in Haryana. He said he would hold a rally in Kalayat and Rajauri soon. Rana held many positions, including as an MLA, in Congress from 1982 to 2014. **PTI**

As TMC dials up heat in Baharampur, Adhir holds steady against Yusuf Pathan

Prestige fight for Cong veteran who has been winning the seat since 1999

RAVIK BHATTACHARYA & ATRI MITRA
MURSHIDABAD, MAY 11

WEARING AN off-white hat, the 68-year-old Congress veteran stands erect, riding pillion on a motorcycle as it navigates the narrow lanes of Hijol village in Kandi area of Murshidabad district. The posters on the walls read: "Praner manush, kajer manush, kachher manush (A man after my own heart, a man of work, someone close)". For Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury, who has been winning the Baharampur LS seat in Murshidabad for five consecutive times since 1999, it is a prestige fight this time. The TMC has fielded Yusuf Pathan, the Gujarat-born ex-Indian cricketer, in Baharampur as it goes all out to wrest the Muslim-dominated seat from Chowdhury. Also in the fray is BJP's Dr Nirmal Kumar

Saha, a well-known local surgeon. The fight is important not only for Chowdhury but for his party's seat-sharing alliance with the CPI(M)-led Left in Bengal. On May 8, Chowdhury's campaign started at 9 am from Dadpur in Reginagar. He greeted people and showered toffees on children whenever he was stopped by villagers. His morning campaign ended at 11 am. As his convoy entered Baharampur town, he got down near Kalpana cinema hall and walked, greeting people, many by their first names. After an hour, he was at his party office. At around 4 pm, Chowdhury hit the road again. At Hijol village in Kandi area, which has always given him a significant lead, he jumped off the jeep to hop on to a motorbike. "That's how our Dada is... Look how bold and straightforward he is," said Amirul Islam, a youth following him on a motorbike.



Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury campaigns in Baharampur LS seat

At Kandi, he said, "TMC will be finished by 2026. Those who are committing violence for this party should realise that people are no longer afraid. If you don't stop, people will throw you out of Murshidabad district." Back in town, Chowdhury said: "This is not a municipal poll, so it will be difficult for TMC to unleash terror. Our control room will function on polling day. In case of any violence, let us know, our boys

will take care." Speaking to *The Indian Express* at the party office, he said: "I am offering two guarantees — promise to respect the love and affection you have given me, and promise not to indulge in anything that could humiliate you. I will never betray you." However, Chowdhury's victory margin from Baharampur has gradually shrunk. In 2009, he won by over 1.8 lakh votes. In 2014, it was over 3 lakh votes, but

in 2019, it had fallen to around 80,000 votes. "Dada (Chowdhury) used to be the last word in Baharampur, commanding both Hindu and Muslim votes. But this time... TMC is leaving no stones unturned to woo Muslim votes, while the BJP is doing the same with Hindu votes," says Subrata Mondol, a tea stall owner in town. The same day, at another part of Baharampur town, TMC's No. 2 Abhishek Banerjee was holding a mega roadshow for Yusuf Pathan. Pathan is not an unknown face in these parts. Besides being part of the 2007 T20 and 2011 ODI World Cup winning squads, Pathan played for KKR from 2011-18. Abhishek said, "Whenever Congress's central leaders like Rahul Gandhi, Sonia Gandhi and Mallikarjun Kharge were holding meetings with Didi (Mamata) to defeat the BJP, Adhir was busy addressing a press conference in Bengal to slam TMC and Didi." At Beldanga, Yusuf was seen with his brother Irfan Pathan. Irfan said, "We are cricketers. We know how to win a tough match."

'PM did nothing for Andhra spl status, YSRCP, BJP, TDP all non-performers

FOLLOWING A brief stint in Telangana, **YSSHARMILA**, the younger sister of Andhra Pradesh CM Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy, returned to Andhra as the state Congress chief last year and is making her poll debut from the family bastion of Kadapa in the LS polls. In an interview to **PUSHKAR BANAKAR**, Sharmila speaks about the challenge of heading the Congress in a state where now it has little presence, her campaign, and the party's prospects in Andhra. Excerpts:



How is the campaign going?
Fabulous, we are getting an amazing response.

Only in Kadapa or across the state?
It is across the state. People are realising it is only the Congress that is standing by them, though they also know that the Congress is very weak right now... I should say we are slowly gaining traction.

Why did you return to Andhra after briefly shifting base to Telangana?

There was a need when I went there as a tyrant was ruling Telangana. It was important to bring his government down and I played my part in it by undertaking a 3,800-km padayatra to sharpen the anti-incumbency against him. However, simultaneously the Congress also grew due to Rahul Gandhi's Bharat Jodo Yatra, electoral success in neighbouring Karnataka and Revanth Reddy's hardwork. It was important for me to step down there as we did not want to split the Congress's vote bank. After I joined the Congress, the party requested me to go to Andhra as nobody here was fighting for the state's special category status...

As state Congress chief, what are your challenges?
Andhra is in a very peculiar

In Jharkhand, BJP still rides high on Modi amid dissent, conflict

ABHISHEK ANGAD
RANCHI, MAY 11

IN THE last Lok Sabha elections, of the total 14 seats in Jharkhand, the NDA had won 12, with a vote share of 56%. This included the 4.4% votes polled by its ally, All Jharkhand Students' Union (AJSU), winning one seat. By the time of the Assembly polls in December that year, though, equations had changed significantly, with the JMM storming to power in the state with Congress support.

Five years later, the BJP enters the LS poll arena, still riding on PM Narendra Modi's popularity, but the advantage may have whittled down. And not so much because of Heman Soren's arrest in January this year but due to dissent and conflict within its own ranks. Earlier this month, BJP headquarters in Chatra district saw sloganeering by supporters of party leader Rajdhani Yadav. The protests were provoked by BJP dropping two-time sitting Chatra MP Sunil Singh and picking Kalicharan Singh. "The ticket has been given to a party virodhi (an anti-party person)," Yadav said. A BJP worker from Chatra told *The Indian Express* Kalicharan got the ticket at the last minute. "BJP workers are unhappy." A senior BJP leader, however, said, "It's natural there will be some disagreement over tickets. We name candidates after detailed deliberations." In Dhanbad, Banghmara MLA Dhullu Mahato, who has been given the ticket over three-time sitting MP Pashupati Nath Singh, continues to face push-back from within the party. A



Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Jharkhand's Chatra district, Saturday. **PTI**

former BJP MLA from Jamshedpur East, Saryu Roy, is opposing Mahato's candidature, over his alleged involvement in more than 40 criminal cases. Besides, Mahato is facing an FIR filed by former BJP member and local Marwari Sammelan president Krishna Agarwal against him and a local strongman for allegedly threatening him. "There are over one lakh Marwari voters in Dhanbad. We wrote to state BJP chief Babulal Marandi that Mahato's candidature has shocked many, and that there will be an environment of fear if he is elected... but to no avail," Agarwal told *The Indian Express*, adding that he will campaign for NOTA. A Dhanbad BJP leader said: "The BJP is doing a lot of social engineering, but this is creating new faultlines. The business class, who are traditionally BJP voters, may look for other options because of Mahato." Babulal Marandi's political advisor Sunil Tiwari defended

the choice of Mahato, saying: "There are criminal cases against Babulal Marandi, Hemant Soren, Godpa MP Nishikant Dubey and others. Criminal cases do not decide the winnability of any candidate, as some of them are political cases too... Mahato is a local, and will get the necessary votes." In Singhbhum, BJP candidate Geeta Koda, who recently defected from the Congress, is facing protests from the INDIA bloc but also resentment within BJP ranks. Recently, JMM workers, reportedly supporters of its candidate and state minister Jobha Manjhi, blocked roads to prevent Koda's entry into several villages, resulting in a scuffle and filing of three FIRs, invoking charges of assault, attempt to murder and SC/ST Act. Besides, one of the winning MLAs from the segments falling under Singhbhum is CM Champai Soren, which could tilt the scales in favour of the INDIA bloc. A local BJP insider said: "Despite hiccups, Koda should trump Manjhi, unless the Hemant Soren issue does us some damage, as it would consolidate tribal votes." In Hazaribagh, the BJP ticket has gone to local MLA Manish Jaiswal, overriding two-time MP Jayant Sinha, the son of former BJP leader Yashwant Sinha. Jaiswal is facing Jai Prakash Bhai Patel of Congress, who deserted the BJP this year. Patel, son of JMM co-founder Tek Lal Mahato, belongs to the Kudmi Mahato caste. Kudmis dominate the Ramgarh and Mandu Assembly segments under the LS seat. A source in Hazaribagh said there will be a "tight contest", considering caste equations and Yashwant Sinha's own votes in the constituency.

RALLYING POINT

Kharge says Modi became PM as Cong fought for freedom, Maya points to BJP's unfulfilled promises



Congress leader Shashi Tharoor and Sena (UBT) leader Aadiya Thackeray in Mumbai, Saturday. **Express**

CONG CHIEF MALLIKARJUN KHARGE IN BIHAR 'WHY NO ACTION IF AMBANI, ADANI WERE SENDING BLACK MONEY TO CONGRESS'

CONGRESS CHIEF Mallikarjun Kharge Saturday hit out at PM Narendra Modi, questioning why his government did not take any action if, as per his allegation, industrialists Mukesh Ambani and Gautam Adani were sending black money to the opposition party. Addressing rallies in Samastipur and Muzaffarpur, Kharge asserted that Modi could become the PM only because Congress fought for its Independence. "Finally, the PM has admitted that these two businessmen have black money... Then why did you not take action against them?" he said. Modi had accused the Congress of having a "deal" with "Ambani and Adani". **PTI**

MAYAWATI, BSP CHIEF IN UTTAR PRADESH 'BJP THEATRICALS WON'T WORK THIS TIME'

BSP chief Mayawati Saturday said none of the theatrics and catch-phrases of the BJP is going to work in the ongoing LS polls. Addressing a rally, she said the people of the country "have understood the BJP". She said the BJP has made innumerable promises regarding good days for the poor, weak, middle class and other working sections of the society but in reality, not even a quarter of those have been fulfilled. **PTI**

'Regional parties coming closer to Congress': Why Pawar said what he did

His words were as much about the future of the Congress as about the prospects of his own party, and with an eye particularly on the coming Assembly elections



THE NEERJA CHOWDHURY COLUMN

Weekly insight into what's changing in national politics — and why

SHARAD PAWAR believes the Congress is on the upswing — whether or not it forms the government this time. This was the upshot of the interview he gave to *The Indian Express* earlier this week — that given the way things were going, the regional parties will tie up more closely with the Congress in the coming months, and some of them may decide to merge in the grand old party. He suggested that one of the parties could be his own NCP (Sharadchandra Pawar). Pawar's words about the future shape of politics — he is a leader with half-a-century of love-hate relationship with the Congress, including time as a member the party — have come right in the midst of the 2024 general elections. The conversa-

tion took place at his hotel room after he had returned from addressing a meeting in Satara in western Maharashtra, along with leaders of his allies Congress, Shiv Sena (UBT), and Aam Aadmi Party. Looking ahead at the post-poll possibilities — he said it had become "difficult to adjust (with) and digest (Narendra) Modi" — his words were as much about the future of the Congress as about the prospects of his own party. The NCP split in 2023, with his nephew Ajit Pawar taking away a major chunk of the party's MLAs and MPs, plus its election symbol, leaving Pawar with only a handful of leaders. While he continues to show the stomach for it, an 83-year-old Pawar is fighting with his back to the wall to retain his NCP faction's — and his daughter Supriya Sule's — political relevance. Clearly, he sees Sule's future as more secure with the Congress than with the BJP. While in the past too there have been back-channel explorations about an NCP merger with the Congress, Pawar has so far been ambiguous. The

Congress too views him with wariness, given that he floated the NCP in 1999 after challenging Sonia Gandhi's authority due to her "foreign origins". However, just months later, Pawar joined hands with the same Sonia-led Congress to form a coalition government in Maharashtra, and has continued that alliance — underlining his pragmatism when it comes to political longevity. Besides, while he is bearing the bulk of the weight for the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) coalition in these Lok Sabha elections, Pawar's eyes are set on the more important Assembly polls due in Maharashtra in October, where the MVA could have a shot at power. The merger of the NCP in the Congress will only shore up the MVA's prospects in the Assembly elections, and in turn benefit the NCP led by Pawar. And if, by then, he has also pulled off a win in the Baramati Lok Sabha seat — Pawar's turf where Sule is pitted against rebel Ajit's wife Sunetra — many who went with the nephew may return to "Saheb's side". The Congress is anyway a



Sharad Pawar's eyes are set on the more important Assembly polls due in Maharashtra in October. **File**

more familiar, cosy ground for them than the massive BJP. The family dynamics remains clear. At a wedding recently in Panchgani of the nephew of an NCP (Ajit Pawar)

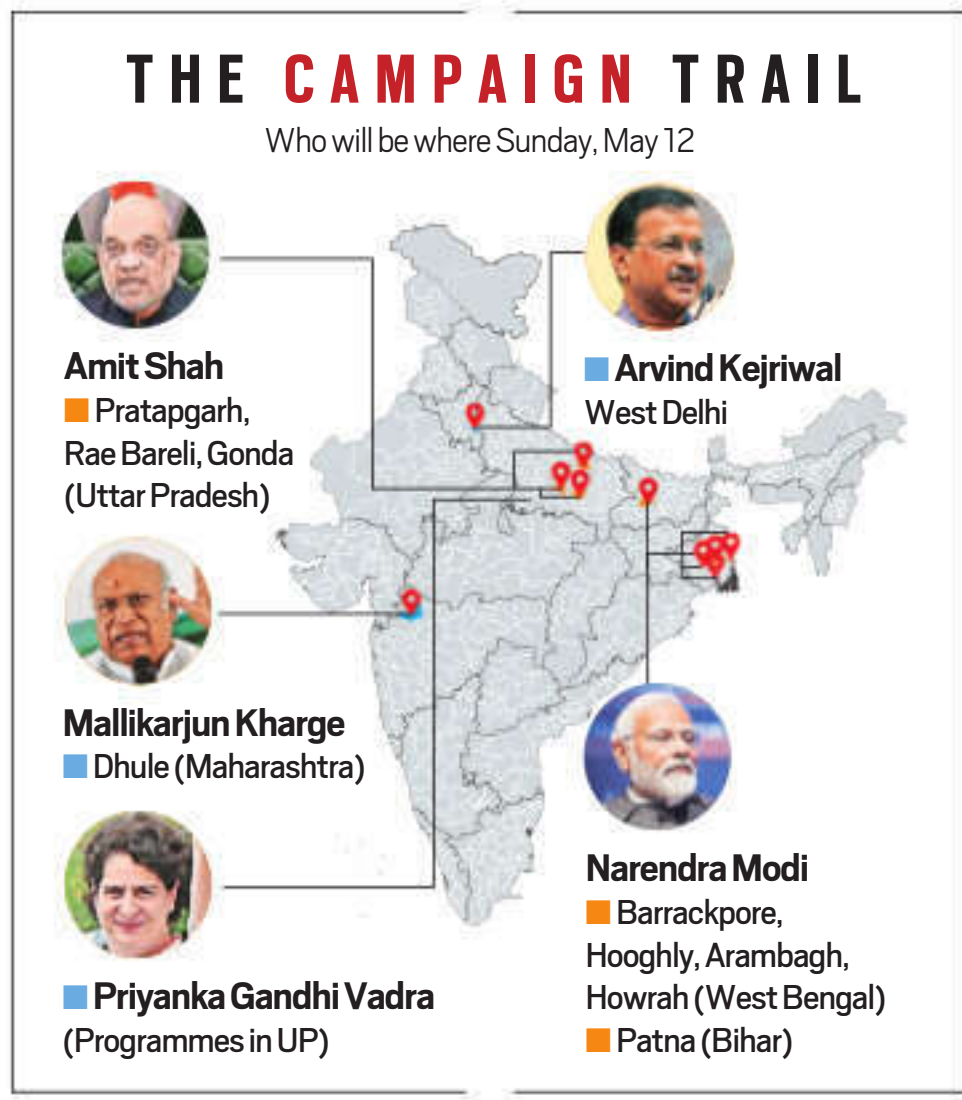
MLA, where this reporter was also present, the who's who of the NCP in attendance included Pawar and Ajit. Sitting on either side of the aisle, they did not exchange a word. The bride and groom first took Pawar's blessings, and then Ajit's. Most of those present were unhappy that the Pawar family had got divided and the NCP had split. Many wondered if Ajit, who had "not got much" from the BJP, would return to his uncle's side after the Lok Sabha elections. Like Pawar, there is sympathy in Maharashtra for Uddhav Thackeray too, for how he had been "betrayed" by colleagues led by Eknath Shinde. Both the NCP (SP) and Sena (UBT) are upbeat due to this. However, it is not clear how many Lok Sabha seats this translates into, in the face of a depleted organisational machinery given their splits. In the Assembly polls though, the "betrayal" may yield better dividends. Besides his own party, Pawar spoke about other regional parties coming closer to the Congress. However, this looks unlikely for parties floated by

rebel Congress leaders such as the YSRCP led by Jagan Mohan Reddy and the Trinamool Congress headed by Mamata Banerjee. Unlike the NCP (SP), these two have replaced the Congress in their states Andhra Pradesh and West Bengal, respectively. However, they could work more closely with the Congress if they come under greater attack from an increasingly aggressive BJP. There are reports that the Congress has given tacit support to the YSRCP in Andhra, which will vote simultaneously for the Lok Sabha and Assembly polls on May 13. While the Congress has little presence now in the state, the BJP has tied up with Andhra's principal Opposition party, TDP. Other regional parties that are offshoots of the old Socialist stream — like the Samajwadi Party or RJD — are also unlikely to dissolve their identities. However, they too may continue to work closely with the Congress, which may provide an overarching umbrella to smaller parties. What is also true is that most of these parties have grown at the expense of the Congress, and

will not want a revival of the Congress beyond a point which could be at their expense. Pawar's words, that the moment may be ripe for a Congress turnaround, will also be contingent on how the party responds to an evolving situation. Will it act like the Big Brother, as it has often done in the past, something that the regional outfits are wary of? Or will the new challenges throw up a different Congress? In that sense, Pawar's remarks comparing Rahul Gandhi favourably to Morarji Desai, for displaying qualities to take everyone along not shown by the late leader when he became the prime minister of a coalition government in 1977, were significant. According to Pawar, today's situation is similar to 1977 in the sense that the PM candidate has not been decided by Opposition parties that have forged a coalition. For a time after Independence, the Congress was an umbrella organisation, accommodating within its fold Socialists as well as leaders like Syama Prasad Mookerjee, who

fell out with Jawaharlal Nehru and went on to launch the Bharatiya Jan Sangh (the precursor to the BJP) in 1951. The rise of Modi in 2014, and the move towards a one-party dominance by a "new BJP", has posed challenges of the kind that the Congress has struggled to handle. While the BJP has emerged as a party around one leader, can the Congress now fashion itself into a federated party, where its state bosses, as well as alliance partners, have autonomy of functioning? Can this happen under the leadership of the Nehru-Gandhi family? These are some of the questions that Pawar's interview have thrown up. But, politics being a game of numbers, ultimately everything will depend on "kaun kitne paani mein hai (who wins what)". And June 4 will give us some clues, if not answers.

Neerja Chowdhury, Contributing Editor, The Indian Express, has covered the last 10 Lok Sabha elections. She is the author of 'How Prime Ministers Decide'



BRIEFLY

UTTAR PRADESH

Registration of will not required in state: HC

Prayagraj: The Allahabad HC has held that registration of a will is not necessary in UP. The state government had made registration of wills mandatory from August 23, 2004. "Wills in Uttar Pradesh are not required to be registered and a will, for its non-registration, will not be void whether before or after the Uttar Pradesh Amendment Act, 2004," a bench of Justices Siddhartha Varma and Ajit Kumar said. It held that Section 169(3) of the Uttar Pradesh Zamindari Abolition and Land Reforms Act will be void to the extent it provides for the registration of a will. **ENS**

Groom among four dead in road accident

Jhansi: A groom and three others were killed and two others injured in a collision between a car and truck near Parichha area. The accident happened on Jhansi-Kanpur national highway on Friday night when six people, including the groom, were on their way to the wedding venue in a car, police said, adding a wedding procession was coming from Bilati village to Chhapra village when a truck hit the car from behind. **PTI**

GUJARAT

Repoll held at one booth after bogus voting

Vadodara: Repolling at Parthampura booth in Santrampur taluka of Mahisagar district under the Dahod Lok Sabha constituency recorded a voter turnout of 69.93 per cent on Saturday – three days after BJP member Vijay Bhabhor, also the son of a BJP leader, was arrested for live-streaming his act of bogus voting from the booth on May 7. The booth had recorded a turnout of 69.59 per cent with 852 voters exercising their franchise last Tuesday, when Gujarat had voted for 25 Lok Sabha seats. **ENS**

MAHARASHTRA

Nine injured in leopard attack in Nashik

Mumbai: Three villagers and six forest staffers were injured by a leopard in the past two days in Maharashtra's Nashik district, an official said on Saturday. One of the injured forest employees is in a serious condition. According to the forest official, the big cat is suspected to have sustained injuries, and an operation is underway to rescue the feline. The injured staffers are in hospital. **PTI**

Man kills mother, wife, 3 kids in UP, ends life

MANISH SAHU
LUCKNOW, MAY 11

A 45-YEAR-OLD businessman in Sitapur allegedly killed his mother, wife and three minor children, before dying by suicide, police said on Saturday. Anurag Singh was intellectually challenged and battling an addiction, officers said. Early Saturday morning, the police were informed about multiple murders and a suicide at a residence in Palapur village, Sitapur SP Chakresh Mishra said in a statement. Police reached the house and found the bodies of two minor children outside and the other bodies inside. A senior police officer said it appeared that two bodies had bullet injuries and

Explore legal options if forensic assistants can be called experts under new crime laws: MHA to UTs

MAHENDER SINGH MANRAL
NEW DELHI, MAY 11

BEFORE THE implementation of three new criminal laws – Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita and Bharatiya Sakshya Act, the Ministry of Home Affairs told all UTs that legal examination has to be done whether the existing forensic assistants can be notified as forensic experts since after the implementation of new laws, their visits will increase substantially. In February, the Centre issued three gazette notifications, informing that the three new criminal laws will be effective July 1. Earlier, Union Home Secretary Ajay Bhalla held a meeting with all the DGs and Chief Secretaries of UTs, heads of NCRB and

BPR&D. It was his second meeting since January 9. In the meeting, Bhalla is learnt to have said it is important that all bottlenecks are addressed before the deadline to ensure a smooth and efficient rollout of the laws. "He is also learnt to have asked to explore the alternative models for forensic vans in Island territories keeping in view their unique requirements," a source said. According to the section 176(3) of BNSS, it provides for the visit of forensic experts to the scene of crime to collect evidence in offences with punishment of 7 years or more. "It was discussed in the meeting that as regards the mandate under Section 176 (3), legally tenable options to recognise those incidents where mandatory visit of forensic expert can be dispensed with need to be explored, as it is estimated that af-

ter the introduction of the new laws, the number of cases requiring forensic visit will increase substantially... Further, not all cases may necessarily warrant mandatory field visit by the forensic expert," a source said. "...It was also discussed in the meeting that legal examination has to be done to assess whether the existing forensic assistants can be notified as forensic experts. Also, since recording and videography has been provided for in the new laws and the app being developed by NCRB is still under development," a source said. In the meeting, a source said it was also discussed that since e-FIRs can be lodged by anyone, it should not be available for public viewing or in other police searches unless the complaint has been signed within 3 days by the complainant.

Current status of UTs:
Delhi: Training has been organised in collaboration with central detective training institutes, Bhopal and Ghaziabad. The FSL has also been restructured and 120 technical posts created.
J&K: Over 6,000 police officers and personnel trained, new posts in the forensics department created, and the J&K police headquarters is working on bringing suitable amendments to the police manual.
Ladakh: 527 police officers trained while hiring of 11 forensic experts and investigation officers will be sent to Delhi for training on digital evidence collection and videography.
Lakshadweep: All police officers trained, forensic experts will be hired from CFSL, Hyderabad and 10 tablets and video cameras have been procured.

Puducherry: All police personnel trained through CDTI, Hyderabad. A Tamil version of the three laws created and circulated in all colleges.
Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu: Training completed for all police personnel, public prosecutors, prison staff and lawyers, and procurement of mobile forensic vans is going on.
Chandigarh: All IOs trained, judicial officers given online training, the judiciary has been requested to conduct a gap analysis for infra requirements, and they are preparing its own App for collecting digital evidence and videography.
Andaman & Nicobar Islands: 1,300 police officers trained, training of judicial officers and public prosecutors is going on, and five committees formed.

IAS officer who's BJP LS candidate submits resignation again, Mann govt approves

KANCHAN VASDEV
CHANDIGARH, MAY 11

THE UNCERTAINTY over Parampal Kaur Sidhu's electoral debut finally ended Saturday with the Punjab government informing the Centre that it has no objection to the resignation tendered by the IAS officer, who is contesting the Lok Sabha election as BJP nominee from the Bathinda Parliamentary constituency. This comes days after the AAP government in Punjab had turned down Sidhu's request for voluntary retirement from service (VRS) and waiver of her three month notice period. Earlier, Sidhu had applied for VRS from the IAS in April and the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) had formally relieved her. However, the state government had rejected her request for the VRS for allegedly "falsifying" grounds and asked her to resume her duties. While initially she refused to join duty, saying she was "not a servant of government for life", Sidhu later, apprehending that she may face problems in getting a no-due certificate for government dues for filling her nominations, tendered a fresh resignation from IAS on May 8.



Punjab govt had earlier denied Parampal Kaur Sidhu's VRS request. *File*

Following this, the Centre wrote to the state government seeking to know within two days if it had any objection to her resignation. On Saturday, the state government wrote to Centre that the government had no objection to her resignation. "To avoid any confusion, I had tendered fresh resignation. I have heard that it has been accepted. I was not being given a no-due certificate (for electricity and water charges for availing government accommodation) citing that I have not retired. They were playing games," Sidhu said. Sidhu was to file her nomination on Friday. However, in want of the no dues certificate, she deferred filing of papers to May 13.

Mehbooba accuses J&K admin of trying to 'fix' LS elections



PDP president Mehbooba Mufti addresses the media in Srinagar, Saturday. *PTI*

BASHAARAT MASOOD
SRINAGAR, MAY 11

PDP PRESIDENT Mehbooba Mufti Saturday accused the Jammu and Kashmir administration of trying to "fix" the Lok Sabha elections by "selectively targeting and harassing" her party and its supporters. Mufti also accused the BJP-led centre of creating a "political Ikhwani" (a counter insurgent group accused of mass human rights violations) in the Valley. "Preparations are being made to do fraud in the elections.

The election is being fixed," she alleged. Addressing a hurriedly-convened press conference at the PDP headquarters, Mufti also alleged that authorities have imposed restrictions for 48 hours from 6:30 pm Saturday under Section 144 in Pulwama, which is part of the Srinagar LS seat going to polls on Monday. The PDP president said they were trying to "harass" the people so that they do not come out to vote. "PDP banished the Ikhwani but they (BJP and Centre) have created a new political Ikhwani

here," she alleged. Mufti said that a large number of party workers in Pulwama and Jammu's Poonch area, which is now part of Anantnag parliamentary seat, are being called to the police stations and detained. Waheed-ur-Rehman Parra, PDP candidate from the Srinagar Lok Sabha seat, alleged that some officials in the J&K administration are trying to manipulate the LS polls. Meanwhile, NC president Farooq Abdullah, during a poll campaign of party candidate Aga Ruhullah Mehdi, also alleged harassment by the police.

Day after 12 Maoists killed, woman dies in IED blast

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
RAIPUR, MAY 11

A DAY after 12 Maoists were killed in an encounter, a 25-year-old woman, who had gone to collect tendu leaves, was killed in an IED blast under jurisdiction of Gangaloor police station in Bijapur district Saturday. Police sources said this is the fourth civilian death in IED blasts this year, which were meant for the security forces. The victim, Shanti Punem was a resident of Mallur village. The incident took place around 20 km from the Pidia village

where the encounter on Friday took place. Of the four civilian casualties, three men were killed in Gangaloor and one in Mirtur. All these incidents have taken place from April to May. In November last year, two villagers who worked in an iron ore mine were killed and another injured in an IED blast at Amdai hill in Narayanpur district in Bastar region. Meanwhile, Bijapur SP Jitendra Yadav said they have identified all the 12 Maoists killed in the encounter and they had a total reward of Rs 31 lakh on their arrests.

TMC may meet President with Sandeshkhali women: Minister

Panja: BJP took women to Rashtrapati Bhavan and misguided the President

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, MAY 11



West Bengal Women and Child Development Minister Shashi Panja. *File*

THE TRINAMOOL Congress (TMC) on Saturday said it is planning to meet President Droupadi Murmu, along with a section of women of Sandeshkhali, and apprise her of what happened in the North 24 Parganas district. State Women and Child Development minister and TMC leader Shashi Panja, while addressing a news conference said, "We feel there is a need to take a team from Sandeshkhali on our behalf and apprise the President of what had actually happened in Sandeshkhali. We will seek the go-ahead from our top leadership for this."

The announcement from the TMC came after a woman from Sandeshkhali said she was forced by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) to lodge a false rape complaint against TMC leaders. Alleging that the BJP had taken a team from Sandeshkhali and had given a "false portrayal" to President Murmu, Panja said, "The BJP had taken a group of women to the Rashtrapati Bhavan and had misguided the President. They have shown disrespect to the high chair of the President. Therefore, there is a need to show the other side of the story as well." While the BJP had levelled allegations against local Trinamool Congress leaders of Sandeshkhali that they had sexually harassed women in the region, the charge has been refuted by the TMC, saying it was a false narrative of the BJP and that the BJP leaders had allegedly paid money to women of Sandeshkhali to make "the false allegations". A purported sting operation video, the authenticity of which has not been verified by *The*

Indian Express, surfaced recently which showed local BJP leader Gangadhar Kayal admitting that the BJP had paid money to the women of Sandeshkhali to make false allegations of sexual harassment. The senior TMC leader lashed out at the BJP for "spreading lies". "The BJP is spreading lies every day. They are maligning the image of West Bengal by resorting to falsehood. Now we have to follow the right protocol to meet the President if our top leadership gives its approval," Panja said, adding, "The BJP has stooped so low that the party has demeaned the prestige of women. They will get a befitting reply in the elections." In addition to this, Panja also alleged that the chairperson of the National Commission for Women (NCW) was also involved in the conspiracy of the BJP in Sandeshkhali and that the TMC will lodge a complaint against her with the Election Commission. "The BJP should either apologise for this or keep quiet. They want to portray that women are not safe in West Bengal in the Trinamool Congress regime. But in reality, that is not true. They are indulging in false narratives to win the Lok Sabha polls," she said.

Suspected poacher killed in gunfight in Kaziranga

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
GUWAHATI, MAY 11

A SUSPECTED poacher was killed in a gunfight with forest guards early on Saturday in the Kaziranga National Park. Kaziranga director Sonali Ghosh said there were some intelligence inputs on the likelihood of intruders attempting to enter the park, following which the authorities stepped up the regular surveillance and combing operations in the last few days along the riverside regions of the park. According to a statement released by the state forest department, patrolling and surveillance teams had been stationed along the border areas of the park on May 10, along with forest frontline teams from Eastern

Assam Wildlife and Biswanath Wildlife divisions. It stated that early on Saturday, a patrolling party stationed near an anti-poaching camp under the Agoratali range of the national park intercepted a group of people, who retaliated when challenged and the confrontation escalated into a gunbattle. The next morning, an unidentified body was recovered from the site, along with a suspected modified 0.303 rifle and live ammunition. "As the incident took place while it was dark, it was difficult to ascertain how many people were part of the group but from our past experiences (we can say), they usually move in groups of two to three with one weapon. The weapon has been recovered but the others are absconding," said Ghosh.

Polls over, but row over 'kafir' message refuses to die down in Vadakara CPM points finger at Cong-led UDF over the 'communally loaded WhatsApp message', Cong alleges Left play for votes

SHAJU PHILIP
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, MAY 11

THOUGH THE Lok Sabha elections in Kerala was over a fortnight ago, the Vadakara constituency is still simmering over the allegations of fomenting communal sentiments during the electioneering. The CPI(M)-led LDF and the Congress-led UDF are trading allegations against each other over a communally loaded WhatsApp message which referred Congress candidate Shafi Parambil as a "Muslim offering prayers five times a day" and CPI(M) candidate KK Shailaja as a "kafir woman (non-Muslim)". A Left citadel which the Congress has been winning

since 2009, Vadakara LS constituency had witnessed a fierce electoral battle this time with both the fronts targeting the rival candidates. On April 24, a day before the polling, the WhatsApp message purportedly attributed to a worker of the Indian Union Muslim League (IUM) had been widely circulated in the constituency. Screenshot of the message said, "Shafi is a Muslim, who offers prayers five times a day. The other candidate is a 'kafir' woman. Whom should we vote for, think before voting. Vote for one among us." The next day, on April 25, CPI(M) social media handles started a counter campaign saying, "During the days of Nipah, floods and pandemic, it was the kafir woman (Shailaja, former



CPI(M)'s KK Shailaja

health minister) who held all of us close irrespective of caste and religion." The CPI(M) had also complained to the Election Commission alleging that the UDF was engaged in a communal campaign in Vadakara. The CPI(M), in its complaint, had named a Youth League worker

in Vadakara as the person behind the message. The Congress soon turned the table on the CPI(M) alleging that the message was created by the CPI(M) to win votes by fomenting communal sentiments. "I am convinced that the message was fabricated. The CPI(M) is raising the allegation using the fake screenshot," Shafi alleged. Congress-backed legislator K K Rama, who represents Vadakara in the state Assembly, blamed the CPI(M) saying that the communal campaign going on in the constituency is potent enough to shatter peaceful life. "Even after the elections, this communal campaign is going on. People would reject the interpretation IUM plus Shafi is communalism. CPI(M) hired a

gang, which killed T P Chandrasekharan in 2012 (her husband) and their vehicle had a sticker 'Masha Allah'. The fake kafir message is a new avatar of that diabolic design," Rama, a fierce critic of the CPM, alleged. (The sticker 'Masha Allah' - What God has willed, has happened - was meant to depict that Chandrasekharan was attacked by some Muslim groups). The IUM Thursday took out a march to the office of the Kozhikode rural SP demanding that police arrest the persons behind the fake screenshots, which described Shailaja as a "kafir woman". "Why can't the police find the source of that fake screenshot? We want the accused to be arrested before the election results are out. In unleashing commu-

nal campaigns, the CPI(M) will defeat the Sangh Parivar," IUM state secretary M K Muneer said. As allegations over the source of the screenshot are still in the air, both CPI(M) and Congress are conducting campaigns and mass conventions across Vadakara constituency against the alleged communal propaganda. CPI(M) Kozhikode district secretary P Mohanan says, "Muslim community has been getting closer to the Left. The UDF wanted to prevent this trend by creating communal polarisation. Hence, they have resorted to the heinous communal propaganda. There was a bid to paint Shailaja teacher as anti-Muslim."

FROM PAGE ONE

FULL REPORTSON
WWW.INDIANEXPRESS.COM

Patnaik, his schemes put BJD on course

a small eatery, praised Chief Minister and BJD leader Naveen Patnaik for providing free rice and ensuring healthcare facilities under the Biju Swasthya Kalyan Yojana (BSKY).

"We are 'sankha' people (supporters of conch, BJD's symbol)," he said, smiling. Krishnachandra Sahu, who runs a common service centre nearby, agreed with him, saying, "Sankha has become a habit for Odias."

Following the collapse of talks between the two parties for a revival of their alliance barely one-and-a-half months ago, the BJP's task seems to be cut out in Odisha even as it is mounting a high-voltage campaign to challenge the BJD, which has been ruling the state for five successive terms since 2000. The BJD appears to be confident about capitalising on Prime Minister Narendra Modi's popularity to boost its prospects in the state, but it faces an uphill challenge in weaning away voters from five-time CM Patnaik, who, despite his health concerns, is eyeing his sixth straight term. While there seems to be a desire for a change among many people, a large section of voters still seem to be rallying behind Patnaik.

Pandian factor

With Patnaik remaining popular, the BJP is raking up "Odia as-

ODISHA ASSEMBLY POLLS (SEATS & VOTE SHARE)		
Party	2014	2019
BJD	117 (43.35%)	112 (44.71%)
BJP	10 (17.99%)	23 (32.49%)
Congress	16 (25.71%)	9 (16.12%)
Others	4 (12.95%)	2 (6.68%)
ODISHA LOK SABHA POLLS (SEATS AND VOTE SHARE)		
BJD	20 (44.77%)	12 (43.33%)
BJP	1 (21.88%)	8 (38.88%)
Congress	0 (26.38%)	1 (13.99%)
Source: Election Commission		

mita (pride)" in its campaign, targeting his confidant V K Pandian, the Tamil-born former bureaucrat who has emerged as the BJD's virtual No. 2, spearheading its canvassing across the state.

While the BJP leaders accuse Patnaik of being "in the grip of a coterie of non-Odia bureaucrats having not much respect for Odisha's heritage, culture and language", a section of people also seem to disapprove of the BJD chief not preferring an Odia leader as his successor. "An outsider cannot take over the reins in Odisha. Odisha should be ruled by Odias," said Duryodhan Sahu.

Pandian, the CM's former private secretary, joined the BJD in November last year after resigning from the IAS. On whether he will

be Patnaik's "political successor", Pandian, while speaking to *The Indian Express*, said, "I live one day at a time; I don't have long-term goals. I will work as long as I get a chance. I believe in karma."

Within the BJD too, there appears to be discontent over Pandian's meteoric rise, with even party veterans or cabinet ministers playing second fiddle to him now, although he still does not have a formal position.

With Patnaik ailing, Pandian has also taken charge of steering the party's electioneering across the state. The BJD chief has restricted his campaigning to just once in three-four days.

Pandian has his own strengths. BJD insiders admit that he enjoys goodwill among six lakh women

self-help groups (SHGs) under the Mission Shakti initiative, which comprise 70 lakh women.

Earlier this week, hundreds of women in colourful sarrees gathered at Badadanda Road in Seragada, in Patnaik's Hinjili constituency, to attend a rally held by Pandian. Though many of them were not aware about his background, they just said "he is sent by Naveen Babu".

"We are happy with the Mission Shakti through which we are getting interest-free bank loans. We use that money to lend to others and earn interest. We also avail other government benefits," said Laxmi Sethi, an SHG member from Baramundali village.

Pandian's acceptability is also said to be high among the new generation of BJD leaders, especially those from its youth and student wings, whose numbers are evident during his roadshows.

Patnaik's popularity

Patnaik continues to hold sway, still enjoying a remarkable popularity despite being at the helm for 24 years. Some of the welfare schemes for various sections, which have played a key role in ensuring Patnaik's success in election after election, include the Mission Shakti, BSKY providing healthcare assurance of Rs 5 lakh (10 lakh for women), NUA-O (Nutana, Unnata, Abhilasha [new, developed and aspirational]-Odisha) for students, and the Location Accessible Multimodal Initiative (LAccMI) bus scheme for rural connectivity.

Countering the BJP's campaign

over unemployment and migration, state BJD secretary Neelam Kumar Swain said: "The BJP should look within for what it has done to create jobs after being in power for 10 years. Migration happens everywhere. Don't Gujaratis go out of their state? Migration is not because there are no jobs."

BJP's challenge

Although the BJP seems to be buoyed by PM Modi's popularity, the state party unit has stepped up its campaign only recently. The state BJP's lacklustre approach earlier was attributed to the bonhomie between the party's central leadership and the Patnaik dispensation. Over the last five years, the BJP's top brass has often praised the Patnaik government publicly, which demoralised a section of its state rank and file. In the current polls, however, the party's hopes are pinned on the Modi factor and the perceived desire for change among a section of voters.

"We need a change, although Naveen babu has worked well for us. But when you elect one party continuously, they try to bully us," said Rajnarayan Sahani, a resident of Bodbh district. The BJP's counter to the Patnaik government's schemes is that funds were sent by the Centre. "Modi sends the money, but BJD changes the name of the schemes. He sends ration for us, money for farmers," said Praful Sahu, a farmer in Sambalpur.

Meanwhile, the Congress, that ruled Odisha for over four decades, has been struggling to stay relevant in state politics now.

● Complaint on turnout our EVM moment, had to respond, says EC official; Kharge responds to letter

watchdog, the Commission had termed Kharge's allegations as "blatant inaccuracies". It even went so far as to say that his letter bordered "on vitiating the constitutionally mandated work" of the EC. The Congress President's communication to leaders of INDIA bloc allies, which was posted on his X handle on Monday, had questioned the "delay" in releasing turnout data and suggested it was an attempt to "doctor" the Lok Sabha result.

When asked why the EC's unusual reply was so framed, a senior officer in the commission said: "This was our EVM moment of 2019. That year, a joint delegation of political parties had met with the Commission and questioned the accuracy of EVMs. The Commission has always exercised restraint in its response to controversies and allegations, even if they are baseless. That (EVM) narrative was not challenged strongly by the Commission, and it haunts us to this day."

"If you look at the content of his (Kharge's) letter, it's an assault on the vitals of the electoral process. If we had not countered this false narrative on voter turnout data strongly, it would have become the agenda for the next several years. This was our only opportunity to make a strong intervention to prevent that from happening all over again," the EC officer added.

The Congress president's concerns over the final turnout data stemmed from the perceived delay by the Commission in releasing the final figures. The poll panel officially released the final data for the first phase of polling on April 19 and for the

EXPLAINED

Behind the delay, a process

THE CONGRESS chief questioned the difference between the provisional turnout data and the first one released by the EC in the first two phases. According to the EC, the initial number is a preliminary estimate. And the higher final figure does not mean that votes were cast after polls closed — it could be because the Returning Officers sent in updated data late.

zled by the need to write that the 'Commission is not legally bound to publish any voter turnout data at aggregate level of a constituency or state', though it is factual. I am sure many voters of our country would be surprised too. Many voters who are deeply interested in the elections would also like to see the absolute number of votes polled to be put out in the public domain by the Commission directly."

"The letter on one hand says (the) Commission respects citizens' right to ask questions and on the other hand threatens citizens in the form of an advice to exercise caution," Kharge further said in his reply on Saturday.

"I am happy that the Commission understands that it has the mandate to conduct smooth, free and fair elections under the constitution. However, the lack of urgency shown by the Commission in taking action against blatantly communal and casteist statements being made by the leaders of the ruling party that vitiates the electoral process seems puzzling," the letter states.

Kharge also said that he is "disappointed that the Commission did not quote another line from the letter which said 'it should be our collective endeavour to safeguard Democracy and protect the independent functioning of the ECI'". "To make it more clear, the Congress party is on the side of the Commission and stands for the strength and independence of the Commission. The officials of the Commission should now decide where they stand," the Congress president wrote.

● Farmer pain, Maratha quota issues

(9.23 crore) of the country's total electorate, *rozgar* or employment, quotas is an issue but their impact on voting choices isn't clear-cut.

No wonder in a state where political lines blur and sharpen only to get blurred again — so much so that this is the first time the voter isn't sure who is who. If she voted for the Sena in 2019, she now has to choose between two Senas; if she voted for the NCP, she has to choose between two NCPs. How this will play out only June 4 will tell but, in this confusion, one thing is a little more clear.

In this swirl of shifting political allegiances, the blame for joblessness, Maratha reservation and farmer losses has also got diffused. It falls at a series of doorsteps, of the BJP-Sena (Shinde)-NCP (Ajit Pawar) state government, the previous state government, and inter and intra-party politics — not singularly on Modi.

"*Modi chipkela hai logon ke dimaag mein. Woh hi aayega* (Modi is stuck in people's mind, he will return to power)," says Tanaji, a Maratha from Sholapur in his 50s, working as a driver in Mumbai.

From entrepreneur Darakunde to driver Tanaji, and from a young upper-caste engineer into his first job in Karegaon to a tea stall owner for 10 years in Ahmednagar, from a salaried individual in his 30s in Maval to a Shirur farmer who supports Sharad Pawar, *The Indian Express* spoke to several voters and the refrain was similar: They all have many complaints, but few for which they blame Modi. Each one has a diagnosis of their problem, but "voting against Modi" isn't seen as a prescription — as many in the Opposition want to frame.

There is a context to this, too. Unemployment is a problem, for sure, but it is not a problem of just the last 10 years, says Naushad Forbes, co-chairman of Forbes Marshall Pvt Ltd, an industrial machinery manufacturing company, with units in Pimpri and Chakan in Pune district.

"Reservation is about people wanting secure employment... it is seen as the only way of accessing this," he underlines, when asked if the demand for reservation in government jobs and educational institutions is an indicator of rising unemployment.

Forbes Marshall employs 2,000 personnel, of whom 1,500 are in Pune alone, and the company hasn't found it difficult to get skilled talent for its units. "We have a healthy mix of local and outside talent which makes it a workplace with good diversity," Forbes says.

The palpable anger over Maratha reservation is probably more about the community's diminishing social standing over the last two decades than just joblessness, explained a top-level corporate executive, who has been a visiting faculty in TISS in Mumbai.

"Every aspect of social life, from temples to schools and sugar factories, was dominated by Marathas. Not so anymore," he says.

That's why, as Dr H N Sonkamble, a professor of political science at Aurangabad's MGM University, says, "the Maratha reservation is not so much about jobs as it is about education, particularly with children having to pay very high fees due to the state withdrawing from education... and the mushrooming of private universities over the last 20 years."

Indeed, for educated youth in and around the region, jobs are not

very difficult to seek. "You will get jobs only if you study hard; merely raising religious slogans slogans will not get help," says a 23-year old upper-caste man from Ahmednagar, who is a B.Tech graduate from Vishwakarma Institute of Technology in Pune, and a new hire at Yazaki Group, a Japanese auto component firm, in its Karegaon unit.

Referring to youth in his age group, this young mechanical engineer, who did not wish to be named, said, religion and faith are important aspects in life but education is most critical for jobs. "Here, many youths join groups, raise religious slogans and participate in processions... How will this help them? We have to study hard for jobs," he says.

Maruti Pawar, an elderly farmer in Shirur, who has five children, says: "One of my two sons is a commerce graduate, but he hasn't got a job so far. I will vote for any party which gives him a job. You tell me whom to vote for." For some like Maruti Pawar, a secure job means everything; and definitely his vote.

Two Lok Sabha constituencies, Maval and Shirur, that fall en route from Mumbai to Ahmednagar and are part of the highly industrialised Western Maharashtra region, are dotted with small and medium sized factories. Vithal Bhosle, a Maratha, working as a field associate with market research firm GfK Nielsen in Maval's Talegaon village, says: "Employment is an issue, and this can be resolved only through development. But all this is better understood by youth... those who are over 50 have a different mindset."

Besides the anger of Marathas over reservation, the farmers' plight is seen to be deteriorating in the Marathwada region. "Prices of fertilisers have gone up sharply, that of diesel has doubled over the last five years, but we are not getting a good price for onions," says Bhupesh Pawar, a farmer in his 30s, who also runs a small hotel, and is a supporter of Sharad Pawar's NCP.

But Bhupesh Pawar also says the "country needs Modi at the Centre". With a caveat: "with a slightly lower majority because running a government with the support of others is good for the country." He says there is "negativity" for Ajit Pawar and Eknath Shinde — the two who broke their parties — but "not BJP".

In Aurangabad, which will see a three-way fight between the Sena factions and the sitting MP of AIMIM, many are still discussing and debating how to vote. Many Muslims and Dalits are torn between AIMIM candidate Imtiaz Jaleel, who is perceived as having represented the constituency and its people well in Parliament, and the Sena (Uddhav Thackeray)'s Chandrakant Khaire, who is from a Scheduled Tribe. "Jobs and reservation are not an issue in this election here," says Hamid Shaikh, a labour contractor. "The government doesn't have jobs to give... all jobs are private," he notes.

In Maharashtra, the Congress, NCP (Sharad Pawar) and Sena (Uddhav Thackeray) are contesting as part of the INDIA bloc. On Monday, 11 seats with 2.28 crore hirur, Maval, Ahmednagar, Shirdi, Aurangabad, Beed, Jalna, Nandurbar, Jalgaon and Raver — go to polls. With these, elections would be over in 35 of the 48 LS seats in the state.

● 'We can stand without fear'

powerful was not easy, it was a daily battle and there were so many powerful people who wanted us to fail.

There was also a negative campaign against us at all stages of our protests, be it when we were at Jantar Mantar and after that, too. Brij Bhushan had initially even said that if one woman comes forward and says she faced sexual harassment, he was ready to hang himself. What happened to following up on that statement? He now keeps changing his stance.

We were worried about him using his powerful connections to put pressure on the system but our lawyer had told us not to worry. The BJP has given his son a ticket for the Lok Sabha elections. That shows that they still support Brij Bhushan. I can say that the day Brij Bhushan does not have the backing of the government at the Centre and loses power, there will be many more girls who will come forward and complain about him.

We did get support but there were many people who turned a blind eye to what Brij Bhushan has done. We can't do anything about them, we can't wake them up and make them see facts.

The criticism of us wrestlers who protested has continued even

after we stopped protesting at Jantar Mantar. It happens even when I am competing now. I didn't win the 53 kg trials because I wanted to focus on 50 kg. I didn't go all out in 53 kg trials. The IT cell went after me immediately.

When Bajrang didn't do well, the same thing happened. And when I do well, these critics go silent. It's not easy when you get trolled or there are negative comments about you all over. Our whole life, we have competed with dignity. But because of the IT cell and trolls, there has been a build-up of negativity.

Some people believe we have been propped up because of politics. We can't go and tell everyone that we have no agenda other than getting justice for women wrestlers, that we are not playing politics. I am not saddened by people who didn't believe us or didn't support us. I just feel they are people with closed minds and are not willing to see what the truth is.

Also, as an athlete, it was tough. I think most of the other sportspeople must have thought that we were mad to protest like we did in the heat and on the road. I hope with the framing of charges, their thought process has also changed. It was difficult because I was an ac-

tive wrestler but had to give my energies towards ensuring the protests did not die down or were not sabotaged. Bajrang's wrestling career suffered, I had to miss the Asian Games because of a surgery. We returned our awards and Sakshi had to retire in protest after the WFI election results.

But we also had positive developments along the way. Initially, we were not sure how the police would conduct their probe, but they did a good job. There are other heartening developments, too. I am not sure if it is because we raised our voice about sexual harassment of women wrestlers, but recently a similar issue happened in football and the girls who were affected spoke up. Be it politics or sports or any other field, I hope because of our protests, women have got the courage to speak up. And if we win this case, then it will have a positive impact for women around the country.

(Vinesh Phogat is a World Championship, Asian Games and Commonwealth Games medalist. She has won a quota for the Paris Olympics. She was at the forefront of protests seeking the arrest of Brij Bhushan Singh after six wrestlers filed sexual harassment complaints against him in April 2023.)

GOVT. OF NCT OF DELHI OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ELECTION OFFICER (WEST DISTRICT) PLOT NO. 03, SHIVAJI PLACE, RAJA GARDEN, NEW DELHI-110027								
GOVERNMENT DUES IS HEREBY PUBLISHED REGARDING CONTESTING CANDIDATES OF 06, WEST DELHI PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCY FOR INFORMATION OF GENERAL PUBLIC								
S. No.	Name of Candidate	Party affiliation if any	Government Accommodation	Supply of Water	Supply of Electricity	Telephone	Government transport (including Aircrafts and Helicopters)	Other Government dues, if any
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1.	KAMALJEET SEHRAWAT	BHARATIYA JANATA PARTY	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
2.	MAHABAL MISHRA	AAM AADMI PARTY	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Income Tax (self)- 4,31,601/- Income Tax (spouse) 1,02,455/-
3.	VISHAKHA	BAHUJAN SAMAJ PARTY	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
4.	AMIT KUMAR SINGH	RASHTRIYA SURAKSHA PARTY	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
5.	UMA SHANKAR TIWARI	BHARTIYA MAHASANGH PARTY	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
6.	UMESH CHAUHAN	RASHTRIYA RASHTRAWADI PARTY	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
7.	OM PRAKASH NARAYAN	AAPKI APNI PARTY (PEOPLES)	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
8.	CHAMAN LAL VERMA	SAMAJ VIKAS KRANTI PARTY	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
9.	CHARANJEET SINGH	ALL INDIA FORWARD BLOC	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
10.	JAYA RAMAN	SARVLOKHIT SAMAJ PARTY	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
11.	DEEPAK SHARMA	BHARATIYA JAN JAGRITI PARTY	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
12.	PRAMOD KUREEL	BAHUJAN NATIONAL PARTY (AMBEDKAR)	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
13.	MADHU	AKHIL BHARTIYA PARIVAR PARTY	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
14.	MEENA UJJAINWAL	PEOPLES PARTY OF INDIA (DEMOCRATIC)	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
15.	RAMESH KUMAR JAIN @NIRBHIK	GAREEB AADMI PARTY	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
16.	AJ RAJAN	NAVARANG CONGRESS PARTY	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
17.	SUNIL MEGHWAL	AMBEDKARITE PARTY OF INDIA	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
18.	ANJU SHARMA	INDEPENDENT	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
19.	KAPIL MARWAH	INDEPENDENT	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
20.	JARNAIL SINGH	INDEPENDENT	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
21.	RAVI	INDEPENDENT	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
22.	RAJIV KANT MISHRA	INDEPENDENT	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
23.	RAM NARAYAN MOHANTY	INDEPENDENT	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
24.	SABIR KHAN	INDEPENDENT	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Sd/- (Dr. KINNY SINGH, IAS) RETURNING OFFICER								
DIP/SHABDARTH/CLASSIFIED/0059/24-25								
06, WEST DELHI PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCY								

OFFICE OF THE RETURNING OFFICER 06-WEST DELHI PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCY PLOT NO.3, SHIVAJI PLACE, RAJA GARDEN, NEW DELHI-110027	
PUBLIC NOTICE	
All the candidates contesting in the General Election to the Lok Sabha 2024 in the Parliamentary Constituency of West Delhi (WDPC-06) and the general public are hereby informed that the Election Expenditure Register will be inspected as per the schedule given below. :-	
1. 1st Inspection - 13.05.2024 (Monday), between 10:00 AM & 05:00 PM	
2. 2nd Inspection - 17.05.2024 (Friday), between 10:00 AM & 05:00 PM	
3. 3rd Inspection - 23.05.2024 (Thursday), between 10:00 AM & 05:00 PM	
Place of Inspection: Room No. 405, Office of the Returning Officer, 06-West Delhi Parliamentary Constituency, Plot No. 03, Shivaji Place, Raja Garden, New Delhi - 110027.	
This inspection is necessary as per Section 77 (1) and 78 of the RP Act 1951.	
Sd/- (DR. KINNY SINGH, IAS) RETURNING OFFICER	
DIP/SHABDARTH/CLASSIFIED/0057/24-25	
06-WEST DELHI PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCY	

OFFICE OF THE RETURNING OFFICER, 03-EDPC GOVT. OF NCT OF DELHI L.M. BUNDH, SHASTRI NAGAR, DELHI-110031 (PUBLIC NOTICE) THE GENERAL ELECTIONS TO LOK SABHA - 2024 Scheduled to be held on 25.05.2024								
Information as furnished by the contesting candidates from East Delhi Parliamentary Constituency in their affidavits in respect of Government dues is hereby published for information of all electors:								
S. No.	Name of Candidate	Party Affiliation, if any	Government Accommodation	Supply of Water	Supply of Elements/ Electricity	Telephone	Government Transport (including aircrafts and helicopters)	Other Government dues, if any
1	Kuldeep Kumar (Monu)	Aam Aadmi Party	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
2	Mohd. Waqar Choudhary	Bahujan Samaj Party	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Rs. 53,716/- (I. Tax)
3	Harsh Malhotra	Bharatiya Janata Party	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
4	A. Gopala Krishna	Navarang Congress Party	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
5	Jai Ram Lal	Rashtriya Republican Party	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
6	Jyoti Prakash (Monu)	Ekam Sanatan Bharat Dal	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
7	Advocate Manjeet Singh	Rashtra Nirman Party	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
8	Yogesh Chaudhary	Bhartiya Veer Dal	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
9	Lal Singh	Bahujan Dravida Party	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
10	Surendra Singh Basoya	Peoples Party of India (Democratic)	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
11	Sanjay	Public Political Party	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
12	Sanjaya Kumar Yadav	Right to Recall Party	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
13	Amit Gupta	Independent	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
14	Arunima Gautam	Independent	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
15	Om Shankar	Independent	Nil	Rs. 12,130/-	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
16	Kuldeep Kumar	Independent	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
17	Manoj Kumar Gupta (Swaraji)	Independent	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
18	Mohammad Irfan	Independent	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
19	Rodash Gupta	Independent	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
20	Vimal Kumar Saxena	Independent	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
-Sd- (AMOL SRIVASTAVA, IAS) Returning Officer								
DIP/SHABDARTH-CLASSIFIED-0058-24-25								
03-East Delhi Parliamentary Constituency								

Across
THE AISLE



PCHIDAMBARAM
Website: pchidambaram.in
Twitter @PChidambaram_IN

Why should a ‘strong’ leader lie?

HON’BLE PRIME Minister, Mr Narendra Modi, is a self-declared ‘strong’ leader. He often boasted of a 56” chest. His followers point to the taming of the Khan Market clique, uprooting the urban Naxals, decimating the *tukde-tukde* gang, teaching-a-lesson to Pakistan, virtually abolishing English as an associate official language, subjugating the mainstream media, and India’s assumed status as *Vishwaguru*.

With a strong leader, 303 seats under the belt and 12 chief ministers spearheading the campaign in their respective states, the march toward 370 for the BJP alone (and 400+ for the NDA) should have been a cakewalk. However, as BJP leaders admit privately, 370 or 400+ is no longer achievable and they would be happy if the BJP won a simple majority.

With a strong leader, 303 seats under the belt and 12 chief ministers spearheading the campaign in their respective states, the march toward 370 for the BJP alone (and 400+ for the NDA) should have been a cakewalk. However, as BJP leaders admit privately, 370 or 400+ is no longer achievable and they would be happy if the BJP won a simple majority

In Palestinian struggle, there’s more than an echo



Dalitality
AARUSHI PUNIA

JYOTIRAO PHULE called the caste system the oldest form of slavery, foreshadowing that there is no singular or original form of racism, but evolving forms of descent-based discrimination that often inform each other.

What is common to both Dalits and Palestinians is extreme racialised discrimination, humiliation and segregation at the hands of the ethno-national state. Both upper castes and Zionists assert scriptural authority, genetic superiority and cultural supremacy through the state.

In the ethno-national state, the dominant group hegemonises politics and cultural apparatus, and controls discursive practices and storytelling through history, narratives and media. Such a state is a *Carceralopolis*, where the dominant group has carceral control over the existence of the subordinate group that is invisibilised and violently exterminated.

Palestinian history and political assertion have been erased through statements like “Palestinians did not exist” (Golda Meir) and are “children of darkness” (Benjamin Netanyahu). Such rhetorical offenses draw from a history of racial othering. West Bank and Gaza have been occupied by Israel since 1967, and Palestinians have been economically impoverished and politically disenfranchised through expanding Zionist settlements, increased military surveillance, and violent massacres and incarceration.

While it is estimated that over 7,50,000 Palestinians were displaced in 1948 when Israel was founded, since Israel declared war on Gaza in October 2023, about 35,000 Palestinians have been killed, of which 13,000 were children, and over 1.9 million people displaced. Palestinian women have been sexually assaulted, Gaza bombed, children buried alive, all with impunity.

In the last 2,000 years, Savarnas have assigned Dalits many names: Chandala, Ati-shudra, Untouchable, and Scheduled Caste, all of which carry their own tenor of humiliation. They have been confined to impoverishing occupations like manual scavenging, carrying dead animals, cleaning toilets, leather work and toddy tapping. If the Indian state were to acknowledge the presence of Dalits across all religions, their population would be 30% of the country. However, the number of Dalits in academic

history
HEADLINE
MIRAPATEL



SANJAY LEELA Bhansali’s period drama series, *Heeramandi: The Diamond Bazaar*, tells the story of courtesans or tawaifs in Lahore’s red-light area of Hira Mandi and is set in the backdrop of the Independence movement.

While the show is said to have become one of the most watched Indian shows on the streaming platform, it has been criticised by some for faltering on facts. Beyond the glamour and the lavish sets of the series, how real is Hira Mandi?

Tucked into the northern corner of Lahore’s Walled City, next to the Lahore Fort, the famed ghetto is now littered with dilapidated buildings and indistinguishable streets. While Hira Mandi was once a thriving market, the playground of royalty, home to artistes, prostitutes and courtesans, today, its balconies are deserted and the shops lie in disarray.

It was under Sikh rule that Lahore’s redlight district got its current name. Hira Singh Dongra, a prime minister of the Sikh Empire, thought the area could be used as an economic hub. The grain market that Hira established came to be known as Hira Singh di Mandi (Hira Singh’s market) and, gradually, as Hira Mandi.

In *Punjabi Century* (2023), historian Prakash Tandon writes, “Hira Mandi by day was quiet and deserted, but after the sun went down, it came into a dazzling and brilliant life.”

Known by different names, tawaifs or royal courtesans occupied an important place in Mughal India. As historian Pran Neville writes in *Nautch Girls of the Raj* (2009), “they formed part of the retinue of kings and nawabs...To be associated with a tawaif was considered to be a symbol of status, wealth, sophistication and culture...no one considered her to be a bad woman or an object of pity”.

Courtesans were also exceptionally independent women by the standards of the time. While most women were not allowed to hold wealth or inherit property, courtesans during the Mughal period were financially independent, possessing agency over their lives and choices.

Sikh dominance over Punjab gave way to the East India Company in 1849. The British, however, were not taken in by the dancing women (whom they called nautch girls), with one edition of the *Punjab Gazetteer* of 1883 stating that “dancing is generally performed by hired nach girls and need not be further men-

The real story of
Lahore’s Hira Mandi



tioned here than to say that it is a very uninteresting and inanimate spectacle to European eyes.”

Victorian conservatism also played a huge role. According to historian Neville, the British “made no distinction between an accomplished professional nautch girl or a devadasi and a common prostitute, dubbing both as fallen women. The educated Indians, suffering from an inferiority complex, were overcome with a sense of shame about their traditional arts”.

It was under the British that Hira Mandi became known as a den for prostitution, with the Company and crown recognising the need for, in the words of British General Henry Montgomery, “essential horizontal pleasures for tired fighting gentlemen soldiers”. Prostitution here soon became a family business, passed down from mother to daughter, openly and unapologetically.

In the 1950s, dancing girls were legitimised as artistes by a Pakistani High Court order, which permitted them to perform for up to three hours every evening. Hira Mandi retained its status as a centre for the performing arts, producing some of the most famous stars of Pakistani cinema. Entertainment was considered beneath women from ‘higher class backgrounds’, so it was the traditional performers of Hira Mandi who became professional singers and dancers.

With the Islamisation of Pakistan under President Zia-ul-Haq, laws were introduced banning music and dance, among other “illicit” activities. This drove many families away from Hira Mandi, leaving behind only the most disadvantaged sections of women, including refugees from neighbouring Afghanistan.

Zerka Tahir, founder of the non-profit Communal Hub, spoke to *The Indian Express* about what remains of the historic neighbourhood. Tahir says that while Zia’s policies did lead to a crack-down on prostitution in Hira Mandi, there were other factors too that transformed the area.

“Technology, education, changes in family structure, and disease all impacted the industry,” she says, leading to the demise of the old Hira Mandi.

Describing the neighbourhood today, Tahir says, “Women of all ages can be hired, with women over 60 often selling their services for as little as Rs 50. If they have a stomach ache, they go into the streets,” she says, “and earn just enough money to buy one tablet of paracetamol.”

According to Louise Brown, sociologist and author of *The Dancing Girls of Lahore* (2005), the women of Hira Mandi are often confined to a life of destitution after multiple pregnancies and venereal diseases have ravaged their once youthful bodies.

Tahir says most people in Hira Mandi now choose to send their children away. It is not uncommon for family elders to send girls as young as 13 to dance troupes in the Gulf, India and Ukraine.

Most historians and experts agree that the Hira Mandi of today is starkly different from what is depicted in films and television shows. However, according to Tahir, the lives of women living there have always been romanticised, often to their detriment.

Some become rich and move their families out of the area. Some get married or become permanent vassals to men with many wives. Some experience brief fame and fortune in faraway lands. Most, however, end up where they began, veiled by the night, ensconced in the shadows, captive to the dismal magnetism of Hira Mandi.

She
SAID



ANGELLICA ARIBAM

EVERY YEAR I read the first two weeks of May. Mother’s Day is a difficult time for many of us who are grieving the loss of our mothers. Opening email and message inboxes becomes triggering as they scream gift ideas and offers for ‘your mom’ — the mom that I no longer have. They add on the emotional torment as the unresolved grief burrows itself deeper.

In 2021, my mother passed away after an open-heart surgery. It was a surgery that my stubborn-hearted mother didn’t want in the first place. In spite of the doctors’ insistence, she wanted to live out the limited number of days she had tending to our

kitchen garden in the foothills of Manipur. It took me weeks and some emotional blackmail to convince her.

The surgery was successful and we were elated. But within hours, she developed various complications. What followed was a nightmare — she was on ventilator support for nearly a month as her organs started to fail. Due to COVID-19 protocols, my siblings and I took turns to see her during visiting hours.

Lying on a white bed with various tubes coming out of her body, my mother would hold onto our hands urging us to stay longer. Amid the sounds of beeping machines, we would narrate happy updates of our daily lives and urge her to not give up. She would nod and hold onto our hands a little tighter. She desperately wanted to

live, and survived the first two heart attacks.

But in the third week, as her kidneys gave up, she also began to give up. She would shut her eyes tightly, not reacting to anything we said. It was her way of telling us that she didn’t want to see us anymore. She was in pain physically and emotionally. She wanted us to let her go. But we weren’t ready and kept requesting the doctors to try whatever they could. A few days later, we lost her to another heart attack.

It has been little more than three years since I last saw my mother, to never see her again. My life changed forever in that moment. I wasn’t ready for goodbye then, and perhaps in my subconscious mind, even now. I often see her in my dreams, having our usual banter and arguing about mundane things. When the sleep breaks, it takes

a moment for reality to seep in. And these words by Meghan O’Rourke echo in my head, “Am I really she who has woken up again without a mother? Yes, I am”.

To the world, three years is a long time to mourn. But grief does not have a timeline; it comes and goes as it pleases. Sometimes it can be a fleeting moment, and sometimes it can engulf you like a heavy coat, just lingering on.

With time, I have accepted my new reality — that I am motherless now and the deep void that I feel in my being will be a part of me throughout this lifetime. But the guilt of the what-if-I-hadn’t-convincing-her scenario still gnaws at me. While I don’t cry raw anymore at the mere mention of her like I did in the first year, I don’t actively seek out her memories. I repress my feelings,

afraid of the floodgates it might open. It is still not easy.

In my limited understanding, I have learned that the loss of a mother is very different from other types of grief as the connection has been lifelong, in fact some call it pre-life referring to the umbilical cord. Her death is like being cut off from the anchor that tied us to this world. It is but natural to feel completely lost and to take our own time to process it.

I hope society spares us, the motherless daughters and sons, some thought as they celebrate today. It can begin with an acknowledgement of our existence, and perhaps a simple opt-out feature from their Mother’s Day tributes and campaigns.

The writer is a political activist and founder of Femme First Foundation

Mother’s Day — without my mother



Fifth
COLUMN

TAVLEEN SINGH

Twitter @tavleen_singh



Modi on the
backfoot?

WHY THE Prime Minister said what he did last week is a mystery. What is clear is that by openly charging India’s two richest men with sending “tempos filled with black money in sacks” to the Congress Party he has put himself in a bind. For those of you who may have missed the speech, what he said was that the “Congress Party’s Shehzada” had spent five years repeating the mantra “Ambani-Adani, Ambani-Adani” but stopped once the election campaign began. Why? He challenged Rahul Gandhi to declare how much he got from Messrs Ambani and Adani.

The response came immediately. Rahul Gandhi uploaded a video saying that if the Prime Minister knew Mukesh Ambani and Gautam Adani were sending him bags full of cash, why had he not sent the ED and CBI to investigate? Valid question. Meanwhile, the Congress president put a mocking tweet on X about friends no longer being friends and how this was a sign of how the times were changing. The Congress Party’s campaign committee quickly calculated that Rahul had used Adani’s name 103 times after the campaign began, proving that the Prime Minister got basic facts wrong.

Nobody is better at changing bad narratives into good ones than the BJP’s media managers. But their services were not needed this time. The Congress Party itself did the job. Those two crotchety old men who have acted as wrecking balls in the last two Lok Sabha elections came forward to distract people’s attention from what the Prime Minister so recklessly said. First came Sam Pitroda with his offensive, racist and ludicrous remark about the skin colour of Indians. This time he got the sack from his job as head of the Overseas wing of the Congress Party but no sooner had damage control been done than along came Mani Shankar Aiyar to cause more damage.

An interview he gave last month suddenly appeared on every news channel in which he is heard saying that a “muscular” approach to Pakistan could not work because it had its own nuclear “muscles in Kahuta”. His intention was to make the point that in the past ten years the good work that the Congress Party had done to keep Pakistan pacified had been undone by Modi’s hostile, acrimonious approach to the Islamist Republic next door. What Aiyar achieved with his interview was to harm the Congress Party instead of harming Modi. Congress spokesmen immediately distanced the party from Aiyar’s views.

The Prime Minister’s rash and puzzling speech has disappeared from headlines but has not been forgotten. Modi is such a skilled politician that he has almost never made the mistake of saying something that he might live to regret. So, what happened this time? What made him attack the two men who everyone believes count among his closest friends? And what action does he plan to take against them now that he has charged them with sending sacks filled with ‘black money’ to the Congress Party’s royal family?

The damage he has done himself is serious because it shows that he failed in his mission to end black money. He was obsessed with doing this from the time he first took office. It was almost the first item on his agenda. On state visits abroad he asked world leaders for help and when he cancelled 85% of our currency overnight in 2016, it was with the stated aim of ending black money. Instead, what demonetisation achieved was to cause serious harm to the economy and the destruction of small businesses. Black money has continued to thrive. When Modi lists his achievements, he never mentions demonetisation. Will he now similarly forget the very serious charges he has leveled against Messrs Ambani and Adani?

For the moment what is more important is that for the first time since this election campaign began the Prime Minister appears to be on the backfoot. None of the issues that he has raised in recent weeks have resonated with voters. This is because none of these issues were issues at all. When he declared that if the Congress Party came to power, it would steal women’s mangalsutras, it made him look vulnerable and slightly hysterical. He would have to be feeling very vulnerable to make so absurd a charge.

Then off he went to Ayodhya to pray once more at the Ram Temple and that seemed to have no resonance with voters either. His loyal adjutant, Amit Shah, stepped in to declare in feverish tones at a public meeting that “Rahul baba” should know that not even if his Nani came back into this world would she be able to stop the CAA. Did he forget that he was talking about Rahul’s Dadi and not his Nani? And does he really think that the amendment to the citizenship law is something that voters across India care about?

Having mulled over the mistakes that the BJP’s two biggest leaders have recently made, I have concluded that this happened because the campaign has dragged on much too long. If there is one thing that we can learn from this endless summer election it is that the Election Commission must find a way of completing the election process in a shorter period. When an election campaign lasts six weeks, everyone starts running out of steam. A torpor has begun to settle and a deep ennui. Everyone is getting bored.

epaper.indianexpress.com

TOP OF THE WORLD



Pakistan President Asif Ali Zardari. File

PAKISTAN Zardari gets immunity in two graft cases

PAKISTAN PRESIDENT Asif Ali Zardari Saturday received immunity from prosecution as a head of state in two cases of alleged corruption. In one of the cases, Zardari was accused of influencing authorities during his tenure as President during his first term from 2008 to 2013 to allegedly obtain loans for his front companies. The other was about him purchasing vehicles from the state repository where all items gifted by foreign countries are deposited. It was alleged that then PM Yusuf Raza Gilani's government relaxed rules for Zardari to purchase vehicles, an allegation denied by Zardari. **PTI**

SOUTH CHINA SEA Philippines sends ships to disputed atoll

THE PHILIPPINES said Saturday it has deployed ships to a disputed area in the South China Sea, where it accused China of building "an artificial island" in an escalating maritime row. Philippine Coast Guard spokesperson Commodore Jay Tarriela told a forum there had been "small-scale reclamation" of the Sabina Shoal, which Manila calls Escoda, and that China was "the most probable actor". The Chinese embassy in Manila did not comment. **REUTERS**

SINGAPORE PM Lee praises IIT-IIM grads as valuable talent

SINGAPORE HAS one of the biggest pools of talented graduates from Indian Institute of Technology (IITs) and Indian Institute of Management (IIMs), PM Lee Hsien Loong said, as he praised the contributions of foreign talents in the country's progress. The PM highlighted the quality of IIT-IIM alumni as he underscored the need for Singapore to continue bringing in foreign talent to meet manpower demands. "If I can get such a pool, come here and work here, it is a tremendous plus for us," he said. **PTI**

1,000 HOUSES DESTROYED; BAGHLAN PROVINCE WORST HIT

Over 300 killed as flash floods hit north Afghanistan, says UN

Taliban ministry says 153 people have died but toll could rise; rescue ops on

AP & REUTERS ISLAMABAD, MAY 11

FLASH FLOODS from unusually heavy seasonal rains in Afghanistan have killed more than 300 people and destroyed over 1,000 houses, the UN food agency said Saturday.

The Taliban's interior ministry said the toll of the deluge that hit Friday was 153, but the authorities said it could rise.

The World Food Program said the northern province of Baghlan, which saw many floods over the last few weeks, bore the brunt of the deluges Friday. In neighbouring Takhar province, state-owned media outlets reported the floods killed at least 20 people.

Zabihullah Mujahid, the chief spokesman for the Taliban government, posted on the social



In Baghlan province, northern Afghanistan, on Saturday. AP

media platform X that "hundreds ... have succumbed to these calamitous floods, while a substantial number have sustained injuries."

Mujahid identified the provinces of Badakhshan, Baghlan, Ghor and Herat as the

worst hit. He added that "the extensive devastation" has resulted in "significant financial losses."

He said the government had ordered all available resources mobilised to rescue people, transport the injured and recover the dead.

The Taliban Defence Ministry said in a statement Saturday that the country's air force has already begun evacuating people in Baghlan and has rescued a large number of people stuck in flooded areas and transported 100 injured people to military hospitals in the region.

Richard Bennett, UN special rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan, said on X that the floods are a stark reminder of Afghanistan's vulnerability to the climate crisis and both immediate aid and long-term planning by the Taliban and international actors are needed.

Videos posted on social media showed people gathered Saturday behind the hospital in Baghlan looking for their loved ones. An official tells them that they should go and start digging graves.



HOURS BEFORE FINAL

EUROVISION: DUTCH CONTESTANT OUT

Joost Klein was expelled hours before Saturday's final of the competition, which has been rattled by protests over participation of Israel. Organiser EBA said Swedish police were probing "a complaint by a female member of the production crew" against Klein.

Rafah: More evacuations as Israel readies to widen ops in Gaza's 'last refuge'

Reasonable evidence Israel breached international law: US

WAFAA SHURAF, SAM MEDNICK & SAMY MAGDY RAFAH, GAZA STRIP, MAY 11

ISRAEL ORDERED new evacuations in Gaza's southern city of Rafah Saturday, forcing tens of thousands more people to move as it prepares to expand its military operation closer to the heavily populated central area, in defiance of growing pressure from close ally the US and others.

Israel's military also said it was moving into an area of devastated northern Gaza where it asserted that the Hamas militant group has regrouped. Israel has now evacuated the eastern third of Rafah, which is considered the last refuge in Gaza.

More than 1.4 million Palestinians — half of Gaza's population — have been sheltering in Rafah, most after fleeing Israel's offensives elsewhere. The UN and others have warned that Israel's planned full-scale Rafah invasion would cripple humanitarian operations and cause a disastrous surge in civilian casualties. Israeli troops have captured the Gaza side of the Rafah crossing, forcing it to shut down.

US President Joe Biden has said he will not provide offensive weapons to Israel for Rafah. On Friday the US said there was "reasonable" evidence that Israel had breached international law protecting civilians in the way it conducted its war against Hamas — the strongest statement yet that the Biden administration has made on the matter.

In response, Ophir Falk, foreign policy adviser to Israel's PM, said that Israel acts in compliance with laws of armed conflict. **AP**



Palestinians prepare to evacuate Rafah, Saturday. Reuters

The bomb Biden does not want Bibi to drop

JOHN ISMAY WASHINGTON, MAY 11

WHEN PRESIDENT Biden threatened to pause some weapons shipments to Israel if it invaded the Rafah, the devastating effects of one weapon were of particular concern to him. He was referring to US-made 2,000-pound aerial weapons, the largest in the Pentagon's Mark 80 series of bombs.

In the military's banal lexicon, the Mark 80s are "general purpose" bombs, meaning they can be used on almost any target the military typically expects to encounter in war. In addition to the 2,000-pound Mk-84, they also come in 250-pound, 500-pound and 1,000-pound versions — the Mk-81, Mk-82 and Mk-83.

Biden has already delayed a shipment to Israel of 3,500 bombs in the Mark 80 series that he feared could be used in a ma-

jor assault on Rafah.

A *New York Times* investigation in December found that American 2,000-pound bombs were responsible for some of the worst attacks on Palestinian civilians since the war in Gaza began after Hamas attacked Israel on October 7.

According to a US Army office that manages ammunition for the Pentagon, the ideal targets for weapons of that size are "buildings, rail yards and lines of communication." However, Defense Department data indicates that US warplanes typically use far less powerful munitions for supporting ground troops engaged with enemy fighters.

The explosive warheads of these bombs have changed little since the US Navy created them shortly after World War II, but the Pentagon has kept them in service by developing new parts and pieces that can be attached for a variety of purposes. **NYT**

EUROPE TO AMERICA TO AUSTRALIA, WORLD DAZZLED BY AURORA BOREALIS



The aurora borealis, also known as the northern lights, seen in Staffordshire, Britain; and Vancouver in Canada on Friday night. Reuters

Nature holds a light show

Northern lights appear after Earth hit by strongest solar storm in two decades

NEW YORK TIMES MAY 11

PEOPLE IN Britain marvelled at the unusual and spectacular sight of the northern lights on Friday night, the consequence of a severe solar storm that was brewing and was expected to continue over the coming days. The northern lights — also known as aurora borealis — usually don't reach that far south. They are most often seen in higher latitudes closer to the North Pole.

People in other European countries, including Denmark and Germany, also reported seeing the lights.

Onlookers marvelled at the sight, posting their surprise, delight and sometimes shock on social media. As one user wrote: "Aurora Borealis? At this time of year? At this time of day? In this part of the country? Localised entirely over Edinburgh?"

Another onlooker posted, "It really is gorgeous though."

The northern lights also made appearances in North America, with some reporting sightings in Maine, Friday night.

EXPLAINED What causes aurora

SOLAR STORMS occur when the Sun emits huge bursts of energy, leading to the release of a stream of charged particles, some of which get caught in the polar regions of the Earth. These particles interact with gas molecules in the upper atmosphere and produce a colour called Aurora. The current solar storm was the biggest in 20 years.

Earlier Friday, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Space Weather Prediction Center issued a rare warning about the solar outburst, because it could disrupt communications and even power grids. However, there were no major disruptions.

The most intense solar storm in recorded history, in 1859, prompted auroras in central America and even Hawaii.

Colourful sky in Ladakh, solar storm effects noted in southern India as well

ANJALI MARAR PUNE, MAY 11

AURORA, OR the dancing lights as they are commonly known, was visible from the pristine skies of Ladakh and neighbouring areas.

Astronomers of the Indian Institute of Astrophysics, Bengaluru (IIA) captured aurorae over skies atop the Indian Astronomical Observatory in Hanle, Ladakh. The activity persisted between midnight to twilight hours of Saturday with the peak activity reported at 2am. Owned and operated by IIA, the IAO is equipped with cameras capable of constantly imaging the entire sky.

Observatories in Kodaikanal and Gauribidanur in south India and Merak in Ladakh, too, captured fluctuations in the optical wavelength caused by the solar



In Hanle, Ladakh. IIA

flares.

But how did this happen in a low latitude region in the Himalayas? Solar astronomers at the Centre of Excellence for Space Science India at IISER Kolkata and IIA said at least four strong solar storms hit the Earth between Friday and Saturday. The intensity was so high that aurorae were visible from lower latitude regions, including Ladakh.

RENEWED GROUND ASSAULT IN KHARKIV

Russia says 5 villages in its control as 1,700 flee northeastern Ukraine

ASSOCIATED PRESS VOVCHANSK, MAY 11

MOSCOW'S FORCES captured five villages in a renewed ground assault in northeastern Ukraine, the Russian Defence Ministry said Saturday, and AP journalists in the city of Vovchansk described multiple buildings destroyed after Russian airstrikes and barrages of Grad rockets.

Ukrainian officials didn't confirm whether Russian had taken the villages, which lie in a contested "grey zone" on the border of Ukraine's Kharkiv region and Russia.

Ukrainian journalists reported that the villages of Boryshivka, Ohirteve, Pylina and Strilecha were taken by Russian troops on Friday. Russia said the village of Pletenivka was also taken.

In an evening statement Saturday, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said fighting was still ongoing in the settlements of Strilecha and Pletenivka, as well as Krasne, Morokhovets, Oliinykove, Lukyantsi and Hatyshche.

The Institute for the Study of



At a site of a Russian strike in Kharkiv. Reuters

War said Friday that geolocated footage confirms at least one of the villages was seized. The Washington-based think tank described recent Russian gains as "tactically significant".

The renewed assault on the region has forced more than 1,700 civilians residing in settlements near the fighting to flee, according to Ukrainian authorities.

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

MICHELIN-STARRED CHEF'S FOOD WILL BE SERVED TO SIX GUESTS DURING A TRIP TO STRATOSPHERE

Fine dining, at a new high: A chef is taking his cuisine to upper atmosphere

JAMES BROOKS COPENHAGEN, MAY 11

EVER SINCE humans have journeyed to space, their meals there have proved to be, well, nothing to write home about. But that could change after a Michelin-starred chef teamed up with the Florida-based startup Space Perspective to take fine-dining to our upper atmosphere in late 2025.

Six guests are set to ascend aboard Spaceship Neptune to the stratosphere, where they will enjoy an immersive dining experience served up by Danish Michelin-starred chef Rasmus

Munk.

Munk, 33, will travel with the guests and serve the meal himself, from a small kitchen. He says his menu will be inspired by the impact of space innovation.

"We want to tell stories through the food," Munk says. "We ... want to talk and highlight some of the research that's been done through the last 60 years."

"I think that will make an even stronger impact when you're up there and looking down," added Munk, who will fly with the six ticket buyers.

Spaceship Neptune is more of a balloon than a rocket. The company says its pressurised

capsule, attached to a balloon, will lift to an altitude of around 100,000 feet (30,480 metres) above sea level where guests will dine while watching the sun rise over the curvature of the Earth.

Organisers are promising an out-of-this-world experience for those with an appetite for adventure. But such an astronomic menu comes with a fittingly astronomic price tag — \$495,000 (roughly ₹4.14 crore) per ticket. They say the trip will last six hours and that they are still in discussion with potential participants.

It's one of the latest offerings by private firms that include Blue Origin, Virgin Galactic, and



Danish chef Rasmus Munk will be on Spaceship Neptune. AP

SpaceX.

The flight won't technically reach "space" — Spaceship Neptune will ascend to around

19 miles (30 kilometres), well below the Karman line, the boundary separating Earth's atmosphere and outer space,

which is some 62 miles (100 kilometres) from Earth.

Munk's menu is expected to be a far cry from meals eaten by past and present astronauts.

The first man in space, Soviet cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin, squeezed beef and liver paste into his mouth from an aluminium tube. To save on weight, astronauts aboard the International Space Station usually dine on dishes packaged in rehydratable containers, including soups and casseroles.

There have been some exceptions. In 2006, French master chef Alain Ducasse created special gourmet food that could be

used for celebratory meals aboard the ISS. The tinned dishes included typical Mediterranean ingredients, such as olives, tomatoes, quails and swordfish.

Though Munk is mysterious about his menu, he says he's planning to incorporate glow-in-the-dark stars made from aerogel and jellyfish protein.

"We are also working on an edible piece of space junk from a satellite," he said.

"And then, we want to talk about some of the things going on the planet ... from deforestation to temperatures rising and the garbage in our seas," he added. Munk's Alchemist restaurant

in Copenhagen, the Danish capital, has held two Michelin stars since 2020, and last year was ranked fifth best in the world.

Guests dine on a menu of 50 edible "impressions," and the experience is accompanied by performers and installations, all set in the restaurant's own architecture — a former theatre set building workshop in Copenhagen.

At the restaurant's centre is a large planetarium dome, where guests eat surrounded by projections of Earth seen from space. "I think fine dining, in general, is changing a lot," Munk says. "And I think you, as a guest, require more experience in future." **AP**

15 ECONOMY

LACK OF ADEQUATE RENEWABLE ENERGY STORAGE INCREASING RELIANCE ON THERMAL

After coal and gas, govt bolsters hydro capacity to meet rising peak demand

With peak power demand set to touch 240 GW in June, the power ministry’s latest effort to avoid supply shortfall reflects growing concern over risk of outages

AGGAM WALIA
NEW DELHI, MAY 11

THE MINISTRY of Power said it has “optimised” hydropower generation to make available an additional 4GW capacity, weeks after it instructed fifteen imported coal-based and all gas-based thermal plants to be operational during the summer months. With peak power demand set to touch 240 GW in June, the ministry’s latest effort to avoid supply shortfall reflects growing concern over risk of outages, particularly amid poll season demand surge and a hotter-than-usual summer.

Even though India added a record renewable capacity of over 18 GW in FY24, the variability in renewable energy generation is putting pressure on base load capacity, including thermal, especially during evening hours of low sunlight and high demand. The reliance on coal and gas to meet peak demand is more pronounced given the absence of adequate energy storage infrastructure in the country, which can help store excess energy generated by solar and wind plants during non-peak hours and release it during peak hours.

While India’s peak demand deficit has fallen considerably in recent years, insufficient energy storage infrastructure and rising temperatures could widen the gap moving forward, especially in the summer months. The country is staring at a 14 GW peak shortfall in June, its largest in 14 years, due to delays in commissioning new coal-based plants, according to a *Reuters* report. The latest move comes in light of hydro generation missing the cu-



India’s current installed generation capacity is 441 GW while peak demand is projected to peak at 235 GW in May. *File*

mulative target of 12,487 MU (million units) by 1,770 MU in the ongoing FY25 till May 9, a shortfall of 14 per cent, data on the National Power Portal showed. Moreover, state sector hydro capacity, which accounts for 58 per cent of total hydro capacity, generated 19 per cent less power last month compared to April, 2023, as per data. Significant year-on-year fall was recorded for hydro plants operated by state-owned utilities of Telangana, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Jammu & Kashmir, and Himachal Pradesh.

With these measures and forecasts of above-normal monsoon in the coming months, “it is expected that the power demand would be adequately met both during the day and during night hours in the summer months of May and June,” the ministry noted in a press release.

“Nowadays, all the plants are running at their peak, so there’s a possibility that there will be no margin available. Hydro is also expected to be a little less compared to last year because of lower snowfall,” said an industry source.

“In June, demand from agriculture will suddenly come up and the majority of this will come from the northern states as they’ll start to take power to run pump sets. There will be a surge in demand and historically, the impact of high wind and high hydro is more than the impact of demand increase. By the third week of May, a lot of wind generation comes into play and gradually, with the snow melting, hydro generation will also start to increase in another three-four weeks,” they added.

In India, which is the world’s third largest producer of renewable energy, around 40 per cent of installed electricity capacity comes from non-fossil fuel sources. This green push has resulted in a sharp 24 per cent reduction in emission intensity of GDP between 2005 and 2016, but it has also thrown up challenges in meeting peak demand with a grid being increasingly powered by renewables.

Even as the share of installed capacity of renewables like solar and wind has increased to nearly

29 per cent of total capacity in FY24, compared to 20 per cent in FY20, these sources of power do not have high capacity utilisation as they are variable in nature. Energy storage is needed alongside green energy sources to primarily balance out the variability in renewable generation - electricity is generated only when the sun shines or when the wind blows. This is not always in sync with the demand cycle. Storage can help tide over this shortcoming associated with renewables.

For procurers such as state-owned discoms, renewables are not always a viable option precisely due to these vagaries in the generation trends, which means they still have to depend on thermal or nuclear generation for meeting base load demand. Renewables bundled with a viable storage option help overcome this problem.

With lithium-ion battery storage being ruled out as unviable for grid application, at least for now, an emerging policy resolve is that solar and wind-based generation cannot continue to be pushed down to struggling electricity distribution companies or discoms. The renewables challenge is compounded by the fact that SECI (Solar Energy Corporation of India Ltd) — the state-owned company conducting solar auctions — has locked-in a number of contracts involving green developers in rigid PPAs (power purchase agreements) with no scope for innovation, according to sectoral experts.

On the specific concerns of energy storage considering the bulk of capacity addition is coming through renewables, a senior government official said one of the requirements is storage and the other is the flexibility of thermal power plants.

“We’ve already issued a regulation that the thermal power plants will be flexible up to 55 per cent. In the next phase, after three

years, we have to go down to 40 per cent, which means in the daytime, they would run at 40 per cent and pick up after sunset. Now, battery storage is expensive at Rs 10 per kilowatt per hour... There is a fresh impetus to pursue pumped hydro projects,” the official said. The country’s current installed generation capacity is 441 GW (1 gigawatt is 1,000 megawatt) while peak demand is projected to peak at 235 GW in May. Of the installed capacity, the total electric power installed capacity from non-fossil fuel-based energy resources was over 190 GW as of March 2024, which is nearly 45 per cent of the total electric power installed capacity, primarily solar and wind.

To compensate for the intermittency, pumped-storage hydroelectric plants — where it stores energy in the form of the gravitational potential energy of water that is generally pumped from a lower elevation reservoir to a higher elevation reservoir when renewable power is available, which is then released to move a turbine to generate electricity when renewable generation is not available — is being seen as the most viable alternative. These projects thereby work similarly to a giant battery, because they can store power and then release it when needed.

The Central Electricity Authority, the policy arm of the Union Power Ministry, has assessed a requirement of 41 GW/190 GWh (gigawatt hour) of energy storage system for integration of 500 GW of non-fossil fuel-based electricity into the grid by 2030.

The India Energy Storage Alliance, an industry alliance focused on development of energy storage, green hydrogen and e-mobility has estimated the requirement of about 160 GWh of energy storage system by 2030 in a report titled “Energy Storage Vision 2030 for India”.

AI-GORITHM CHATBOTS

AI chatbots want to be factual. But can they be a credible news source?

SOUMYARENDRA BARIK
NEW DELHI, MAY 11

FIRST IT was the Browser Company’s Arc web browser, and now it is social networking platform X’s artificial intelligence (AI) tool Grok — AI platforms are now being trained to produce summaries of content on a particular site, triggering concerns over its impact on traffic to news publishers, and their potential to generate and propagate misleading content harming the online information economy.

Last week, X said that its AI offering Grok will summarise events viral on the platform with news points and additional commentary around the events. The service will be available under the ‘For You’ tab in the ‘Explore’ page of the platform — and when users tap on a story, instead of using text from the article or news itself, the summary is generated based on the conversations happening on the platform. For now, this service is only available to paid users of X.

While offering summaries of news events and trending topics on X is not new and was a feature under the leadership of Jack Dorset when the social network was called Twitter, this is the first time the platform will use AI to create summaries of events.

Even as many fear that this could drive down the traffic that X sends to news publishers who typically cover all major national and international developments, concerns have also been raised over the quality of summaries that X’s Grok would be able to generate given that its source data is essentially what people are posting on the social media platform.

While journalists and credible news publishers share their work — which is backed by thorough ethical and fact-check standards — on the platform, the platform is known to have a misinformation problem too. And since Grok will essentially



In countries with low digital literacy, users can potentially assume chatbots to be an authoritative source of factual information without realising some of their pitfalls. *Getty*

depend on conversations on X regarding a particular development, it is unclear how the system may decide what is accurate information and what isn’t.

Besides, many have questioned whether AI tools should ever even be seen as a factual source. Many people in the industry have argued that AI bots are better at creative tasks than being authoritative news sources given their hallucination problem. In countries with low digital literacy, there could be a potential that users assume such chatbots to be an authoritative source of factual information without realising some of their pitfalls.

While press freedoms vary across countries dictating what journalists can and can’t freely write about, technology companies who do not have a financial or ethical responsibility towards journalism may soon find themselves caught in crosshairs with governments if their chatbots produce content that regulators find objectionable — giving way to fears that the responses they generate may be susceptible to self-censorship as companies are likely to first protect their commercial interests.

Some of this has already played out in India. For instance,

Google has said it will restrict the types of election-related questions users can ask its artificial intelligence (AI) chatbot Gemini in the country, and Krutrim, the chatbot developed by an Indian AI startup founded by Bhavish Aggarwal of Ola, had been found to self-censor on certain keywords.

News companies are also having to contend with AI news summaries and the impact it could have on their business model — which typically relies on either advertisements or subscriptions, but ultimately on how many people reach their website.

As a result, many news companies are cutting deals with AI companies for licensing their content to them to introduce that as an additional revenue stream. OpenAI recently announced a partnership with the *Financial Times*, and others, such as *Axel Springer*, the *AP*, and *Le Monde*, have also announced similar moves.

However, there is also the concern that while deep-pocketed news publishers may be more lucrative partners for AI companies for content licensing deals, smaller niche and independent publishers may miss out on such revenue streams, putting their business in jeopardy.

BRIEFLY

Eicher Motors Q4 PAT up 18% to ₹1,070 crore

New Delhi: Eicher Motors on Saturday reported an 18 per cent increase in consolidated profit after tax to Rs 1,070 crore for the fourth quarter ended March 2024, driven by higher sales. The company posted a profit after tax of Rs 906 crore in the same period last year. Its total revenue rose 12 per cent to Rs 4,256 crore in the January-March quarter of FY24 compared to Rs 3,804 crore in the corresponding quarter of 2022-23, Eicher Motors said. **PTI**

JSW Steel crude output flat in April

New Delhi: JSW Steel’s consolidated crude steel production in April remained almost flat at 21.21 lakh tonnes (LT). Its consolidated output was 21.13 LT in April 2023, the company said in a filing on Saturday. In India, the company produced 20.55 LT crude steel against 20.33 LT a year ago. The production of JSW Steel USA — Ohio fell to 0.66 LT in April from 0.80 LT in the year-ago period. **PTI**

Union Bank of India Q4 net profit rises 18%

New Delhi: Union Bank of India on Saturday reported an 18.36 per cent growth in its consolidated net profit for the March quarter to Rs 3,328 crore, helped by lower provisions. For the fiscal 2023-24, it reported a consolidated net profit of Rs 13,797 crore against Rs 8,512 crore in the year-ago period. In Q4, its standalone net profit increased to Rs 3,311 crore from Rs 2,782 crore a year ago. **PTI**

Trade unions write to ministry, object to exclusion from labour code consultations

ENSECONOMICBUREAU
NEW DELHI, MAY 11

TEN CENTRAL trade unions have written a letter to the Union Labour and Employment Minister objecting to their exclusion from consultations after the Ministry of Labour and Employment held a meeting for preparation of the draft standard on Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) Code for beedi and cigar workplaces including only one trade union — Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh (BMS).

In a letter to Labour and Employment Minister Bhupender Yadav dated May 11, the central trade unions Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC), All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC), Hind Mazdoor Sabha (HMS), Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU), All India United Trade Union Centre (AIUTU), Trade Union Coordination Centre (TUCC), Self Employed Women’s Association (SEWA), All India

OBJECTIONS BY TRADE UNIONS

■ According to one of the union members, the central trade unions were not informed about the meeting

■ The government has failed and neglected to involve all the central trade unions and involved only the BMS, the letter stated

Central Council of Trade Unions (AICCTU), Labour Progressive Federation (LPF) and United Trade Union Congress (UTUC) said it appears that the Ministry is “trying to implement OSH Code by the backdoor”.

“The government has failed and neglected to involve all the central trade unions, at least those

who have beedi and cigar workers unions affiliated to them and has involved only BMS union. This exercise, while the elections are underway, is against the model code of conduct,” the letter stated.

The unions pointed out that the welfare board, which was functioning earlier, has been made defunct as beedi cess has been stopped.

“We urge you to put on hold the process initiated and ask the concerned officials to consult all the central trade unions who are working in the beedi sector,” the letter stated.

The central trade unions were not informed about the meeting, one of the union members said.

On April 24, Directorate General Labour Welfare under the Ministry of Labour and Employment issued a notice for the constitution of a committee for preparing a draft standard on OSH for workplaces relating to beedi and cigar under section 18(1) of Occupational Safety,

Health and Working Condition Code, 2020. Deputy Director General of Labour Welfare was listed as the chairman of the committee with labour department officials from Kolkata, Bengaluru, and Uttar Pradesh as other members. The notice also stated that the chairman of the committee co-opted four other members including the organising secretary, BMS. The first meeting of the committee was held on April 30.

Section 18(1) of the OSH Code relates to standards on occupational safety and health for workplaces related to factories, mines, dock work, beedi and cigar, building and other construction work and other establishments.

The Centre had notified four labour codes to replace 29 sets of labour laws: The Code on Wages, 2019; The Industrial Relations Code, 2020; The Code on Social Security, 2020; and The OSH Code, 2020. However, the codes notified and passed by the Parliament are yet to be implemented.

Hinduja Group-led IIHL gets Irdai approval for Reliance Capital deal

RAJESH KURUP
MUMBAI, MAY 11

THE HINDUJA Group has received the insurance regulator’s approval to conclude the acquisition of Reliance Capital’s (RCap) three insurance companies, a move that will help it complete the resolution process of the debt-laden firm by the May 27 deadline.

However, IndusInd International Holdings (IIHL), a group firm through which the Hinduja Group had placed bids for RCap, now requires regulatory approvals for a proposed change in holding structure. Sources said these approvals are expected “anytime now”.

On Friday, the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (Irdai) per-



File

mitted transfer of RCap’s three insurance subsidiaries — Reliance General Insurance Company Ltd (RGICL), Reliance Nippon Life Insurance Co Ltd. (RNILCL) and Reliance Health Insurance Ltd (RHIL) — to Hinduja Group, sources close to the development said.

the registered office of KABIL here.

KABIL is owned by three public sector undertakings — National Aluminium Company Ltd (Nalco), Hindustan Copper Ltd (HCL) and Mineral Exploration and Consultancy Ltd (MECL).

“I am hoping that it should be Australia because we have been working (there) for the last year,” he explained.

But unlike Argentina, Australia would be a bit costly so the paid-up capital of KABIL will have to be increased. KABIL has a paid-up capital of Rs 100 crore at present.

“We are authorised to go up to Rs 500 crore and I think we have approval of up to Rs 200

crore,” he explained. Rao further said that target has been set to begin mining in the lithium blocks in Argentina in another two to three years.

Lithium is the most important mineral for the energy transition, a fundamental component of lithium-ion batteries, which power electric vehicles and battery energy storage systems.

The government had earlier said that India would pump in about Rs 200 crore to explore and develop five lithium mines in Argentina.

Argentina is part of the ‘lithium triangle’ along with Chile and Bolivia with more than half of the world’s total lithium resources.

Exchange Board of India, Reserve Bank of India and the Competition Commission of India.

“The approval is subject to certain regulatory, statutory and judicial clearances and compliances. IIHL stands committed to working towards obtaining the same as soon as possible and aims to close this transaction by the National Company Law Tribunal’s stipulated date of May 27,” an IIHL spokesperson said, confirming the approval.

The approval comes at a time when RCap lenders led by Employees’ Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO), Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) and provident funds were insisting IIHL make a payment of ₹9,661 crore to them to close the insolvency process. **FE**

BRIDGE

Dealer: South Vulnerable: North/South

NORTH		EAST	
♠ A73		♠ 1086	
♥ 972		♥ J	
♦ 7632		♦ K9854	
♣ A84		♣ Q1096	
WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
pass	2S♣	pass	1S♣
pass	4S	pass	3C♣
pass			

West led the four of hearts, East's jack losing to declarer's ace. Do you think your partner has the king and queen of hearts? He does not. If he had the king and queen of hearts, his correct lead would be the king. When your partner leads a low card against a suit contract and your jack forces out an ace, you should suspect that declarer has the king too. At trick two, South leads the queen of diamonds. Your partner takes it with the ace and he continues with the queen of hearts. Should you ruff it or should you signal in one of the other suits? If you do signal, which signal should you give?

The real issue is whether you should ruff or not. If you will reflect back, you will recall that your partner led the four. Dummy had the two. West can have the three and if so, he has five hearts and declarer four. This means South has a heart loss. You can ruff this heart or you can discard something, probably a diamond.

On defense, it is often a good idea not to ruff in this situation. South does have the king of hearts (your partner would lead it now if he had it) and if you ruff, declarer will follow with a small heart, a card he was destined to lose anyway. In effect, you are ruffing one of declarer's losers. You do not want to ruff losers. You want to ruff winners.

The West hand: S-J2H-Q10843D-A-J10C-J73
The South hand: S-KQ954 H-AK65D-QC-K52

You can see the entire layout now. South started with four hearts, and that means he has two small hearts to worry about. If you ruff this heart, South will get in and will draw trump. He can ruff his last heart in dummy. If you do not ruff this heart, South will have two heart losers. One of these will be lost to West's ten. The next card only leaves dummy and as long as you have three trumps left, South can't ruff in dummy without setting up a trump trick for you. If he ruffs low, you overruff, and if he ruffs high, that gives you a trump trick.

Dealer: West Vulnerable: None

NORTH		SOUTH	
♠ A92		♠ K7654	
♥ 85		♥ J2	
♦ KJ3		♦ A842	
♣ KQJ8		♣ 103	

West	North	East	South
1H♥	dbl	2H♥	2S♠
pass	pass	3H♥	3S♠
pass	pass	pass	

West led the nine of diamonds. You played the jack, covered by the queen. After taking the tricky play the king of spades, both opponents follow and West follows with the ten when you lead a second spade. Do you play the ace or the jack?

SUNDAY CROSSWORD 2477

QUICK CLUES

ACROSS

- River in S Africa (7)
- Narrow walkway (7)
- Assistants or helpers (5)
- Aspecial right (9)
- Flying, soaring high up in the sky ? (2,3,4)
- Make a speech (5)
- Indian instrument (5)
- Talents (9)
- Suffered or endured; experienced (9)
- Beau ____ : novel by P.C. Wren (5)
- Greek letter (5)
- Stretching out or extending (9)
- Throng (9)
- Colloquial language (5)
- Current of air (7)
- Respects or reverses (7)

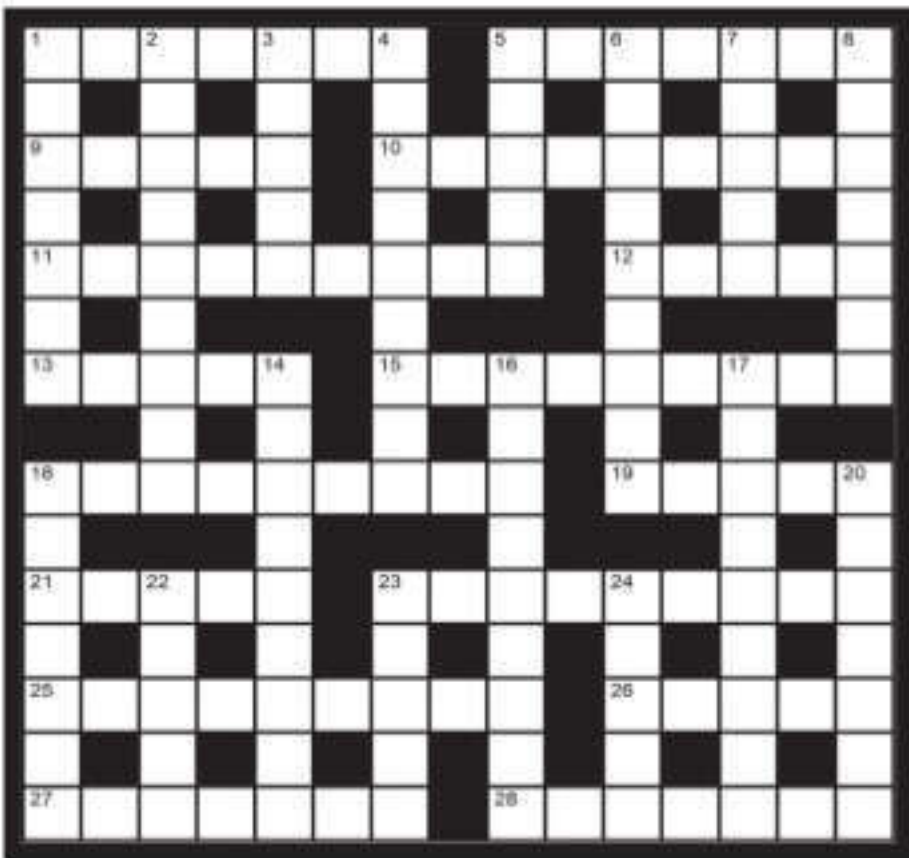
DOWN

- Extreme partisans, fanatics (7)
- Pondered (9)
- Be subsequent (5)
- Involve in a crime (9)
- Hold on to (5)
- Making clothes (9)
- Scene of conflict or sphere of action (5)
- Finders ____ , losers weepers ? (7)
- On ____ it : on going through it again (9)
- Mediate (9)
- Provoke someone (9)
- Without weapons (7)
- Betroths (7)
- Lively Bohemian dance (5)
- Sort trucks out in a goods yard (5)
- Something of benefit (5)

CRYPTIC CLUES

ACROSS

- Company with the right sergeant or corporal has the first bugle or pipe! (7)
- Jazz musicians from "Police" getting a new start (7)
- She gives a number a subtle emanation (5)
- Departs later in pursuit ? (4,5)
- Doesn't he protect his master's head? (9)
- Material turned in refused by the French (5)
- Swords never filling the wigwams (5)
- Like tea-cup and lid smashed (9)
- Diner must change - these are basic principles (9)
- Scenes of merry-making in buffet, especially (5)



- Island apprehensively effecting 50% cut (5)
- Cornfield plant an indicator of weather? Nonsense (9)
- One who seizes child by the head (9)
- Struck no utensils including this implement for floggings (5)
- Peremptory demand for a rise (5,2)
- All the letters come from them (7)
- What the photographer who messed up the first shot does ? (7)
- West Indian island making street gear (back street) (2,5)
- Channels of communication aimed to obfuscate (5)
- Go at university and make it more lively (3,2)
- Finally play another country on Canadian territory (5)

Solutions to 2476

QUICK CLUES Across: 1 Meghalaya, 6 Lucan, 9 Perturb, 10 Corsair, 11 Sciff, 12 Mausoleum, 13 Cognizant, 15 Fluke, 16 Scrum, 18 Yodelling, 20 Ominously, 23 Offal, 25 Octagon, 26 At first, 27 Yorke, 28 Ascetics Down: 1 Mopes, 2 Gorging, 3 Aluminium, 4 Album, 5 Accounted, 6 Largo, 7 Chateau, 8 Nuremberg, 13 Cosmology, 14 Abyssinia, 15 Full of fun, 17 Roister, 19 Inform, 21 Ohgee, 22 Years, 24 Lutes CRYPTIC CLUES Across: 1 Eagle farm, 6 Civic, 9 Regatta, 10 Lumpsum, 11 Sieve, 12 Kingcobra, 13 Post-haste, 15 Crypt, 16 Ambit, 18 Assaulted, 20 Soap opera, 23 Tapes, 25 A fair go, 26 Hancock, 27 Rolls, 28 Money-bags Down: 1 Earps, 2 Gaggles, 3 Entrench, 4 Aback, 5 Malinger, 6 Comic, 7 Visibly, 8 Compacted, 13 Plays fair, 14 Starroom, 15 Courtney, 17 Broadway, 19 Topical, 21 Oms, 22 Ashen, 24 Sikhs

If it's your Birthday

Sunday May 12

Some people say that day-dreams are a waste of time, but the more you listen to your imagination the easier you'll get your future hopes into perspective.

Monday May 13

Desires may be directed as much towards a place or a principle as to a person. Over the coming year many of the most important improvements in your life will begin in your imagination.

Tuesday May 14

You could find yourself the centre of attention today, but what's significant is the way you may be under the spotlight over the next twelve months.

Wednesday May 15

Keep your eye on the signals, waiting for the lights to shift to green. If you have any doubts about your current course, seek reassurance and make a fresh start.

Thursday May 16

Your emotions build up to a tidal wave of power over the next three days. Try to bring personal projects to completion as soon as you can.

Friday May 17

Your wild and wacky plans may not get off the ground but at least you can have a go. Plus, if you don't try, then you'll never succeed.

Saturday May 18

You have been pulled in two directions, unsure whether to press ahead or to hold back. These pressures are now lifting, and you should therefore be free to make your own choices.

YOUR WEEK AHEAD

ARIES (Mar 21 - Apr 20)

If the course set by your stars is followed exactly, you should have a laid-back start to the current week. If you are propelled into serious practical tasks early on, take things very slowly if you want to avoid a muddle. In love, play it cool.

TAURUS (Apr 21 - May 21)

Various challenges lie ahead, and you are assisted by rising energy levels. You should come forward and seize the initiative at home, even though you may have doubts about taking a risk which exposes your emotions. Later on, you'll be more inclined to spend time by yourself or in your own private world.

GEMINI (May 22 - June 21)

One very important development in your chart now finds you in a mood to change your mind. If you get an inkling that one arrangement is not for the best, make alternative plans now. It is very important indeed to discuss your innermost feelings. Otherwise there is bound to be a misunderstanding.

CANCER (June 22 - July 23)

If you are pursuing either an important professional goal, or increased status in your community, go for it now. Maternal-type relationships seem to be the most significant, and it looks as if you could benefit from people who come forward to protect you.

LEO (July 24 - Aug 23)

Mercury, which represents your thought processes, and which has been making it much easier than normal for you to put your ideas across, is about to start behaving strangely. You may begin at once to question all those taboos you've taken for granted for so long. Your future can indeed be changed for the better.

VIRGO (Aug 24 - Sep 23)

Money matters rise up your agenda, and financial plans should take first place, especially if joint arrangements are at issue. You should allow for increased intensity in intimate relationships, but don't fall into the trap of blaming others if you're not satisfied.

LIBRA (Sep 24 - Oct 23)

Family members and work colleagues both have good advice for you, for they understand you better than you think. You may be subject to some criticism, especially from people you live with, but if this helps clear the air, it will all have been worthwhile.

SCORPIO (Oct 24 - Nov 23)

Your stars are moving this way and that with great enthusiasm. It's a time to keep busy. Those of you at work will be stretched, but even if you were planning to put your feet up, the best leisure activities are those which lead to self-improvement.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov 24 - Dec 23)

It's a fine time for creative ventures, and all sporting activities should be successful - or, at least, satisfying! Within the family, children should take first place, probably because they have something to teach adults about living! At work, take it easy, as far as possible.

CAPRICORN (Dec 23 - Jan 20)

Home and family affairs will intervene, even for those of you who had different ideas. The best careers seem to be those related to domesticity, like estate agent, builder or cleaner! Affairs of the heart could be proving expensive, so keep an eye on your cash and ask partners some searching questions.

AQUARIUS (Jan 21 - Feb 19)

Collaboration and co-operation constitute your celestial theme for the week. It's a very useful time to share your ideas with others, especially concerning home arrangements and how they do or don't suit you. It may also be necessary soon to get in touch with a relation you haven't seen for some time.

PISCES (Feb 20 - Mar 20)

It's a changeable week, to be sure. You could well get off to an emotional start, with deep feelings stirring just below the surface. Yet events will soon show you that you have to deal with life's necessities - and fast. Money will assume a greater priority, so check out your bank balance.

JUMBLED WORDS

Given below are four jumbled words. Solve the jumbles to make proper words and move them to the respective squares below. Select the letters in the shaded squares and jumble them to get the answer for the given clue.

____ is the worst of all evils until the moment when reality makes us regret ____ - Jean-Baptiste Alphonse Karr (11...11) (same word twice)

DHAER



BIONNU



ALITT



CISTCY



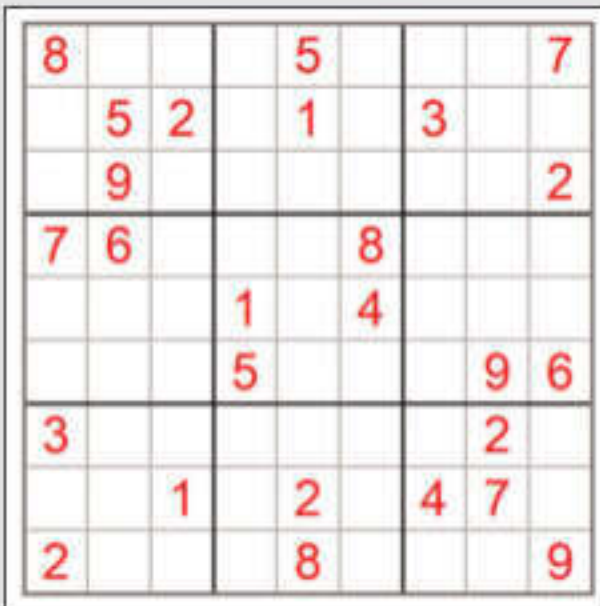
SUDOKU 5559

Difficulty Level 5s

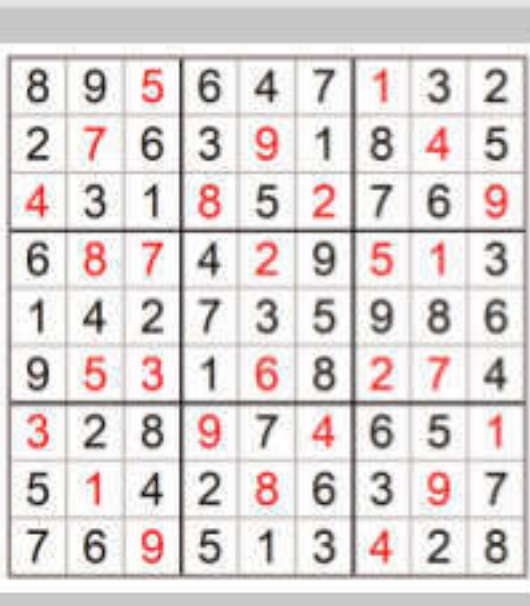
Instructions To solve a Sudoku puzzle, every digit from 1 to 9 must appear in each of the nine vertical columns, in each of the nine horizontal rows and in each of the nine boxes.

Difficulty Level

1s = Very easy; 2s = Easy; 3s = Medium; 4s = Hard; 5s = Very Hard; 6s = Genius



SOLUTION SUDOKU 5558



MORE SUMMER SPECIAL TRAINS-2024

In addition to already announced Summer Special Services, Railways will run following additional Summer Special Trains as per following details:-

09425/09426 Sabarmati-Haridwar-Sabarmati					08 Trips	
Special Express						
Train No. 09425			STATIONS		Train No. 09426	
ARR.	DEP.	↓		↑	ARR.	DEP.
---	18:45		Sabarmati		21:30	---
19:40	19:50		Mahesana Jn.		19:45	19:55
21:45	21:47		Palanpur Jn.		18:48	18:50
23:00	23:10		Abu Road		17:20	17:30
00:08	00:10		Jawai Bandh		16:14	16:16
00:20	00:22		Falna		16:00	16:02
00:32	00:34		Rani		15:46	15:48
02:30	02:35		Marwar Jn.		15:13	15:15
04:50	05:00		Ajmer Jn.		13:15	13:25
05:37	05:39		Kishangarh		11:50	11:52
06:20	06:22		Phulera Jn.		10:20	10:22
07:22	07:24		Ringas Jn.		08:45	08:48
08:03	08:05		Nim Ka Thana		07:45	07:47
09:30	09:32		Narnaul		06:40	06:42
11:15	11:20		Rewari Jn.		05:55	06:00
12:20	12:22		Gurgaon		04:42	04:44
12:40	12:42		Delhi Cantt.		04:20	04:22
13:30	13:40		Delhi Jn.		03:30	03:40
14:30	14:32		Ghaziabad		02:45	02:47
15:16	15:18		Meerut City		01:42	01:44
16:30	16:32		Muzaffarnagar		00:54	00:56
17:50	17:52		Roorkee		23:00	23:02
19:00	---		Haridwar		---	21:45

Days of Run : 09425 Ex. Sabarmati on 14, 17, 20 & 23.05.2024 and 09426 Ex. Haridwar on 15, 18, 21 & 24.05.2024. Accommodation : 3 Tier AC, Sleeper & General

For any kind of information, passengers are requested to contact RailMadad Helpline No. 139 or visit Indian Railways website <https://enquiry.indianrail.gov.in> or NTES App.

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SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

यूनियन बैंक ऑफ इंडिया Union Bank of India (A Govt of India Undertaking)

Asset Recovery Branch : 1st Floor, Steel House, Near Police Check Post, Boring Road, Patna-800001, Email: arb.patna@unionbankofindia.bank

15 Days SALE NOTICE FOR SALE OF IMMOVABLE PROPERTY (Appendix IV A)

E-auction Sale Notice for sale of immovable Assets under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and proviso to the rule 8 (6) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002

Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower(s) and Guarantor(s) that the below described immovable property mortgaged/charged to the Secured Creditor, the Possession of which has been taken by the Authorised Officer of Union Bank of India Asset Recovery Branch (ARB), the Secured Creditor, will be sold on "As is where is", "As is what is" and "Whatever there is" on **29.05.2024** for recovery of **Rs. 4,07,91,132.87** (Rupees Four Crore Seven Lacs Ninety One Thousand One Hundred Thirty Two & Paise Eighty Seven only) as on 30.04.2017 with further interest, costs and charges due to Union Bank of India ARB Branch, the Secured Creditor from Borrower/s : **M/s Aashi Agrotech Pvt. Ltd.**, 2B-5, Bhanu Kutir, Near Arya Samaj Mandir Road, RPS More, Danapur, Patna - 801503, M/s Aashi Agrotech Pvt. Ltd., Lalganj Sehra, Pali Ganj, Patna - 801110 Co obligant/ Director/s Guarantor/s : Mr. Avinash Kumar, S/o Late Abhay Nandan Chaudhary, 2B-5, Bhanu Kutir, Near Arya Samaj Mandir Road, RPS More, Danapur, Patna - 801503, Mrs. Vijeta Kumari, W/o Mr. Abhishesh Kumar, 2B-5, Bhanu Kutir, Near Arya Samaj Mandir Road, RPS More, Danapur, Patna - 801503, Mr. Ranjan Kumar, S/o Mr. Surendra Pratap Singh, 3, Sehra Lalganj Sehra, Paliganj, Patna - 801110, Mrs. Indu Kumari, W/o Late Abhay Nandan Chaudhary, 30, Vill- Patori, Post- Patori Vasant, Dist.- Darbhanga - 802301, Mrs. Fulmayia Singh, W/o Late Virendra Pratap Singh, 4, Sehra Lalganj Sehra, Paliganj, Patna - 801110, Mr. Arun Kumar, S/o Mr. Surendra Prasad Singh, Chhota Govindnagar, Subhashnagar, PS - Govindpur, Dist- East Singhbhum, Jharkhand - 803001. Mr. Bijendra Kumar S/o Late Virendra Prasad Singh, Lalganj Sehra, Paliganj, Patna - 801110

Legal Heirs of Late Abhay Nandan Chaudhary (Guarantor) Mr. Abhishesh Kumar, S/o Late Abhay Nandan Chaudhary, 2B-5, Bhanu Kutir, Near Arya Samaj Mandir Road, RPS More, Danapur, Patna - 801503, Mr. Avinash Kumar, S/o Late Abhay Nandan Chaudhary, 2B-5, Bhanu Kutir, Near Arya Samaj Mandir Road, RPS More, Danapur, Patna - 801503, Mrs. Indu Kumari, W/o Late Abhay Nandan Chaudhary, 30, Vill- Patori, Post- Patori Vasant, Dist.- Darbhanga - 802301, Mrs. Geetanjali Rani D/o Late Abhay Nandan Chaudhary, 30, Vill- Patori, Post- Patori Vasant, Dist.- Darbhanga - 802301

The reserve price will be **Rs. 27,00,000/-** (Rupees Twenty Seven Lakh only) and earnest money deposit will be **Rs. 2,70,000/-** (Rupees Two Lakh Seventy Thousand only) with bid increment of Rs.10,000/-

Description of movable Property :- Hypothecation of Plant and machinery of Rice mill with all the available equipment's situated at Mauza Lalganj Sehra, PS Paliganj, Thana No. 282, Taazi No. 4563, Khata No. 296, S. Plot No. 1625

For detailed terms and conditions of the sale, please refer to the link provided in Union Bank of India's website i.e. <https://www.unionbankofindia.co.in / english / tendelviewallauction.aspx> and <https://www.mstcecommerce.com / auctionhome/ibapi/index.jsp>

यूनियन बैंक ऑफ इंडिया Union Bank of India (A Govt of India Undertaking)

ASSET RECOVERY BRANCH PATNA 1st Floor, Steel House, Near S K Puri Police Check Post, Boring Road, Patna-800001 Email : arb.patna@unionbankofindia.bank

Date: 08.05.2024 **Place: Patna** **Authorised Officer**

TENDER NOTICE : SHOPS/VENTURES

1. AOC, AF Stn Palam New Delhi -10 invites sealed tenders to run the following shops/ventures on rent at this Station for a period upto five years. The applicant must have sound financial status and business experience in the field:

(a) All participants (including civilians & Govt agencies) can apply for the following shops/ventures however allotment would be carried out giving preference to war widows / widows of Defence personnel killed while on duty, disabled soldiers/Ex-servicemen and spouses / widows of Ex-servicemen as per existing guidelines:

Sl.No.	Name and Location	Base Price (₹)
(i)	Restaurant at IOC Chowk	95000
(ii)	Any type of business shop/Preferably Gift Shop at Old Pinto Park (Area 25 Sqm)	5000
(iii)	Stationery Shop at RV Area	6000
(iv)	Recognised Automobile dealer for running driving classes along with Defensive Driving Training. The vendor should also provide offline Computer classes as part of Corporate Social Responsibility at RV Area	500

2. The blank Tender Forms can be collected from **Stn Sports Section, Camp Area, AF Stn Palam** from Monday to Friday 0800 hrs to 1430 hrs wef **13 May 24 to 20 May 24** on cash payment of ₹ 100/- (Non Refundable). In case of any query, contact on following mobile numbers 9899352129, 8527765380.

डी.फार्म (आयु.) एडमिशन

NEET बगैर सीध प्रवेश पाए * योग्यता : १२वी पास (PCB)

विश्वप्रसिद्ध एवम् भारतका एक मात्र राष्ट्रीय महत्वका आयुर्वेद संस्थान

आयुर्वेदिक शिक्षण एवं अनुसन्धान संस्थान

स्कूल ऑफ फार्मसी जामनगर

आयुष मंत्रालय - भारत सरकार

राष्ट्रीय महत्व की संस्था

:: विशेषताएं ::

- संस्थान द्वारा साक्षात्कार तथा प्लेसमेंट
- आधुनिक सुविधाओं से सुसज्जित प्रयोगशाला
- कैंपस में ही ओ.पी.डी. ट्रेनिंग की व्यवस्था
- हॉस्टल सुविधा (सिर्फ बालिकाओं के लिए सीमित संख्यामें)
- आयुर्वेदिक पद्धतियों द्वारा डिस्पेंसिंग तथा औषधि निर्माण प्रशिक्षण

शोध संर्पक करें - फोन नं. **7043609842, 7043693918** अ.के.जमाल बिल्डिंग, गुरुनानक रोड, जामनगर गुजरात

फॉर्म भरने की अंतिम तिथि **10 JUNE 2024**

अधिक जानकारी के लिए वेबसाइट पर जाएँ www.itra.ac.in www.itrapharmacy.in

यूनियन बैंक ऑफ इंडिया Union Bank of India (A Govt of India Undertaking)

ASSET RECOVERY BRANCH PATNA 1st Floor, Steel House, Near S K Puri Police Check Post, Boring Road, Patna-800001 Email : arb.patna@unionbankofindia.bank

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The reserve price will be **Property No. 1 - Rs. 30,00,000.00** (Rs. Thirty Lakhs Only) and Earnest Money Deposit will be **Rs. 3,00,000.00** (Rs. Three Lakhs Only) and **Property No. 2 - Rs. 35,00,000.00** (Rs. Thirty Five Lakhs Only) and Earnest Money Deposit will be **Rs. 3,50,000.00** (Rs. Three Lakhs Fifty Thousand Only) with bid increment of Rs.10,000/-

Description of Immovable Property - 1) Land And Building Bearing Khata No. - 119 (Old) / 23 (New), Plot No. - 382, (Old) / 547 (New), R Thana No. - 248, At Mouza - Gangti, P.S - Buniyadganj, Dist. - Gaya, Admeasuring 1260 sqft in the name of **Mr. Ramanugrah Singh and Boundary - North** - Sujit Kumar, **South** - Niz Bikreta, **East** - Gaya Khizarsarai Road, **West** - Bihar Sarkar

2) Land And Building Khata No. - 59 (Old), Plot No. - 52 (Old) / 302 (New), R Thana No. - 317, Ward No. - 53 Situated At Village Bhusanda Police Station Mufall, Dist. - Gaya. Admeasuring Area 1080 sqft, in the name of **Usha Singh** W/o Sri Mithilesh Kumar and **Boundary - North** - 10ft Wide Rasta, **South** - Jamil and Others, **East** - Shakila Khatoun & Others, **West** - Shanti Devi Bihar Sarkar

For detailed terms and conditions of the sale, please refer to the link provided in Union Bank of India's website i.e.



ANDERSON TO RETIRE

England's James Anderson will retire from test cricket after the first match of the series against West Indies at Lord's this year, he said on Saturday, ending a 21-year career in which he became the most successful ever pace bowler. **REUTERS**

EMOTIONAL ROLLERCOASTER

Hot heads, calm minds and everything in between



Bumrah magic

Sunil Narine's success with the bat is perhaps the story of IPL 2024. He has been known to damage bowling attacks in the past. But the consistency this season has been incredible. There's been a method behind the madness. An identification of areas where he can target, clean timing etc... but all that deserted him for a microsecond. And sometimes, a microsecond is all that takes against Jasprit Bumrah. The MI pacer, bowling the second over with a brand new ball, angled the ball across Narine. It was full, and had it remained on its trajectory, it was likely headed into the gloves of Ishan Kishan. But Bumrah got it to swerve back in late, and Narine had already made up his mind that he didn't want anything to do with it. Boom, timber. And out came the familiar Bumrah smile.

Toss trouble

April 14. That was the last time Shreyas Iyer won a toss at IPL 2024. The run extended to seven straight lost tosses on Saturday as Hardik Pandya called heads correctly. It is another matter that KKR have played good enough cricket to win four out of these six matches leading up to the one against MI. But Shreyas couldn't really hide his amusement once again, also conceding that if there was ever a toss to be won, then it would have been tonight. Shreyas was forthright in admitting that he would have loved to bowl first here, given the pitch had been under covers for a long time, and the match was delayed further till 9pm. The uncertainty over the conditions meant any team would have loved to chase. Shreyas has also said he has been practising but hey, luck of the coin is not something one can work on in the nets now, can they?

Little bit handbrake

FORMER ARSENAL manager Arsene Wenger was known for his quips during interviews. One of his often-repeated phrases was "we played with a little bit of a handbrake on". Rohit Sharma's struggles at Eden Gardens could be perfectly summed up with that. Already struggling for form in recent weeks, the India captain endured a forgettable night at one of his favourite venues. In a match where MI needed to score at nearly 10 per over, Rohit scored a painful (once quite literally as he copped a blow on his hands) 24-ball 19 before being dismissed by Varun Chakravarthi. And that too with the help of a free hit full toss that he hit for six. For some reason, Rohit kept trying to play the reverse sweep before eventually falling off the conventional sweep. Season might be over for Mumbai Indians fans, but concerns persist for Indian fans.

Knights in knockouts

KKR becomes the first team in IPL 2024 to qualify for Play-offs as they beat visitors by 18 runs

SYNOPSIS

Rohit Sharma and Hardik Pandya fail again for Mumbai Indians as KKR reach 18 points

SAYAK DUTTA KOLKATA, MAY 11

IN A rain-curtailed 16-overs contest, it was KKR who ran away with the win, on the back of a disciplined bowling performance that stifled MI. Kolkata officially became the first team to qualify for the play-offs.

Chasing a tricky total, Mumbai started on a steady note with both Rohit Sharma and Ishan Kishan finding the ropes thrice in the first 2 overs. Things got better for the 5-time champions in the 3rd over when Vaibhav Arora conceded 14 runs, courtesy of a no ball which rolled away for 4 byes and a pulled six from Rohit. Kishan would switch gears in the last two overs of the powerplay, marauding 15 from the 4th and then 13 from the 5th as Mumbai reached 59/0 after 5 overs. But things would turn.

The 25-year-old was ultimately snapped up by Sunil Narine for a 22-ball 40 in the 7th over before Varun Chakravarthi sent back Rohit for 19 in the very next one as the Indian skipper's form continued to be a cause of concern before the upcoming T20 World Cup.

The Kolkata bowlers would continue to peg the MI batters back with the visitors scoring 81/2 after 10 overs, needing 77 from the last 6. With the pressure mounting, Tilak Varma and Suryakumar Yadav tried swinging at everything but the latter was sent back to the pavilion by Andre Russell for just 11.

Skipper Hardik Pandya fell to Chakravarthi for just 2 as his nightmare season continued before Russel sent back Tim David for a duck as MI's innings imploded. Naman Dhir and Varma almost gave KKR a late scare but Harshit Rana snapped both to hand the hosts the win by 18 runs.

Rare failure for the openers

Before Saturday's match, at least one of the Kolkata openers would fire if the other failed. But both Narine and Phil Salt failed to click here.

Narine would last just one ball. He looked to leave a Jasprit Bumrah corker which swerved late and got his off stump rattled.



Venkatesh Iyer slammed 42 off 21 balls for KKR on Saturday.

Sportzpics

Captain Shreyas Iyer would continue his hot and cold form in the season, cleaned up by Kamboj for just 7 runs as KKR went 3 down in the powerplay.

Middle order steps up

Venkatesh Iyer steadied the innings, smashing Bumrah for two fours and a six.

Iyer loves playing against MI, had scored a scintillating century against them at the Wankhede last season and had also chipped in with 70 in the same venue this season. He couldn't complete his half century this time

around as Piyush Chawla picked him for 42. But by then Kolkata had found some sort of a rhythm. He was supported by a returning Nitish Rana who showed little ring rust by playing a plethora of shots, the standout of which was a late cut against Pandya in the 8th over. The former KKR skipper would not have luck on his side, however, as he was run out for 33 in the 12th over.

Russell, who replaced Venkatesh in the middle, started like only he can, depositing Chawla for a six in the very second ball he faced and followed it up with a four. The

bowler would strike back in the 13th over when he snapped up the burly striker for a quickfire 24 off 14. In the fog end of the innings, Rinku Singh and Ramandeep Singh chipped in with 20 and 17 respectively as KKR posted 157/7 after the allotted overs, a score that proved to be too much for MI to scale.

Brief scores: KKR 157 /7 in 20 overs (Venkatesh Iyer 42, Nitish Rana 33, Andre Russell 24; J Bumrah 2/39, P Chawla 2/28) bt MI 139/8 in 20 overs (Ishan Kishan 40, Tilak Varma 32; Harshit Rana 2/34, V Chakravarthi 2/17, Andre Russell 2/34) by 18 runs.

BCCI looking at four-day gap between Ranji Trophy games

DEVENDRA PANDEY MUMBAI, MAY 11

A FOUR-day gap instead of three between Ranji Trophy games to help players manage workload better with the tournament to be played in two phases to reduce weather-related disruptions because of fog during the winter in north India.

Elimination of the toss with the visiting team given the choice to either bat or bowl in the Under-23 CK Nayudu Trophy and awarding of points based on number of runs scored and wickets taken. If the points-system experiment in the age-group competition is a success, the same will be implemented in Ranji Trophy from the 2025-26 season to give an incentive to teams to go for outright wins.

These suggestions were put forward by the Cricket Committee of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) which comprises of Indian team coach Rahul

Dravid, chairman of selection committee Ajit Agarkar, and the Indian board's general manager of cricket operations, Abey Kuruvilla.

Jay Shah, the BCCI secretary, said as per the practice, the suggestions of the Cricket Committee will be placed before the Apex Council for approval. Shah said the proposed four-day gap would give Ranji Trophy regulars more time to recover between matches. "There will be an increased gap between matches to allow players sufficient time for recovery and to maintain peak performance throughout the season," Shah said. Shah added that the new points system was aimed to promote balanced performance at the Under-23 level. Last season a good number of Under-23 matches finished within four sessions, a worrying trend for the BCCI.

"The CK Nayudu Trophy will implement a new points system aimed at promoting balanced performances. This includes awarding points for batting and bowling

'The CK Nayudu Trophy will implement a new points system aimed at promoting balanced performances. This includes awarding points for batting and bowling performances in the first innings, in addition to points for the first innings lead or outright win.'

BCCI SECRETARY JAY SHAH



performances in the first innings, in addition to points for the first innings lead or outright win," Shah stated.

"The visiting team will have the right to choose whether to bat or bowl first. A review will be conducted at the end of the season to assess the effectiveness of the

new points system. A decision will be taken on whether to implement it in the Ranji Trophy for the following season," Shah explained.

Points system

It is learnt that the Cricket Committee's suggested points system is like this: 1 point for 150 runs, 225 runs (2 points), 300 runs (3 points), 350 runs (4 points) and 400 runs (5 points). However, the runs need to be scored within 100 overs. The bowling team will be rewarded based on the number of wickets taken within 100 overs.

The three-day gap between Ranji Trophy games was flagged by players last season. India pacer Shardul Thakur, who represents Mumbai, had stated how tough it was for domestic players because of just a three-day break.

"It is extremely tough for domestic players... to expect them to play 10 games in a row with just a three-day gap, (especially) if the team reaches the final. The schedule

is becoming tighter and tighter," Thakur had said last season after the semifinals. To reduce weather-related disruptions during winter, the Cricket Committee has suggested that the Ranji Trophy start in October with five rounds to be played before a break. The remaining league matches and the knockout phase will be held after the T20 Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy and the Vijay Hazare Trophy.

Fog and bad light has resulted in truncated matches in north India once winter begins in December and an early start and a delayed second phase is being seen as a solution. Last season, the first round of matches of Ranji Trophy were held from January 5 to 8. "The Indian domestic calendar will kick off from Duleep Trophy, Irani Trophy followed by Ranji Trophy which will commence with five rounds of league matches followed by the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy and the Vijay Hazare Trophy and will conclude with the remaining matches of the Ranji Trophy," Shah said.

Pant suspended for crucial RCB match

New Delhi: Delhi Capitals captain Rishabh Pant will miss Sunday's crucial match against Royal Challengers Bengaluru after he was handed a one-match suspension for maintaining a slow over-rate for the third time this IPL season. Pant was also fined Rs 30 lakh for the Code of Conduct breach that took place during DC's 20-run win against Rajasthan Royals on May 7 here. DC were 10 minutes behind time at the start of the final over in that game. "Rishabh Pant, Captain, Delhi Capitals has been fined has been fined and suspended for one match for breaching the IPL Code of Conduct after his team maintained a slow over-rate against Rajasthan Royals at the Arun Jaitley Stadium, Delhi on May 07, 2024," an IPL statement read.

—PTI

Gujarat Titans name Brar as replacement

Gujarat Titans have roped in right-arm pacer Gurnoor Brar as replacement for the injured left-arm quick Sushant Mishra. Gurnoor plays for Punjab in domestic tournaments, and this will be his second stint in the Indian Premier League, having previously featured for Punjab Kings. The 23-year-old has played only one T20 match till date, which was for Punjab Kings against LSG last season.

PTI

IN WITH A CHANCE

Place your bets on Sunrisers, they are following the Warne playlist

SANDEEP DWIVEDI MAY 11

PAT CUMMINS isn't the kind of Aussie that India has grown up watching and grudgingly appreciated. He isn't quite like the late Shane Warne. The confrontation and controversy seeker, the 'play hard, party harder' believer, the true celebrity cricketer – Warne was the Aussie. Cummins, though, is doing at Sunrisers Hyderabad (SRH) what Warne did at Rajasthan Royals in the opening season.

Warne once said that he scripted the fairytale 2008 win with "good people who we trusted under pressure." Cummins too seems to have found those men. With just two more league games to go, SRH is third on the table. But going by their present form, they are most likely to make it to the play-offs. Beyond that, going by the monstrous batting totals they have been compiling, SRH has built a reputation of beating any opposition on their day. And this IPL, they have had too many of those days.

The other day, around the time the Lucknow Super Giants (LSG) captain and owner were having their now infamous conversation on the field, Cummins was celebrating with his own trusted good people who had delivered under pressure. In the dressing room, not far from the birthday cake that had Cummins' name, the team was celebrating their most emphatic win.

SRH's official social media handle put out a dressing room video of the post-win party. It had a lot of smiling faces in sweat-soaked jerseys with an orange-black maze. But those still charmed by Warne's Class of 2008 could see hazy faces of a champions side wearing Rajasthan Royals original dark blue with matte golden stripes jersey. The team's leader, the tall Aussies pacer with a kind smile and crow's feet laugh lines around his eyes, looked like the charismatic man with flaming blond hair.

The clip had Abhishek Sharma, Travis Head, Heinrich Klaasen, Aiden Markram, Abdul Samad, Shahbaz Ahmed, Cummins, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Jaydev Unadkat, T Natarajan, Nitish Kumar Reddy among others. But they looked like Graeme Smith, Swapnil Asnodkar, Sohail Tanvir, Shane Watson, Mohammad Kaif, Yusuf Pathan, Ravindra Jadeja, Shane Warne, Mahesh Rawat, Munaf Patel, Siddharth Trivedi and others.

That day they had chased down LSG's total of 164 in 10 overs. The heroes for SRH were their openers – World Cup winning Aussie Head and an uncapped Indian Abhishek. Earlier in the tournament, they had put up a record 125 runs at the end of the first power play. Their teammates call them Travishek. By the end of the tournament, the name is most likely to be mainstreamed.

The partnership is a throwback to RR's Class of 2008 when seasoned South Africa pro Graeme Smith opened with little-known Goan Swapnil Asnodkar. In the company of



Pat Cummins bowls T Natarajan at crucial times, like Shane Warne would use Munaf Patel. Sportzpics/BCCI

Smith, Asnodkar got a swagger. He was fearless. By the end of the tournament his confidence was so high that he even dared to walk across the pitch and advise his super senior partner Smith.

Abhishek too has the same charming temerity about him these days. He calls Head his friend who he loves to hang out with. The

company has done the young Punjab boy good. He is learning the finer points of T20 batting. Against LSG that day, Head, a master of playing spin, taught him how to tackle the variations the pacers try in T20 cricket. "They were bowling cutters in the middle. I thought the cutters could slow down on their way, but Travis and I had planned to play it the way you would hit spin. So, if it is an off-cutter, we look to hit towards long-off covers. If it is a leg cutter, obviously we look at mid-wicket or mid-on."

In young Swapnil, Warne saw a dasher he could punt on to give the team a flying start. In his autobiography, No Spin, he mentions the exciting opener that he introduced to India. "He had good technique but just wanted to hit the ball, which he did more often than not. He was a natural to open with Smith," he says. Cummins saw the same promise in Abhishek and he wasn't wrong. Abhishek, recently, shared the conversation he had with the team management. "Our support staff and Pat (Cummins), the way they think, I have never seen anyone else think like that. They're like, 'Go out there and express yourself. Play as aggressively as you can, we'll back you.' I think that matters a lot."

Warne had also seen the spark in another young player. That was a 19-year-old Ravindra Jadeja. Warne had got a modest brief about Jadeja. "He bats nine and bowls a bit of spin," he was told. But the hawk-eyed Aussie saw in him what others didn't. He writes: "The more

Cummins' Jadeja this season has been Nitish Reddy. Before this season, all he had was promise; now he has two crucial game changing half-centuries and two match-winning spells. He also is an exceptional fielder.

we saw of him (Jadeja) – the way he moved in the field, the athleticism, the swagger – the more we thought, 'We've got something here.' It was even obvious in the way he walked out to bat. I said, 'This guy can do it for us in the top four or five.'"

Cummins' Jadeja this season has been Nitish Reddy. Before this season, all he had was promise; now he has two crucial game changing half-centuries and two match-winning spells. He also is an exceptional fielder. They are also fond of him in the dressing room.

Getting the best out of Bhuv

Back to the video where Cummins is seen giving an internal Play of the Day trophy to Bhuvneshwar Kumar, the India international who had been off-boil before the season. Under the Aussie captain, he has found his old form, just like Shane Watson rediscovered his touch on Warne's watch.

Bhuvni requests Nitish and debutant

Sanvir Singh who took a stunning catch, to step forward. He wants to share the prize with the day's other two performers. There are claps and cheers all around. In the background, one hears a loud yell by Cummins. "Nice one, Bhuvni," he says. The Aussie skipper is a World Cup winner, he knows what this thoughtfulness means to the collective spirit of the team.

The camera then pans to T Natarajan, the team's yorker man, the death-over enforcer. He is the sharpest tool in the SRH box. Cummins unleashes him at crucial times, like Warne would use Munaf.

Back to the book and Warne and a spell of play where Munaf had the great Glenn McGrath in front of him. "Munaf Patel said to me, 'Captain, still short?' I said, 'Munaf, if I tell you to do something different, then we do something different.' So... okay. Munaf bowled four bouncers in a row to Pigeon. The last one broke his thumb... To this day, his thumb is still a mess." Against KKR, Andre Russell was felled by a Natarajan toe-crusher. When he is on target, more toes can be in mess.

The two poles apart Aussie captains have one common trait. Gideon Haigh in his book On Warne, mentions a 'Web of Warmitude' that stifles batsmen in submission. It was the reason those facing him would play the larger-than-life man, not the ball and get consumed by the legend. SRH this season has spun a Web of Patitude around its rivals.

Aman makes amends

57 kg wrestler becomes first Indian male to win a Paris Olympics quota

MIHIR VASAVDA
MAY 11

IF INDIAN men's wrestling is all about tradition and passing the virtues from one generation to another, it may have found its rightful heir. He's a wiry young man, all of 20 years old, with a perennially scruffy look and impassive, sunken eyes. But Aman Sehrawat also has shoulders built like bazookas, which rest on a rubber-like body that is blessed with blinding speed.

In the toughest of times for the sport in India – during a period when the country's most celebrated wrestler, Sushil Kumar, was jailed; when almost all wrestling activities stopped last year due to the protests; and when one of the biggest stars, Tokyo Olympics silver medalist Ravi Dahiya, got seriously injured – Sehrawat has remained the lone bright spot in men's wrestling.

And so, it was unsurprising that it was Sehrawat, the youngest man in a long list of India's Olympic aspirants, who saved India from the embarrassment of going unrepresented in men's wrestling at the Paris Games.

The Asian champion, who competes in the 57 kg weight class, became the first male wrestler to secure an Olympic quota during the World Qualifiers in Istanbul on Saturday.

India can add to its tally on Sunday when Sujeet Kalkal, whose swift counterattacks were enough to take down some big names in the 65 kg category but came undone when he stumbled into reigning Asian Games gold medalist Tulga Tumur-Ochir in the semifinal, which he lost. Sujeet will return to the mat again on Sunday, hoping to make the most of the second chance, also the last.

But on a day when India feared the worst after the Tokyo Olympics fifth-placer Deepak Punia went out cheaply in his first-round bout (86kg), it was Sehrawat who ended the long wait for a quota on his third jab at qualification.

Sehrawat's rise in this curtailed Olympic cycle where Indian wrestling has had little to cheer for has been nothing short of meteoric. It started with a Cadet World Championship gold medal in 2021 followed by the under-23 world title a year later. Still a teenager, he made a seamless transition to senior international by claiming the Asian Championship gold in 2023, the year where he also won the Asian Games bronze.

But his quest to make the cut for the Olympics wasn't so straightforward. At the World Championships last year, his first shot,



Aman Sherawat, the Asian champion (57 kg), was the only male wrestler to secure an Olympic quota during the World Qualifiers in Istanbul on Saturday. SAI

he couldn't make any impact but then again, it felt like the tournament came a little too early for him, still a freshman.

It was expected that he would seal the deal at the Asian Qualifiers last month. But when he was rolled over by his opponent in the first round inside a few minutes, doubts surfaced over his abilities in the unforgiving world of Indian wrestling and there were murmurs of conducting fresh selection trials for the Istanbul qualifiers.

Grappling with demons

Indeed, Sehrawat himself had to grapple with the demons in his mind before he would wrestle his rivals on the mat. On the flight to Istanbul, the young wrestler wondered about the possibility of returning empty-handed yet again. He wasn't alone in worrying about that outcome.

Even the US-Canadian commentary pair couldn't hide their astonishment. Every time an Indian wrestler stepped on the mat on Saturday – there were six of them, one in each category – their crisp summary noted the recent Olympic success and contrasted it with a qualifying campaign where the men deeply struggled.

Given his stellar rise in this curtailed Olympic cycle, Sehrawat was expected to break the duck. And when the time came, he did it with minimal fuss.

He began the morning by overwhelming Valentinov Vangelov of Georgia 10-4 and then

returned a few minutes later to beat Ukraine's Andrii Yatsenko on technical superiority (10-0). Sehrawat looked to be in his usual flow in the second bout, slipping between his opponents' charging arms to get a grip on the right leg and converting them into takedowns.

In the winner-takes-all semifinal, Sehrawat found himself up against the tricky North Korean, Chongsong Han. Short in height and quick with his movements, Han tried to test Sehrawat's patience by circling on the mat, bidding his time to use his speedy movements to score a point. As it turned out, that moment never came for the North Korean. It was Sehrawat who used his long levers smartly to attack Han from a distance, without really putting himself in any danger. For years, his upper-body strength, long reach, explosive power, and speedy leg-work have been spoken about highly at New Delhi's Chhatrasal Stadium.

On Saturday, when India needed it the most, he unleashed his weapons to outfox the North Korean wrestler. Sehrawat's speedy leg attacks coupled with a watertight defence would have made the world and Olympic medalist wrestlers from his alma mater proud.

Ravi Dahiya, Bajrang Punia, and Deepak Punia – who've all cut their teeth at Chhatrasal – might have had their Paris dreams all but cut brutally short. But in Sehrawat, India may have found a new wrestling hope to cling onto.

Relaying on team spirit, Indian food, and training

ANDREW AMSAN
BHUBANESWAR, MAY 11

WHEN THE microphone reached Asian Games gold medalist Amoj Jacob during the pre-meet conference for the Federation Cup in Bhubaneswar, he provided the perfect ice-breaking moment for the evening. Amoj, who arrived after a long and tiring flight from the Bahamas after running the anchor leg for the 4x400m team that sealed a spot for Paris, clearly wanted to hit the hay as soon as possible. "To be honest, I don't want to be here. I just want to go back to my room and sleep. I am waiting for this to end," the 26-year-old Delhi boy joked, with a cheeky smile.

But he did have a point as the time difference between Nassau in Bahamas and India was bound to bring in jet lag. Amoj on Sunday ran the all-important anchor leg of the Olympic Qualification heats at the World Relays to help the team clock 3:03.23s and finish second behind the United States and book their Paris spot. Amoj along with his teammate Muhammed Ajmal will feature in the 400m event at the Fed Cup. From the women's relay team, who also earned a Paris ticket this weekend, MR Poovamma, Jyothika Sri Dandi and Subha Venkatesan feature on the 400m start list.

Even though drowsy due to jet lag, the relay members were in high spirits after Sunday's triumph. Jyothika, and the rest of her teammates, credit the teams' early arrival in the Bahamas for a training camp for the recent success. The Indians landed in the picturesque capital city of Nassau a month ahead of the World Relays to train and acclimate for the event. "We trained at the practice track outside the main stadium where the event was held. So when the competition happened it almost felt like it was another practice session. Had we landed a few days before the event, it would have felt different," says Jyothika who clocked what would have been a personal best of 51.36s in her leg.

Agreement with Indian eatery

The Athletics Federation booked an apartment building close to the stadium and made arrangements for pickup and drops. An agreement was struck with an Indian restaurant in Nassau that ensured the athletes never felt homesick for food.

"Idli, dosas, fish fry, biryani... (the list goes on). Food was even better than what we had at our camp in Trivandrum," says women's assistant coach Nagesh as he swipes through



(L to R) Amoj Jacob, Subha Venkatesan, Jyothika Sri and Muhammed Ajmal, members of the men's and women's 4x400m relay squad that made the cut for the Paris Olympics. Express

food pictures from the camp on his phone.

On arrival in Nassau, jet lag wasn't the team's only challenge. The chilly winds in the late evening got the better of Ajmal and the rest. "The first week was the toughest for us. Almost all of us were down with a cold and fever," says Nagesh.

But once the flu fled, the Indians didn't look back, putting in the hard yards at the track and gym. Amoj feels nothing was unique or different in the training approach and sticking to the basics alone yielded great results.

Come rain or wind

The coaches also ensured the teams were weather-hardened by making them train in every condition possible. Running against the wind, under the sun, during breezy evenings, and even rain – the coaches didn't leave any stone unturned.

"A few days before the final race it rained a lot but we made sure that we practised to prepare for all scenarios. What if it rained at the finals? We did not want to leave anything to chance," explains Jyothika.

But all these efforts wouldn't have yielded fruits had it not been for the team bonding among the relay members. It has been almost two years that the current lot has been training together at the national camp in SAI Trivandrum. "We spend more time together than with our own families. Our favourite pastime is to pull each other's legs. We are all like siblings," says Subha while giving a strong yet "friendly" pat on Ajmal's shoulder. "We also fight like siblings," she adds.

Federation Cup (Finals on Day One): Men: Pole Vault, 400m hurdles; **Women:** 400m hurdles, javelin, triple jump, 5,000 metres.

Gvardiol double sends Man City atop table

REUTERS
MAY 11

MANCHESTER CITY hit the top of the Premier League with one week of the season remaining as two goals by Josko Gvardiol and one each for Phil Foden and Julian Alvarez sealed a 4-0 demolition of Fulham on Saturday.

City's stroll in the London sunshine, their seventh successive league win and 16th consecutive victory over Fulham in all competitions, moved Pep Guardiola's step closer an unprecedented fourth English title in a row.

They have 85 points from 36 games, with Arsenal on 83 from 36.

Arsenal can regain top spot by beating Manchester United on Sunday but City, who play their game in hand at Tottenham Hotspur on Tuesday, are now two wins away from history.

Croatian defender Gvardiol slotted them in front in the 13th minute after a neat one-two with Kevin De Bruyne and Foden gave them breathing space in the 59th minute.

Gvardiol made sure of the points when he slid in to touch home Bernardo Silva's cross at the back post and City's fans, with former Oasis frontman Noel Gallagher in their ranks, were in a party mode when Alvarez tucked away a stoppage-time penalty after being fouled by Issa Diop who was sent off.

It was the type of ruthless performance City inevitably produce down the stretch in title race and they now look likely to wrap up it up at home to West Ham United next week.

"The great players enjoy playing with great pressure," Guardiola said. "These players in the last few years have been able to do it and we are again in the latter stages.

"Our dream is as we said a few weeks ago when they (Arsenal) lost against Aston Villa was to arrive in the last games with it in our hands, to play West Ham at home with the destiny belonging to us. We did a really good job today."

EPL STANDINGS

Pos	Team	M	W	D	L	GD	Pts
1.	Man City	36	26	7	3	58	85
2.	Arsenal	36	26	5	5	60	83
3.	Liverpool	36	23	9	4	43	78
4.	Aston Villa	36	20	7	9	20	67
5.	Tottenham	36	19	6	11	12	63

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ARTS etc, PAGE 2

The Churn

Nearly half a century after Shyam Benegal's *Manthan* released, its freshly restored print will be shown at Cannes this month



BOOK REVIEWS, PAGE 3

- Mani Shankar Aiyar's *The Rajiv I Knew*
- Gabriel Garcia Marquez's *Until August*
- Vanya Vaidehi Bhargav's *Being Hindu, Being Indian*

WHEN THE WALLFLOWER BLOOMS

As a new season of the globally acclaimed Regency-era romance *Bridgerton* arrives this week and the spotlight shifts to its onlooker-outsider protagonist, a look at the perks of being a wallflower

Paromita Chakrabarti

WALLFLOWER: Pleasant smelling garden plant that has yellow, orange, or brown flowers that grow in groups; a shy person, especially a girl or woman, who is frightened to involve herself in social activities and does not attract much interest or attention.

The traits that stand out from the Cambridge Dictionary definition offer a clue to the personality of a wallflower, botanical or human: “Pleasant”, “shy”, but also sturdy, thriving in environments that require little care or nourishment, a peripheral presence capable of blossoming under care.

It's difficult to imagine a person with such attributes as the “diamond of the season” — the “incomparable” debutante who takes centre stage in each volume — and now, thanks to its successful OTT adaptation — in each season of the Regency romance, *Bridgerton*. The royal court is where the search for suitable partners for the society's elite begins. In this setting, as in every other social gathering, the wallflower's place is in the background, lost in the melee, the outsider who can't seem to break in.

The wallflower as a literary trope peaked with Stephen Chbosky's charming coming-of-age novel, *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* (2012). Through the story of Charlie, an introverted teenager learning to negotiate friendship, love and sexuality, Chbosky speaks for all the unobtrusive wallflowers who understand the language of silence and whose awareness of their surroundings gives them a quiet empathy. “You see things. You keep quiet about them. And you understand,” writes Charlie in the epistolary YA novel. Charlie is a person of thought, not action. His attempts to adapt to his world, and to eventually understand it, are limited to this self-introspective awareness rather than to pragmatic experiences and interventions.

Contrary to Charlie, Penelope Featherington, the lead in Julia Quinn's *Romancing Mr Bridgerton* (2002) — the focus of the third season, the first part of which premieres on Netflix on May 16 — is not a woman given merely to passive observations. For long, she has been the quiet onlooker, overlooked for other, more vibrant contemporaries because nothing about her screamed conformity. Like Charlie, she sees things, she understands but she doesn't keep quiet. She writes about them, anonymously.

The setting of Quinn's novel is the early-19th century Regency era, when Queen Consort Charlotte held sway. Penelope's appearance — from her weight to the unflattering colour palette thrust upon her, to her social awkwardness — are a departure from the norm. She is the youngest of three siblings with an overbearing mother. At balls, the accepted courting ritual of the era, potential suitors rarely gravitate towards her. “She tried to remind herself that beauty was only skin deep, but that didn't offer any helpful excuses when she was berating herself for never knowing what to say to people. There was nothing more depressing than an ugly girl with no personality,” Penelope thinks to herself in the novel. Marriage, before Colin Bridgerton discovers the person behind the persona, seems almost an impossibility even though “deep inside, she knew who she was, and that person was smart and kind and often even funny, but somehow her personality always got lost somewhere between her heart and her mouth, and she found herself saying the wrong thing or, more often, nothing at all.”

Always on the periphery of society, Penelope's position, however, lends itself automatically to her becoming the keeper of secrets, the invisible witness to the laughter, tears and machinations of the social set. But, unlike Charlie, she turns her observations into agency, honing her considerable wit and intelligence to show up a mirror to the Ton. Her loneliness amuses itself by choosing to be contrarian. The thrill of writing and producing *Lady Whistledown's Society Papers*, whose provenance and range of gossip remain a matter of curiosity and deep interest to the Ton, is a subversion that few of her elite contemporaries could imagine. As *Lady Whistledown*, Penelope comes into her own. She is no longer at a loss for words — her insights into the pre-tentiousness of her contemporaries come cloaked in sardonic humour. There's a power reversal in the way Penelope wrests back control through her secret life.

Unlike Chbosky's much more contemporary setting, Quinn's *Bridgerton* universe is a throwback to a different era altogether. But in her telling, and more so, in the Netflix adap-



A Little Bit of Polin In the Air

As Penelope and Colin take centre stage in Season 3, actors Nicola Coughlan and Luke Newton talk about their friendship and on-screen transformation

Alaka Sahani



AFTER THE *Bridgerton*verse explored the intense longing that forbidden love triggers, the much-anticipated third installment of *Bridgerton* is spotlighting the friendship between Penelope and Colin — essayed by Nicola Coughlan and Luke Newton, respectively — that turns romantic. The new season celebrates the transformation of Coughlan and Newton as ‘objects of desire’ as their characters step into adulthood.

The Regency romance drama's last season ended with Penelope falling out with Eloise, her best friend and Colin's sister. Eloise is upset to learn that Penelope is Lady Whistledown, the anonymous gossip writer. Penelope receives another blow when she overhears Colin, who she secretly loves, saying he would never date her. Though she is still recovering from these setbacks when season three opens, Penelope pulls herself together and decides to find a husband.

To reflect the changes their characters have gone through, from being friends who looked out for each other to adults who set each other's heart aflutter, it becomes imperative to show their makeover. In a press statement, showrunner Jess Brownell says: “A makeover is a huge trope in the rom-com genre. Penelope does have her makeover but it doesn't necessarily have the impact that she thought it would. For her, the change is much more about her confidence than it is about her external impression.” As the season progresses, Penelope learns to accept who she is, apart from taking accountability for some of the things she's written as Lady Whistledown. Colin, being the third Bridgerton brother, tries to come out of his siblings' shadow to find his place in this world. When Season 3 opens, Colin has returned from his summer travels with a new look and



FRIENDS WITH BENEFITS

(Clockwise from top) Nicola Coughlan (extreme right) in a still; with Luke Newton; Jonathan Bailey and Simone Ashley from Season 2; Rege-Jean Page and Phoebe Dynevor from Season 1

swagger. By then Penelope seems to have moved on and gives him the cold shoulder. To mend their friendship, Colin offers to mentor Penelope in the art of flirtation and to help her find a husband. “We wanted to portray the version of these two characters as grown up. That required working with all departments (costumes, hair and make-up) for changes in their looks to bring them to centre stage. It was a fun journey to go through,” Newton tells *The Indian Express*. Some have described Colin's new look as a ‘sexy pirate’, others as a ‘Marlboro Man’ with his clothing getting darker and more moody this season.

Till now, the viewers have seen Penelope in citrus-hued gowns. As she takes charge of her marital prospects, she ends up in greens and blues, which coincidentally also are more similar to *Bridgerton* family colours. This also drops hints of where she's headed. When it

comes to the hair and make-up, Penelope has always had these “tight little pin curl poodle looks”. She shuns that for a looser hairdo, which was not the style then, indicating that she was always ahead of time. Coughlan says: “That transformation took months of work as Penelope steps into her adulthood and finds her sexuality. Doing it as her character evolves was interesting for me as an actor.”

The star couple of Season 2, played by Jonathan Bailey (Anthony) and Simone Ashley (Kate), known as Kanthony, brought their much-loved crackling chemistry to the narrative. The newest pair in the Ton has been anointed as ‘Polin’. Do the lead actors feel the pressure of living up to the buzz Kanthony created? “Absolutely. That's the thing about the show. It has a totally new couple every season. The thing with romance is that they go through these different tropes. We hope

we receive as much love as they did,” says Coughlan, who also features in *Derry Girls* (2018-2022) and *Barbie* (2023).


The character of Penelope goes through quite a journey from being introduced as a wide-eyed teenager, who stumbles as she enters the grand hall to meet the queen, to a purpose-driven woman. “I was obviously much older than when I was playing Penelope's age in S1. But people often make the mistake of patronising the younger characters. When you are 17, you haven't lived as much life but you are the same person. She was always intelligent. When we were in the midst of filming S3, I saw a clip of S2. That was so different. In S3, I wanted her to be physically more comfortable,” says Coughlan.

As co-actors, Newton and Coughlan share “deep trust in one another”. That, they believe, has turned playing lovers on screen one of their best experiences. “It's amazing because Nicola sits next to me in the make-up chair and we get to talk about the growth of our characters, and the journeys that we go on. I love the way they've morphed together a little bit; Penelope has brought out the more flamboyant side of Colin,” says Newton, who has acted in *The Cut* (2009) and the Disney Channel series *The Lodge* (2016-2017).

While the dynamics of Colin and Penelope's relationship changes this season, off-screen Coughlan and Newton have been friends for long. “We are both very good at communicating. Standing for each other's needs. Shooting for this season has been a long process, including 10 months of practice. We were lucky to have built this foundation of friendship five years before,” Newton says. Coughlan echoes that they are aware of one another. “That made it a rewarding and beautiful process. It's my favourite season to film,” says Coughlan.

Penelope might not be the ‘diamond of the season’ but the story of Polin's friendship and love is set to shine.






DOWN IN JUNGLELAND

RANJIT LAL

Author, environmentalist and bird watcher



EXPRESS ARCHIVE

Let's Stick Together

Predators have figured a home truth – share with others and they will cooperate on the next hunt

BECAUSE WE have brains that work evilly, we have, over time, evolved hunting strategies (and made weapons) that make it impossible for our prey to escape. We've been so successful that we've wiped out most of our big cats and large herbivores and we now need to protect them actively. And typically, how did our evil minds work? Want to bag a tiger? Find a potential victim, organise a beat: hundreds of men hammering tin cans and marching through the jungle and, in front of them, hunters with rifles atop elephants, waiting for the traumatised big cat to break through the enclosure. Thankfully, this is all now a thing of the past, though 'canned hunting' in Africa is now its ignoble successor.

Animals, wild dogs for instance, adopt cooperative hunting strategies. First, they'll assess a herd of say, antelope, and pick a target and split it from its companions. The pursuit begins and as the animal flees, the dogs fan out flanking it from either side to prevent it

Chimpanzees will bury their differences when out on a hunt... going solo is rarely an option

from darting hither or tither, while some chase it from behind. The chase can go on for miles and if there's one thing the dogs have, it's stamina. One or more animals will race ahead, hide in the high grass and wait. As the tiring victim bumbles into it, it's game over. Bounding through the grass, the dogs keep track of each other by whistles. They have a success rate of 60 per cent, the highest among carnivores.

How did the dogs first realise they had a better chance of success if they hunted together? Did this happen by accident? A solitary hunter, on the chase, is followed by pack mates. The prey jinks one way and another and some of the followers dart after splitting up. Another bright spark gets way ahead, say by accident, and then finds it is in the ideal position to take down the victim – as the chasers close in. This procedure is repeated in subsequent hunts with equal success and is taught to the cubs in the pack. And becomes an established hunting strategy.

Other cooperative hunters, like lions, hunt together, especially when the prey is large and dangerous (like buffalo or elephant). Lionesses will typ-

ically attack from the rear, attempting to hamstring the victim before the lead huntress tackles the dangerous front end, clamping down on the throat and asphyxiating the animal. In cases where the victim refuses to go down easily, his royal highness, the lion, might even join in – his greater weight helping to bring down the prey. Again, it's amazing how this strategy evolved into a template with enough room for manoeuvre, depending on circumstances.

Chimpanzees will bury their differences when out on a hunt for monkeys. As they move through the forest, their keen eyes scanning the canopy, they'll maintain radio silence. Once they spot a prospect, they'll assess the escape routes and various pack members will climb up the trees and seal these off. At a signal, the screaming begins, and the panicked victim is chased up, hurtling through the branches in desperation – chased by a chimp – straight into a waiting hunter in the treetops.

The successful hunter is careful to share the spoils among the pack. Which chimp in the pack is the first to be invited to the table is a matter of social hierarchy but the reasoning behind sharing is sound: Share with the others, and you can be sure that they'll cooperate in the next hunt. Hunting solo is probably

not an option.

The victims of predators, too, have realised that there's relative safety in numbers. If you're a lone zebra standing in the plains with lions approaching, you're a goner. But if you are one, in a herd of 1000, then the chances of you being picked off are one in a thousand. Birds and fish, too, adopt this strategy: starlings have their astonishing 'murmurations' to confuse raptors and sardines and mackerels swim tightly together in shoals, making it difficult for their predators to pick a target.

Ironically, some whales counter this by also hunting together, corralling the shoals and blowing rings of bubbles around them to 'cage' them and then just swimming into them with their cave-like mouths wide open. Or they simply whack the water so hard with their tails, they knock the fish unconscious, which is rather like using dynamite while fishing.

But again, it is amazing to think just how all these strategies involving cooperation started and evolved. And how these species realised there was more survival value in working together than in going solo.



COURTESY: FILM HERITAGE FOUNDATION

The Churn

Nearly half a century after Shyam Benegal's *Manthan* released, its freshly restored print will be screened at Cannes this month and in Indian theatres later

Alaka Sahani

DURING THE upcoming edition of Cannes Film Festival (May 14-25), delegates will watch two very differently produced Indian films. While Payal Kapadia's *All We Imagine As Light*, which is selected for its competition section, is a France, India, Luxembourg and Netherlands co-production, Shyam Benegal's *Manthan* (1976) is the earliest example of a crowdfunded film. Nearly five lakh farmers, who were members of the Gujarat Co-operative Milk Marketing Federation Ltd (GCMMF), had contributed Rs 2 each to produce the film.

After a year-long restoration of the *Manthan* print, the film will be screened under the Cannes Classics selection, which was created 20 years ago to showcase classics, restored prints and documentaries. Other films in the category include Charles Vidor's *Gilda* (1946); Wim Wenders's *Palme d'or* winner *Paris, Texas* (1984) and Akira Kurosawa's *Seven Samurai* (1954).

Manthan has been restored by the Film Heritage Foundation (FHF) at Prasad Corporation's studios in Chennai, and L'Imagine Ritrovata Laboratory, in association with GCMMF. It was done using the best surviving elements: the 35 mm original camera negative preserved at the NFDC-National Film Archive of India, while the sound was digitised from the 35 mm release print, preserved at FHF. Its Cannes screening is scheduled to be held in the presence of actor Naseeruddin Shah, the family of actor Smita Patil, producers of the film and Shivendra Singh Dungarpur, director, FHF, on May 17 evening at Buñuel Theatre.

This was Benegal's third directorial outing after the much-acclaimed *Ankur* (1974) and *Nishant* (1975), which was selected to compete for the Palme d'Or at the 1976



CREAM OF THE CROP

(Top) A still from *Manthan*; director Shyam Benegal (extreme right) and cinematographer Govind Nihalani (centre) on the sets

Cannes Film Festival. Continuing with Benegal's exploration of social realism, *Manthan* examines the complex realities of a village – caste system, class conflict and gender dynamics.

Benegal had earlier made two documentaries on Amul's success in procuring and distributing milk. He wanted to share this success story with a wider audience. Recounting the movie's making, he says, "Verghese Kurien (then chairman) told the (milk) collection centres that when they (farmers) come for their daily morning and evening collection, ask them not to take Rs 2 and they can all become producers of a film." Benegal says that *Manthan* is a reminder of "the power of

cinema as a vehicle of change", as well as Kurien's legacy as father of the white revolution. "Govind Nihalani (*Manthan*'s cinematographer) and I have been following the progress of the restoration closely. It is wonderful to see the film come back to life almost like we made it yesterday," says Benegal.

The story of *Manthan*, though inspired by Kurien, is not centred around him. Instead, it takes an incisive look at the challenges involved in achieving unity in a society divided on economic and caste lines. Manohar Rao (Girish Karnad) and his team, which features characters played by Mohan Agashe and Anant Nag, have to navigate the conflict between the upper-caste sarpanch (Kulbhusan

Kharbanda) and hot-headed Bhola (Shah), a Dalit villager, before they can set up a cooperative society. Even as Manohar tries to resolve the differences and unite the villagers, he is fascinated by the feisty Bindu, played by the incandescent Smita Patil.

Vijay Tendulkar's screenplay and dialogues by Kaifi Azmi capture the social realities. Its timeless music composed by Vanraj Bhatia, especially the song *Mero gaam katha parey*, sung by Preeti Sagar, remains popular even today. Dungarpur says, "*Manthan*'s restoration was on our wish list for years as Shyam *babu* is one of India's most venerated filmmakers whose early films were iconic in India's Parallel Cinema movement. Almost half a century later, the power of the narrative and the compelling performances of the actors, especially Smita Patil, remains undiminished."

The triumph of *Manthan* lies in the fact that it does not show the city-bred officials fix the villagers' problems. The villagers, led by Bhola, figure out their way and run their society. Shah recalls, "I started my career as an actor with *Nishant* followed by *Manthan*. It was a runaway success when it was released almost 50 years ago. I remember during its shooting, I lived in a hut, learnt to make cow dung cakes and milk a buffalo. I would carry the buckets and serve the milk to the unit to get the physicality of the character."

Shot by Nihalani, who was Benegal's frequent collaborator in the '70s, the film has a lyrical quality, with his treatment of light, shadow and colour. For him, being involved in the restoration has been "an emotional experience". "It has taken me back to 1976 when the entire unit lived like a family in the village of Sanganya in Gujarat for 45 days during the shoot. The shooting was challenging because we had to use a patchwork of different film stock for the film within the film," says Nihalani. The 4k version of *Manthan* will subsequently be screened in Indian theatres.

War and Peace

TV Santhosh's works, on display in Ernakulam, Kerala, seek to question our understanding of our surroundings and ask who the real enemy is

Vandana Kalra

ARTIST TV Santhosh believes that there are almost always a number of solutions to any conflict. "My focus is on trying to understand history and the reasons behind constant wars and conflicts. At any given moment, some war is happening somewhere. It is a continuous process, like an endless chain of action and reaction, often exposing the darker side of humanity... When you look at the larger picture, you realise that there is often an alternative, a probable solution to the unrest the world is dealing with," says the Mumbai-based artist.

In the exhibition titled "History Lab and the Elegy of Visceral Incantations", organised by the Kerala Lalit Kala Akademi at Durbar Hall Art Gallery in Ernakulam, he elaborates on this line of thought, carefully presenting the realities and deliberating on the diverse scenarios. If a painting portrays a televised war, depicting



how the turbulent outside world enters our drawing room through television channels, in the sculptural installation *When World Enters Your Home*, a gun is affixed onto a door with insertions signifying bullet marks. "It is a reminder to the kind of violence that is happening and stories of attacks that we confront. The metaphorical door has guns placed on both sides. The rifle on the inside is meant to protect people from an attack outside, where an AK 47 is fixed... When you look at each episode of violence individually, then there is a clear picture of the enemy. But when you look at the same event from a large humanistic point of view, the distinction between the victim and the aggressor gets blurred. In the end, it is the human beings themselves who are being victimised," says Santhosh.

The newsprint often influences texts in the cataclysmic narratives where images find manifold interpretations as Santhosh explores themes of terrorism, injustice, war and how perceptions are influenced by the me-



POINT OF VIEW

(From left) TV Santhosh; his watercolours on paper – *The Protagonist and His Empty Rat Trap*; *When World was Gasping for its Breath*



dia. "Our connection to the outside world is essentially through news media that exposes us to the turbulent realities and contemporary situations. The second-hand experience becomes part of our everyday experience, redefining the nature of our relationship with the outside world, bringing forth stories of violence, cries of innocent victims; but once again there is an inherent issue of who is the attacker and who is the victim – this can be approached through various angles, historical and ideological points of view and the answers will be different," says Santhosh.



COURTESY: THE GUILD AND TV SANTHOSH

Trained in sculpture at Kala Bhavan, Santiniketan, the artist, who completed his MFA from Maharaja Sayajirao University in Baroda, notes that his works seek to question our understanding of our surroundings, contemplating, "Who is the real enemy?". Santhosh says, "On the one hand, it is a political question but it is also a philosophical question." If his first solo, "One hand clapping/siren", presented by Guild Art Gallery in 2003 in Mumbai featured near-monochromatic paintings, in the 2008 installation, *A Room to Pray*, he created a space to pray, with

walls that appeared as a pile of bones. The centre table was symbolic of Leonardo da Vinci's *The Last Supper*. At the Grosvenor Gallery in London in 2014, he "appropriated" images that refer to the "notion of being under attack and being wounded". "It's like as soon as India begins to recover from one attack another one happens. It happens all over: we keep inflicting wounds on society. When it heals, another wound occurs," he says, in the concept note.

Often modelled on himself, the central protagonists, who appear in his works, are usually his studio assistants. "There are autobiographical elements but they are the main characters of the story... It is almost like what would be there in a one-act play, where the same actor enacts different roles. Several objects and props are placed around to tell stories, from skulls to rat traps and knives," says Santhosh. The practice, perhaps, also originates from his own theatre days as a student in Thrissur, when he also made political posters for street plays. "We often go back in time and restore something we did, discovering new meanings," adds Santhosh.

His projection of the future though is rather bleak. The titular sculpture in the on-going exhibition *History Lab IV* incorporates an "apocalyptic clock". "History has its multiple complex narratives. Many scientists, over time, have predicted that the world is not going to last forever; the end might come due to ecological reasons or man himself committing a huge crime against humanity... The clock is a metaphor for the inevitable doom and catastrophe," says Santhosh.

Rescuing Rajiv

In trying to highlight the human dimension of Rajiv Gandhi's life, Mani Shankar Aiyar misses the political for the personal in his new book

Suhas Palshikar

MANI SHANKAR Aiyar's book, *The Rajiv I Knew*, is a partisan but spirited and well-documented account of Rajiv Gandhi's time as the prime minister and subsequently, for a brief period, also as the Opposition leader. It doesn't, however, answer the question from the subtitle — "And why he was India's most misunderstood prime minister". The central question about Rajiv is: Does one remember him for the victimhood due to "vicious" media hounding, for the tragic end that left questions of leadership unanswered, for the "accidental" mistakes, or for the (equally accidental?) initiatives that saved and strengthened the nation-state with a democratic spirit of give-and-take? This book leaves the reader with these questions.

The 1980s were a turbulent decade in Indian politics. There were strains in the federal fabric and the decade ended with tearing in the communal harmony completely apart. It also saw a vacuum in national leadership with the assassination of Indira Gandhi, the prime minister. Rajiv Gandhi seemed to be filling that vacuum but halfway through his tenure as prime minister, the shine was gone — he was at the centre of troublesome developments. Therefore, an account of his role remains a valuable source of information, insight and, inevitably, controversy.

Aiyar's account laboriously argues that on the issues of Shah Bano and Bofors, Rajiv Gandhi was not at fault. He points to the judicial pronouncements on these issues vindicating him. While the book also deals with Gandhi's many domestic and foreign-policy initiatives, somewhat surprisingly, the author underplays his more dramatic initiatives in the very early phase of his leadership — the Punjab, Assam and Mizoram accords as also the initiative in the Gorkhaland issue and his agreement with Farooq Abdullah. Of course, many of these might be set aside as part of the broader policy of the Indian state but Rajiv Gandhi was leading the Indian state at a moment of distrust and uncertainty when the traditional policy of the state could have been easily trampled roughshod. Instead, he contributed to the strengthening of the spirit of democratic compromise through these accords.

Having disposed of the discussion of the accords in just over 30 pages, the book spares a hundred pages to the "controversies" in order to clear Rajiv Gandhi's name and honour. For a political animal that Aiyar is, it should be evident that no amount of evidence will politically clear the air on these. In terms of Indian democracy and its bygone resilience, the accords showcase the advantage of naivete and optimism, as well as the continuity of the policy of accommodation and inclusivity. While others have written on



EXPRESS ARCHIVE

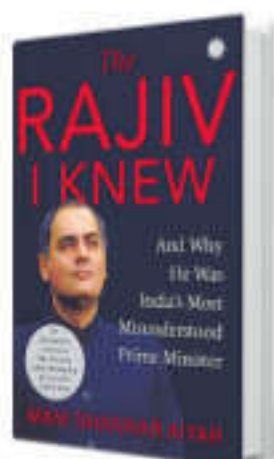
CHANGE OF GUARD

(From left) Rajiv Gandhi; President R Venkataraman; VP Singh at the Rashtrapati Bhavan in 1989

those accords, an insider-outsider account would have been most welcome.

As this reviewer went through the stout, lawyer-like defence of Rajiv Gandhi over the Shah Bano issue and the strongly documented discussion of Bofors, many intriguing questions crowded the mind — and they are actually farther from those controversies so to speak. Aiyar's account whets the appetite of the reader for a more convoluted suspense involving human life, party intrigues and democratic politics.

The author seems to convey that Rajiv Gandhi stands apart from the humdrum image of the "leader" because after all, he was a "nice person". "Because he was a good man, he thought others would be the same," and "(Perhaps) RG lacked the deviousness that makes for a long-standing prime minister...". As is well-known, he was catapulted first, into politics and party activity when the Congress was reduced to being only palace conspiracies; then he was catapulted into office without any political preparation or explicit support from the party. Clearly, this was



THE RAJIV I KNEW AND WHY HE WAS INDIA'S MOST MISUNDERSTOOD PRIME MINISTER BY MANI SHANKAR AIYAR Juggernaut 324 pages ₹799

a compromise to avoid a full-fledged war of succession within the Congress and also as a measure to retain fiefdoms of party apparatchiki who mostly lacked popular support themselves.

This context brings forth the tragic mix of human life and intra-party politics. Aiyar is alive to this mix, being the central character that shaped the time of Rajiv Gandhi as prime minister. But either because he wants to highlight the human dimension of Rajiv Gandhi's life or because he does not want to ruffle too many feathers within the Congress (as if he has not done that before!), he emphasises the personal side of that tragedy and misses its more political side, viz., the demise of the party.

We are told that there were three factors responsible for Gandhi's failures: First, Arun Nehru. In no uncertain terms, this book points a finger to his ambition to become the king-maker and the de facto boss. Second, the intransigence of close aides of Rajiv Gandhi whom he trusted — Arun Singh, General K Sunderji, officers such as Gopi

Arora, and so on. In fact, somewhat amusingly, the narrative seems to be driving the point that everyone Rajiv Gandhi trusted with key responsibilities either ditched him or even conspired against him.

Third, and politically the most educative point Aiyar makes — alas, only in passing — is that the Congress had already grown tired of its cherished legacy of inclusionary politics (my term; Aiyar sticks to the more misunderstood and nebulous term "secularism"). From PV Narasimha Rao and VN Gadgil to ordinary workers in UP — all were foxed by the question of Ram Janmabhoomi and were willing to cave in. This reviewer believes that this third factor was most critical in understanding the failure of Rajiv Gandhi — and the Congress in the past one decade. Rajiv Gandhi could not bypass the stalwarts nor could he convince and reinvigorate the cadres on this question of principle — a handicap emanating from both lack of experience and lack of deeper legitimacy within the party.

The writer, based in Pune, taught political science

Another Leap of Love

Despite its unevenness, Gabriel Garcia Marquez's posthumous novel is a testament to his genius

Shah Alam Khan

GABRIEL GARCIA Marquez died in April 2014. We are told that in the last years of his life, Gabo, as he was fondly known, suffered memory loss which bothered him while writing. He had often said, "Memory is, at once, my source material and my tool. Without it, there's nothing." Though *Until August* was completed in June 2002, he had said, "This book doesn't work, it must be destroyed."

Fortunately, it wasn't, and remained in darkness till his children, Rodrigo and Gonzalo Garcia Barcha, decided to reveal it to the world. On Gabo's 97th birth anniversary, *Until August* came out, becoming another entry in his frequent fictional explorations of love between older people, just like in *Memories of My Melancholic Whores* (2005), his previous novel.

The essential Marquezian element is magical realism but, surprisingly, *Until August* doesn't have it. It's the story of Ana Magdalena Bach, a married woman in her fifties who makes annual visits to her mother's grave in a remote Caribbean Island. The visits happen every August 16 on the mother's death anniversary. Like most of Gabo's characters, Ana is a complicated person. She's in league with many iniquitous characters from the Marquez canon like those in *Big Mama's Funeral* (1962) and *Death Constant Beyond Love* (1970).

The supporting cast is equally interesting. Her 54-year-old music-critic husband Domencio Amaris is handsome, well-educated, and an inveterate flirt. Her two children, a boy and a girl, make the story's digressions readable, particularly the story of her rebellious daughter who wants to become a nun and join the convent against her mother's will.

Ana has multiple sexual encounters with strangers on her annual island visits, but the first stranger is of note.

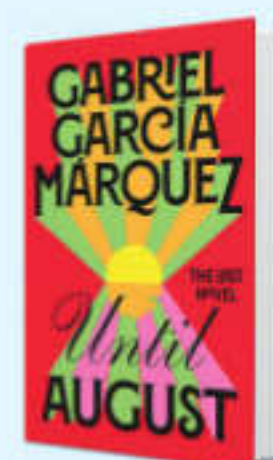
When he leaves her, he keeps a 20-dollar bill between the pages of a book she is reading. It violates her and marks a change in her life when she returns home, realising her life has now irretrievably changed. The memory of that 20-dollar man embitters her throughout the book.

Until August also stands at the intersection of morality and amorality, infidelity and faithfulness. Marquez had marked the manuscript's margins with many possible interpretations. *Until August* is thus not a story of infidelity but a story of return to love. The anxiety which engulfs Ana every time she returns from the island is what makes one empathise with her desire. Her vulnerability is similar to what Chekhov explores in his short story, *The Lady with the Dog* (1899), in which a banker and a young woman start an affair and are forced to live apart for a while, before they meet again and realise that distance has only nourished their love. Her anxiety reminds me of bell hooks's *All About Love* (1999), in which she writes, "The practice of love offers no place of safety. We risk loss, hurt, pain. We risk being acted upon by forces beyond our control."

Literature is also used to prop up the book's themes. Ana is often shown reading books relevant to the storyline, like Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, Ernest Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea*, Albert Camus's *The Stranger*, Daniel Defoe's *A Journal of the Plague Year*, Silvina Ocampo's *The Book of Fantasy*, Ray Bradbury's *The Martian Chronicles* and *Lazarillo de Tormes*.

Human solitude is a strange space. For the fortunate, it can be effortlessly filled up by love and desire. That's what forms the heart of this splendid novella. But no work of literature is complete without an element of suspense and surprise. The book shouldn't only be read for the magic of Marquez's words and the imageries he evokes, but also for its climax. The end is as shockingly beautiful as the stunning pattern of a thunderbolt on a clear night sky. Despite the criticism against its publication, as a reader, I feel grateful to have been offered a chance to savour a Marquez that feels both like familiar and unfamiliar territory.

Shah Alam Khan is a professor of Orthopaedics at AIIMS, New Delhi



UNTIL AUGUST BY GABRIEL GARCIA MARQUEZ Penguin 128 pages ₹549

HOT OFF THE PRESS



MARTYR (₹599, *Pan Macmillan*) by Kaveh Akbar is a debut novel by the multiple-time-Pushcart-winning poet, about a New York-based writer whose mother was shot down over the Persian gulf in a 'senseless accident', whose father has spent a lifetime 'killing chickens' at a farm, and who is driven by alcoholism towards martyrs, artists, religion and the search for meaning.



BIOPECULIAR (₹399, *Westland*) by Gigi Ganguly is a short fiction collection about the natural world, telling stories of cloud-herders, weather departments and



corvid inspectors. Ganguly's second book in the science-fiction genre, following her 2022 novella about a mysterious repair shop in Delhi's Chandni Chowk, its stories are interspersed with love, hatred, indignance and empathy for the natural world.

CHOICE (₹699, *Penguin*) by Neel Mukherjee is the fourth book by the Booker-shortlisted writer, about a London-based publisher who's obsessed with the question "How ought one to live?" and what that means in

21st century capitalism within which, as some say, there's no such thing as ethical consumption. The story is anchored on his interactions with his economist husband, children and commissioned authors.



THE NEW EXPERTS (₹2,614, *Cambridge University Press*) by Anuradha Sajjanhar is about the 'technocratic promises' offered by the Bharatiya Janata Party since coming to power in 2014, and how the party's network of consultants, bureaucrats and workers further the Hindutva project on the plank of economic development.



UNDERSTANDING INDIA (₹799, *The Write Order*) by Abraham Jacob is an analysis of literary and philosophical texts from the subcontinent to trace its evolution in spiritual, religious and political thought. It delves into the various sects that merged

into the modern-day understanding of Hinduism as the religion of those living east of the Indus River, and the role played by superstition in that trajectory.



INDIAN PHILOSOPHY, INDIAN REVOLUTION (₹799, *Westland*) by Divya Dwivedi and Shaj Mohan, edited by Maël Montévi, is a philosophical attempt at breaking down the binary of Hindu nationalism vs religious pluralism through a series of essays written between 2016 and 2023. The authors seek to explain how caste, Brahminism, authoritarianism and lack of press freedom create a landscape where revolution, or resistance, becomes impossible. **UDBHAV SETH**

Illuminating the Darkness

Vanya Vaidehi Bhargav's biography of Lajpat Rai attempts to extricate him from the pigeonholes he has been hemmed in

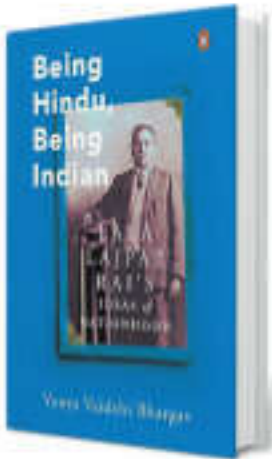
Arjun Sengupta

AT A time when Savarkar's Hindutva seems to be in vogue, many scholars have looked for alternative articulations of nationalism. Vanya Vaidehi Bhargav's *Being Hindu, Being Indian* does exactly that, by presenting a systematic study of Lala Lajpat Rai's diverse, seemingly contradictory ideas on the subject.

Rai has long been viewed as an intellectual predecessor of Savarkar, and, as Christophe Jaffrelot put it, "a pioneer of Hindu nationalist ideology". This characterisation, Bhargav argues, is in line with the Hindu Right's claims over Rai's legacy of being a "Hindu hero", in opposition to the Indian National Congress's brand of secular — "pro-Muslim, anti-Hindu" — nationalism.

Being Hindu, Being Indian challenges this interpretation, which Bhargav believes "ends up leaving out much nuance". At the same time, it also seeks to resist the tendency to simply ignore Rai's Hindu nationalism in favour of casting his thoughts as a form of "Indian nationalism", albeit with a "communal twist" (as articulated by historian Gyanendra Pandey in *The Construction of Communalism in Colonial North India*, 2006). Bhargav's book is an attempt to extricate Rai from the pigeonholes that he has been hemmed in, to map out the fluidity and evolution of his thought, and in the process "convey some sense of how complex history can be".

Bhargav begins her author's note by saying that she has "long harboured the passion to write history that is accessible to the public". In this regard, she does not disappoint. At



BEING HINDU, BEING INDIAN: LALA LAJPAT RAI'S IDEAS OF NATIONHOOD BY VANYA VAIDEHI BHARGAV Penguin Viking 336 pages ₹1,299

the same time, her endeavour to write for the layperson does not come at the cost of scholarly rigour. Her writing is lucid, sensitive to detail and resists the temptation to be sensational. Bhargav is also not afraid to theorise but does so with the research to back it up.

At a time when dime-a-dozen pop historians write shoddily researched empirically-disconnected bestsellers, *Being Hindu, Being Indian* is a much-needed work, exactly the kind to counter WhatsApp histories — something Indian academics have generally not been good at. It's not the first book in this space, but definitely among the better ones.

It's also a timely book because it challenges the notion that nationalism, or, for that matter, Hindu nationalism, is a monolithic ideology. Bhargav's study of Rai's alternative vision of what it means to be a Hindu, and an Indian, presents a foil to the homogenising Hindutva that India's current dispensation pushes.

The book is divided into four chronological parts, "covering nationalist narratives that Lajpat Rai articulated in four distinguishable phases of his intellectual life" — from the 1880s, at the beginning of Rai's political life, to the 1920s, when he was eventually killed by blows to his head from a British officer's *lathi*. Chapters in the book are interspersed with historical narration and philosophical discussion, with Bhargav paying crucial attention to the political and intellectual circumstances in which Rai articulated his ideas.

Unfortunately, the book does not pay



WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

A DIFFERENT LENS Lala Lajpat Rai

much attention to socio-economic processes to aid this contextualisation. One can't help but think that a book proclaiming to shed light on history's complexities would have done well with an added layer of context.

The bigger problem with the book is that, at times, the author's quest to push through her basic argument seems forced — and not because of lack of empirical evidence: Bhargav leaves very little for the readers to discern. Rather than prodding readers towards the

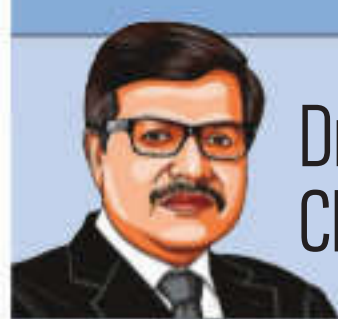
conclusion, Bhargav sometimes seems to be shoving it down their throats.

For instance, in Chapter 20 ('Understanding Lajpat Rai's Hindu Politics and Secularism'), arguably the most important chapter in the book, the author makes a single overarching point: that Rai's militant Hindu politics was very much compatible with his convictions towards a secular nation state. Whether one agrees or disagrees with this claim — Bhargav certainly presents a very compelling case — this feels repetitive, especially given the content of all previous chapters put together. The book might have been much more powerful if it had, at least in some cases, left readers with the opportunity to draw their own conclusions.

This also sometimes leads to the author glossing over legitimate criticisms of Rai. It is not that Bhargav does not make these criticisms. But given how ardent she is in articulating that Rai's Hindu and secular nationalisms are very much compatible, the book seems to find ways to minimise these criticisms for the service of the larger point being made. In other words, in a bid to not be reductive (as historians thus far have been), Bhargav engages in a kind of reductionism of her own.

That being said, the book is a worthwhile read, if not for anything else, then to learn about the man often remembered as a part of the Lal-Bal-Pal triumvirate, or as the catalyst for Bhagat Singh's murder of policeman John Saunders.

INTERPRETATIONS
OF MALADY



DR SURANJIT
CHATTERJEE

Gut bacteria can chew up cholesterol

Probiotics reduce cholesterol absorption from food and liver

NOWADAYS, WE hear many conversations on gut bacteria being the pivot of our health and well-being, impacting our key lifestyle markers like cholesterol, blood sugar, triglycerides, body fat and haemoglobin. In fact, latest research by the Broad Institute of MIT and Harvard, along with Massachusetts General Hospital, has found that specific bacteria in the gut can chew up cholesterol, lowering its levels in the blood and consequently eliminating the risk of plaque formation in the heart arteries.

Over a decade-long study, researchers found that people who had *Oscillibacter* bacteria in their gut had lower cholesterol levels than those with poor levels of the same.

So how does gut bacteria help in controlling cholesterol levels in your blood?

They break down cholesterol so that it cannot be absorbed into your bloodstream. Rather the end product passes through your stool. Earlier research has also shown similar effects. Several strains of *Lactobacillus* bacteria — a common gut bacteria — entrap cholesterol from their surroundings and incorporate it into their membranes. This is another way of eliminating cholesterol.

Oscillibacter bacteria influence bile acids, which are essential for fat digestion and absorption. Once they finish their functions, bile acids return to the liver for recycling. But some amount remains in the gut, becoming the food for gut bacteria and growing them. In this process, the gut bacteria break down bile acids into secondary bile acids, which regulate cholesterol metabolism. Furthermore, bacteria break down dietary fibres through fermentation and produce short chain fatty acids. These inhibit cholesterol formation and keep its levels low.

Using probiotics to target cholesterol

Probiotics containing *Oscillibacter* strains or foods that promote their growth and activity should be included in your daily diet. Probiotics exist in fermented foods like natural yogurt, cheese and kimchi. Animal studies have already hinted that some probiotic strains might help manage cholesterol levels. One study showed how test subjects, who had *Lactobacillus* bacteria-enriched yogurt twice a day for six weeks, had an almost five per cent reduction in overall cholesterol and a nearly nine per cent reduction in low density lipoprotein (LDL) or bad cholesterol. How long people take probiotics and how much they take are likely to make a difference, too. In a 2018 meta-analysis, researchers found that people who took probiotics reduced their total cholesterol level by 13 per cent. Most of these studies used probiotics containing *Lactobacillus acidophilus* and *Bifidobacterium lactis*, which come in capsules or powders and are consumed daily.

Probiotics can influence our cholesterol levels by reducing the absorption of cholesterol from our food and limiting the amount of cholesterol produced by the liver. Based on more studies and going forward, treatments could include targeted diets, probiotics or new drugs derived from the molecules these bacteria produce.

Dr Chatterjee is senior consultant, Indraprastha Apollo Hospitals, New Delhi

Anonna Dutt

THE INTERNET is flooded with wisdom on nutrition, be it weight loss diets, intermittent fasting, veganism, giving up carbohydrates or taking supplements. Truth is it is difficult to find a balanced meal that works for you from the information swirling around you. That's why the National Institute of Nutrition (NIN), under the aegis of the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), has released a comprehensive guideline on how Indians should be eating clean with easily accessible resources and most importantly, what suits their body type.

Complete with an ideal plate, diet charts, recipes and advisories on how you should be cooking and in what cookware, this is an essential handbook that all of us would find convenient to incorporate in our daily lives. Given India's growing burden of non-communicable diseases, these guidelines are significant as they lay down the template of foundational nutrition in children, beginning with pregnant women. The report says that proper nutrition for a mother and child (from conception to the age of about two years) is linked not only to proper growth and development but also to the risk of diabetes, hypertension and heart attacks later in life.

Over 56 per cent of all non-communicable diseases can be attributed to an unhealthy diet. As the report shows, a healthy diet, combined with physical activity, can prevent 80 per cent of Type 2 diabetes and significantly reduce the burden of heart diseases, high blood pressure and prevent premature deaths. It has even warned against taking protein supplements for building body mass and recommended restricting salt intake, minimising sugar and ultra-processed foods and reading information on food labels correctly.

DIET FOR PREGNANT AND LACTATING MOTHERS

A woman needs to consume extra calories when pregnant to meet her nutritional needs. Ideally, she should gain around 10 to 12 kg, lesser if she is already overweight. Women with a healthy body weight during pregnancy are more likely to give birth to babies with the ideal birth weight and proper organ development. Such newborns are then likely to have a lesser risk of contracting infection and mortality.

In a day, a pregnant woman should consume 240 grams of cereals and millets, 80 grams of pulses, 40 grams of nuts and seeds, 20 ml of cooking oil, 300 grams of vegetables, roots and tubers such as carrots, cauliflower and peppers, 150 grams of leafy vegetables such as spinach or coriander, 150 grams of fruits and 400 ml of dairy products, including milk, curd, 80 grams of lean meat like chicken. Lean meats should total up to at least 250-300 grams in a week.

The guideline recommends small, frequent meals for mothers experiencing nausea and vomiting. It advocates only breast milk for all infants till six months as it contains all the nutrients. Infants should not be fed anything other than breast milk for six months, not even water. They certainly should not be given honey, glucose or diluted milk formula before six months of age. Pregnant and lactating women should not have any medicines without consulting their doctors.

NO FORMULA FOR INFANTS

After six months, children need complementary foods in addition to breast milk. Preparing these at home is better than purchasing formula, which usually have added sugars.

Complementary food can be prepared at home by mixing 25 gram pureed carrot, pumpkin, spinach, potato or apple with 15 gram of ground rice, 15 gram of ground lentils and 200 ml of water. The same can be done with mashed and boiled egg or fish instead of vegetables or fruits. Infants can snack on green peas or lobia — pureed for those below one and boiled for older ones. They can also be given fruits such as papaya and banana, curd, boiled egg or boiled and mashed fish.

The complementary foods should be given twice or thrice a day along with breastfeeding till one year.

CALCIUM FOR ADOLESCENTS

Between the ages of 10 and 19 years, adolescents rapidly increase in height and weight, undergo hormonal changes and sexual maturation and hence require a high calorie intake. Their calcium requirement is also high and, therefore, they should be encouraged to consume milk and milk products. Nutritional care of adolescent girls is of particular importance for their own health and in preparation for motherhood in future.

The 16-19 age group is significant as the human body needs the highest number of calories during this period, 2,490 kcal for girls and 3,300 kcal for boys. It is equally important to ensure they do not overeat. Heavily processed and packaged foods should be avoided.

COMBOS FOR THE ELDERLY

The guideline says that elderly people should consume foods rich in proteins, calcium, micronutrients and fibre. Apart from pulses and cereals — with at least one-third as whole grains — they should consume at least 200-400 ml of low-fat milk or milk products, a fist full of nuts and oilseeds and 400-500 gm of vegetables and fruits. The guidelines prescribe low salt and spices. The elderly need exercise for bone density and muscle mass.

PROTEINS FOR PLANT FOOD EATERS

Proteins are not only necessary to build and maintain good muscle mass, they are needed for many body functions. While the diet of an adult often has enough protein, what kind of protein is consumed is more important. Our body needs 20 amino acids — constituents of proteins — but nine of these are essential because they cannot be produced by our body. While meat eaters can easily source their quota from fish, poultry or lean meat, plant food eaters have to consume cereals and pulses. A special guideline for vegans says that they should consume cereals and pulses in the ratio of 3:1 to get the essential amino acids. Vegetarians can add 250 ml of milk.

The guidelines talk of protein powders — mainly made from eggs, milk, or whey (a byproduct of cheese or paneer) — that are taken by many athletes. Arguing that the protein requirement among humans is not as high as is commonly perceived, the reckoner says that even athletes can get their requirement through food alone. "The prolonged intake of a large amount of protein is associated with potential dangers such as bone mineral loss and kidney damage," experts wrote. Besides, protein powders contain added sugar and non-caloric sweeteners.

HOW MUCH OF OIL AND SALTS ARE SAFE

Since most foods already contain sodium, added salt should be bare minimum. Salt intake should be restricted to five grams a day. Data indicates that an average consumption of salt ranges from three grams to 10 grams per day in different states with about 45 per cent of the population consuming more than five grams per day.

Oil intake should be minimised with a sharp focus on more vegetable-based sources as they do not contain cholesterol. One should avoid cooking products like ghee that contain saturated fats. Most importantly, the new rulebook argues against reusing and reheating oils as they can produce harmful substances.

at 45 or so earlier. Women who have never birthed babies or breast-fed have a higher risk of breast cancer because oestrogen levels go down during pregnancy and lactation. Multiple pregnancies have a protective effect while late age of pregnancy is a risk factor. Hormone replacement therapy is another risk factor. Be cautious if you have a family history.

How does regular screening for breast cancer help?

Regular screening has been shown to reduce deaths by 30 to 35 per cent. Early treatment improves the odds of survival. Data from the population based registry in India shows that most breast cancer patients — more than half — get diagnosed in stage III. Only 30 per cent cases are diagnosed in stage I and II.

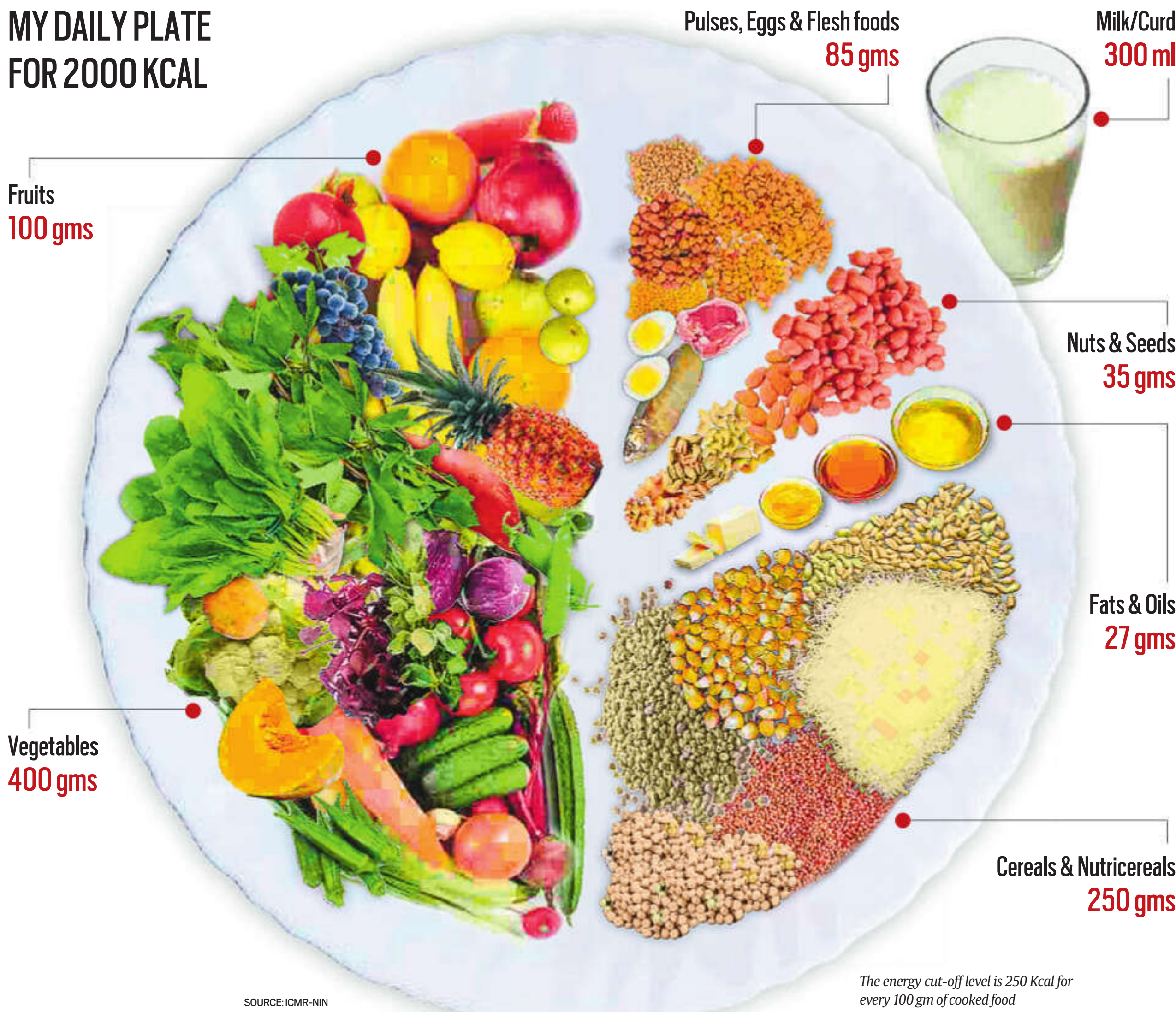
Why is screening more essential now?

The number of breast cancer cases has increased from 1.5 lakh in 2016 to 2 lakh in 2022, probably triggered by exposure to air pollutants though studies are still inconclusive. There has been an increase in triple negative cancers, accounting for nearly 40 per cent of cases. These don't have any of the three receptors found in other breast cancers. So doctors have fewer treatment options. This type affects young women and are more aggressive.

What Should We Eat?

The ICMR-NIN guidelines are a template for preventing heart disease and diabetes. The mantra is simple: No formula food for infants, no protein powder and a diet low in salt and sugar

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NUTRITION NUGGETS



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Why breast screening should be done at 40

Early imaging can save younger women from aggressive cancers

Anonna Dutt

IN A move to prevent deaths due to breast cancer, the US Preventive Services Task Force recently recommended that women undergo a mammography every other year, beginning at 40. This brings down the age of screening for all women by a decade which earlier guidelines had set at 50. The panel had then said that only the high-risk group between the ages of 40 and 49 should take the test earlier.

With breast cancer being the most common type of cancer in women — it affects 1.9 lakh women and kills over 98,000 every year — Dr Abhishek Shankar, radiation oncologist at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), Delhi, talks about what women in India should do.

Who should be screened for cancer?

Like many other lifestyle diseases, hor-

mone-related cancers, such as those of the breast, can affect Indians a decade earlier than their Western counterparts. So one can begin screening at 40. But unlike the periodicity in the US, they should get mammography, an X-ray imaging method to examine the breast, done once every year. This is because two years are too long a window and many patients tend to ignore a follow-up. Many might never come back — repeated testing is the only way to detect the cancer early.

Government guidelines recommend screening at 30 but only with clinical breast examination. However, there is no evidence to show that this ensures survival benefits. The guidelines are, however, meant for a larger population. Those who can afford it — and those who reach tertiary care centres such as AIIMS and PGI, Chandigarh — should undergo mammography.

Who is at the highest risk of developing



NEED TO KNOW

More than half of breast cancer patients get diagnosed in stage III

breast cancer?

Anything that increases exposure to the female hormone oestrogen is a risk factor. So obesity, early age of menarche and late age of menopause are risk factors. Now, we see girls starting menstruation at the age of 10 or 11 years, down from the previous 14 or 15 years. Menopause happens between the ages of 50 and 52 now on an average, which used to be

GETTY IMAGES