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17 AIR



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विपिन दुबे

ऑल इंडिया GS टेस्ट, अभ्यास

257 AIR



मनीषा धार्वे

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313 AIR



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DELHI

KAROL BAGH

9 MAY, 9 AM | 17 MAY, 1 PM

GTB NAGAR

21 MAY, 5:30 PM

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हिन्दी माध्यम

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जयपुर 21 मई

जोधपुर 20 मई

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THE WORLD

TOP OF THE WORLD



Regional President Pere Aragonés casts his vote with family. AP

SPAIN Catalans vote in poll to gauge separatist force

Barcelona: Catalonia is holding a regional election on Sunday whose outcome will reverberate in Spain's national politics. The ballot will be a test both for the strength of the separatist movement in the wealthy northeastern part of Spain and for the policies of Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez. More than 5.7 million voters are eligible to choose lawmakers for the regional parliament. Separatists have held the regional government for more than a decade. But polling and a national election in July show that support for secession has shrunk since former regional president Carles Puigdemont led a futile — breakaway bid. AP

NEPAL Man breaks own record with 29th Everest ascent

Kathmandu: Nepal's legendary mountaineer Kami Rita Sherpa made history on Sunday by breaking his record for the highest number of ascents of Mt. Everest as he scaled the world's highest peak for the 29th time. The 54-year-old veteran climber reached the 8,849-metre peak at 7:25 am local time on Sunday, according to Rakesh Gurung, director at the Tourism Department in the Ministry of Tourism and Civil Aviation. The expedition was organised by the Seven Summit Treks and had 20 climbers. They scaled Everest on Sunday morning, said Thani Guragain from the Seven Summit Treks. REUTERS

IRAQ Shiite cleric Sadr girds for political comeback

Najaf: Powerful Iraqi Shi'ite Muslim cleric Moqtada al-Sadr is laying the groundwork for a political comeback two years after a failed and ultimately deadly high-stakes move to form a government without his Shiite rivals, multiple sources said. His return, likely planned for the 2025 polls, could threaten the growing clout of rivals including armed factions close to Iran, and undermine Iraq's recent relative stability, observers say. REUTERS

IAN AUSTEN MAY 12

THIS WEEK, Chris Aylward, the national president of Canada's largest public sector union, warned Canadians that they were facing "a summer of discontent." Aylward, of the Public Service Alliance of Canada, had joined with leaders from three other public sector unions to announce that they had started a series of legal challenges over the federal government's requirement that most of their members show up at their workplaces at least three days a week begin-

OVER 3,00,000 FLEE RAFAH; JABALIA REFUGEE CAMP IN NORTH ATTACKED

Tanks push back into northern Gaza as Israel steps up Rafah ground ops

Many parts of south Gaza face Internet blackout

REUTERS
CAIRO, MAY 12

ISRAEL SENT tanks into eastern Jabalia in the northern Gaza Strip early on Sunday, after a night of heavy aerial and ground bombardments, killing 19 people and wounding dozens of others, health officials said.

The death toll in Israel's military operation in Gaza has now passed at least 35,000 Palestinians, according to Gaza's health ministry.

Late on Saturday, the Israeli military said forces operating in Jabalia are preventing Hamas, which controls Gaza, from re-establishing its military capabilities there. Jabalia is the biggest of Gaza's eight historic refugee camps and is home to more than 100,000 people.

Later on Sunday, sirens sounded in the Israeli city of Ashkelon as a result of incoming rocket fire from Gaza, which signaled militants there were still able to launch rocket attacks after over seven months of war.

The Palestinian telecom company said internet services in southern areas of the enclave were severed, adding that workers were seeking to resolve the problem.

On Sunday, more families, estimated in the thousands, were leaving Rafah as the Israeli mili-



Palestinians flee Jabalia refugee camp after an Israeli evacuation order, moving south towards Gaza City. Reuters

tary pressure intensified. The operations have forced around 300,000 people to flee Rafah.

"As I moved out of Rafah, I passed through Khan Younis, I cried... I saw a ghost city, all buildings on the two sides of the road, complete districts were wiped out," said Tamer Al-Burai, a resident from Gaza, who had been sheltering in Rafah.

Egypt's Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukri said Cairo would continue its mediation between Israel and Hamas and urged both sides to show the flexibility and the will needed to reach a deal. WITH AP INPUT

US Marine pilot held in Australia worked with Chinese hacker, says lawyer

REUTERS
SYDNEY, MAY 12

A FORMER US Marine pilot fighting extradition from Australia on US charges of training Chinese military pilots to land on aircraft carriers, unknowingly worked with a Chinese hacker, his lawyer said.

Daniel Duggan, 55, a naturalised Australian citizen, feared requests by Western intelligence agencies for sensitive information were putting his family at risk, the lawyer said in a legal filing seen by Reuters.

The lawyer's filing supports Reuters reporting linking Duggan to convicted Chinese defence hacker Su Bin. Duggan denies the allegations that he broke U.S. arms control laws. He has been in an Australian maximum security prison since his 2022 arrest after returning from six years working in Beijing.

U.S. authorities found correspondence with Duggan on electronic devices seized from Su Bin, Duggan's lawyer Bernard Collaery said in the March submission to Australian Attorney General Mark Dreyfus, who will decide whether to surrender Duggan to the US after a magistrate hears Duggan's extradition case. The case will be heard in a Sydney court this month, two years after his arrest.

Israel lacks credible plan to protect 1.4 million civilians in Rafah: Blinken

REUTERS
WASHINGTON, MAY 12

US SECRETARY of State Antony Blinken on Sunday said Israel lacked a "credible plan" to protect some 1.4 million Palestinian civilians in Rafah and warned an Israeli attack could create an insurgency by failing to kill all Hamas fighters in the south Gazan city.



US Secretary of State Antony Blinken

"Israel is on a trajectory potentially to inherit an insurgency with many armed Hamas fighters left or if it leaves a vacuum filled by chaos, filled by anarchy and prob-

ably refilled by Hamas," Blinken told NBC. Hamas, he said, is returning to north Gaza which Israel claimed to have cleared, and an assault on Rafah "risks doing terrible harm to civilians" without ending Hamas presence there.

Defending a pause on the supply of 2,000-pound and 500-pound bombs, Blinken said Israel lacked a "credible plan" to protect the civilians sheltering in Rafah.



AFTERMATH OF AFGHANISTAN FLOODS
A man near his damaged house after heavy flooding in Baghlan province on Sunday. Flash floods killed 315 people and injured more than 1,600, authorities said Sunday. AP

Police officer killed, more than 100 injured in clashes amid price hike protest in PoK

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
ISLAMABAD, MAY 12

ONE POLICE officer was killed and more than 100 people, mostly policemen, injured in violent clashes between security forces and protesters agitating against high prices of wheat flour and electricity in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, media reports said on Sunday.

The disputed region witnessed clashes on Saturday between the police and activists of

a rights movement amid a wheel-jam and shutter-down strike across the territory, the Dawn newspaper reported.

Mirpur SSP Kamran Ali told Dawn.com that sub-inspector Adnan Qureshi succumbed to a gunshot wound in the chest in the town of Islamgarh, where he was deployed along with other police personnel to stop a rally for Muzaffarabad via Kotli and Poonch districts under the banner of the Jammu Kashmir Joint Awami Action Committee.

The JAAC, which has traders at the forefront in most parts of the state, has been seeking the provision of electricity as per hydropower generation cost in the region, subsidised wheat flour and an end to the privileges of the elite class. Mobile phone and internet services were suspended in different parts of the PoK on Sunday including Mirpur, Bhimber and Bagh Towns, Geo News reported.

President Asif Ali Zardari has called an emergency meeting over the situation Monday, said sources.

Poll ad by S Africa party shows flag burning, President calls it treasonous

Cape Town: A campaign video for South Africa's opposition party showing the country's flag in flames has stoked tensions just weeks ahead of national elections that are seen as the most pivotal since the end of the apartheid system. The opposition Democratic Alliance says the ad is a symbolic depiction of what it claims will befall the country if the African National Congress forms a coalition to remain in power.

South African President Cyril Ramaphosa, who leads the ANC, has called the ad "despicable" and "treasonous." State broadcaster SABC said Thursday it would not air the video because of an alleged "outcry from South Africans". AP

7 SECURITY PERSONNEL KILLED IN KPK ATTACKS

Peshawar: At least seven security personnel have been killed and two injured in two separate militant attacks on security forces in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, authorities said Sunday. They said the injured and the bodies of the personnel were airlifted to Military Hospital, Bannu. PTI



People search for survivors after a Ukrainian strike destroyed an apartment block in Belgorod on Sunday. Reuters

Ukraine missile strikes apartment block in Russia's Belgorod, 9 killed

REUTERS
MOSCOW, MAY 12

AT LEAST nine people were killed and 20 injured on Sunday when a whole section of a Russian apartment block collapsed after it was struck by a Soviet-era missile launched by Ukraine and shot down by Russia, officials said.

In one of the deadliest attacks to date on the region of Belgorod, Ukraine launched what Russian officials said was a massive missile attack with Tochka ballistic missiles and Adler and RM-70 Vampire (MLRS) multiple launch rocket systems.

Footage from the scene showed at least 10 storeys of the building collapsing. Later, as emergency services scoured the rubble for survivors, the roof collapsed and people ran for their lives, dust and rubble falling behind them.

Russia's defence ministry said the attack, which it called a "terrorist attack on residential areas", took place at 08:40 GMT and involved at least 12 missiles.

"Fragments of one of the downed Tochka-U missiles damaged an apartment building in the city of Belgorod," the ministry said.

4,000 CIVILIANS FLEE KHARKIV AFTER ATTACK

Kyiv: Thousands more civilians have fled Russia's renewed ground offensive in Ukraine's northeast that has targeted towns and villages with a barrage of artillery and mortar fire, officials said Sunday. At least 4,000 civilians have fled the Kharkiv region since Friday, when Moscow's forces launched the operation, Gov. Oleh Syniehubov said in a social media statement. AP

Russian news agencies said at least nine people had been killed and 20 injured, including two children. Others were still trapped under the rubble.

Both Ukraine and Russia say they do not target civilians, though many civilians have been killed in the war by both sides.

Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said that the strike was a targeted attack on civilians which showed the criminality of both Ukraine and its backers — primarily the United States and its European allies.

Nepal Rs 100 notes with map of areas in India: President advisor quits

YUBARAJ GHIMIRE
KATHMANDU, MAY 12



Rastra Bank ex-Governor Dr Chiranjibi Nepal

THE ECONOMIC advisor to Nepal's President resigned on Sunday, a week after he criticised his government's decision to issue currency notes that depict the country's new map with areas in India.

Chiranjibi Nepal, who is also the former governor of Nepal's central bank, had told The Indian Express that the move to include Limpiyadhura, Lipulekh and Kalapani — which are under India's control — was "unwise". His comments drew immediate criticism from K P Sharma Oli of the Communist Party of Nepal-United Marxist Leninist.

PM Pushpa Kamal Dahal was said to have spoken to President Ram Chandra Poudel regarding the comments. The President's office confirmed that his resignation has been accepted.

Many had called for Nepal's

removal from the post including former ambassador to India Nilambar Acharya, former chief of Nepal's anti-graft body Suryanath Upadhyay and Sushil Pyakurel, adviser to former president Bidya Devi Bhandari.

"I oppose the move as a former Governor of the Rastra Bank, and not as an adviser to the President," Nepal had said soon after the government's decision to put the map on the notes was made public on May 4. He said: "Nepal being in dispute with India over certain parts of territory is one thing, but printing in the currency a map that is different from what the international bodies, including two neighbours, have recognised is unwise." NYT

FEDERAL GOVT TRIES TO BRING EMPLOYEES BACK TO OFFICE, AT LEAST 3 DAYS A WEEK

Canada faces 'summer of discontent' as unions threaten strike over WFH rollback

ning in September. And they said that they would take "coordinated actions" leading to disruptions as a pressure tactic.

For most Canadians, the ability to work chiefly from home faded away along with the pandemic health threat some time ago. In January, Statistics Canada reported that 20 percent of people, including government employees, spend the majority of their work time at home. That's well down from the 40 percent level at the height of the pandemic but nevertheless higher than the 7 percent level of 2019.

Return-to-office mandates remain a major source of con-



Return to office was a major issue during last year's public service walkout. NYT

tention within the federal public service. It was one of the key issues behind a 15-day strike just over a year ago. But that job action did not result in an agreement giving public servants the right to mostly work from home.

Many government employees, like prison and border guards, cannot work remotely, but the government now requires that everyone else show up at the workplace at least twice a week. Aylward and the other union leaders said during their news conference that many of their members struggle to find workspaces or equipment when they arrive. They all argued that

adding another day would compound those issues.

"This misguided decision sets up workers to fail by pushing them into physical offices," Mr. Aylward said. He said commuting more would undermine Canada's climate goals and suggested that government offices could become residential buildings to help with the housing crisis.

Above all, the union leaders said that the decision was a political move by the Liberal government of Justin Trudeau to mollify Doug Ford, the Progressive Conservative premier of Ontario who recently said he would like to see more workers, as well as

commercial landlords, back in the downtowns of cities.

One factor that did not help the government's cause is that most public servants learned about the plan from a report in The Ottawa Citizen based on a leaked memo. Anita Anand, the cabinet minister in charge of the Treasury Board and, thus, personnel matters, told reporters that the decision was made by senior public servants, not politicians.

"It's a real mess," said Prof. Linda Duxbury of the Sprott School of Business at Carleton University. "The union's arguments are not persuasive. The union has no right to dictate.

Where you work is in the hands of the employer."

At the same time, she added, "the government of Canada is trying to do it the easy way, which is focus on days. The harder way, which is the correct way, is to focus on work."

The union leaders were vague about what sort of "workplace action" would set off the summer of disruption. A union representing Canada Border Services Agency employees is in contract talks and could, in theory, go on a legal strike. Professor Duxbury said that if the unions make good on their threat, it's certain to have one outcome. NYT

ALL OF ANDHRA, TELANGANA
vote today; polling ends in MP

SIMULTANEOUS ASSEMBLY
polls: All 175 seats in AP, 28 in Odisha

379 LS CONSTITUENCIES
will have voted at end of Phase 4

Phase 4: Vote in 96 seats today

In fray: Akhilesh to Adhir, Mahua to Giriraj; BJP, allies won 47 of these seats in 2019

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, MAY 12

AS THE BJP and the opposition parties sharpen their attack against each other, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi alleging that corruption was the common character of INDIA bloc parties and the Congress arguing that a third term for the BJP would mean enslavement of the poor, Dalits and tribals, 96 constituencies across 10 states and Union Territories will vote Monday in the fourth phase of Lok Sabha elections.

The stakes are significant for the BJP and its allies, which had won 47 of the 96 seats in 2019. While the BJP had won 42 seats, the TDP had won 3 and JD(U)

and IJP one each. The INDIA bloc parties, on the other hand, had won 12 of these seats. The rest had gone to YSRCP (22), BRS (9), BJD (2), AIMIM (2) and the undivided Shiv Sena (2).

In 2019, the seats going to polls in the fourth phase had recorded an overall voter turnout of 69.12%. With the first three phases this time recording a dip in turnout as compared to last time, it is to be seen whether the voting on Monday bucks the trend.

In the ongoing polls so far, the turnout in Phase 1 stood at 66.14% against 69.89% in those seats in 2019; 66.71% in Phase 2 against 69.64% last time; and 65.68% in Phase 3 against 67.3% in 2019.

Apart from the Lok Sabha voting, the spotlight on Monday

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



PM Narendra Modi, Bihar CM Nitish Kumar and BJP Patna Sahib candidate Ravi Shankar Prasad at a roadshow on Sunday. Patna Sahib votes in the last phase on June 1. **PTI** RELATED REPORT, **P 6**

DECISION 2024

PHASE 4
Total seats **96** Candidates **1,717**

Electors in Phase 4 **17.70 cr (18.29%)**
Share (%) of voters in total

Male **8.97 cr** Female **8.73 cr**

VOTE SHARE (Phase 4)

NDA **40.34%** INDIA **23.73%** Others **35.93%**



SEATS GOING TO POLLS AND 2019 TURNOUT (%)

FULL STATES
Andhra Pradesh 25 80.38%
Telangana 17 62.77%

STATES THAT WILL COMPLETE POLLING
Madhya Pradesh 8 75.74%

OTHERS

| | | |
|---------------|----|--------|
| Uttar Pradesh | 13 | 58.86% |
| Maharashtra | 11 | 61.61% |
| West Bengal | 8 | 82.88% |
| Bihar | 5 | 59.35% |
| Jharkhand | 4 | 66.95% |
| Odisha | 4 | 74.28% |
| J&K | 1 | 14.43% |

Turnout (%) in 2024
Phase 1 **66.14** Phase 2 **66.71** Phase 3 **65.68**

Devote time to vote time!



Integrated commands structure plan looks at Vice CDS, Deputy CDS with clear roles

Jaipur, Lucknow and Coimbatore likely homes for theatre commands

AMRITA NAYAK DUTTA
NEW DELHI, MAY 12

READY WITH the organisational structure for the creation of integrated theatre commands, the Armed Forces are looking at the appointment of a Vice Chief of Defence Staff and a Deputy Chief of Defence Staff.

The Vice CDS, likely to be an officer of the rank of General or equivalent, will in all probability look after strategic planning, capability development and procurement-related matters.

The Deputy CDS, likely to be an officer of the rank of

EXPLAINED The three fronts

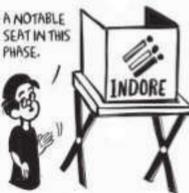
THE THEATRE commands look at integrating resources of the Army, IAF and Navy to meet threats from three fronts: China, Pakistan and via the sea routes. This should streamline planning, logistics and operations.

Lieutenant General or equivalent, will be responsible for operations, intelligence and will coordinate

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

BUSINESS AS USUAL

By UNNY



Andhra votes today, Jagan looks to defend turf against resurgent TDP

SREENIVAS JANYALA
AMALAPURAM (ANDHRA PRADESH), MAY 12

HAVING LOST five years ago, G Harish Bhalayogi, the 33-year-old son of former Lok Sabha Speaker G M C Bhalayogi, is testing his luck for the second time from the Amalapuram Lok Sabha seat in

Andhra Pradesh. Unlike 2019, there is a spring in the TDP candidate's step and that is down to the alliance with the BJP.

Amalapuram in the newly created Konaseema district in central Andhra is an example of how TDP chief N Chandrababu Naidu, who appeared down and out last year, is hoping to consolidate anti-incumbency votes

across the state where Lok Sabha and Assembly polls will be held on Monday. With rural voters seemingly backing Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy, largely because of his government's welfare schemes, the Opposition NDA alliance of the TDP, BJP and the Jana Sena Party (JSP) has its task cut out.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

DECISION 2024



MADHYA PRADESH CM INTERVIEW: 'PM upheld Basic Structure of Constitution... Congress killed its soul'
PAGES 5, 6, 7

Delhi CM offers 'Kejriwal ki Guarantee': Free power among 10 poll promises

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, MAY 12

COUNTERING THE BJP and the Prime Minister's 'Modi ki Guarantee' promise with his 'Kejriwal ki Guarantee' slogan, AAP leader and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal Sunday announced 10 guarantees for people across the country, including the promise of free electricity up to 200 units, if the Opposition INDIA bloc is voted to power.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal and Punjab CM Bhagwant Mann on Sunday. **REPORTS, PAGE 3**

Robin Hood economics cannot work anymore: Sitharaman slams Cong

On PM's Ambani-Adani remark, says he was calling out Rahul stand on businesses

PRASANTA SAHU & SHOBHANA SUBRAMANIAN
NEW DELHI, MAY 12

THE CONGRESS idea of wealth redistribution was nothing but robbing Peter to pay Paul, something that was not only an outdated approach but also an irresponsible one, Union Finance



FM Nirmala Sitharaman INTERVIEW, PAGE 11

Minister Nirmala Sitharaman told *Financial Express* in an exclusive interview. "These are not the

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

SP, Cong bonhomie on ground as they fight BJP — and their last experience

MAULSHREE SETH
RAE BARELI, MAY 12

THEIR ALLIANCE having failed to make a dent the last time they got together in Uttar Pradesh, the Samajwadi Party and Congress are working overtime to put up a united front against the BJP as the Lok Sabha elections moves towards the fourth and fifth phases.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



At a 'nukkad' meet in Rae Bareli, Congress and SP members stand on either side of Priyanka Gandhi Vadra. **Express**

Eyes on Paris prize, archers look for edge: Recreating venue, sessions with top coach

PAGE 1 ANCHOR

MIHIR VASAVDA
MUMBAI, MAY 12

IN A corner of Haryana, there will soon be a small slice of central Paris.

It won't be an exact replica of the iconic gardens of Les Invalides, where the Olympics archery competition will be held. But the lawns of the Sports Authority of India's (SAI) Sonepat centre will be trans-



South Korean coach Kim Hyung Tak at SAI's Sonepat centre.

formed into a field of play that will be "very similar" to the venue of the games, said Indian archery's high-performance director Sanjeeva Singh.

Be it the platform on which the archers will stand and shoot, the colour scheme of blue, red, green and purple, the positioning of the shot timers or even the big LED screens near the targets, the Archery Association of India (AAI) is in the process of recreating the Olympics venue at the training base to prepare the athletes for what to expect in the French capital.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

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FROM PAGE ONE

Phase 4: Vote in 96 seats today

will be on the dead heat race in the Assembly elections in Andhra Pradesh, where a renaissance YSRCP is hoping to dislodge the YSRCP. Voting will simultaneously be held in all 175 Assembly seats and 25 Lok Sabha constituencies in Andhra Pradesh.

The contest in Andhra is mainly between the ruling YSRCP led by Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy and the NDA alliance comprising the BJP, Chandrababu Naidu's TDP and Pawan Kalyan-led Jana Sena Party (JSP).

The Congress, which had been in the political wilderness after the bifurcation of the state in 2014, is also in the fray.

In neighbouring Telangana, where voting will be held in all the 17 Lok Sabha constituencies, the equations are different. The Congress, which stormed to power in the state just months ago, is hoping to register a strong performance. The BJP, too, is hopeful of increasing its tally. The BRS, which ruled the state since its formation a decade ago, is facing the heat.

Apart from Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, where Lok Sabha elections will end Monday, voting will take place in 13 seats of Uttar Pradesh, 11 seats of Maharashtra, eight seats each in West Bengal and Madhya Pradesh, five seats in Bihar, four each in Jharkhand and Odisha (the election exercise starts in both states) and one seat in Jammu and Kashmir. As many as 28 Assembly seats of Odisha are also going to polls in this phase.

Campaigning in key states on Sunday, Prime Minister Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah tore into the Opposition.

Addressing rallies in Bengal, Modi claimed corruption was the common character of INDIA bloc parties. Targeting the ruling Trinamool Congress in the state, he said the party has made corruption a "full-time business". He also alleged that under the TMC rule, Hindus have become second-class citizens in West Bengal and asserted that "as long as Modi is here, no one can repeal the CAA law".

Addressing a rally in Gandhi family bastion of Rae Bareilly, Shah said senior Congress leader Sonia

Gandhi had spent more than 70 per cent of her MP funds on minorities.

Returning the fire in equal measure, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge, who addressed a meeting in Dhule in Maharashtra, said that "before Independence, the poor, Dalits and tribals were treated like slaves. If you give a third term to Modi and Shah, the same situation will repeat. We will become slaves again."

Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav said the ongoing Lok Sabha election is between people who want to "change the Constitution" and those protecting it.

Some of the key seats in this round are:

Bihar: Begusarai, where Union Minister Giriraj Singh is in the fray against CPI's Awadhesh Rai; Ujiyarpur, where Union Minister of State for Home Nityanand Rai is aiming at a hat-trick; Munger, where sitting MP and former JD (U) president Rajiv Ranjan Singh 'Lalan' is up against RJD's Kumari Anita.
West Bengal: Congress leader

in Lok Sabha Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury is eyeing a sixth straight victory from Baharampur where his opponent is former cricketer and TMC candidate Yusuf Pathan. TMC's firebrand leader Mohua Moitra, who was expelled from Lok Sabha over cash-for-query allegations, is in the fray again from Krishnanagar. In Asansol, TMC's actor-turned-politician Shatrughan Sinha is pitted against BJP's S S Ahluwalia and in Bardhaman-Durgapur, BJP's former state unit president Dilip Ghosh is fighting TMC's Kirti Azad.

The other keenly watched contests are that of AIMIM's Asaduddin Owaisi (Hyderabad), SP chief Akhilesh Yadav (Kannauj, UP) BJP's Pankaja Munde (Beed, Maharashtra), Andhra Pradesh Congress president Y S Sharmila (Kadapa) and Union Minister Ajay Kumar Mishra Teni (Kheri, UP). The EC said all arrangements have been put in place for Monday's polling. According to the poll body, a total of 17.70 crore voters, including 8.97 crore men and 8.73 crore women, have been enrolled in phase four.

● Andhra votes today, Jagan looks to defend turf against resurgent TDP

However, the NDA's ace still is PM Modi's popularity and it will be hoping that will pay dividends in the urban and semi-urban areas. Though the BJP has little organisational presence in the state, the NDA parties are so confident of their ability of allies to transfer votes among themselves that of the five Lok Sabha seats in the East and West Godavari districts, two have been allotted to the BJP - Narasapuram and Rajahmundry (state BJP chief D Purandeswari is contesting).

Harish alleges Amalapuram has been neglected by the YSRCP. "Jagan only concentrated on welfare, but people also want to see some development along with welfare that makes their lives easier. As a Dalit, I also want to work for the uplift of my community in the Konaseema region," he says.

Ponnada Nageshwar, a timber merchant in the Amalapuram (SC-reserved) Assembly segment, who was vying for a ticket from the JSP, says, "In many constituencies, especially semi-urban ones, the TDP is looking to harvest anti-incumbency votes because of the goodwill of PM Modi."

In neighbouring East and West Godavari districts - which have 34 Assembly segments between them - an urban and rural divide

has taken shape. While urban voters display a pro-TDP tilt, rural voters are behind the CM.

"Jagan will become CM again," says K Chandru, a 32-year-old fruit seller in Bhimadole village near Eluru. "I receive some welfare money, while my mother and wife get some other benefits. It helps a lot. I was able to buy a moped on loan and have repaid it. We are happy with Jagan."

A part of the reason for the anti-incumbency factor against the YSRCP strengthening is that the state government's welfare schemes are targeted at lower-income groups. Last December, the Bharat Rashtira Samithi (BRS) lost the Assembly polls despite its numerous welfare schemes. On the outskirts of Eluru, first-time voters Jagdish and Rudra say their families are grateful for Jagan's welfare initiatives. "We do not even know who the local YSRCP candidate is but our vote will be for Jagan and the fan (the YSRCP symbol)," Jagdish says.

In contrast, insurance salesman G Venkataramana Rao in Eluru city says the CM squandered away a good mandate by focusing only on welfare. "How long do people want to live on doles? They want their children to have jobs and steady incomes when they

grow up. They want better civic infrastructure and more proactive local government officials," Rao says, adding that TDP has been gaining ground.

The Kapu factor

Another major factor across the East and West Godavari districts is the powerful Kapu community. In each constituency, the Kapu vote share is 15-18%. In 2019, as Kapu moved away from the TDP to support the YSRCP, the latter made a clean sweep, winning 14 of 19 seats in East Godavari, and 13 of 15 in West Godavari.

The Kapu are holding their cards close to their chest this time. "There is a lot of dissent among Kapu over the lack of jobs and rising prices of essential commodities," says a Kapu leader in Narasapuram.

Dr K P N Satya Prasad, a well-known physician from Bhimavaram who helped K Chiranjeevi found the Praja Rajyam Party (PRP) in August 2008, says the Kapu and other communities are showing signs of tilting towards the NDA. "Even among the beneficiaries of Jagan's welfare schemes, not everyone is happy due to rising prices. But they form the core YSRCP support. If YSRCP candidates have to win,

all the beneficiaries have to vote for them en masse, otherwise it will be difficult," he says. The NDA has also targeted the doles handed out by the Jagan government, alleging they pushed the state into a financial mess.

Anticipating anti-incumbency in many constituencies, Jagan initially dropped MLAs or changed their constituencies. However, after realising that the "wave" he had anticipated in his favour was missing, Jagan embarked on a 22-day statewide bus tour in March.

Though the bus yatra generated a buzz in his favour in north Andhra districts such as Visakhapatnam, Vizianagaram and Srikakulam - with a total of 34 Assembly seats - YSRCP candidates are facing tough competition from NDA. But in Rayalaseema, or the southern part of the state, where the YSRCP won 49 of the 52 Assembly seats in 2019, the party appears in control in most constituencies.

"The TDP may have lost the Muslim vote in Rayalaseema districts after it allied with the BJP. Jagan's advantage is that even though he has supported the BJP at the Centre in the past, in these polls, the BJP is on the other side," says Ramgopal Reddy, a former Congress leader.

● Robin Hood economics cannot work anymore: FM

days of Robin Hood," she said. "The methodology Congress has been adopting is very insidious. They have been constantly talking about carrying out X-rays of wealth and caste census. They say their poll manifesto doesn't talk about wealth redistribution, but their leaders are saying the same thing again and again," Sitharaman said.

While the BJP, she said, would continue on its path of improving economic growth along with targeted distribution of amenities to needy people, the Congress wanted to take away someone else's money and give it to many others.

"Instead of making the poor wealthier, their solution is to make the wealthier poor. It's just unjust. Wealth creators also provide jobs and opportunities to people and resources to the government. Sensationalising it only because you are desperate to win and come to power shows you care nothing for people," she said.

Asked about the Prime Minister's recent statement on whether truckloads of money had been sent by Ambani and Adani to the Congress party, Sitharaman said the Prime

Minister was only calling out Rahul Gandhi and the Congress party on their hypocrisy towards India's wealth creators.

"For the past few years, they have been weaving this disastrous narrative of crony capitalism and showcased businessmen as people who loot. Why have they suddenly lost hate for Adani and Ambani? Has something been coming to the Congress from them?" she said.

Pointing out that the BJP treated businessmen and entrepreneurs with respect and gave them opportunities to perform so that they could create more jobs and contribute to the country's wealth creation, Sitharaman said entrepreneurship had given India its strength.

"After developing a narrative of hatred towards businessmen, Congress perhaps couldn't find a graceful way to exit, and suddenly adopted silence in the hope that people will no longer notice their hatred. The PM's speech was in that spirit," she said.

Sitharaman said she hoped that the Reserve Bank of India would initiate a "vibrant discussion" on the draft guidelines on

project finance, which proposed steep provisioning, as it was important for all voices to be heard before taking a final decision on such issues.

Asked whether she agreed with the view that there was regulatory overreach in some areas, she said the regulators had been doing a "very professional" job, but it was important to continue to keep "our ears close to the ground" so that some of the regulations could be fine-tuned.

"Regulation, whether it's for equity markets or banks or corporate entities, can't be fixated. A soft touch always results in better response from the regulated," she said.

On the worries in the stock market over the margin of victory for the BJP in the Lok Sabha elections, she said she simply didn't understand where "this narrative of the results being not favourable to us" was coming from.

The Opposition, she said, was building this false narrative to undermine expectations about the BJP's performance in the first two phases of the elections.

"Market is reacting to this narrative being built. The actual results may be very different as we are sure to come up with a good majority," she said, referring to Union Home Minister Amit Shah's recent assertion that the target of 370-plus seats will be met on June 4.

● Integrated commands structure plan

The allocation of assets between theatres. While the organisational structure plan may be finetuned after it gets government approval, sources said it entails creation of the western theatre command headquarters in Jaipur where the Army's South Western Command is located.

The northern theatre command is likely to be in Lucknow. The maritime theatre command is likely to have its base in Coimbatore and will involve the IAF's Prayagraj-headquartered Central Command and its Southern Air Command based in Thiruvananthapuram. Earlier, the plans were to set up the maritime theatre command headquarters in Karwar. This will be alongside components of the two other services in the respective theatre's area of responsibility.

Currently, the Army and the IAF have seven commands each while the Navy has three. In addition, there are two tri-service commands - the Andaman and Nicobar Command and the Strategic Forces Command (SFC) - apart from the Headquarters Integrated Defence Staff (HQIDS).

Post the creation of the theatre commands, three command headquarters of the services are likely to be transformed into theatre command headquarters. The overall plan is to establish three adversary-based theatre commands - one facing Pakistan, another opposite China, and a maritime theatre command to tackle maritime threats outside the coastal borders of the country.

The existing Andaman and Nicobar Command may be subsumed into the maritime theatre command and the HQIDS will operate under the CDS. The SFC, according to the plan, will continue to operate independently.

The three service chiefs will be responsible for raising, training and sustaining the individual services. It is not known yet whether they will continue to retain some operational roles - the three theatre commanders will be responsible for operations.

Sources said the organisational requirements for the long term are still being worked out, while some strategic reallocation of assets is likely to be carried out to meet immediate requirements.

● Delhi CM offers 'Kejriwal ki Guarantee'

Kejriwal, who was released Friday on interim bail until June 1 by the Supreme Court after he was arrested on March 21 by the Enforcement Directorate in the Delhi excise policy case, told a press conference in New Delhi that he had not been able to discuss the "guarantees" with alliance partners due to paucity of time but hoped they would not have a problem with them.

"BJP has always failed to deliver on its promises... My guarantees have a proven track record. It is for the people to decide whether to go for 'Kejriwal ki Guarantee' or 'Modi ki Guarantee,'" he said, adding that the BJP had promised Rs 15 lakh to every person and 2 crore jobs to the country's youth.

The 10 guarantees, according to Kejriwal, are: ■ **Electricity:** Electricity across the country 24 hours a day. "We have the capacity to produce 3 lakh megawatts of power. The peak demand in summers is 2 lakh mw. But there are still power cuts. Why? Because the management is poor. We fixed it in Delhi and Punjab, and we can do it in the country," he said. The poor across the country, he said, will get 200 units of power for free.

■ **Education:** He promised to set up high-standard schools across the country where good quality education would be free for all. "This will cost the government Rs 5 lakh crore, half of which will be spent by the Centre and half by the states. To keep up the standards, every year, it will cost

the Centre Rs 50,000 crore. This is not a lot of money keeping in mind that all children will have access to good education."

■ **Universal healthcare:** He promised mohalla clinics in all parts of the country and the upgradation of district hospitals to super specialty facilities. "Most importantly, treatment here will be free for everyone... There will be no insurance schemes. This is a big scam. We will create health infrastructure in all parts of the country, the expenditure for which would be Rs 5 lakh crore - half borne by the Centre," he said

■ **Solution to 'Chinese encroachment':** The AAP chief promised a permanent solution to land being "encroached" by China in the border areas. "Our Army is very strong. Let them do their job independently. Diplomatic efforts will be made and the Army will be given complete independence," he said.

■ **Ending Agniveer scheme:** Kejriwal promised to stop the induction of youth in armed forces for four years under the Agniveer scheme and said all those who have been inducted through the programme will be given permanent postings. Claiming the scheme weakens the Army, Kejriwal said: "The Agniveer scheme has no ownership. This scheme was brought in because the Central felt the burden of salaries was too high. We have to spend for the country's security. We can't compromise on that."

■ **Promises for farmers:**

Kejriwal assured MSP for crops based on the Swaminathan report. "You can ensure a respectable life for farmers if you pay them the price they deserve. When they don't get the right price for their work, they die by suicide."

■ **Statehood:** The three-time Delhi Chief Minister promised full statehood for Delhi.

■ **Employment:** Criticising the Centre for unemployment, Kejriwal said: "Within a year, arrangements will be made for 2 crore jobs. This will be productive and effective employment."

■ **Crackdown on corruption:** Taking a dig at the BJP, Kejriwal said, "The system where honest people are being sent to jail and the corrupt are being protected will end. It is the biggest reason behind the country's corruption."

"BJP's washing machine will be dismantled. Like we had attacked corruption at both the lower and higher levels in Delhi and Punjab, we will replicate it across the country," he said.

■ **Measures for traders:** Kejriwal said: "GST will be taken out of the PMLA ambit and simplified. If someone wants to do business legally, they should be able to do it without problems. Our target is to leave China behind, which is far ahead in terms of manufacturing and trade."

"Data shows that over the past 8-10 years, 12 lakh high-net-worth individuals have shut businesses here and left the country because the government has harassed them," he said.

● In Rae Bareilly, SP-Cong bonhomie

The efforts are showing on the ground in at least some of the constituencies, including Rae Bareilly, as leaders and workers of the two INDIA bloc allies display rare bonhomie at election meetings, giving the opposition campaign a fresh impetus.

This couldn't have come at a better time for both parties. While SP chief Akhilesh Yadav is in the fray in Kannauj, which votes on Monday, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi is contesting from Rae Bareilly, which votes on May 20.

Both leaders have in recent days led the push for a united fight, holding joint rallies. Last Friday, Rahul campaigned for Akhilesh in Kannauj, only the second such joint rally since elections began on April 19. This was followed by another joint rally in Kanpur the same day for Congress candidate Alok Mishra.

The SP and Congress, however, are not only fighting the ruling BJP but also their experience from the last time they were together. In the 2017 Assembly polls, when the SP and Congress were in alliance, they were drubbed by the BJP, which won 312 out of the 403 seats. The SP won 47 out of the 311 seats it contested and Congress won 7 out of 114 seats it fought. While the BJP bagged 39.67% of the vote share, the SP got 21.82% and Congress 6.25%. Leaders of both parties say it was different then. Co-ordination was missing at the grassroots, they say. Also, unlike this time, both had fielded candidates against each other in 14 seats.

In the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, both fought separately with the SP trying an alliance with the BSP. The SP won only 5 seats, while BSP won 10. The Congress won only one seat -- Rae Bareilly. "Compared to 2017, there are certainly more efforts to make the alliance work at the grassroots level this time," says a Congress leader.

In Rae Bareilly, the bonhomie efforts show on the ground. The SP, which in the past had been soft in its Lok Sabha campaign in Rae Bareilly and Amethi by not fielding candidates against the Gandhi family members, has gone a step ahead this time with its grassroots leaders actively participating in the Congress's campaign.

Local SP MLAs and grassroots leaders, including the district president and block-in-charges, accompanied Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi to her every meeting. There is reciprocation from the Congress as well.

Not only do SP flags figure along with the Congress flags at

such "nukkad (street corner) meetings", their representatives - wearing the party's red caps and stole - occupy the front rows to send across the unity message.

On some occasions, Priyanka ensures that local SP leaders stand on her one side and local Congress leaders stand on the other.

Local SP leaders say they have instructions from their party chief Akhilesh to extend all support on the ground. As part of the strategy, while the party's district president and local MLA or former MLA accompany Priyanka, the SP's block pramukhs from the particular Assembly segment are present at the nukkad meetings even before Priyanka's arrival.

Support of the SP is crucial for the Congress as it has a strong presence in the Assembly segments under the Rae Bareilly Lok Sabha constituency. Out of five Assembly segments, the SP had won four - Bachcharawan, Harchandpur, Sareni andUNCHAR - in 2022. While SP MLA from UNCHAR Manoj Pandey has turned rebel, the other three sitting MLAs have been tasked with pushing the alliance campaign along with Congress leaders in their respective Assembly segments.

Asked about the support plan for the Congress in Rae Bareilly, SP district president Virendra Yadav says, "On the instructions of Akhilesh Yadav ji, we have formed Vidhan Sabha wise teams. These include local MLAs or former Assembly candidates, block pramukhs and booth-in-charges."

"Akhilesh ji aayenge campaign ke liye yahan (Akhilesh will come to campaign here)," he says.

The bonhomie was also seen in Lakhimpur Kheri recently when Akhilesh went there to campaign for SP candidate Utkarsh Verma. Despite initial reports of resentment by some local Congress leaders, party's former MP Jafar Ali Naqvi, a known face in the region, accompanied Akhilesh.

On Sunday, Akhilesh visited Barabanki, where he campaigned for Congress's Tanuj Punia, son of poll symbol PL Punia. Referring to voters symbols of SP and Congress, he said at a rally: "Cycle walon, Panja dabaoge ki nahin dabaoge? (SP supporters, will you vote for the Congress or not?)"

Akhilesh and Rahul are scheduled to address joint rallies on May 17, not just in Rae Bareilly but also in Amethi, from where the Congress has fielded party loyalist K L Sharma. Sources say joint meetings are also likely in Varanasi and Deoria.

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● Eyes on Paris prize, archers look for edge: Recreating venue, sessions with top coach

"For the first time, we are trying to recreate the field of play," Singh said. "We are training more and more keeping in mind what we are going to get at the Olympics."

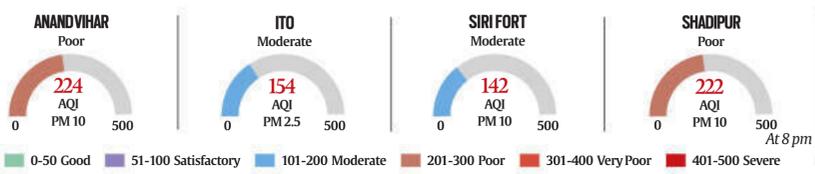
But the preparation for the Paris Games, which will begin on July 26 (archery gets underway a day earlier), isn't just about the look and feel. In Sonapat, the archers are also getting a helping hand from a top name from the most successful archery nation, South Korea. Kim Hyung Tak, a renowned coach who has trained many a world and Olympic champion, held a special session with India's archers, minutely scrutinising their techniques with technology and making interventions.

"What is needed now is to plan well for the next two months. Making a good programme is important," Kim told *The Indian Express*. The brief camp last week was the first of at least two before the Games, with the other to be held when the archers travel to South Korea for a World Cup later this month. "All this is important if we are aspiring for a medal," said India coach Sonam Bhutia.

After the London Games, when they began to show some kind of promise, India's archers have fallen short every time. Now, they are keen to prove their good form isn't a false dawn. "This is one of the missing links," said Singh, referring to the sessions with Kim and recreating the venue. Singh has been credited with turning India into a force in compound archery, a non-Olympic style. Now, the focus is on the recurve archers and getting Kim to train the Indians is part of the plan.

"There are only two coaches who train archers outside Korea. And one of them is Mr Kim," Singh said. "He has a very good software called Dartfish to measure the forces and angles of the body which the eye cannot decipher." Kim, coach Bhutia said, uses high-definition cameras to capture an archer's shot. He then feeds the images into the software before beginning the "fault-finding" mission. Kim said his interventions are subtle, yet critical. For instance, to Deepika, he pointed out that her little finger was bending inside when she was releasing the arrow. "I made it more towards the outside," he said. With Bommadevara Kim said he changed the "shooting method", synchronising the left finger, elbow and release point. These are only two examples of what have been a series of tiny changes. But Singh said the impact is visible in the groupings, the pattern of shots on the target.

3 THE CITY



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 Partly cloudy sky. Possibility of very light rain/drizzle towards evening
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KEJRIWAL HOLDS MEETING WITH PARTY MLAs

If you vote for AAP on May 25, I may not go back to jail: CM at roadshow

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, MAY 12

"IF YOU push the 'jhaadu' button on May 25, I may not go back to jail," Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal declared at a roadshow in Moti Nagar, under the New Delhi constituency, on Sunday.

The AAP chief has been released on interim bail by the Supreme Court till June 1. "Friends, they are saying after 20 days, I will have to go back to jail... but if you push the broom button... I may not go to jail... the power is in your hands... vote for jhaadu and sweep away the BJP..." he added, appealing to people to support party candidate Somnath Bharti.



Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal and Punjab CM Bhagwant Mann at a roadshow in Moti Nagar, Sunday. Gajendra Yadav

Within two days of coming out of jail, the AAP chief has hit the streets, holding roadshows and rallies. Apart from the roadshow in Moti Nagar, he was part of another one in Matiala for West Delhi candidate Mahabab Mishra where he was accompanied by Punjab Minister Bhagwant Mann and Transport Minister Kailash Gahlot.

Meanwhile, the CM also held a meeting with around 60 AAP MLAs at his residence during the day. Thanking the legislators for not letting the party splinter after his arrest, he said, "Main bas 21 din ke liye aaya hoon... aap logon ko aise hi ekjut ho karsath rehna hai or ladna hai... I will go back on June 2... after that, you will have to manage the party..."

He added, "People gave an opportunity to other parties over the years... but AAP is the only one known for its work... Aam Aadmi Party iss aane wale samay main desh ki kamaan sambhalegi... AAP hi desh ko bhavishya degi... that is why they are scared... If you move forward so fast, you will have to suffer a little..."

The CM also took a dig at the BJP and said, "They had a plan to first arrest me, break the MLAs and topple the government in

Delhi... then target Bhagwant Mann and dent Punjab... but after my arrest, the party has grown stronger... Their (BJP) plan failed..."

The CM's meeting lasted 45 minutes. Former Social Welfare Minister and Seemapuri MLA Rajendra Pal Gautam said, "... all of us were very happy to meet Kejriwal ji. He appreciated us for staying strong and asked us to continue campaigning vigorously and get the party all seven seats."

Akhilesh Pati Tripathi, Model Town MLA, said, "... the CM thanked us for holding the party together and motivated us to work hard to save the Constitution and end dictatorship... by putting him in jail, the BJP made him more lovable and a potential PM face among the public..."

Meanwhile, Congress leader and INDIA candidate from Northeast Delhi Kanhaiya Kumar met Kejriwal Sunday. Kumar posted on X, "... Met Chief Minister and INDIA group colleague Arvind Kejriwal ji... discussed the upcoming strategy of the alliance... Together, we are going to overthrow the dictatorship..."

'Modi silent on his retirement... BJP spoke in support, was mum on Yogi'

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, MAY 12

CHIEF MINISTER Arvind Kejriwal questioned Prime Minister Narendra Modi's silence on retiring at the age of 75 and said he was sure he would follow the rule that he himself made in 2014.

Responding to a question during a press conference Sunday, Kejriwal referred to the statement he made on Saturday — where he said Modi was not asking people to vote for him but for Home Minister Amit Shah because after he turns 75 in September 2025, he will retire as per the rules made by him.

Shah Saturday had said Modi would complete his term and lead the country. "There is no confusion within the BJP; they want to create confusion," he had said. Responding to Shah's state-

ment, Kejriwal said, "Whenever a big leader is talked about, party members speak in his support. I understand the Prime Minister will not, under any circumstances, stop the same rule from applying to him because of which (Lal Krishna) Advani ji retired. But if what BJP leaders say is true, then Modi ji should say the rule because of which Advani ji retired does not apply to him. I however, don't think Modi ji will do this. It is clear he will retire; just tell us who will be his successor?"

Kejriwal is out on interim bail till June 1 to campaign for the on-going Lok Sabha polls. While he cannot enter the Chief Minister's Office or the Delhi Secretariat, there is no bar on him campaigning in any part of the country.

According to the Aam Aadmi Party, he will campaign in Lucknow on May 15 and in Jamshedpur and Punjab on May

16. He will then head to Maharashtra on May 17.

During Sunday's press conference, Kejriwal also said by not coming out in support of Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, the BJP had made it clear he would be replaced within two months in case the party came back to power. "Yesterday, all leaders of his party said the 75-year retirement rule would not apply to Modi ji, but not a single leader said Yogi ji will not be removed. So, one thing has been confirmed in the last 24 hours that within the next two months, Yogi ji is being removed from the post of CM of Uttar Pradesh," he said.

During the interim bail given by the Supreme Court, Kejriwal will address rallies in all 18 seats where AAP has fielded contestants. These include 13 seats in Punjab, four in Delhi and one in Haryana.

3, INCLUDING DOMESTIC HELP, ARRESTED

Jangpura doctor murder an inside job, trusted house help planned crime: Police

ARNABJIT SUR
NEW DELHI, MAY 12

TWO DAYS after a group of burglars sneaked into an apartment in Jangpura Extension and murdered 63-year-old Dr Yogesh Chander Paul in broad daylight, the Delhi Police Sunday claimed a trusted woman house help of the family was the main conspirator and facilitator of this crime.

The help, 60-year-old Basanti, and two of her alleged accomplices, Himanshu and his brother Aakash Joshi, have been arrested. Police said a total of eight people, including the help, were involved — Himanshu was part of a group of three men who entered the flat to carry out the crime while Aakash waited on the street with another man to keep watch.



The accused — Aakash, Himanshu and Basanti

"It is an inside job," DCP (Southeast) Rajesh Deo told *The Indian Express*. "The house help who has worked with the family for 24 years is at the centre of this conspiracy. The burglary was her idea; she planned and facilitated it."

Police claimed they planned to rob the house and kill the doctor and decided to strike in the afternoon as most people were at work at the time.

Deo said around Rs 3 to 4 lakh cash and 10 to 15 kg gold were stolen from the house, of which Rs 55,000 was recovered from Aakash. He added that as Basanti had been working for the couple for over two decades, her police verification was not done.

The DCP added, "While at work, Basanti used Facebook Messenger to video call the accused and show them the layout of the house, entry and exit routes, where valuables were kept."

apartment at 7 pm and leave after half an hour. "... She also worked for a family on the second floor in the same building," a police officer privy to the investigation said, adding, "She was close to the Paul family and knew the ins and outs of their home."

Over the past month, officers claimed, Basanti had been plotting to rob the family and knew they had gold ornaments and cash stored inside a cupboard. But she needed help and decided to rope in a woman she had befriended earlier this year at a park in the locality, police claimed.

A police officer, privy to the probe, said, "They were both from Nepal... over time, Basanti introduced the other woman to the Pauls as her friend... between March 15 and April 7, the latter visited the house six times."

Police said the duo initially thought to rob a flat on the second floor, where Basanti worked for a lawyer and her family. "They carried out a recce of the place but they decided to target the elderly couple as Dr Yogesh had a set pattern of going to his clinic and coming back while his wife, Dr Neena, was at work," said DCP Deo.

The officer said through her friend, Basanti met the other accused. "Her friend's husband got in touch with one of the accused, who was based in Haridwar and hailed from Nepal... this man roped in brothers Himanshu and Aakash," said Deo.

Tracking the accused

On May 5, Himanshu, Aakash and another man arrived in Delhi to scope out the locality before heading back to Haridwar. On May 7, the trio, along with two more men, arrived in Delhi and stayed at a hotel in Sarai Kale Khan till the day of the incident, May 10.

CCTV footage from a camera across the street showed them arriving at the house in a vehicle that they parked nearby. DCP Deo said, "At 1.30 pm, Dr Paul was walking back from his clinic on Birbal Road towards his house... footage showed two of the accused following him... and entering the house along with him... another accused can be seen entering the flat a while later and exiting after a few minutes... the other two come out at 3.05 pm."

Inside, police said the men had allegedly tied up the doctor, gagged him, and strangled him with the leash of his pet dog.

After the body was discovered by Dr Neena at 6.30 pm, police said Basanti was their first suspect. She was taken in for questioning and officially arrested late Saturday. Brothers Himanshu and Aakash were also arrested on Saturday.

Police analysed CCTV footage to identify the route taken by the accused. "Footage showed them carrying several plastic bags with the looted money," said an officer privy to the probe.

The DCP said after committing the crime, it appears the accused went back to the hotel in the car and left the city in batches — Aakash and another man left on a motorcycle to Haridwar; Basanti's friend and her husband left in a bus. Himanshu stayed back at the hotel while Basanti went about her daily work as usual. Two others, who are yet to be identified, also left but it was not clear where they went, added the DCP.

BJP kicks off new campaign to go door-to-door, distribute voter slips

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, MAY 12

TWO WEEKS before the Capital goes to polls on May 25, the BJP kick-started a campaign to distribute voter slips among people in different booths on Sunday.

Party workers distributed the slips in Dilshad Colony, Rohini Sector 16, Delhi Gate, Punjabi Bagh, Yamuna Vihar, Shastri Park, Sitaram Colony, and Lakshmi Nagar, among other areas.

The candidates also participated in the campaign by distributing the slips in one locality each from their respective constituencies; Manoj Tiwari distributed the slips in Kadipur; Ramvir Singh Bidhuri in Srinivaspuri; Harsh Malhotra in New Ashok Nagar; Yogender Chandoliya in Rohini East; Kamaljeet Sehrawat in Bindapur; Bansuri Swaraj in Chanakyaपुरi; and Praveen



Delhi BJP chief Sachdeva during a door-to-door campaign in East Delhi. ANI

Khandelwal in Sitaram Bazar.

"The strongest pillar of any election is the booth without which success in any election is difficult," Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva said while launching the campaign as he visited Malhotra's constituency and pasted candidates' stickers outside houses.

Sachdeva said the party's intention is to reach every voter

through booth-level heads and make them aware of the 10 years of work done by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Meanwhile, BJP's National General Secretary Dushyant Gautam said this time, the election would be between corruption and actual work. "On one hand, there is an alliance that is in coalition only to hide their corruption, and on the other hand, there is the Modi government, which has done a number of development works in the last 10 years — that could not be done in the last 70 years," he said.

"The alliance between the Congress and the AAP is to advance the politics of corruption... (Arvind) Kejriwal government in Delhi only tells lies and plans conspiracies on how to do corruption in every scheme," BJP's Lok Sabha in-charge Om Prakash Dhankar claimed.

Kejriwal a dishonest leader: Surya

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, MAY 12

THE YOUTH of the country understands the development politics of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, which is why it stands with the BJP with full enthusiasm, said Tejasvi Surya, the National President of Bharatiya Janata Yuva Morcha, Sunday, as he spearheaded a roadshow from the Shiv temple at Kewal Park, Azadpur, to endorse the party's candidate from Chandni Chowk, Praveen Khandelwal.

"The youth of the country has come to know that unity and progress are possible only through Modi ji," Surya said.

He also targeted AAP convener and Delhi Chief Minister, Arvind Kejriwal, claiming that he is a "dishonest leader" who lacks credibility. "The truth of his claims of good schools, mohalla clinics, and clean politics in Delhi already stands revealed. The



BJP leader Tejasvi Surya campaigns for Chandni Chowk candidate Praveen Khandelwal, Sunday. Abhinav Saha

people of Delhi have completely lost their faith in the AAP," said the Bangalore South MP.

Khandelwal, meanwhile claimed the Opposition wants to divide the country along economic, regional, religious, and caste lines.

Khandelwal later reached his polling booth, Kucha Pati Ram in

Sita Ram Bazar, along with BJP workers for door-to-door distribution of voter slips.

"Khandelwal's childhood was spent in these streets and every household here has a close relationship with him. Hence, this journey is very special and close to his heart," the BJP said.

Since Jan, over a lakh challaned for pollution certificate violations

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, MAY 12

WITHIN THE first four months of this year, Delhi Traffic Police has issued over a lakh challans for Pollution Under Control Certificates (PUC) violations — an almost 30% rise from the same period in 2023.

According to the police, the crackdown is being enforced to ensure that motorists comply with vehicular emissions rules and contribute to environmental sustainability within Delhi.

Data released by the Delhi Traffic Police reveals that between January 1 and April 30, 2024, over a lakh violations related to PUC were recorded — marking a substantial uptick from 78,169 cases reported in

the same period in 2023. This surge signifies a rise of nearly 30% in prosecutions against motorists driving vehicles without valid PUCs.

Traffic Police also carried out a comprehensive analysis of the top 10 traffic circles in terms of challans issued in 2024. The highest number of violations came from Karol Bagh (4,034). Other areas included Bhajanpura (3,852), Ashok Vihar (3,703), Najafgarh (3,587), Dwarka (3,488), Sarita Vihar (3,420), Nand Nagri (3,268), Punjabi Bagh (3,265), Model Town (3,126), and Tilak Nagar (2,794).

"By identifying these areas, targeted enforcement measures can be implemented to promote adherence to traffic regulations," said the Delhi Traffic Police in a statement.

Puri: India might attain developed country status 10-15 years before 2047

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, MAY 12

THE SPEED with which the BJP-led Centre is working, India might attain the status of a developed country 10-15 years before the target set for 2047, Union Minister Hardeep Singh Puri said Sunday.

Addressing a traders' convention in Amar Colony, Puri said Delhi needs to be developed as a capital suitable to the status of the world's third-largest economy. "When Narendra Modi became the prime Minister in 2014, the country was the 10th-largest economy of the world and now, it is the fifth largest. In the next two years, it will attain the position of the world's third-largest economy, surpassing Germany and Japan," he said.

Slamming Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal for his outbursts against Modi and the BJP, he took



Union Minister Hardeep Puri at a traders' convention in Amar Colony. X

a dig at the AAP leader, saying "he has come out (of Tihar Jail) on interim bail after enjoying state hospitality, but the case against him is still on". Besides Puri, Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, Union minister VK Singh among others campaigned for candidates.

2 BOYS KILLED IN SANGAM VIHAR BY GROUP OF MEN: A FRIEND RECOUNTS THE CRIME

'... they surrounded us... began attacking my friends'

UPASIKA SINGHAL
NEW DELHI, MAY 12

HE CAN'T eat or sleep. He lays awake at night, staring at the ceiling because "when I close my eyes, I see the bodies of my friends". Five days ago, the 16-year-old watched as a group of young men allegedly attacked his friends — a 15-year-old and a 17-year-old — with knives, killing them, in Sangam Vihar.

"People had gathered around but they didn't intervene to save my friends. Instead, they took out their phones and started to record a video... I somehow escaped (the onslaught) and ran away..." he recalled.

On May 8, around 1 pm, the 16-year-old was standing with three other boys on a road in front of a school when a group of young men suddenly surrounded them. "... One of them began question-

ing us. This is when another man said... 'what are you waiting for? Kill them'," he recalled, stressing that he remembered the faces of each of the attackers as they were all school mates.

Police, he said, arrived an hour later. "They loaded two of my friends in their vehicle and left," he said. Police rushed the two boys to AIIMS where one of them was declared dead on arrival while the other succumbed to his injuries a few hours later.

His other friend, a class 10 student, who sustained knife wounds on his face, head and arms, managed to run home. He was taken to a hospital by his family subsequently, where he is now out of danger.

Police have arrested two men involved in the murder — Farid and Abhishek alias Babu, both aged 19 and residents of Sangam Vihar — and lodged an FIR against them under IPC sections

for murder, attempt to murder, voluntarily causing hurt, wrongful restraint, being armed with a deadly weapon and unlawful assembly. Police said they don't have a criminal history.

What was the motive?

During questioning, a police officer said the duo claimed one of the deceased boys had a minor scuffle with one of the accused the day before the murder. "Apparently, they killed the two boys as an act of revenge," he said.

The sister of the 15-year-old victim, however, said Abhishek and her brother had got into a fight a while ago. "Six months ago, I had gone to eat golgappe with another girl at a nearby market when Abhishek and his friend harassed us, passing rude comments. He abused us. I was furious and told my brother. He too got angry," she recalled.

The 15-year-old had then ap-

proached Abhishek and his friend and warned them never to harass his sister. The argument, however, escalated and the two exchanged blows. "Abhishek's friend had told him then he would take revenge," said the sister, adding that they later threatened her brother.

His mother said: "My son completely changed after that incident. He was living in perpetual fear... he rarely went out and stopped going to school. I thought I would transfer him to a school near our house but before I could do so, this happened."

The boy was the youngest of five siblings. His 40-year-old father repairs gas stoves for a living, having moved to the locality over 20 years ago from UP's Kasganj for work. The family lives in a small two-bedroom house.

"What angers me is no one helped. This could have happened

to anyone here," added his sister.

Area not new to crime

Sangam Vihar sits squeezed between the Asola Bhatti Wildlife Sanctuary and the Haryana border in the south, and the plush farmhouses of Sainik Farm in the West. The neighbourhood is congested — houses stand almost shoulder to shoulder, wires hang dangerously low, and piles of garbage lie on the streets.

"The psychology of the children here is hampered," said a police officer who requested not to be named. "The population is mostly lower-income... Many children have parents who either fight or live separately. They're also exposed to crime from an early age," he said.

The officer added that crime amongst the youngsters had increased in the last three months. "A lot of them want to show off on social media plat-

forms... of how tough they are," he said.

In March, nine minors were detained for allegedly stabbing a 20-year-old man to death in Sangam Vihar. In February, a 17-year-old boy was allegedly stabbed to death by three minors, including his school junior, near a school in the area.

At the home of the 17-year-old victim, meanwhile, his family believes he was collateral damage in the fight. "On that day, he was on his way back home for lunch and stopped to meet his friends on the way. He generally would come straight back home to eat and leave again for work, before returning at 9 pm," said his elder brother.

The boy had taken up welding, earning Rs 7,000 a month, to support his elder brother and sister-in-law's household. He was the youngest of five brothers. His parents had passed away.

Classifieds

I, Ex-Service No-9102173Y/TS/NK Ashaq Hussain Bhat, RO/ Tehsil-Lalpora, District-Kupwara. In my service record name of my and my wife has been mentioned as Ashaq Hussain Bhat and my wife as Shakeela Akhter but in School records of my wards my name has been mentioned as Ashiq Hussain Bhat and my wife as Shakeela Begum. Also the names and D o B of my three sons has been wrongly mentioned as Wahid Aashiq Bhat D o B-07-03-2003, Shahid Aashiq Bhat D o B-10-11-2005, Raqib Ashiq D o B-14-04-2010 instead of Wahid Ashiq Bhat D o B-01-03-2007, Shahid Aashiq D o B-25-04-2007, Raqib Ashiq D o B-10-03-2012 as in School records. It needs corrections. Objections be filled to Unit 10 JAKLI within seven days.

0020475799-1

I Liaqat Ali S/O, Abdul Gani R/o 244/6 Gali No-05 Sangam Vihar Wazirabad Village, Delhi-110084 have changed my name to Liyaquat Ali.

0040727990-1

I Meena Begum D/O, Nannu R/O H.n. -390 Gali No-08 Near Masjid Jagatpur Village Delhi-110084 have changed my name to Hasina Begum. 0040727989-1

I, ARBAZ KHAN Alias MD ARBAZ KHAN, S/O KHAN MOHD, R/O-2750 Gali Sher Afgan Baradari, Ballimaran, Delhi-110006, have changed my name to MOHD ARBAZ KHAN, permanently. 0040728114-1

I, Nupur chadha W/o-jappi Singh bakshi, Address-C-159, suncity sector-54 gurgaon haryana-122001, changed my name to Nupur Bakshi. 0040728114-2

कोल इंडिया लिमिटेड
(एक महारत्न कंपनी)

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Attention Advertising Agencies

Applications are invited from INS accredited advertising agencies for empanelment on Northern Railway for Public Relations works. Application forms can be downloaded from our website : www.nr.indianrailways.gov.in from 13.05.2024 to 03.06.2024 till 12:00 noon or can be obtained from the office of Chief Public Relations Officer, Northern Railway, NDCR Building, State Entry Road, New Delhi-110055 on any working day from 10:00 AM to 05:30 PM from 13.05.2024 to 02.06.2024 and upto 12:00 Noon on 03.06.2024 on the payment of ₹ 5,900 (₹ 5,000/- plus 18% GST) in cash (non-refundable). Applications must reach the above address by 12:30 hrs. on 03.06.2024 after which applications will not be accepted. This information is also available on Northern Railway website www.nr.indianrailways.gov.in 1402/2024

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DEMAND NOTICE
UNDER SEC 13(2) OF THE SECURITISATION AND RECONSTRUCTION OF FINANCIAL ASSETS AND ENFORCEMENT OF SECURITY INTEREST ACT, 2002 ("THE ACT") READ WITH RULE 3 OF THE SECURITY INTEREST (ENFORCEMENT) RULES, 2002 ("THE RULES")

The undersigned being the Authorized officer of Aditya Birla Finance Limited (ABFL) under the Act and in exercise of powers conferred under Section 13(2) of the Act read with the Rule 3, issued Demand Notice(s) under Section 13(2) of the Act, calling upon the following borrower(s) to repay the amount mentioned in the respective notice(s) within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice. The undersigned reasonably believes that borrower(s) is / are avoiding the service of the demand notice(s), therefore the service of notice is being effected by affixation and publication as per Rules. The contents of demand notice(s) are extracted herein below:

In connection with the above, Notice is hereby given, once again, to the said Borrower(s) / Legal Heir(s) / Legal Representative(s) to pay to ABFL, within 60 days from the date of the respective Notice(s), the amount indicated herein below against their respective names, together with further interest as detailed below from the respective dates mentioned below in column (d) till the date of payment and / or realisation, read with the loan agreement and other documents / writings, if any, executed by the said Borrower(s). As security for due repayment of the loan, the following Secured Asset(s) have been mortgaged to ABFL by the said Borrower(s) respectively.

| Sr. No. | Name and Address of the Borrower(s) | Demand Notice Date & NPA Date | Description of Immovable property |
|---------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------|---|
| 1. | Mr. Vikas Kumar, 5/c, Kanwar Pal | 26.04.2024 & 04.04.2024 | Property Situated At Bhuma Tadadi 1 Kanal 07 Marla. A/ Khevat No.231/363 Number Khasara 11/28/2(2-4) Raquba 2 Kanal 4 Marla's 5/44 Part Bakdar 5 Marla And Khevat No.231/363 Number Khasara 11/28/3 Raquba 1-15, 12/2 Raquba D-17 Kite 2 Raquba 2 Kanal 12 Marla's 5319/12320 Part Bakadar 1 Kanal 2 Marla. Total Tadadi 1 Kanal 7 Marla. Yaka Raquba Talheri Ragrah, Tehsil Barara, Distt. Ambala. Bounded As - Boundaries + North : Pwd Road Bhujia 104 Feet; + South : Gali Bhujia 104 Feet; + East : Gali Bhujia 72 Feet; + West : House Of Charerpal Bhujia 72 Feet. |
| 2. | Mr. Mukesh Kumar | 26.04.2024 & 04.04.2024 | Property Situated At Bhuma Tadadi 1 Kanal 07 Marla. A/ Khevat No.231/363 Number Khasara 11/28/2(2-4) Raquba 2 Kanal 4 Marla's 5/44 Part Bakdar 5 Marla And Khevat No.231/363 Number Khasara 11/28/3 Raquba 1-15, 12/2 Raquba D-17 Kite 2 Raquba 2 Kanal 12 Marla's 5319/12320 Part Bakadar 1 Kanal 2 Marla. Total Tadadi 1 Kanal 7 Marla. Yaka Raquba Talheri Ragrah, Tehsil Barara, Distt. Ambala. Bounded As - Boundaries + North : Pwd Road Bhujia 104 Feet; + South : Gali Bhujia 104 Feet; + East : Gali Bhujia 72 Feet; + West : House Of Charerpal Bhujia 72 Feet. |

Place : Ambala, Haryana Date : 13.05.2024

Sd/- Authorised Officer
ADITYA BIRLA FINANCE LIMITED

व्यक्तिगत

मै, "अफजाल अहमद" पुत्र जफर अहमद निवासी ग्राम- पावी सादक पुर लोनी जनापद गाजियाबाद उत्तर प्रदेश मे अपना नाम "अफजाल अहमद" से बदलकर "कुंवर अफजाल चौधरी" कर लिया है। अब से मुझे भविष्य के सभी उद्देश्यों के लिये "कुंवर अफजाल चौधरी" के नाम से जाना जाएगा।

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CROSSWORD 5362

- ACROSS**
- One who wallows in merrymaking? (8)
 - It's not profitable for a company to make it (4)
 - Forms groups of actors (5)
 - Don't stop the wrong persons (5,2)
 - One objecting to modern arts movement (12)
 - Many invited to a kind of ball (6)
 - Stay over with the French in order to eat (6)
 - Not to be found in a minute (3,3,6)
 - About to be put back in school ground (7)
 - Sarcasm from the club youth leader (5)
 - Fishes in the sunshine? (4)
 - Gravel rash? (8)
- DOWN**
- People in the running (4)
 - Partly improves personal service (7)
 - Panic at having a capital loss? (4,4,4)
 - Reveal a former attitude (6)
 - Notes wrong beginning (5)
 - Men ordered to guard the southern gates? (8)
 - Facsimile I put on record perhaps (12)
 - I am getting stout as a business man (8)
 - No brawl disturbs such a light sleeper (4,3)
 - The critical point in eating a biscuit? (6)
 - Transfer between banks (5)
 - Looks at a key agreement (4)

Solutions Crossword 5361 Across: 1 Booby trap, 8 Ocean, 9 Porcupine, 10 Seldom, 11 Adding, 12 Hamsters, 15 Harassed, 18 Energy, 20 Vacuum, 21 Rifter, 22 Erie, 23 Defendant Down: 2 Ovoid, 3 Birdie, 4 Throats, 5 Posers, 6 Needles, 7 Animosity, 11 Anchovies, 13 Madeline, 14 Grocery, 16 Soused, 17 Behead, 19 Green

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 quip.

Conquer, but don't ___ - Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach (7)

HRSIR **GOORMP**

ILPTU **HORNET**

SOLUTION: HRSIR: THRILL, POORUM, THRONE Answer: Conquer, but don't triumph - Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach

2 killed, three injured after car overturns

New Delhi: Two men in their 20s died while three were injured after their car turned turtle in Aman Vihar area on Sunday, police said.

According to the police, the incident occurred after the driver of the car lost control of the vehicle.

Information about the incident was received around 12.30 pm on Sunday after which a police team was sent to the spot.

The occupants of the car were taken to hospital where Sanjay (23) and Ashutosh (22) were declared brought dead, a police official said, adding that both the deceased were residents of Kishan Vihar.

"The three injured have been identified as Sahil (20), Rashid (18) and Lokesh Singh (23), residents of the same locality," the official said.

"A case has been registered and further probe is underway," the official added. PTI

SALUTE THE SOLDIER

Constable Surender Singh

ITBP salutes its braveheart Constable Surender Singh of 4th Battalion, who made supreme sacrifice in the line of duty on this day in Jammu & Kashmir in 2002.

Resident of : Vill.- Kandote, Post.- Nodinalla, Distt.- Doda, State- Jammu & Kashmir.

Sep Sakriya Naika (13 May 2003)

On 13 May 2003, you made the supreme sacrifice fighting terrorists in Jammu & Kashmir. We remember your courage and determination and you continue to be an inspiration to all of us.

Commanding Officer and all Ranks BraveAath

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The undersigned being the Authorized officer of Aditya Birla Finance Limited (ABFL) under the Act and in exercise of powers conferred under Section 13(2) of the Act read with the Rule 3, issued Demand Notice(s) under Section 13(2) of the Act, calling upon the following borrower(s) to repay the amount mentioned in the respective notice(s) within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice. The undersigned reasonably believes that borrower(s) is / are avoiding the service of the demand notice(s), therefore the service of notice is being effected by affixation and publication as per Rules. The contents of demand notice(s) are extracted herein below:

In connection with the above, Notice is hereby given, once again, to the said Borrower(s) / Legal Heir(s) / Legal Representative(s) to pay to ABFL, within 60 days from the date of the respective Notice(s), the amount indicated herein below against their respective names, together with further interest as detailed below from the respective dates mentioned below in column (d) till the date of payment and / or realisation, read with the loan agreement and other documents / writings, if any, executed by the said Borrower(s). As security for due repayment of the loan, the following Secured Asset(s) have been mortgaged to ABFL by the said Borrower(s) respectively.

| Sr. No. | Name and Address of the Borrower(s) | Demand Notice Date & NPA Date | Description of Immovable property |
|---------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------|---|
| 1. | Mr. Vikas Kumar, 5/c, Kanwar Pal | 26.04.2024 & 04.04.2024 | Property Situated At Bhuma Tadadi 1 Kanal 07 Marla. A/ Khevat No.231/363 Number Khasara 11/28/2(2-4) Raquba 2 Kanal 4 Marla's 5/44 Part Bakdar 5 Marla And Khevat No.231/363 Number Khasara 11/28/3 Raquba 1-15, 12/2 Raquba D-17 Kite 2 Raquba 2 Kanal 12 Marla's 5319/12320 Part Bakadar 1 Kanal 2 Marla. Total Tadadi 1 Kanal 7 Marla. Yaka Raquba Talheri Ragrah, Tehsil Barara, Distt. Ambala. Bounded As - Boundaries + North : Pwd Road Bhujia 104 Feet; + South : Gali Bhujia 104 Feet; + East : Gali Bhujia 72 Feet; + West : House Of Charerpal Bhujia 72 Feet. |
| 2. | Mr. Mukesh Kumar | 26.04.2024 & 04.04.2024 | Property Situated At Bhuma Tadadi 1 Kanal 07 Marla. A/ Khevat No.231/363 Number Khasara 11/28/2(2-4) Raquba 2 Kanal 4 Marla's 5/44 Part Bakdar 5 Marla And Khevat No.231/363 Number Khasara 11/28/3 Raquba 1-15, 12/2 Raquba D-17 Kite 2 Raquba 2 Kanal 12 Marla's 5319/12320 Part Bakadar 1 Kanal 2 Marla. Total Tadadi 1 Kanal 7 Marla. Yaka Raquba Talheri Ragrah, Tehsil Barara, Distt. Ambala. Bounded As - Boundaries + North : Pwd Road Bhujia 104 Feet; + South : Gali Bhujia 104 Feet; + East : Gali Bhujia 72 Feet; + West : House Of Charerpal Bhujia 72 Feet. |

Place : Ambala, Haryana Date : 13.05.2024

Sd/- Authorised Officer
ADITYA BIRLA FINANCE LIMITED

NOTHING SUSPICIOUS FOUND: POLICE Delhi airport, at least eight city hospitals receive bomb threats

The threat comes nearly two weeks after 150 schools in Delhi-NCR received similar mails on their IDs



Outside Sanjay Gandhi hospital. Gajendra Yadav

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI, MAY 12

NEARLY TWO weeks after over 150 schools in Delhi-NCR received bomb threat emails on their official IDs, sparking panic and mass evacuations before it was declared a hoax, the Delhi Airport and at least eight hospitals received similar threats on Sunday, said officials.

Police and bomb disposal squads were rushed to Terminal 3 of the Indira Gandhi International Airport after receiving a phone call at 6.20 pm. Authorities said nothing suspicious has been found so far.

Teams were also deployed at the city hospitals, including Burari Hospital and Sanjay Gandhi Memorial Hospital, which received the bomb threats through email on Sunday afternoon.

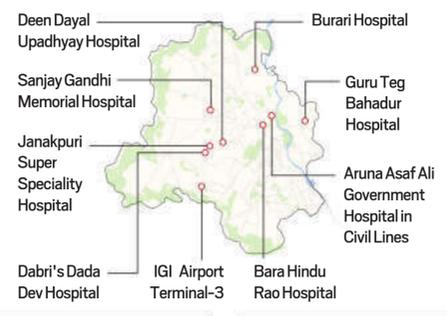
The other hospitals were Guru Teg Bahadur (GTB) Hospital in Dilshad Garden, Deen Dayal Upadhyay (DDU) Hospital in Hari Nagar, Dada Dev Hospital in Dabri, Bara Hindu Rao Hospital, Aruna Asaf Ali Hospital in Civil Lines, and Janakpuri Super Speciality Hospital.

DCP (North) Manoj Meena said, "A hospital in North Delhi's Burari received an email with a bomb threat. Bomb disposal teams are at the spot. Nothing suspicious has been found."

DCP (Dwarka) Ankit Singh confirmed a PCR call was received at Dabri Police Station and police and hospital staff checked the premises of Dada Dev Hospital, adding nothing suspicious was found.

DCP (Shahdara) Surendra

CAPITAL SCARE These places received a hoax mail on Sunday



Chowdhary said police received a PCR call around 3.30pm regarding a bomb hoax mail at GTB Hospital.

He said, "Hospital authorities informed the local police about that mail. Immediately, police swung into action and dispatched the Bomb Disposal Squad to the hospital. Checking was done at GTB Hospital and Delhi State Cancer Institute, which is situated on the premises of the GTB Hospital. Nothing suspicious was found."

Dr Rajat Jhamb from the GTB Hospital told PTI, "We received a bomb threat via email simultane-

ously with other hospitals, but there was no panic situation at the hospital."

Burari Hospital MD Dr Ashish Goyal received the threat around 3 pm. "I have access to the hospital email on my phone. The email said a bomb had been placed in the hospital. I informed the police as soon as I saw it and it appeared to be a hoax. Police are investigating the matter," he said.

Sanjay Gandhi Memorial Hospital received a threat email around 3 pm, according to officials. "Soon after the call, we immediately sent two fire engines to both locations. Our teams are still there as the search operation is on," said an official from the Delhi Fire Services (DFS).

The MCD-run Hindu Rao Hospital is on a high alert with directions given to increase security checks at night, a civic body statement said.

"The operation theatre, emergency, CCU and blood bank at the hospital are equipped for any adverse event. It is on a high alert for QRT activation. Hospital staff have also been asked to be vigilant," it read.

Colonel Harish Chandra Sharma from the Janakpuri Super Speciality Hospital said, "Things were under control, there was no panic or disturbances due to the threat. The hospital management handled it with full responsibility, so everything is fine."

Dr SK Kaakran, Medical Superintendent at Sanjay Gandhi Memorial Hospital, said he saw the mail around 4pm and contacted Delhi Police. "We responded quickly and conducted a search operation on the campus," he added.

In the school case, the Delhi Police's anti-terror unit special cell traced the domain of emails to Russia and it is suspected to have been formed with the help of the dark web — an encrypted online content that allows individuals to hide their identity and location from others.

According to the FIR filed in the case, several calls of bomb threats were received from different schools between 5.47 am and 1.13 pm on May 1.

"School authorities said they had received these bomb threats on their email IDs... on receipt of the calls, PCR vehicles were rushed to the schools, district police, bomb disposal squad... were also alerted," the FIR said. It added that an elaborate exercise was carried out across the city in safely evacuating schools and carrying out anti-sabotage checks.

(with PTI inputs)

OVER THE HEDGE by Michael Fry & T Lewis

THIS CHESS PIECE IS A KNIGHT.

IT'S A HORSE HEAD! THERE'S NO KNIGHT!

HE'S PROBABLY WITH THE REST OF THE HORSE.

IT'S SYMBOLIC OF THE KNIGHT! THERE'S NO REST OF THE HORSE!

IT MOVES TWO PLACES OVER AND ONE TO THE SIDE...OR TWO PLACES TO THE SIDE AND ONE PLACE OVER!!

I GUESS YOU'D EXPECT A DECAPITATED HORSE HEAD TO HAVE A LIMITED RANGE.

KINDA FLOPS ALL OVER THE PLACE.

CALVIN & HOBBS by Bill Watterson

HA HA! THEY JUST ANNOUNCED THE SCHOOLS ARE CLOSED! IT'S A SNOW DAY! WHEEEEEEE!

YES! YES! YES! YES! YES!

TALK ABOUT LUCK! NOW YOU CAN DO YOUR HOMEWORK AND YOU WON'T GET IN TROUBLE!

RIGHT, BUT THERE'S OVER TWO FEET OF SNOW THAT REQUIRES OUR IMMEDIATE AND UNDIVIDED ATTENTION.

FIRST THINGS FIRST.

MATH WILL STILL BE THERE WHEN THE SNOW MELTS.

MARVIN by Tom Armstrong

When your roommates are old...

...they leave you at home every day while they go to DR appointments

SUDOKU 5560

Difficulty Level 1s 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 5559

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|--|--|--|
| 8 | 7 | 1 | | | 2 | | | |
| | 1 | | 5 | | 3 | | | |
| 5 | 2 | 8 | | 6 | 7 | | | |
| | 2 | | 9 | 1 | | | | |
| | 2 | 5 | 6 | 8 | 3 | | | |
| 4 | 8 | | 3 | | | | | |
| 8 | 1 | | 4 | 2 | 5 | | | |
| 3 | | 6 | | 4 | | | | |
| 9 | | | 1 | 3 | 7 | | | |

SOLUTION SUDOKU 5559

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 8 | 3 | 4 | 6 | 5 | 2 | 9 | 1 | 7 |
| 6 | 5 | 2 | 7 | 1 | 9 | 3 | 4 | 8 |
| 1 | 9 | 7 | 8 | 4 | 3 | 5 | 6 | 2 |
| 7 | 6 | 3 | 2 | 9 | 8 | 1 | 5 | 4 |
| 5 | 2 | 9 | 1 | 6 | 4 | 7 | 8 | 3 |
| 4 | 1 | 8 | 5 | 3 | 7 | 2 | 9 | 6 |
| 3 | 4 | 6 | 9 | 7 | 5 | 8 | 2 | 1 |
| 9 | 8 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 6 | 4 | 7 | 5 |
| 2 | 7 | 5 | 4 | 8 | 1 | 6 | 3 | 9 |

DAY TODAY BY PETER VIDAL

- ARIES (Mar 21 - Apr 20)**
Another week, another Monday, and what this means for you is a sensible, efficient and organised beginning. The Moon is in a supportive mood, so everything needs to be taken one step at a time.
- TAURUS (Apr 21 - May 21)**
Six out of a possible ten planets are in directly supportive positions, backing your interests. That's not a bad tally! You should be able to take life at your own pace today, so anyone who tries to pressurise you could be out of luck. Make the most of any passing good fortune.
- GEMINI (May 22 - June 21)**
Home and domestic matters are bound to take up a fair bit of your time and, even if you're at work, the best way to get on with colleagues will be to imagine you're all part of one big family. Not a perfectly happy one necessarily, but a family nonetheless.
- CANCER (June 22 - July 23)**
Make serious plans and take practical decisions. It has never been more important to look only at the significant details and put all your hopes, wishes and fantasies to one side. Don't be perturbed by delays. But do keep a very close watch on every detail concerning cash.
- LEO (July 24 - Aug 23)**
Although you may be preoccupied with the trivia of material survival, dwelling over questions such as how to save the odd bit of cash here and there, this is in fact a somewhat optimistic and adventurous time. All that is asked of you is that you take the right decisions.
- VIRGO (Aug 24 - Sep 23)**
The Moon is well situated, strong and sympathetic. This is a welcome symbolic indication that you can have it all your own way at home, but only if you face up to hidden problems and deep undercurrents. People who think differently should soon be made to apologise for their errors.

- LIBRA (Sep 24 - Oct 23)**
Something secret could be bothering you today. Just what this could be is far from clear, but it could be connected with regret for affairs which didn't work out. Stop being such a perfectionist and realise that you can't relive the past - at least, not now.
- SCORPIO (Oct 24 - Nov 23)**
Social influences are looking very pronounced today, if a little serious. What you need from friends now seems to be a sense that they're going to look after you, or provide emotional security. I know this may be asking too much - but I'm sure you can cope.
- SAGITTARIUS (Nov 24 - Dec 22)**
Career and professional affairs now require their fair share of attention, all the more so if you are laying your own ideas on the line. With just a little shove in the right direction it looks as if your past efforts could be about to bring the desired rewards.
- CAPRICORN (Dec 23 - Jan 20)**
After last week's energetic stars, this week's point to a shift of gear. You may therefore feel that you have a right to sit down and put your feet up, but any spare time is likely to be disrupted by the need to swing straight back into action.
- AQUARIUS (Jan 21 - Feb 19)**
You still seem to imagine nobody else understands you. The key is to listen very carefully to what your imagination is trying to tell you rather than always trying to ignore it. There's just no time to stick your head in the sand - so don't.
- PISCES (Feb 20 - Mar 20)**
You always find criticism difficult, for you allow it to undermine your confidence. However, nothing would do you more good at the present time than a little friendly advice. Romantically, by the way, you could soon be on a total winner.



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INDIANEXPRESS.COM/ELECTIONS

KEY GROUPS

ANDHRA CASTE POLITICS: KAMMA-KAPU RIVALRY TO REDDY DOMINANCE



LOK SABHA ELECTIONS PHASE 4: 96 SEATS IN 10 STATES, UTs GO TO POLLS

In 2019, it was BJP in front, followed closely by non-aligned regional parties

NDA won 47 of these seats five years ago, regional outfits bagged 35, while parties in INDIA bloc trailed with 11

ANJISHNU DAS
NEW DELHI, MAY 12

KICKING OFF the second half of the Lok Sabha elections, 96 constituencies in 10 states and UTs will go to polls on Monday. After Phase 4, polling will be over in 379 seats and three states: Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Madhya Pradesh. Andhra and Odisha are also holding Assembly polls.

In 2019, the parties constituting the Opposition INDIA bloc and the ruling NDA had won 11 and 47 of these 96 seats. The BJP won 42

of these seats, with the Congress far behind at six.

Several non-aligned parties won a considerable chunk of these constituencies. Andhra's ruling YSRCP won 22 constituencies, Telangana's former ruling party BRS won nine, and the AIMIM and BJD two each. The undivided NCP and Shiv Sena won one and two seats, respectively.

In vote share terms, the parties in the NDA received 40.34% of the votes compared to the 23.73% of the INDIA alliance parties (excluding the Shiv Sena and NCP, which were then undivided).

CANDIDATE BREAKDOWN

476 (28%)
CROREPATI CANDIDATES

1701 (10%)
WOMEN CANDIDATES

46
AVERAGE AGE

₹11.72cr
AVERAGE ASSETS

21% (360 candidates)
Share of candidates with pending criminal cases. Of these, there are 274 candidates with serious criminal cases

Candidates who are graduates and above **994**

Share of graduates **58%**

After Phase 4, a total of 526 women will have contested across all the phases so far.

In 2014, 15 women won from

the Phase 4 seats and in 2019, 12 women won.

At 15, the BJP has the most women candidates in Phase 4

PARTY-WISE CANDIDATES WITH CRIMINAL CASES

BJP: **40 (57%)**

Cong: **35 (57%)**

YSRCP: **12 (48%)**

BSP: **11 (12%)**

BRS: **9 (53%)**

VBA: **8 (73%)**

SP: **7 (37%)**

Telangana has the most candidates with criminal cases at 104, followed by Andhra Pradesh at 88 and Maharashtra at 73.

PARTY-WISE CROREPATI CANDIDATES

BJP: **65 (93%)**

Cong: **56 (92%)**

BSP: **27 (29%)**

YSRCP: **24 (96%)**

BRS: **17 (100%)**

TDP: **17 (100%)**

SP: **11 (58%)**

TMC: **7 (88%)**

Share (%) of crorepatis in party

5 CONTESTS TO WATCH OUT FOR

1 KANNAUJ, UP: SP chief Akhilesh Yadav vs sitting MP Subrat Pathak (BJP)

vs Dr Nirmal Kumar Saha (BJP)

2 KRISHNANAGAR, BENGAL: Former MP Mahua Moitra (TMC) vs queen of erstwhile Krishnanagar royal family Amrita Roy (BJP) vs S M Sadi (CPM)

4 HYDERABAD, TELANGANA: Sitting MP and AIMIM chief Asaduddin Owaisi vs Madhavi Latha (BJP) vs Gaddam Srinivas Yadav (BRS) vs district party chief Mohammed Waliullah Sameer (Cong)

3 BAHARAMPUR, BENGAL: Sitting MP and party leader in Lok Sabha Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury (Cong) vs former cricketer Yusuf Pathan (TMC)

5 KADAPA, ANDHRA: Congress state chief Y S Sharmila Reddy vs sitting MP Y S Avinash Reddy (YSRCP) vs C Bhupesh Reddy (TDP)

PHASE 4 SEATS: RESULTS IN 2019

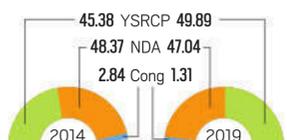
NDA: **47** INDIA: **11** YSRCP: **22** BRS: **9**
OTHERS: **7**

Others: BJD, undivided Shiv Sena, AIMIM 2 each, undivided NCP 1

KEY BATTLEGROUND

ANDHRA PRADESH

Lok Sabha results



Seats won: 2014 2019

YSRCP: 22, 17; NDA: 17, 17; Cong: 3, 0

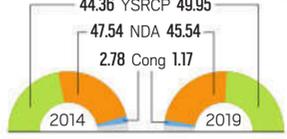
Total seats: **25**

Total electors: **4.08 crore**

In Andhra, the NDA comprises the BJP, TDP and Janasena Party

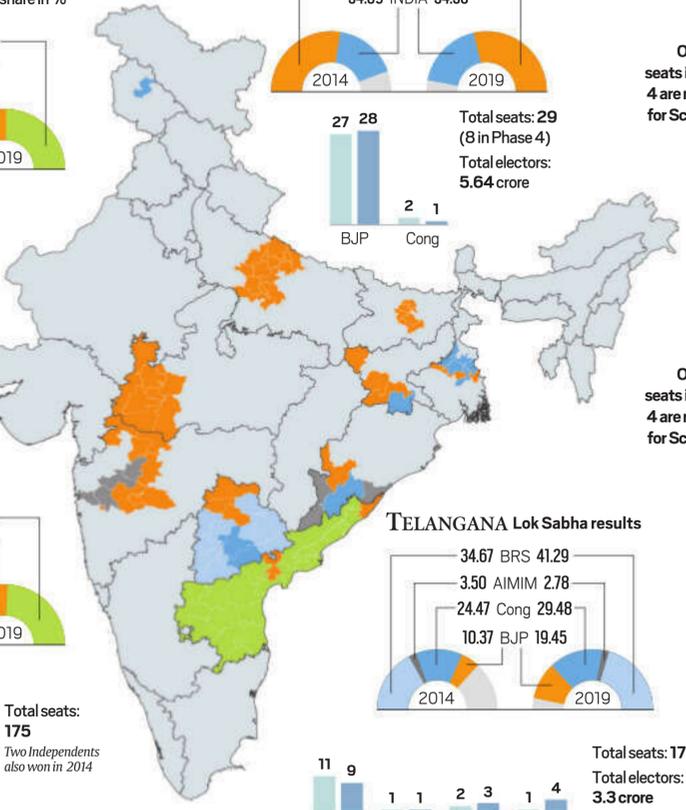
ANDHRA PRADESH

Assembly results



Seats won: 2014 2019

YSRCP: 151, 106; NDA: 106, 106; Cong: 24, 0



Indore, Madhya Pradesh
The state's most populous constituency is set up for a "no contest" after the Congress candidate withdrew last minute leaving the party without a candidate

No women in fray in 22 seats
Of the total 96 seats in Phase 4, there are 22 with no women candidates. Among the states, Telangana has the most women candidates at 50

RICHEST CANDIDATES

DR CHANDRA SEKHAR PEMMASANI (TDP), contesting from Andhra Pradesh's Guntur
Assets: **₹5,706 cr**

KONDA VISHWESHWAR REDDY (BJP), contesting from Telangana's Chevella
Assets: **₹4,568 cr**

PRABHAKAR REDDY VEMIREDDY (TDP), contesting from Andhra Pradesh's Nellore
Assets: **₹716 cr**

YOUNGEST AND OLDEST

YOUNGEST: 15 candidates aged 25, including 8 from smaller parties and 7 Independents

OLDEST: PADIGA YARRAIAH, an 80-year-old Independent in Telangana's Mahabubabad

OTHER STATES GOING TO POLLS

UTTAR PRADESH: 13 SEATS
Akbarpur, Bahraich, Dhaurahra, Etawah, Farrukhabad, Hardoi, Kannauj, Kanpur, Kheri, Mirikhi, Shahjahanpur, Sitapur, Unnao

MAHARASHTRA: 11 SEATS
Ahmadnagar, Aurangabad, Beed, Jalgaon, Jalna, Maval, Nandurbar, Pune, Raver, Shirdi, Shirur

WEST BENGAL: 8 SEATS
Asansol, Baharampur, Bardhaman, Durgapur, Bardhaman Purba, Birbhum,

Bolpur, Krishnanagar, Ranaghat

BIHAR: 5 SEATS
Begusarai, Darbhanga, Munger, Samastipur, Ujjarpur

JHARKHAND: 4 SEATS
Khunti, Lohardaga, Palamau, Singhbhum

ODISHA: 4 SEATS
Berhampur, Kalahandi, Koraput, Nabarangpur

J&K: 1 SEAT
Srinagar

'PM Modi upholding Constitution while Cong killed its soul'



Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav (centre) campaigns in the Morena constituency. PTI

20
Of the 96 seats in Phase 4 are reserved for Scheduled Castes

12
Of the 96 seats in Phase 4 are reserved for Scheduled Tribes

MADHYA PRADESH Chief Minister MOHAN YADAV was the BJP's surprise pick to replace Shivraj Singh Chouhan after the Assembly elections in December. A three-time Ujjain MLA, Yadav oversaw the party's campaign as it attempted to win all 29 parliamentary seats in the state, a feat even his predecessor could not achieve. As polling concludes in Madhya Pradesh on Monday, Yadav speaks to ANAND MOHAN J about the elections, whether he is an emerging Yadav face in the Hindi heartland, and the state's financial situation. Excerpts.

What is your take on wealth redistribution and the inheritance tax?

The Congress has hatched a conspiracy to snatch the wealth of people to distribute it among infiltrators and that is why they are opposing the CAA.

The BJP alleged the Congress in power will give Muslims quota from the OBC share...

It is essential to rely on facts rather than rumours or allegations. The Congress has done nothing but speak lies and cheat the country. PM Modi in the last 10 years did not end reservation and has worked harder than anyone to ensure social justice and equal opportunities. The existing system is based on social and economic criteria, not religious identity.

How confident are you of winning all 29 seats in MP?

The BJP motto is *pran jaye par vachan na jaye* (life may end but a promise should not be broken). That is why people believe the Modi guarantees are cast in stone. From Ram Mandir to Article 370, the PM has delivered on every promise. We have a progressive track record. We are definitely going to win all 29 seats.

The BJP sent you to UP and Bihar to reach out to Yadav voters. Do you see yourself as a Yadav face in the state?

The party does not see caste, lineage or tradition. Hailing from the Yadav community, if I can tell countrymen that people of every community are getting equal opportunities, then what is wrong with that? Our country is known for its diversity.

The state has seen a large exodus of Congress leaders. Why induct leaders from the Opposition if you are confident of victory?

Congress workers have slowly realised their party is working not for the development of the country but for the development of one family. On the other side, the BJP is giving opportunity to every party worker. Congress workers have finally understood the party holds no vision and values. Nobody wants to stay in a party that cannot represent the needs and aspirations of its workers. If they think the BJP can give them this opportunity, we are happy to welcome them.

Did the party's decision to replace Shivraj Singh Chouhan with you come as a surprise?

When my name was announced, I did not trust my ears but the ethos of ours is unique as it gives equal chance to every worker. My party works like a family. Shivraj Singh Chouhan still guides me.

The state government has Rs 4-lakh-crore debt. How will you deal with this burden?

The loan being taken by the state government at low interest rates is promoting capital work in the state. Capital expenditure has a multiplier effect. You will surely see its positive impact in the near future. Our economic fundamentals are extremely strong.

GROUND REPORT

Nitish Kumar's core voter base for decades, Kushwaha support for NDA wavers

SANTOSH SINGH
UJIARPUR, KHAGARIA, NAWADA, MAY 12

ADDRESSING a meeting in Bihar's Ujjarpur Lok Sabha constituency last week, Union Home Minister Amit Shah made an impassioned plea for Nityanand Rai, the junior minister in his department. "I have not done as much work in my constituency as Nityanand Rai has done for Ujjarpur... He is my friend, ensure his victory with a huge margin," Shah said.

Ujjarpur, among the five Bihar constituencies going to polls on Monday, is witnessing a fierce contest between Rai, a two-time sitting MP, and the Rashtriya Janata Dal's (RJD) Alok Kumar

Mehta, a former state minister and prominent Kushwaha leader.

The contest underlines the trouble that Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar of the Janata Dal (United) is facing as he tries to keep intact his hold over the 7% Luv-Kush votes – the Kurmi and Koeri (Kushwaha) communities are called Luv-Kush in Bihar. Since the mid-1990s, Nitish has meticulously nurtured this constituency – according to last year's caste survey, it comprises 4.21% of Bihar's population – to counter the RJD's Muslim-Yadav vote bank.

Ujjarpur is one of the most populous OBC Kushwaha constituencies with about 2.75 lakh Kushwaha voters. Of Bihar's 40 Lok Sabha seats, 15 have 1.5 to 3 lakh Kushwahas who can

decide poll outcomes – Ujjarpur, Samastipur, Karakat, Aurangabad, Nawada, Nalanda, East Champaran, West Champaran, Khagaria, Valmiki Nagar, Arrah, Sitamarhi, Purnia, Jamui, and Patna Saheb.

While the Kurmi vote (about 3%) looks largely intact for the NDA, cracks have appeared in the Kushwaha base, with some shifting towards the RJD-led Mahagathbandhan. First, the Opposition stole a march over the JD(U) by fielding six Kushwaha candidates. In comparison, the JD(U) has fielded only two Kushwahas, in Purnia and Valmiki Nagar, and the BJP none.

What Kushwahas are saying
With Nitish Kumar's stature



Bihar CM Nitish Kumar campaigns in Sitamarhi. PTI

taking a hit over his frequent about-turns and Deputy CM Samrat Choudhary and Upendra Kushwaha of the Rashtriya Lok Samta Party failing to establish themselves as pan-Bihar

Kushwaha leaders, local factors and the Mahagathbandhan's choice of candidates have played a part in fracturing the community's support for the JD(U) and NDA. This became apparent as The

Indian Express travelled to Kushwaha-dominated seats.

In Ujjarpur's Gawpur village, farmer Ajay Kumar said, "While the 2019 polls had the Pulwama factor, this election is dominated by local factors. (RJD's) Alok Kumar Mehta is a local leader. He is from our community. There is no Modi factor for us."

Ujjarpur resident Navin Singh, a farmer, said, "The RJD gave tickets to three Kushwahas. In Karakat, Upendra Kushwaha is facing BJP rebel Pawan Singh. Why can't Amit Shah call Singh to withdraw from the race?"

The RJD's jobs pitch and Nitish's dented image were cited by some as reasons for backing the Opposition. "We liked Nitish Kumar but he is now a pale

shadow of himself," said Santosh Kumar, who grows vegetables.

However, not all Kushwahas are voicing resentment. In Vidyapati Nagar, some said they would stick with PM Narendra Modi. "Most of the youth and women are still with Modi despite the caste factor," said Pankaj Kumar, a Bihar Jeevika worker.

A BJP leader said the Mahagathbandhan got it right by fielding seven Kushwaha candidates and that the contests in Nawada and Aurangabad, which voted in the first phase on April 19, would be close affairs.

Yadavs and Kushwahas are warring castes and do not vote together, the aggression of Yadavs has subdued in this election and Yadav and Kushwaha are coming together," said Satish Kumar, a private schoolteacher.

Some of the Kushwaha resentment with the NDA is visible in Jamui too, a seat represented by LJP chief Chirag Paswan. Though Samrat Choudhary's home turf Tarapur is part of the constituency, some had complaints about him.

"Samrat Choudhary rose in importance because he is a Kushwaha leader as Nitish Kumar moves towards the end of his political career. But he has hardly travelled to Kushwaha-dominated regions," said retired teacher Rakesh Kushwaha.

6 DECISION 2024



Fresh tension in Sandeshkhali after TMC leaders attacked

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE KOLKATA, MAY 12

BJP WORKERS, mostly women, on Sunday attacked TMC activists in Sandeshkhali in West Bengal's North 24 Parganas district for allegedly circulating 'fake videos' to implicate their party leaders.

According to police, a group of BJP workers allegedly dragged Tatan Gayen, considered close to TMC MLA Sukumar Mahata, out of his home and beat him up. The group also attacked TMC leader Dilip Mandal, who lived nearby. The incident occurred a stone's throw away from the Sandeshkhali police station.

The attack led to fresh tension in Sandeshkhali, following which massive police force and RPF units were deployed in the area.

In a purported video that surfaced from Sandeshkhali on Saturday night, a local BJP leader was heard saying that over 70 women had received Rs 2,000 each for taking part in protests against TMC strongman Shahjahan Sheikh and his aides who were accused of sexual assault and land grab.

Meanwhile, the TMC Sunday lodged a complaint with EC against Rekha Sharma, chairperson of National Commission for Women, accusing her of committing 'forgery, cheating, fraud, criminal intimidation and criminal conspiracy by exploiting innocent women of Sandeshkhali for political gains'.

MODI'S RALLY IN BARRACKPORE

TMC threatening Sandeshkhali women, says PM; he's lying: CM

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE KOLKATA, PATNA, MAY 12

AS PM Narendra Modi on Sunday accused the TMC of "terrifying" women in Sandeshkhali to withdraw their complaints against Shahjahan Sheikh, arrested for sexual abuse and land grab, West Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee hit back, saying the PM was "peddling lies".

Raising the Sandeshkhali episode, which has taken a new turn after a woman alleged that BJP leaders forced her to lodge a false rape complaint against TMC leaders, Modi said: "All of us have seen what the TMC has done with the sisters and mothers of Sandeshkhali. First, the TMC tried to protect the accused with the help of police. The TMC has now started a new game. Their goons are terrorising and threatening the women there because the perpetrator's name is Sheikh Shahjahan."

"The TMC is trying to protect the culprit to appease its vote bank. But the people have understood their game," alleged Modi at a rally in Barrackpore.

Soon after the PM's speech, TMC supremo Mamata accused the PM of "peddling lies".

Questioning why the PM was maintaining a "stoic silence" on the allegations of molestation against West Bengal



Prime Minister Narendra Modi with BJP candidate Locket Chatterjee in West Bengal's Hooghly district, Sunday, Express

Governor CV Ananda Bose and not asking him to resign, Mamata at an election rally in North 24 Parganas' Amdanga said Modi should be ashamed after the "BJP's conspiracy" about Sandeshkhali has become public.

"The PM is going around peddling lies about Sandeshkhali. He should be ashamed as BJP's conspiracy has now become public. He should be ashamed for playing with the dignity of the women of Sandeshkhali by paying them... I will not listen to any lectures from those who disrespect women... Women of

Sandeshkhali did not even know what they had signed. They were made to file fake complaints," the CM said, apparently referring to a purported video in which a local BJP leader was heard saying that the "staged" protests in Sandeshkhali were done at the behest of Leader of Opposition Suwendu Adhikari.

Mamata said the Centre's inaction against Governor Bose in the molestation case showed the BJP's "true anti-woman character". "PM's representative in Bengal is a *laat saheb* at Raj Bhavan, where women are now afraid to go. This is a constitu-

tional crisis because if I need to speak with him (Governor), I have to do it elsewhere. I am in a dilemma. No woman is willing to visit Raj Bhavan after some shameful deeds came to light. Why did the PM not ask the Governor to resign during his overnight stay at Raj Bhavan?" she said.

Meanwhile, accusing the TMC of "indulging in appeasement politics" to protect its vote bank in Bengal, Modi alleged that the party led by Mamata has "turned Hindus into second-class citizens" in the state.

Campaigning for the BJP in the state, where he addressed four rallies, Modi alleged: "An MLA of TMC gave a statement yesterday (Saturday) that they will throw Hindus in Bhagirathi (river). Hindus have become second-class citizens in Bengal. TMC does not let anyone take Ram's name. It doesn't allow Ram Navami processions in Bengal."

Meanwhile, Modi Sunday held about 2-km roadshow which drew an overwhelming response from the crowd. This was the first-ever roadshow by any PM since Independence in Patna, which saw women participating in large numbers. During the roadshow, he was joined by Bihar CM Nitish Kumar, BJP Patna Sahib candidate Ravi Shankar Prasad and deputy CM Samrat Choudhary.

In 4th phase, BJP sits pretty in 13 UP seats

BJP won all these seats last 2 times, barring Kannauj in 2014

BHUPENDRA PANDEY LUCKNOW, MAY 12

THE THIRTEEN seats going to polls in UP Monday, include constituencies close to SP's heart. However, for the past two general elections, the BJP has won them all, barring Kannauj, which was in 2014 won by SP's Dimple Yadav.

While the BJP will be looking to repeat the feat, especially in the SP preste seats of Kannauj and Etawah, another constituency where it will hope that its gambit - of repeating Ajay Mishra 'Teni' - pays off is Lakhimpur Kheri. The son of Teni, the Union MoS for Home, is accused in the killing of four people during a farmers' protest in 2021. While the case is still on, Teni's boss Union Home Minister Amit Shah virtually promised at a recent public meeting that he would make Teni a "big man" if he wins.

In the 13 seats, Dalits and OBCs form bulk of vote bank, with Muslims too in good numbers.

Kannauj
2019 WINNER BJP (49.37%)
RUNNER-UP 48.29%

The most prominent of the constituencies is Kannauj, where SP chief Akhilesh Yadav is contesting for the fourth time.

Akhilesh is up against the BJP's Subrat Pathak, who won in 2019 defeating Dimple Yadav, and the BSP's Imran Bin Jafar.

While the BSP's decision to field Jafar may cost the SP some Muslim and Dalit votes - both in big numbers in the constituency - Akhilesh will attract a major chunk of them.

Lakhimpur Kheri
2019 WINNER BJP (53.63%)
RUNNER-UP 34.38%

In Lakhimpur Kheri, Teni is facing the SP's Utkarsh Verma and the BSP's Anshay Kalra. Despite the pressure it came under for Teni's resignation, the BJP continued with the MP, who has been winning polls starting with the Assembly polls in 2012.

While Teni's son Ashish was in jail for a few months after the incident, he is now on bail. Both SP and BSP spoke about the 2021 incident in their campaigns.

Etawah (SC-reserved)
2019 WINNER BJP (50.80%)
RUNNER-UP 44.53%

The reserved constituency houses Saifai, the native village of SP founder Mulayam Singh Yadav. While that makes the seat important for the SP symboli-

U.P. PHASE FOUR IN NUMBERS

130 candidates in fray
15 KANNAUJ: Seat with most candidates
7 ETAWAH: Seat with least candidates
13 seats



cally, which won it in 1996, 1999, 2004 and 2009, the BJP was the winner in 2014 and 2019. The BJP has fielded Ram Shanker Katheria. The SP has fielded Jitendra Dohre and the BSP, Sarika Singh.

Kanpur
2019 WINNER BJP (55.63%)
RUNNER-UP 37.13%

The seat used to be a Congress stronghold, with Shri Prakash Jaiswal winning in 1999, 2004 and 2009. In 2014, he lost to BJP veteran Murlidhar Manohar Joshi, and in 2019 to BJP's Satyadev Pachauri. The BJP has fielded Ramesh Awasthi against the Congress's Alok Mishra and the BSP's Kuldeep Bhaduria. All three are contesting their first Lok Sabha elections.

Akbarpur
2019 WINNER BJP (56.69%)
RUNNER-UP 29.86%

Rajaram Pal, a former Congress MP from the seat (2009), is the SP candidate. The BSP has given a ticket to a Brahmin, Rajesh Dwivedi. OBCs are in a majority in the constituency, followed by upper castes, Dalits and Muslims.

Unnao
2019 WINNER BJP (56.87%)
RUNNER-UP 24.46%

The BJP ticket from Unnao has again gone to its controversial MP, Swami Sachchidanand Hari Sakshi alias Sakshi Maharaj, who will take on the SP's Annu Tandon and the BSP's Ashok Kumar Pandey.

Farrukhabad
2019 WINNER BJP (56.82%)
RUNNER-UP 34.72%

In Farrukhabad, the BJP has repeated Mukesh Rajput, a Lodh. Apart from his caste base, Rajput is banking on the Modi and Ram Temple factors. Rajput is facing the SP's Naval Kishore Shakya and BSP's Kranti Pandey.

Bahraich (SC-reserved)
2019 WINNER BJP (53.14%)
RUNNER-UP 40.13%

The seat borders Nepal, with Muslims in a majority. The BJP

has fielded Anand Gond, the son of its 2019 winning candidate, Akshaybar Lal Gond.

Shahjahanpur (SC-reserved)
2019 WINNER BJP (58.09%)
RUNNER-UP 35.46%

As long as the seat was not reserved, it was known as a Congress stronghold before 2014. After Jitendra Prasad's successive victories from here, his son Jitin won the seat in 2004. Now in BJP, Jitin is contesting from Pilibhit. The constituency was later won by the SP till the BJP captured it in 2014.

Misrikh (SC-reserved)
2019 WINNER BJP (52.05%)
RUNNER-UP 42.25%

In Misrikh, the BJP has repeated Ashok Rawat, who has a strong hold on the seat and was the BSP winner from here in 2004 and 2009. The SP has very little presence in this seat.

Sitapur
2019 WINNER BJP (48.33%)
RUNNER-UP 38.86%

While sitting MP Rajesh Verma is BJP candidate, the other main nominees, Rakesh Rathore of the SP and Mahendra Yadav of the BSP, used to be BJP MLAs.

Dhaurahra
2019 WINNER BJP (48.21%)
RUNNER-UP 33.12%

In Dhaurahra, the BJP has repeated its two-time sitting MP Rekha Verma. Verma is facing some challenge from BSP candidate Shyam Kishore Awasthi. However, the SP has never performed well here.

Hardoi (SC-reserved)
2019 WINNER BJP (53.72%)
RUNNER-UP 41.20%

The BJP has replaced its two-time winning MP, Anshul Verma, here with Jai Prakash. The SP's Usha Verma is banking on Yadavs and Muslims, while BSP has fielded Bhimrao Ambedkar.

Modi gave country's wealth to 4 or 5 rich people, says Priyanka

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA RAE BARELI, MAY 12

CONGRESS LEADER Priyanka Gandhi Vadra Sunday attacked Prime Minister Narendra Modi, accusing him of giving the country's "entire wealth" to "four or five rich people".

Addressing a rally in support of her brother and Congress' Rae Bareli Lok Sabha seat candidate Rahul Gandhi, Priyanka said, "Narendra Modi is the MP from Varanasi for the last 10 years but he has not visited any village there or asked a farmer how he is living."

She also said, "Privatisation is not bad in itself but if the prime minister gives the entire wealth of the nation to four or five rich people, then that is not right."

Today coal, electricity, ports and airports of the country are all with the friends of the PM, she al-



Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra in Rae Bareli district, Sunday, PTI

leged. Mentioning former PMs and Congress leaders Rajiv Gandhi and Indira Gandhi, she said they visited villages and asked people about their issues. "Our PM organises big events where you will see many big capitalists but not find a single poor person," she said.

Sonia spent over 70% of MP funds on minorities, says Shah

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE LUCKNOW, MAY 12

UNION HOME Minister Amit Shah claimed Sunday that senior Congress leader Sonia Gandhi spent at least 70% of her MP funds on minorities and urged the people of Rae Bareli to choose a local candidate who will remain within them and not an outsider who will go "missing" for the next five years.

Addressing a rally, Shah said, "You gave the Gandhi family chances for years, but no development work was done... The 'shahzada' (prince) has come here to seek votes. You have been voting for many years. Have you received anything from the MP fund? If you have not received it, then where did it go? It went to their vote bank. Sonia Gandhi has spent more than 70% of the MP funds on minorities."

Accusing the Gandhi family of being an expert in lying, he added, "They are now promising Rs 1 lakh for every woman. In the



Union Home Minister Amit Shah in Rae Bareli, Sunday, PTI

Telangana (Assembly) polls, they promised Rs 15,000 for every woman. The people of Rae Bareli have made the Gandhi and Nehru family win for years. But after getting elected from here, how many times did Sonia ji and her family come to Rae Bareli?"

Shah, who also addressed election meetings in Pratapgarh and Gonda of UP, accused the Opposition of doing appeasement politics, saying Sonia, Rahul, SP chief Akhilesh Yadav and his wife Dimple Yadav were invited to the consecration ceremony at the Ram temple in

Ayodhya but they did not attend. "These people did not go because they were afraid of their vote bank," he said.

Shah termed the Opposition's assertion that reservation would end if the BJP wins 400 seats as a "lie" and claimed that after the Congress came to power in Karnataka and Telangana, its governments gave reservations to Muslims overnight by cutting the share of SC, ST and OBCs. "Today, I am stating the 'Modi ki guarantee'... till the time the BJP has even a single MP, we will not allow scrapping of reservation for SC, ST and OBCs," Shah said.

Referring to Congress leader Mani Shankar Aiyar's remarks on Pakistan having the atom bomb, he said Rahul Gandhi might be scared of the neighbouring country's atom bomb but the BJP is not. Pakistan-occupied Kashmir belongs to India and "we will take it", he said. At Pratapgarh, Shah alleged that Congress, SP and the BSP were "taking care of Article 370 as their 'illegitimate child'."

Ludhiana's Bains brothers join Cong, merge party

DIVYA GOYAL GOPAL LUDHIANA, MAY 12

BROTHERS AND former MLAs Simarjeet Singh Bains and Balwinder Bains Sunday joined the Congress in Punjab and merged their Lok Insaaf Party (LIP) with the grand old party. The Ludhiana-based leaders were inducted into the Congress by party's Punjab in-charge Devender Yadav in presence of Rahul Gandhi in New Delhi.

While Simarjeet is a two-time

former MLA from Atam Nagar, his elder brother and Balwinder is 2-time former MLA from Ludhiana South Assembly constituency.

In the 2019 LS elections, Simarjeet had contested from Ludhiana and had emerged runners-up behind Congress's Ravneet Singh Bittu (now BJP candidate from Ludhiana). However, his political career nearly tanked after he was booked in an alleged rape case in July 2021. The Bains brothers were first elected as Independent MLAs from their respective seats in 2012.

Journalist assaulted during Shah rally, FIR lodged

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE LUCKNOW, MAY 12

A 27-YEAR-old journalist working with a Delhi-based online portal was assaulted, allegedly by BJP workers, at an election rally of Union Home Minister Amit Shah in Rae Bareli Sunday.

The journalist, Raghu Trivedi, who works for a YouTube news channel called 'Molitics', said that some people, allegedly associated with the BJP, attacked him after he questioned them about the state-

ments made by some women attending the rally. Former Chhattisgarh CM Bhupesh Baghel met Trivedi at the district hospital and called the incident "a direct attack on democracy."

Based on a complaint filed by Sanjeet Sahni, a cameraman and an associate of Trivedi, an FIR was registered against six unidentified persons under Sections 147 (rioting), 323 (voluntarily causing hurt), and 504 (intentional insult with intent to provoke breach of the peace) of the IPC. Rae Bareli Circle Officer Amit

Singh said an investigation had been initiated but no arrest had been made until evening.

Trivedi told *The Indian Express* from the hospital, "I came from Delhi to cover ground reports in Rae Bareli and Amethi. During Shah's rally, I interviewed women and many of them said they were brought to the event by their village pradhan with the promise they would be paid Rs 100. I also spoke to some people who were leaving the rally venue without waiting for the speech to end. When I enquired why they were

leaving early, they said they were getting late. Then, I approached local BJP leaders to question them about these statements."

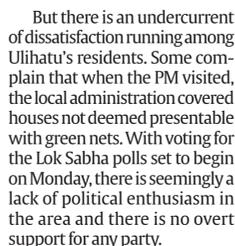
"Initially, they denied any wrongdoing but when I informed them I had recorded statements of women, a group forcibly took me to a secluded place and demanded I delete the recording. When I refused, they began to assault me... I pleaded with police and bystanders for help, but no one intervened... I lost consciousness. When I regained consciousness, I found myself in hospital," he said.

Birsa Munda birthplace in spotlight as tribal pockets go to polls

ABHISHEK ANGAD KHUNTI, SINGHBHUM, LOHARDAGA, MAY 12

THE BIRTHPLACE of Adivasi icon Birsa Munda, Ulihatu - a village in the Khunti LS seat of Jharkhand - the development in recent years is visible. Freshly tarred roads, new schools and water tanks are among the examples. In addition to the new infrastructure, visits by PM Narendra Modi as well as by President Droupadi Murmu have raised the village's profile.

As part of its outreach efforts in the tribal-dominated state, the Central government also christened Birsa Munda's birth anniversary on November 15 as 'Janjatiya Gaurav Diwas'.



In Aarahatu colony, there is no electricity. Abhishek Angad



store rather than relocate with his two sons who work in the local administration in the Khunti district headquarters. Though Ulihatu has seen some development, it remains

an outlier among tribal villages. Not far, around 60 km from the Arki block headquarters in Khunti district, is Aarahatu colony in Bowanda revenue village. A kilometre away from the

village, the motorable road gives way to a dirt track, traversable only on foot. In the Aarahatu colony, which *The Indian Express* visited, there is no electricity.

Sukhdev Munda, a first-time voter in Aarahatu, said the colony did not participate in the Pathalgadi movement - which began in Khunti after the BJP government attempted to amend two laws on tribal land in 2017 - because the villagers were "not convinced by the cause". In 2019, angry tribal voters had boycotted the elections, leading to turnouts as low as 0.14% in some Khunti booths. This time though, the lack of development here is the main poll issue and more voters are expected to turnout. "No political leaders ever came here. There is

no development as you can see in the village. During a health crisis, there is no ambulance which comes to our tola. But after someone dies, a private ambulance ferries the dead to our homes on request," Sukhdev said.

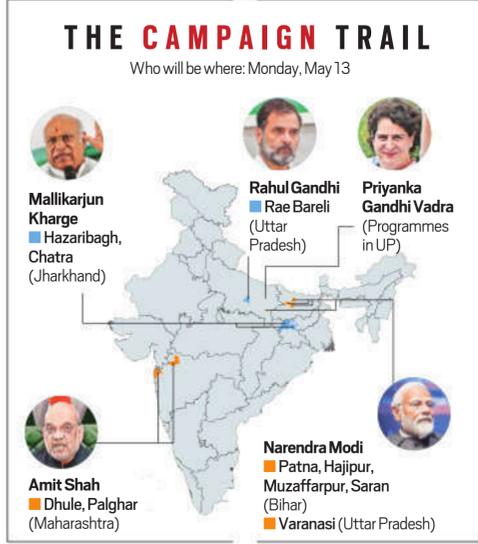
In Saraikela-Kharsawan district within the Khunti constituency, Durga Munda, however, is among those who have decided against voting. Durga says, "Last year, very little rainfall occurred and we could not sow enough. This year too, we are dependent on God. *Jab tak upar wala nahi dekhga, hum nahi dekh payenge* (Until god cares for us in the form of rain, we will not be able to lift ourselves with crop harvests)." FULL REPORT ON www.indianexpress.com

BALLOTIN

Allu Arjun booked for MCC breach

Hyderabad: Police in Andhra Pradesh's Nandyal district have booked popular Telugu actor Allu Arjun after his visit to YSRCP candidate and sitting MLA Shilpa Ravichandra Kishore Reddy's residence caused a large crowd to gather. The FIR also names the MLA. In the incident that took place Saturday, Arjun waved to the crowd as he chanted 'Pushpa' - the name of the actor's superhit movie - for over an hour. This triggered an allegation of election code violation.

Special Deputy Tehsildar of Nandyal lodged a complaint at Nandyal Town police station, saying Arjun had no permission from the constituency's Returning Officer to conduct any poll programme. Police lodged a case Saturday. FIR also states Arjun breached election protocols and violated CrPC Sec 144. **ENS**





DELHI CONFIDENTIAL



BACK AT WHEEL

THE SUDDEN demotion of Akash Anand in the BSP has affected the pace of party chief Mayawati's Lok Sabha poll campaign. Akash stopped canvassing for the polls after he was booked for "promoting enmity" in his speech in Sitapur last month. Following this, Mayawati, who was earlier addressing one or two rallies daily, started addressing only one event in a day. Sources said Mayawati was utilising the rest of the time holding organisational meetings and taking feedback from party leaders. Earlier, Akash, as the national coordinator and political successor of Mayawati, was addressing rallies and holding meetings with local party units. But after removing him from these positions, Mayawati is holding the responsibility of all the states herself.

BREAKING NEW GROUND

THE RASHTRIYA Lok Dal (RLD) is known for its sway over Jat voters in western UP, but the BJP has decided to use its ally's influence in eastern UP too, where there is negligible presence of Jat population. RLD president Jayant Chaudhary will join Prime Minister Narendra Modi's roadshow in Varanasi on Monday. He will also be present with the PM when he will file his nomination papers on Tuesday. Sources in RLD said the PM has decided to include Jayant in his roadshow with an eye on Kurmi voters who have a significant presence in Varanasi, Mirzapur and a few other seats of eastern UP. The sources said Kurmi voters in the region have great regard for Jayant's grandfather and former PM Chaudhary Charan Singh because he had given due representation to the community during his government.

WEIGHT LOSS

DELHI CHIEF Minister Arvind Kejriwal, who was granted interim bail last week to campaign for the Lok Sabha elections, was in custody for 56 days. Although he hit the ground running soon after his release, with a temple visit and a roadshow, Kejriwal is learnt to have lost nearly 10 kg since his arrest. The Delhi CM has fluctuating blood sugar levels, which may have contributed to the weight loss.

Fourth arrest in Nijjar killing: Indian man in Canada on temp visa

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
WASHINGTON, OTTAWA, MAY 12



Amandeep Singh was already in custody in a separate case. PTI

THE CANADIAN authorities have arrested a fourth Indian national in connection with the killing of Khalistan separatist Hardeep Singh Nijjar outside a gurudwara in British Columbia last June. This comes a week after three Indians, all in their 20s were arrested in the high-profile case that has strained relations between India and Canada.

According to the Integrated Homicide Investigation Team (IHIT) of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), Amandeep Singh, 22, has been charged with first-degree murder and conspiracy to commit murder. Amandeep, who was arrested on May 11 for his role in the killing of Nijjar, was already in the custody of the Peel Regional Police for unrelated firearms charges, the IHIT said, adding the accused divides his time between Brampton, Ontario, Surrey, and Abbotsford, British Columbia.

Nijjar, 45, was killed outside Guru Nanak Sikh Gurdwara in Surrey, British Columbia on June 18, 2023. "This arrest shows the nature of our ongoing investigation to hold responsible those that played a role in the homicide of Hardeep Singh Nijjar," said Superintendent Mandeep Mooker, the Officer in Charge of IHIT. "IHIT pursued the evidence and gained sufficient information for the British Columbia Prosecution Service to charge Amandeep Singh with first-degree murder and conspiracy to commit murder," the police statement said. Investigators said no further details of the arrest can be released due to ongoing investigations and court processes.

Ajmer cleric's murder: Six minors detained, claim he sexually exploited them

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
JAIPUR, MAY 12

SIX MINORS have been detained for the murder of a mosque cleric, who allegedly sexually exploited them, in the Ramganj area of Rajasthan's Ajmer district, police said on Sunday. Mohammad Tahir (30) was beaten to death on the night of April 26. Superintendent of Police (Ajmer) Devendra Vishnoi said the investigation had stalled before the six minors who lived with him in the mosque were questioned. They confessed to have murdered the cleric as he used to exploit them sexually. The minors have been detained, he added. The police said the minors mixed sleeping pills in Tahir's food and then beat him with sticks. Later, they informed the police that three masked men had entered the mosque and attacked the cleric, the police said. Tahir used to teach children in the mosque.

SRINAGAR: BUKHARI SAYS OUR WORKERS TARGETED TOO
NC, PDP say workers harassed at Apni Party behest; police, EC deny

BASHAARAT MASOOD
SRINAGAR, MAY 12

ON THE eve of voting in Srinagar, allegations by two prominent Valley parties — PDP and NC — that the J&K administration was "intimidating and detaining" their workers to favour "a particular political party", snowballed into a major controversy. The Election Commission and the police have denied the allegations.



Polling officials leave for their respective booths Sunday, a day ahead of voting in Srinagar constituency. Shuaib Masoodi

While PDP's Srinagar candidate Waheed ur Rehman Para claimed Saturday that Apni Party president Altaf Bukhari "openly gets people arrested", NC candidate Aga Ruhullah Mehdi alleged Sunday that the administration was "working for a particular political party". On the other hand, Bukhari said the administration was targeting Apni Party workers, and alleged that the PDP and the NC had joined hands with the administration in this.

The J&K Police rejected the allegations in a statement Sunday, saying they were made "without basis". "There have been actions regardless of party affiliation pertaining to violations such as seizure of cash, narcotics, liquor and preventive actions against miscreants and potential offenders with a background of linkages to terrorism and separatism," the statement said.

J&K CEO Pandurang Pole also termed the allegations baseless, but said if any mistakes were made, they would be corrected.

Mehdi, in a press conference Sunday, said his party's workers were being targeted to "weaken our logistic support". "Unfortunately, J&K has been a police state since 2019. But now, even under the supervision of the EC, it is working for a particular po-

litical party... the way an atmosphere is being prepared for a particular political party, the way the soldiers of democracy are being intimidated, political parties and organisers are being intimidated, what do they want to do...?"

In a post on social media, Para named a senior police officer and accused him of "allegedly directing officials to minimise voter turnout by detaining and harassing our workers". "We're reaching out to the EC to urgently address and relocate the official from his sensitive position," he said.

The J&K Police rejected the allegations against the officer and said, "...Criticism of the police has been always accepted as a professional hazard. However, speculative statements made against individual police officers and put in the public domain exposes the individual to security hazards as seen in past. Nevertheless, we reiterate our dedication and commitment to impartial enforcement of law."

BJP should not repeat its past of torturing tribals to end Naxalism: Ex-CM Baghel

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
RAIPUR, MAY 12

AMID ALLEGATIONS that the 12 Maoists who police said were killed in an encounter in Bijapur on May 10 were civilians, former Chhattisgarh CM Bhupesh Baghel said the ruling BJP should not "repeat their past of torturing tribals to end Naxalism".

"It is necessary to solve the Naxalite problem and also boost the morale of the security forces. But unexpected political pressure on security forces should not be such that their actions are questioned. The security forces should also keep in mind that ultimately their commitment is to the Constitution. It is also important to warn BJP government of the state not to repeat its past of torturing tribals in the name of ending Naxalism," said Baghel. He was reacting to media reports that several villagers from Pidia and Itavar had reached the Bijapur collectorate Saturday and claimed the 12 killed included their kin who weren't Maoists.

Soni Sori, 50, an activist from Dantewada said, "I met some women whose kin were among those killed. They told me that police fired at their men when they went to collect tendu leaves." Sori said. When contacted, Bijapur SP Jitendra Kumar Yadav called it "counter propaganda tactics used by Naxals". "All those killed are Maoists who had a reward on their arrest," he said.

BJP leader linked to Prajwal video leak arrested in harassment case

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
BENGALURU, MAY 12

BJP LEADER G Devaraje Gowda, who has been linked to the leak of sexual assault videos allegedly involving JD(S) MP Prajwal Revanna, was arrested on May 11 over a 40-day-old sexual harassment complaint against him. He has been sent to judicial custody for 14 days.

On April 1, a woman lodged a complaint of sexual harassment against Gowda, an advocate from Holenarasipura region of Karnataka's Hassan district. A day earlier, the woman's husband had filed an SC/ST atrocity case against the BJP leader.

Gowda had moved a Hassan district court on May 8 seeking



Devaraje Gowda also booked under the SC/ST Act

anticipatory bail in both cases.

Hassan police said Gowda was arrested in the 40-day-old case "on basis of a fresh statement from the victim".

Two days before his arrest, Gowda had mentioned the two cases against him during a press conference where he accused state Congress leaders of "leaking the sex videos of Prajwal", the NDA candidate from Hassan Lok Sabha seat, ahead of the April 26 election in the constituency. He

also claimed that the women seen in the leaked videos were being threatened for extortion.

Gowda was summoned and questioned once by the SIT probing the Prajwal videos as the BJP leader has been accused of leaking them. Gowda, however, has claimed that the tapes were not leaked by him but by Karthik N, a former driver for Prajwal.

In the sexual harassment case against Gowda, the complainant alleged that the BJP leader promised to help her with funds for building a house on a small plot she owned with her husband in Hassan but began seeking sexual favours. The woman's husband accused Gowda of abusing them using their caste identity.

Abuse clips: Ex-BJP MLA 'aides' held

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
BENGALURU, MAY 12

THE SIT arrested two persons in Hassan Sunday, who are allegedly aides of Karnataka BJP general secretary Preetham Gowda, in connection with leaking videos related to JD(S) MP Prajwal Revanna case.

The accused — Likith Gowda and Yalagunda Chetan — were arrested based on a complaint filed by JD(S) worker Poornachandra Tejaswi MG on April 22 against five people for allegedly leaking the videos. Police are looking for Naveen Gowda, a Congress worker, the prime accused in the case.

Prior to their arrest, the ac-

cused were questioned at the CEN Crime police station in Hassan. According to sources, Chetan was employed at former Hassan MLA Preetham Gowda's office, while Likith was a close aide. JD(S) state president H D Kumaraswamy had alleged last week that despite a complaint by his party, the SIT did not take action against those who leaked the videos.

Preetham had lost the 2023 Assembly polls from Hassan and had been involved in several spats with the Revanna family. He was among those who expressed his reservation over fielding Prajwal from Hassan segment and had reportedly refused to campaign for him during the Lok Sabha polls.

In new video, victim says she wasn't kidnapped

Bengaluru: In a surprising development, a purported video of the woman allegedly kidnapped by JD(S) MLA H D Revanna surfaced on social media, in which she claims she was not kept against her will by the MLA and his men.

The video shared on Sunday came a week after the SIT rescued the woman from a residence belonging to an aide of Revanna at Hunsur. This was following a police complaint that she was kidnapped by the MLA's men. ENS

'If ideology is same, why remain separate': Tharoor on potential merger of smaller parties into Congress

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
MUMBAI, MAY 12

SENIOR CONGRESS leader Shashi Tharoor on Sunday appeared amenable to views expressed in certain sections on the potential merger of smaller parties into the Grand Old Party.

Addressing a press conference in Mumbai, Tharoor said, "As far as smaller parties aligning or merging with Congress is concerned, I feel if the ideology is the same, then what is the need to be separate? Let's see what happens."



'Atmosphere has changed, INDIA bloc will come to power'

Recently, NCP-SP chief Sharad Pawar said that in the next couple of years, several regional parties will associate with the Congress, or even merge with it.

Tharoor said that the atmosphere in the country has changed and on June 4, the India bloc will come to power.

"This LS election is not an ordinary election but a struggle to keep India's soul safe. The BJP has endangered democracy and the Constitution, and openly undermined diversity," Tharoor said.

Alleging that the BJP has brought religion into citizenship, he said, "We cannot use the words that Prime Minister Narendra Modi is using in public, even in a closed house, it is very disgraceful and it is not appropriate in politics." Accusing the BJP government of not talking about unemployment, inflation and farmers' issues, Tharoor said, "The BJP and

PM Modi are talking about unimportant issues by avoiding the burning questions of the people. Rahul Gandhi has given an open challenge to PM Modi for talks but Modi has not accepted it. During the UPA government, Dr Manmohan Singh used to hold press conferences and present his position. PM Modi, however, is now giving scripted interviews."

He also said the PM's appeal to Sharad Pawar and Shiv Sena UBT leader Uddhav Thackeray to join the parties led by Ajit Pawar and Eknath Shinde, respectively, was "meaningless".

Kerala: Church-run college takes down video 'seeming to promote campus love'

SHAJU PHILIP
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM,
MAY 12

A CATHOLIC Church-run college in Kerala withdrew its promotional video for the coming academic year after the management found the video gave an impression that "the institute is facilitating campus love".

On Sunday, the management of Nirmala College in Ernakulam district's Muvattupuzha expressed regret over the video that they said violated the values as well as the "religious and cultural traditions" of the college.

In a circular, college manager Father Pius Malekandathil said,

"The short video seemingly legitimising a lax atmosphere in the college is far from reality. This is not the cultural and moral profile that we seek to maintain in the college."

The video, nearly one-and-a-half minutes long, shows a dream sequence presumably set in the college. It follows a young man courting a young woman in the library, and eventually walking hand-in-hand with her before he is woken up. Poomaname, a romantic Malayalam film song from 1985, plays in the background. It also shows an image of the cover of Malayalam romantic novel Inapravukal, followed by the message: "Reading opens your mind and ignites imagination."

The video ends with text inviting online applications for admission.

College principal Dr K V Thomas said the video was prepared by an external agency. "Soon after it appeared on social media platforms, we realised that the video would give the wrong message, and hence we immediately took it off. The management also urged everyone not to circulate the video... The video gives a wrong impression that the college and its library are giving facilities for love affairs. We are responsible to the students and their parents. The college does not promote relations without boundaries," the principal said.

Haryana ex-MP Kailash Saini joins Congress

Chandigarh: Former Kurukshetra MP Kailash Saini joined the Congress Sunday. Saini, an OBC leader, along with several supporters joined the Congress in Rohtak in presence of former Haryana CM Bhupinder Singh Hooda and the Congress' state unit chief Uday Bhan.

Hooda told reporters that the joining of Saini, a two-time MP, will definitely strengthen the Congress. "This will send a big message to the entire Haryana, including Kurukshetra," Saini said she will strongly campaign for the INDIA bloc in Kurukshetra and in other constituencies where the party gives her responsibility. ENS

ED summons Jharkhand minister over seizure of cash with link to his secy

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
RANCHI, MAY 12



Jharkhand minister Alamgir Alam

DAYS AFTER the Enforcement Directorate arrested Jharkhand minister Alamgir Alam's personal secretary Sanjiv Lal and Lal's domestic help Jehangir, the agency has asked the minister to appear before it on May 14.

Alam, who is the state's Minister of Rural Development, had distanced himself from the Rs 34.50 crore in cash seized last week from the premises of Jehangir. A day later, Lal and Jehangir were arrested.

Sources said Alam was served the summons as the Enforcement Directorate is looking into any relationship between Jehangir and the minister himself.

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) had said earlier that names of senior bureaucrats and politicians have emerged as part of their investigation that led to the seizure of the cash last week.

In ED's remand application for Lal and Jehangir, it had said that "several officials from top to bottom of Rural Development Department" were involved in a

money laundering nexus.

"...It is ascertained that Sanjeev Lal takes care of the collection of commission on behalf of some influential persons and plays a pivotal role in managing the tenders and collection of commission from engineers, also the said percentage of commission is distributed in a mechanised manner to higher ups of government," the central agency had said.

"Further, during the investigation names of senior bureaucrats and politicians have emerged which are being investigated... several officials from top to bottom of the Rural Development Department are involved in this nexus and the huge payments were usually received in cash which were later laundered which needs to be unearthed," the central agency said in its submission to the court.

Ministry of Culture Government of India
Prime Ministers Museum and Library cordially invites you to a Talk on "Nechariya Poetics": Avadh Punch and the Natural Poetry Movement by Dr. Maryam Sikander Junior Fellow, PMML Tuesday, 14 May 2024 at 3:00pm Venue: Seminar Room, Library Building Prime Ministers Museum and Library Teen Murti House, New Delhi All are Welcome. Those wishing to have their names added to the email list may please email us at: ccs2nmml@gmail.com

HINDUSTAN PETROLEUM CORPORATION LIMITED
Regd. Office: Petroleum House, 17, Jamsheji Tata Road, Churchgate, Mumbai - 400 020
Tel: +91 - 22 - 22863900 Fax: +91 - 22 - 22872992
Website: www.hindustanpetroleum.com Email ID: hpcinvestors@mail.hpcil.co.in
NOTICE TO MEMBERS - POSTAL BALLOT
Notice is hereby given to the Members that pursuant to Section 108 and Section 110 of the Companies Act, 2013 ("Act") read with Companies (Management and Administration) Rules, 2014, ("Rules"), the Company is seeking approval of Members of the Company through the Postal Ballot Process by passing of Ordinary Resolution in compliance of the SEBI (Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015 ("SEBI LODR, 2015") to Capitalize the Reserves of the Company and to issue Bonus Shares.
In compliance with aforesaid statutory provisions, MCA circulars issued in this regard & Regulation 44 of SEBI LODR, 2015, Postal Ballot Notice has been sent only through electronic mode and remote e-voting facility has been facilitated through M/s. Central Depository Services (India) Limited ("CDSL"). Further, the notice has been dispatched on Saturday, May 11, 2024 only to those Members whose email addresses were registered with the Company's Depositories as on cut-off date, i.e. Friday, May 10, 2024. A person who is not a Member as on the cut-off date should treat the Notice of Postal Ballot for information purpose only.
The Notice of Postal Ballot which, inter-alia, includes detailed procedure is hosted under the 'Investors' section on the Company's website www.hindustanpetroleum.com and on the website of CDSL at https://www.evotingindia.com and shall also be informed to BSE Limited ("BSE") and National Stock Exchange of India Limited ("NSE") at www.bseindia.com and www.nseindia.com respectively.
A) e-Voting: Summary of relevant dates for remote e-voting process is given below
Commencement of remote e-voting Monday, May 13, 2024 (From 9.00 a.m. (IST))
End of remote e-voting Tuesday, June 11, 2024 (Till 5.00 p.m. (IST))
Cut-Off Date for remote e-voting Friday, May 10, 2024
Results of remote e-voting At or before 4.00 p.m. IST on Wednesday, June 12, 2024
Event Number for remote e-voting EVSN - 240510001
1. Please note that e-Voting Module will be disabled by CDSL for remote e-voting after the said date/time.
2. Members holding shares as on cut-off date i.e. May 10, 2024 can access Notice of Postal Ballot on HPCIL's website https://www.hindustanpetroleum.com /documents/pdf/Notice-of-Postal-Ballot_2024.pdf and can refer instructions given in the Notes to the Notice of Postal Ballot for obtaining User ID and password for remote e-voting.
3. Members holding shares in physical mode and who have not updated their e-mail addresses with the Company are requested to write to the Company or Registrar and Transfer Agents (M/s. Link Intime India Private Limited, Unit: Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited, C 101, 247 Park, Lal Bahadur Shastri Marg, Vikhroli West, Mumbai - 400 083, email ID: rnt.helpdesk@linkintime.com) to update their respective email addresses by providing the requisite documents. Members holding shares in dematerialized mode are requested to register/update their email addresses with the respective Depository Participants.
4. The Company has appointed M/s. Ragini Chokshi & Company, Practicing Company Secretaries, as the Scrutinizer for conducting the Postal Ballot Process in a fair and transparent manner.
5. All grievances related to the facility for voting by electronic means may be addressed to Mr. Rakesh Dalvi, Sr. Manager, Central Depository Services (India) Limited, A Wing, 25th Floor, Marathon Futrex, Mafatlal Mill Compounds, N M Joshi Marg, Lower Parel (East), Mumbai- 400013 or send an email to helpdesk.evoting@cdslindia.com or call at toll free no. 1800 22 55 33.
6. Members having grievances pertaining to the Postal Ballot Process, may send an e-mail at hpcinvestors@mail.hpcil.co.in or write to Shri Umesh S. Pawaskar, Assistant Company Secretary or Shares Department, Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited, 2nd Floor, Shares Department, Petroleum House, 17, Jamsheji Tata Road, Churchgate, Mumbai - 400 020. The Notice can also be downloaded from the investor section at www.hindustanpetroleum.com.
The results of the Postal Ballot will be announced at the Registered Office of the Company at the specified date, time & place and shall be informed to BSE and NSE at www.bseindia.com and www.nseindia.com respectively and on the website of CDSL at https://www.evotingindia.com and will also be hosted under the Investors' section of website www.hindustanpetroleum.com
B) Bonus Issue, Record Date & Mode of Allotment: Details are as under:
Ratio 1 share for every 2 shares held (subject to approval of the shareholders through Postal Ballot)
Record Date for eligibility to receive Bonus Equity Issue Friday, June 21, 2024
Allotment of Bonus Equity Shares In Demat Mode
Date : May 12, 2024
Place : Mumbai
By Order of the Board, V. Murali Company Secretary



The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY
RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

A POOR DEBATE

Congress veteran Mani Shankar Aiyar's ill-considered remarks on Pakistan, PM Modi's response, generate more heat than light

AGENERAL ELECTION offers an opportunity for a serious debate on Pakistan, India's most challenging neighbour, and on the broader orientation of the nation's foreign policy in a moment of profound change in the international system. Given the NDA's decade-long tenure in power, there is a sound basis for such a debate between the two main national parties — the ruling BJP and the Opposition Congress. But evidently, it is not to be. Congress veteran and maverick Mani Shankar Aiyar's ill-considered remarks on "respecting" Pakistan, because it has an atomic arsenal, and Prime Minister Narendra Modi's counter-attack, generate more heat than light.

Aiyar has a view of Pakistan that has never been in sync with Congress policies or the foreign policy establishment that the party directed for most of the decades since Independence. Aiyar's remarks have always complicated Congress campaigns, but in this case he is also inaccurate in describing India's nuclear dilemmas and characterising the Modi government's record on Pakistan. After it acquired nuclear weapons in the late 1980s, the Pakistan army began to support cross-border terrorism under the shadow of nuclear escalation, and mounted pressure on India to negotiate the Kashmir dispute on its terms. All governments in Delhi, irrespective of political hue, have struggled to find answers. The question here is not about "respecting" Pakistan, but "detering" Rawalpindi's threat of escalation, and countering its nuclear blackmail.

The PM has a good story to tell on Pakistan and he can claim credit for major gains in the policy towards the western neighbour. Aiyar's claim that the BJP government has not engaged Pakistan does not stand scrutiny. On his first day in office in May 2014, Modi spent time with the then Prime Minister of Pakistan, Nawaz Sharif, who had come to Delhi along with other South Asian leaders to attend the swearing-in of the BJP government. Unlike Manmohan Singh, who was not allowed by the Congress to visit Pakistan even once during his decade-long stint as India's PM, Modi traveled at short notice to Lahore on Christmas day of 2015 to call on Sharif at his family home. The Pakistan army was quick to quash the hopes generated by Modi's visit. It launched a major terror attack on Pathankot a week later. Modi broke from custom and invited Pakistan's ISI to conduct a joint investigation with Indian agencies but Rawalpindi had little interest. The Modi years have also seen the establishment of the Kartarpur Sahib corridor to Pakistan for Sikh pilgrims in 2019 and the negotiation of a ceasefire accord in 2021. Above all, the Modi government made a serious effort to deter Pakistan by ordering a vigorous cross-border military response to terror attacks. It also changed the constitutional status of Jammu and Kashmir in 2019 and blocked Pakistan's efforts to take the issue to the United Nations Security Council. Put simply, Modi has successfully changed the terms of engagement with Pakistan. It is unfortunate that the PM chose to combine his response to Aiyar with heaping contempt on Pakistan by pointing to its current economic crisis. This comes at a time when Islamabad is sending important signals on improving ties with India, and Modi himself stands tall on the world stage. The heat of electoral battle cannot justify disdain towards a neighbour India can't just wish away.

A SAFER WEB

Protecting children on the internet calls for frank conversations at home and in the classroom

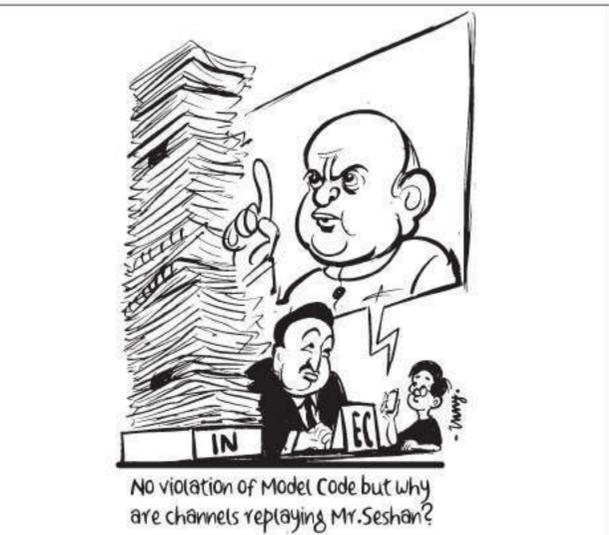
AT A TIME when technology is integrated into all aspects of life, how can society's most vulnerable members be better protected from its harms? A question like this one lay behind the observations on May 6, by a single-judge bench of Delhi High Court, which said that efforts to protect minors should go beyond teaching them about "good touch" and "bad touch" in the physical world. Invoking the concept of "virtual touch", Justice Swarana Kanta Sharma said, "Minors must be equipped with the knowledge and tools to navigate online interactions safely and recognise potential risks lurking in cyberspace."

More than three decades since the internet entered the public domain, the understanding of how the world wide web impacts society, especially children and young adults, struggles to keep pace with the evolution of the technology itself. Complicating this is the fact that the generations of so-called "digital natives" that have emerged since the late 1990s, have limited or no experience of a world without the internet, even as those responsible for putting safeguards in place continue to frame the unique challenges of the digital world in analog terms. There is little doubt that the pervasiveness of the internet has made it easier for children and young people to be exposed to dangers, including child sexual abuse, online harassment, cyberbullying and blackmail. Existing laws such as the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act and the Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Act, which mandates that parental consent be taken for processing of a child's data, go some way towards addressing these concerns. But legislation can only play a limited role, thanks to the dynamic nature of the internet and its threats. For any effort to protect children to be effective, it must begin from the home and classroom, with frank conversations between children and adults that also take into account the former's concerns and experiences. As Justice Sharma said, this would involve teaching children about "appropriate online behaviour, recognising warning signs of predatory behaviour, and understanding the importance of privacy settings and online boundaries."

The internet is a resource, not just for adults, but also for children who rely on it for education, entertainment, socialising and self-realisation, and a fear-based approach would only be counterproductive. Considering that a majority of children in India still either have no or restricted access to the internet, what is called for is a balanced approach that keeps the child safe online, while recognising her right to access the internet.

FREEZE FRAME

EP UNNY



Make it farmer friendly

Export policy has a consumer bias. This needs to change if we want to augment farmers' incomes



FROM PLATE TO PLOUGH

BY ASHOK GULATI AND RITIKA JUNEJA

AGRICULTURAL EXPORTS TOUCHED \$48.9 billion in 2023-24, registering a 8 per cent decline from \$53.2 billion in 2022-23. This is significantly short of the ambitious target of \$60 billion set by the Narendra Modi government for 2022. Not only this, the growth momentum in agri-exports during the 10 years of Modi government seems to have lost steam, dropping from an annual average growth rate of 20 per cent during the UPA government (2004-05 to 2013-14) to a meagre 1.9 per cent during 2014-15 to 2023-24. In absolute terms, while India's agri-exports surged from \$8.7 billion in 2004-05 to a whopping \$43.3 billion in 2013-14, a vault jump of almost 500 per cent, they only lurched thereafter, reaching \$48.9 billion by 2023-24. This indicates a decline in trade surplus, from a peak of \$27.7 billion in 2013-14 to \$16 billion in 2023-24. Had the growth momentum of the UPA period been sustained during the NDA period, agricultural exports could have reached the \$200 billion mark today. Since agri-exports have strong implications for incomes of the farming community, there is an urgent need to chalk out a new strategy to revive them. This requires a deeper dive into the structure of exports and the reasons behind their sluggish growth during the NDA period.

It is important to note that rice holds the top position in India's agri-exports basket, valued at \$10.4 billion from 16.3 million tonnes (MT). This represents roughly 21 per cent of the total value of agri-exports in 2023-24. Following rice are marine products (\$7.3 billion), constituting a 15 per cent share, spices (\$4.25 billion) with a 9 per cent share, bovine meat (\$3.7 billion) with an 8 per cent share, and sugar (\$2.8 billion) accounting for 6 per cent of the total share.

Indian agri-exports are influenced by two main factors: One, how global prices of agri-produce are behaving; and two, how liberal is our agri-export policy. When global prices are on the upswing, India's agri-exports also surge, as was the case in the UPA period. But when global prices fall, our price-competitive-

ness also gets blunted, and agri-exports suffer, as was the case in the first five years of the Modi government.

Besides global price dynamics, export restrictions and outright bans on sensitive agricultural commodities like wheat, rice, sugar, and onions lately have significantly impacted agri-exports, driven primarily by the concerns of domestic food inflation. This began with the ban on wheat exports on May 13, 2022, followed by restrictions on sugar exports in June 2022. On July 20, 2023, exports of non-basmati white rice and broken rice were prohibited. Additionally, on August 25, 2023, a 20 per cent duty was imposed on parboiled non-basmati rice exports, along with minimum export price (MEP) on basmati rice, initially at \$1200/tonne, but later reduced to \$950/tonne in October 2023. Recently, while the export ban on onions was lifted, it was replaced with a 40 per cent duty, in addition to a MEP of \$550/tonne.

Export restrictions on rice offer valuable policy lessons. As India announced its rice export restrictions, the international price of rice surged by approximately 25 per cent, escalating from \$494/tonne during April-June 2023 to \$620/tonne in January 2024. This helped exporters of basmati rice and parboiled rice get better price realisation. Despite a 27 per cent drop in rice exports from 22.3MT in 2022-23 to 16.3MT in 2023-24, the export value realisation only decreased by 6 per cent, from \$11.1 billion to \$10.4 billion during the same period. Here is a policy lesson: In a global market of around 53 MT, if India exports say 22 MT or more rice, it will bring down the global price to Indian levels. Trade theory suggests an optimal export tax to ensure that marginal revenue from additional exports should not fall. Our research indicates India's optimal rice export quantity should be around 15-16 MT. Beyond this, additional exports will yield diminishing marginal revenues. In other words, India will have to export more quantity to get the same export revenue. That is not a wise policy. A prudent policy option would be to impose a 15 per cent export duty on common

and parboiled rice, alongside lifting the outright export ban.

In the case of rice, which is 65 per cent irrigated, there are also concerns related to depleting groundwater, especially in the Punjab-Haryana belt. Free power and highly subsidised fertilisers are leading to an ecological disaster. It is widely recognised that producing one kilogram of rice requires between 3,000-5,000 litres of water for irrigation. Assuming an average water usage of approximately 4,000 litres per kilogram of rice, with roughly half of this water seeping back to groundwater, exporting 16.3 MT of rice effectively means exporting 32.6 billion cubic meters of water. We must recognise that high subsidies on power and fertilisers confer artificial competitive advantage.

Essentially, true export competitiveness hinges on boosting productivity and achieving more with fewer resources. This goal demands significant investments across agriculture, including research and development, seeds, irrigation, fertilisers and adopting resource-efficient farming practices like precision agriculture, fertigation etc. These strategic investments can drive down per-unit costs, enhance global competitiveness, increase agricultural exports, improve farmers' profitability, as well as protect the environment.

The case of onion is unique. The government announced opening up its exports just before polling in Maharashtra but put a very high MEP with 40 per cent export duty, making the effective export price of Rs 65/kg. This is when farmers are currently selling onions at Rs 13 to Rs 15/kg in Lasalgaon, not enough to recover their costs. However, they are deprived of the export opportunity that could have lifted their domestic price. All this shows that government policy has a consumer bias, which implicitly discriminates against the farmer. This needs to change if we want to augment farmers' incomes.

Gulati is Infosys Chair Professor and Juneja is Fellow at ICRIER. Views are personal

LOST AND NOT FOUND

Great works reclaim lost histories. 'Heeramandi' reinforces stereotypes



MANJARI CHATURVEDI

I HAVE SPENT 15 years recreating the songs and dances of tawaifs and telling their stories in an attempt to build respect for their art and remove the stigma associated with them. It is heart-breaking to write this article in 2024.

With a big promotional budget and the backing of one of the biggest OTT platforms, Sanjay Leela Bhansali's new series *Heeramandi* shows a particular version of the lives of tawaifs to an audience with little idea of their history.

First, let's talk about what the series has done well — opulent sets, great lighting, a profusion of velvet, silk and zardozi embroidery and depiction of the freedom movement.

Yet, the only thing you remember after watching the show is this: Women who drank and smoked excessively, were forever scheming, and who sang and danced only to claim a "sahab" for sexual favours and wealth. If, after doing all this, they became powerful, they only used their power to connive against each other, even kill. We never see them discussing or practising a *thumri*, a poem or *dadra*. We see no ustads teaching them.

Where is the artiste in them? Historically, there were different kinds of entertainers: Bhands, nakkals, behrupiya, tawaifs, mirasins. And just as there are A-grade, B-grade and C-grade actors, these entertainers can't all be clubbed together. But, like the British, Bhansali puts the singers, dancers, sex workers under one umbrella — "tawaif".

The tawaifs represented the highest form of art, catering to the elite. They worked hard

to perfect their art. It took years of learning, which only a dancer or a singer will be able to tell, to perfect a *raag*, a *taal*, a *tukda*. The famous *dadra* composition "phool gendwa na maro" by Jaddanbai and Rasoolan Bai is reworked and used, without giving them due acknowledgement. The dances are nothing to talk about. In the absence of content, elaborate sets, heavy outfits and a camera circling around dancers are used to dazzle the audience and create a sense of grandeur. The culture of Awadh, its nawabs, their mannerisms, language, outfits have been transplanted into Lahore. One doesn't know whether we are watching women of Lucknow or Lahore.

The tawaifs were well-read women of their times, educated and accomplished. This series shows them in a derogatory light. It leaves people with the impression that they were illiterate women, scheming for favours. While the fictional character of Mallika Jaan is merely a conniving *huzoor*, those who read the history of the times would know that there was a real Malka Jaan, who was an accomplished poet.

In an interview, Bhansali said that he refers to history only up to a point and then it's his imagination that comes into play. In his version of their story, tawaifs are merely useful for sexual gratification. There is an unnecessary obsession with the ritual of "nath utrai" (the practice of "selling" virginity). Even the dance songs, which are traditional *raag*-based classical forms, are merely used to tease and titillate. The great arts of *thumri*, *ghazal*, *dadra*,

and *chhota khayal*, and *kathak* the dance form that was associated with them, are lost in Bhansali's depiction of decadence. This was the era when Jaddanbai moved to Bombay to run a production house and compose music, when Gauhar Jaan was the queen of gramophone records and when Mukhtar Begum from Lahore was the queen of Parsi theatre and Hindi cinema.

At the end of a recent class, a Kathak dancer told me, "Didi, you speak about the dignity of the dance and music of the tawaifs and say they performed *kathak* and *thumri*. But after watching *Heeramandi* the audience will call us (Kathak dancers) sex workers." This is the fear that arises when creative liberties are taken to tamper with history, particularly, the sensitive histories of women.

Heeramandi has a disclaimer that its characters are fictional even as the promotional tours have repeatedly talked about showcasing history. Great art is about reclaiming lost histories to give due recognition and credit to the vilified and the misrepresented, not to reinforce stereotypes and cliches. Bhansali could have achieved something remarkable if he had portrayed the beauty, grace, talent and uniqueness of the tawaifs in order to revise their public image, giving these women, who have long been wronged, their rightful place in Indian history. Instead, he has compounded an injustice.

The writer is the founder of The Courtesan Project

MAY 13, 1984, FORTY YEARS AGO

CHIEF EDITOR SHOT

TERRORISTS GUNNED DOWN Ramesh Chander, editor-in-chief of the Hind Samachar group of newspapers, and injured his two armed guards at Jalandhar. In Amritsar, the state police claimed the seizure of a truck carrying large quantities of arms and ammunition allegedly belonging to Jamail Singh Bhindranwale. Ramesh Chander, the elder son of former Rajya Sabha member and veteran journalist, Lala Jagat Narain, was returning after attending a function.

US ON INDIA'S ROLE

THE UNITED STATES recognises the impor-

tant role of a strong India whose well-established democratic institutions help it serve as an anchor of regional stability. This was stressed by the US Vice President George Bush on his arrival in New Delhi on a state visit. Vice President M Hidayatullah in his speech at the banquet hosted in honour of President Bush said, "Our region witnessed many conflicts in the past which were not of India's seeking."

SRI LANKA KIDNAPPING

SRI LANKA PRESIDENT Junius R Jayawardene said that his country would refuse to pay the ransom demanded by the kidnapers of an American couple in the ethnically troubled province of Jaffna, where Tamil guerrillas are

fighting to establish a separate state. In an interview at his home, the 77-year-old President appealed to the international community for assistance in combating ethnic terrorism.

BIHAR JANATA SPLIT

THE JANATA UNIT in Bihar appears set for a split in the wake of its suppression by Chandra Shekhar, the party chief, in connection with the defeat of Shahabuddin, former general secretary, in the recent biennial election to the Rajya Sabha. Feverish preparations are being made to ensure the success of the meeting of 365-member state council in an attempt to demonstrate the "anti-Chandra Shekhar sentiment".



The path back from the brink

Right mix of freedom and accountability has improved the performance of public sector enterprises



HARDEEP S PURI

A CLUELESS OPPOSITION is a bane for any democracy. Unfortunately, the government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been saddled with a rudderless Opposition, which often makes baseless accusations. One of the outrageous charges against the decade-long tenure of the Modi government is that it has sold "family silver" of public sector enterprises (PSEs). Nothing can be further from the truth.

Consider the irrefutable facts laid bare by data for the last fiscal (2023-24): Upstream oil company Oil India Ltd posted its highest-ever crude and natural gas production. IOCL capped an excellent year with the historically best refinery throughput, sales volume and net profit. BPCL reported its highest-ever profit for the first nine months of any fiscal (April-December, 2023). Coal India recorded its highest-ever production. NTPC set a new record for the highest-ever electricity generation in a year.

Additionally, the government brought back public sector banks from the brink of the non-performing assets (NPA) crisis, inherited from the corrupt UPA regime. In the financial year 2022-23, these banks reported their highest-ever profits and lowest-ever NPAs.

Many readers would remember the treatment of PSEs as personal fiefdoms of those in power in the UPA era. Whether it was milching the Railways dry through outright corruption in what has come to be known as the "land-for-jobs" scam or arm-twisting PSEs to establish unviable projects for short-term and parochial political gains, the UPA created a vitiated atmosphere that weighed down the public sector.

The contrast between UPA and the last 10 years is unmissable. The PSEs are now competing for global leadership and establishing themselves as recognisable brands. Under PM Modi's leadership, the government has unleashed the potential of these companies by allowing the right mix of freedom and accountability. The government maintains an arm's length distance from their business decisions while fully supporting and encouraging ambitious plans that are aligned with the vision of Viksit Bharat, 2047.

Encouraged to discharge their duties as good corporate citizens, the government-owned OMCs kept fuel prices unchanged for months to control inflation while crude prices soared in the international markets. At that time, private fuel retailers had curtailed operations as they could not match the retail rates. The OMCs were instrumental in reining in fuel costs and inflation during that crisis.

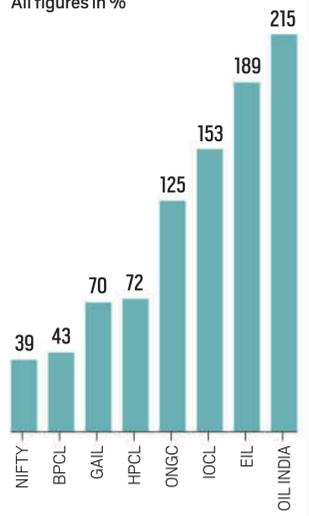
The unchanged fuel prices during the crisis affected the OMCs' bottom lines initially. However, the OMCs specifically and PSEs broadly do not operate in silos anymore, but look at their roles in the context of the entire economy. The change in mindset and outlook is a direct result of the values the Modi government has fostered.

During 2023-24, oil PSUs have posted a cumulative profit of over Rs 1.5 lakh crore, despite the fact that they have kept petrol, diesel and LPG prices amongst the lowest in the world and prices of fuel have only gone down



OIL PSUs OUTPERFORMING NIFTY INDEX

All figures in %



Between July 2021 to Feb 2024

Illustration: C R Sasikumar

in the last three years despite major turmoil in global energy markets. The higher profits will enable them to pay substantial taxes and dividends to the government and undertake a larger capital expenditure program to meet the future needs of the country.

The performance of OMCs has been driven by a long-term vision and complete professional freedom to carry out business decisions. This is suitably reflected in their market capitalisation. For OMCs and upstream companies, market capitalisation has more than doubled to nearly Rs 10 lakh crore in the last three years. Moreover, most of the oil PSUs have outperformed the Nifty index over the last three years.

With a clear vision for the future, aided by robust financial health, the PSEs have utilised their profits for investment through capital expenditure. This has provided much-needed impetus to the economy. As of February 2024, oil and gas PSEs are implementing 275 projects with a total investment of over Rs 5.67 lakh crore. During the last 10 years, these PSUs have completed projects worth Rs 4.15 lakh crore. The public sector is able to take up projects, which may have longer gestation periods, but are of strategic importance to the nation.

The government under Prime Minister Modi's leadership has sought to find the optimal path on divestment. We have carefully calibrated each individual PSE on multiple parameters before arriving at a decision, junking the one-size-fits-all policy. As a result, the government went ahead with the divestment of Air India, but held back on selling its stake in Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd (BPCL).

As a loss-making entity, Air India was the right candidate for divestment despite its glorious history. To be competitive in a uniquely brutal sector of aviation, Air India needed flexibility to rejig its human resources and nimbleness to cut across old bu-

The Modi government's stewardship of PSEs heralds a new era of governance characterised by professionalism, strategic foresight, and unwavering commitment to national interests. The PSEs have responded spectacularly to the visionary leadership by embodying the reform, perform and transform mantra.

reaucratic processes, which required it to be privatised. Post its privatisation and rejig, Air India has placed an order for over 500 planes.

On the other hand, the government felt it was crucial to retain full control of BPCL owing to its vast network of fuel retail outlets, important refineries and unmatched expertise in various domains. Moreover, BPCL has been playing a significant role in energy transition through the ethanol blending programme and other measures to reduce carbon emissions.

BPCL has vindicated the government's decision against divesting its stake. The company's profit after tax for the nine months of 2023-24 was nearly 75 per cent of the reserve price the government was expected to receive from the divestment. The government can now keep the company and also net a healthy dividend.

At a time when privatisation was thought to be the only solution for state-run electricity boards, as CM of Gujarat, Modi's inspiring and visionary leadership, combined with effective identification and resolution of performance gaps, corruption-free and professional management at the top achieved the seemingly impossible task of making state electricity companies profitable. A decade later, distribution companies in Gujarat continue to be counted among the best in the country across parameters.

The Modi government's stewardship of PSEs heralds a new era of governance characterised by professionalism, strategic foresight, and unwavering commitment to national interests. The PSEs have responded spectacularly to the visionary leadership by embodying the reform, perform and transform mantra. The stage is set for PSEs to shoulder India's development journey into a brighter and more prosperous future for all.

The writer is Union Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas, and Housing and Urban Affairs

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"He [Netanyahu] seeks a propitious moment to campaign for re-election as Hamas's destroyer. He bets on Donald Trump, who considers settlements legitimate, returning to power. Israel's occupation is at the root of its government's extremism. A smart sanctions regime is needed..."

— THE GUARDIAN

Three corners in Telangana

Congress seeks to capitalise on momentum of Assembly election win and BJP tries to expand influence, while BRS is fighting to stay relevant



AFROZ ALAM

IN THE 2024 parliamentary elections for Telangana's 17 seats, the political scenario is shaping up to be a competitive three-way contest. The Congress party and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) are squaring off against each other in many constituencies, while the Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS), which once held sway over the state, is focusing more on consolidating its vote share than winning outright. For the BRS, this election is crucial for maintaining its political relevance within the state. Congress is currently in a favourable position following its victory in the recent assembly elections, while the BJP has been buoyed by its performance in both the assembly elections and the Hyderabad municipal elections. The success of these two national parties will depend heavily on whether the BRS can retain its traditional voter base.

The BRS faces potential existential challenges. Several factors contribute to its precarious situation. First, the morale within the party has significantly declined following its unexpected loss in the 2023 assembly elections, where it secured only 39 of the 119 seats. This decline is further exacerbated by the arrest of K Kavitha, daughter of the former Chief Minister K Chandrasekar Rao, in connection with a money laundering case. Moreover, the visible discord and poor coordination among its party members have further aggravated the situation.

The party has also suffered from defections to the BJP and Congress, weakening its prospects further. The BRS, which had initiated "Operation Akarshan" to attract leaders from these two parties, is now seeing a reversal of this trend. It finds itself in a challenging position, holding the majority with 9 out of 17 Lok Sabha seats, yet struggling to field candidates across many constituencies. The sitting BRS MPs from Zaheerabad and Nagarkurnool have switched allegiances to the BJP. Similarly, MPs representing Chevella and Warangal, along with the MLA from Khairatabad, have joined Congress. This has led to a situation where several potential candidates are either approaching other parties or awaiting the results of the 2024 elections before making their move.

Over a decade since the formation of the state, the fervour of the Telangana Movement, which once galvanised significant public and political support, has faded. This waning sentiment presents a significant challenge for the BRS, which had capitalised on regional pride to ascend to power. Initially, the movement's success was a testament to the effective mobilisation and strong emotional appeal crafted by the BRS leadership, embodying the aspirations for a "Bangaru Telangana" or golden state. However, as the initial enthusiasm has subsided and the realities of governance have set in, the BRS has struggled to maintain its momentum. The lack of new milestones or significant achievements to rally the popu-

lace has left the party vulnerable, struggling to invoke the same level of regional sentiment that once secured it a robust electoral mandate. This shift has left the BRS scrambling to redefine its political strategy, making it increasingly difficult to engage voters with the same intensity as in past elections.

A key development also is the weakening of BRS's informal alliance with AIMIM. After the Congress secured 64 out of 119 Assembly seats in the 2023 elections, it began courting AIMIM, which holds seven seats, to mitigate any future threats to its stability. This courtship by Congress appears to be succeeding, posing a considerable risk to the BRS as it stands to lose a crucial ally, further destabilising its position in the state. Concurrently, the BJP, recognising the BRS's vulnerabilities, has intensified its efforts to erode the party's support base. Despite traditionally lacking strong local cadres and a broad appeal in Telangana, the BJP has been capitalising on the so-called Modi wave to attract disenchanted BRS cadres and voters. The BJP, however, struggles to field strong candidates from its own ranks and has thus been focusing its recruitment efforts on BRS's ranks. Furthermore, the BRS is finding it increasingly challenging to maintain even a semblance of its previous tacit understanding with the BJP, complicating its strategic options. This dynamic not only highlights the opportunistic nature of party politics in the region but also underscores the precarious position of the BRS.

The BRS is contending with significant hurdles that stem not only from external political dynamics but also from deeply ingrained perceptions and demographic realities. It is grappling with a pervasive narrative that took root during the 2023 Assembly elections, characterised by the widespread criticism of the perceived arrogance growing out of a decade of family-centric governance, the inaccessibility of its leaders, serious corruption charges and, notably, the failure to fulfil promises to key voter groups such as Dalits and unemployed youths. Such criticism has contributed to a challenging electoral atmosphere, as the party struggles to reshape its image and regain the trust of disillusioned voters.

Compounding these challenges are the caste dynamics. The BRS leadership draws primarily from the Velama community, which constitutes a mere three per cent of the state's population. This demographic limitation restricts its ability to establish a broader core voter base, thus diminishing its electoral advantage. Together, these factors delineate a party at a crossroads, struggling to navigate the multifaceted challenges of contemporary political engagements and shifting voter expectations.

Despite these challenges, BRS's enduring schemes like Rythu Bandhu, Shaadi Mubarak, pensions and the continued reverence for K Chandrasekar Rao as a significant leader, may still sway some voters. Ultimately, the outcome of the elections will determine whether Congress can capitalise on its current momentum, and the BJP can expand its influence, or whether the BRS can reclaim its former standing in Telangana's political landscape.

The writer is Professor and Head, Department of Political Science, Maulana Azad National Urdu University, Hyderabad

India in the world, a continuity

Modi government has sought to promote India's interest — others did so too



VIVEK KATJU

SLOGANS AND ACRONYMS, whether alliterating or not, can be part of the vocabulary of politics but can never be the basis of analysis or policy. Nor can ideas of national interest be divorced from national ideologies; it is simplistic to think differently. Besides, even ministers have to carefully avoid the enticing trap of viewing the past through the prism of the present. That hindsight is always 20/20 may be a cliché but it is, nevertheless, true. This is not to cover past mistakes but merely to point to the essentiality of evaluating circumstances and situations that led to policy determinations.

The absence of such scrutiny may win political brownie points but inevitably leads to the repetition of error as India's approaches to China indicate. If the early decades of Independence were marked by an insufficient analytical understanding of Chinese motivations, ambitions and objectives, in recent years the thrust of resolving fundamental difficulties or sustaining agreements reached in the past through an inordinate reliance on personal chemistry displayed naivete. Chinese actions in 2020, hopefully, acted as a corrective.

The desire to be a "Bandhu" to the entire world is noble. However, are those who frame the external policies of countries re-

ally taken in by such self-proclamations? Indeed, why should there ever be a need for such claims? What do they reveal about the psyche of such claimants? The fact is that friendship is among individuals. Friendship does not seek reciprocity — if it does, it cannot be friendship. Can nations ever act altruistically?

States pursue perceived self-interest. "Bandhutva" is never the basis of their actions even when they assist another state. Indeed, it is ironical that "Bandhutva" is being asserted by the current ruling dispensation along with the claim that it is more sharply and concertedly pursuing India's (which is constitutionally the appropriate word, as yet, to express this country's name in the English language) national interest now than other governments did so in the past. Is this correct? Would it not be true to state that just as today the Modi government has sought to promote India's interest, acting unilaterally or bilaterally and multilaterally, others did so too in the past? All explored regional and global opportunities within existing international constraints. It is appropriate for politicians, even those who have become so after pursuing earlier careers, to promote their party's interests. But in doing that, should they abandon facts, experience

and logic?

At all times, national development goals are shaped by domestic ideologies and the external environment. It is thus also today. The Narendra Modi government has done well to use the products of the digital age to move towards a formalisation of the economy. However, inequalities that began to rise with the beginning of the liberalisation period have grown enormously. They challenge the premise of constitutional values. More significantly, the need to use the opportunities created by global concerns regarding the concentration of manufacturing facilities only in a singular economy is obvious. The question, though, is if conditions have been adequately created for this purpose. The recent example of a captain of a digital industrial giant giving India a miss after planning a visit and landing in China is noteworthy.

It is also good to contemplate "leapfrogging" in the knowledge industries and a wide swathe of economic activities but these will remain dreams without the deployment of enough public and private resources. There is no indication that this is being done. Realism demands an acknowledgement that let alone the US and Europe, even China is far ahead of India in pure science and technology. Yes, the development of some applica-

tions with a nationwide reach is a great achievement, but these will not help in reducing the gap which is growing with these countries in these critical areas.

Are we deploying the needed public and private resources for research and innovation in the frontier areas or are we being satisfied by buying those developed elsewhere knowing that no one will give us their best? And, candour demands the acceptance that the glories of the past can hardly be the basis of dealing with the realities of the present, especially in the quest for knowledge both in the physical and social sciences.

The quest to navigate global contradictions has been the attempt of Indian foreign policy since the beginning. New terminology cannot diffuse the thrust of what, now the much-reviled, Jawaharlal Nehru, attempted. Indeed, Nehru's impulses derived from the fundamental principles of the Freedom Movement. And seven decades and more later, those principles continue to demand an independent and autonomous foreign policy. If the Modi government considers that it is following these principles, it would be unworthy of its members to claim that its predecessors did not do so.

The writer is a former diplomat

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

RESPECT THE PLAYERS

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'The owner's corner' (IE, May 11). Money is necessary for nurturing sports. However it's the spirit of the sport that is paramount. When money becomes the be-all and end-all, this spirit is lost. Owners of the teams must remember that it is the sport and the players who are fetching them the monetary returns. Ill treatment of any player — senior or newcomer — by the owners is outrageous and condemnable. Players are the flag bearers of the sport they represent. Hence, they all deserve the same respect. The BCCI must intervene and seek apology from the owner of LSG. It is essential for preserving the sanctity of the game and its players. Code of conduct for the owners must also be framed by the IPL governing body so that such ugly behaviour by the owners are brought to book.

Manish Mishra, Bhopal

BALANCING ACT

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Right to campaign' (IE, May 11). The SC's order granting interim bail to Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal balances the sanctity of the fundamental right to personal liberty and freedom of expression in the election season with the necessity to observe the legal due process in a

criminal investigation. The Court order reaffirms the legal principles for the grant of interim bail to those in custody, and is a fine balancing act in furtherance of the democratic fundamentals. One hopes that Kejriwal makes the best use of this god-sent opportunity.

SS Paul, Nadia

AGAINST SECULARISM

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'At ease with diversity' (IE, May 11). The writer, while analysing the PMEAC study, cited India's case where there is a 7.81 per cent fall in the majority population with the corresponding rise in the population of minorities. However, his conclusion that it reflects a conducive environment for minorities in society is partly true. Alternatively, having more children or Total Fertility Rate (TFR) also reflects prevalence of illiteracy, poverty, social orthodoxy etc., which falls with better education and socio-economic improvement as the latest National Family Health Survey data shows. Contrary to the writer's claim, the PMEAC study is not a vindication against opposition's charge of RSS-BJP being anti-minority. Notably, it is Sangh Parivar who red flagged minority welfare as "minority appeasement" to attack the Opposition and discredit secularism.

LR Murmu, New Delhi



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If there are questions of current or contemporary relevance that you would like explained, please write to explained@indianexpress.com

Of India's 969 million electors, more than 18.4 million are between the ages of 18 and 19. This is the story of elections to India's House of the People, for the younger readers of *The Indian Express*

After Indira assassination, 400 paar for Rajiv

1984: The young Prime Minister with an unprecedented mandate had a turbulent tenure. He would lose power amid a huge corruption scandal in 1989, and the Congress would never again achieve a Lok Sabha majority on its own

SHYAMLAL YADAV
 NEW DELHI, MAY 12

THE ONLY politician who actually went "400 paar" in Lok Sabha was Rajiv Gandhi, who found himself unexpectedly pitchforked into the job after Indira Gandhi was assassinated on October 31, 1984.

Riding a nationwide tsunami of sympathy, Rajiv's Congress won 404 of the 514 seats in the first phase of the eighth Lok Sabha election held on December 24, 27, and 28, 1984, and another 10 seats after votes were cast in militancy-hit Punjab and Assam in September and December 1985 respectively.

The goodwill vanished remarkably quickly. India's youngest Prime Minister — Rajiv was only 40 when he took office — lost power amid a huge corruption scandal in 1989, and the Congress could never achieve a Lok Sabha majority on its own after 1984.

Churn in Opposition

The years after the collapse of the Janata experiment and Indira's return to power saw massive churn in the political opposition and important developments in the states. Chaudhary Charan Singh's Janata Party (Secular) splintered into his own Janata Party (S-Charan Singh) and Janata Party (S-Raj Narain). In August 1982, Charan Singh's group, now called Lok Dal, too split as the Bihar leader Karpoori Thakur went his own way. Both Charan Singh and Thakur were honoured with the Bharat Ratna earlier this year.

The opposition had several single-personality parties — Jagjivan Ram's Congress (Jagjivan), H N Bahuguna's Democratic Socialist Party (DSP) and Chandrajit Yadav's Janwadi Party. George Fernandes, Madhu Limaye, Devi Lal, and Biju Patnaik were in the Lok Dal (K).

Farooq Abdullah became Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir after his father Sheikh Abdullah died on September 8, 1982. In Karnataka, Ramakrishna Hegde became CM in a Janata government on January 10, 1983. A day earlier, Telugu actor-turned-politician N T Rama Rao had taken oath in Andhra Pradesh.

As efforts were made for a possible alliance or merger of some "progressive and socialist" national and regional parties, Chandra Shekhar's Janata came together with K Ramachandran's Congress (Secular), Bahuguna's DSP, and Ratubhai Adani's Rashtriya Congress in a United Front. The BJP, which had earlier opposed the idea of a merger of parties, said it would follow a policy of "meaningful cooperation" — and following multiple rounds of talks between between BJP chief Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Charan Singh, the two parties came together in August 1983 in the first avatar of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA).

But this version of the NDA did not last. A year after it was formed, the BJP decided to break away, and Charan Singh formed the new Dalit Mazdoor Kisan Party (DMKP).

An early election

The Lok Sabha election would have taken place in the normal course in January 1985. On August 25, 1984, the Election Commission of India (ECI) called a meeting of all parties to discuss the alleged misuse of official machinery in the election campaign. Some parties wanted a ban on the use of official aircraft by ministers and other leaders from the last date of withdrawal of nominations to the day of polling.

The assassination of Indira Gandhi was followed by terrible anti-Sikh violence. More than 3,000 members of the community were killed across the country, including more than 2,500 in Delhi. Some accused,



Rajiv Gandhi was unexpectedly thrust into the limelight after the assassination of Indira Gandhi on October 31, 1984. *Archive*

including a few Congress leaders, have been convicted.

The ECI was forced to bring the Lok Sabha election forward by a few weeks. During the campaign, the Janata Party and the BJP objected to a Congress advertisement with the line: "Why should you feel uncomfortable riding in a taxi driven by a taxi driver belonging to another State?" The ECI's report said that "according to the complainants, the reference to taxi driver was in fact intended to refer to Sikh community and that it aimed at fanning communal prejudice and disaffection among different sections of the people".

The ECI concluded that the ad "did not offend any electoral law or run counter to the principles laid down in the Model Code of Conduct".

Unprecedented mandate

Elections were held in 17 states and in all nine Union Territories on a single day. No voting could be held in Punjab and Assam — to facilitate this, Section 73A was added to The Representation of the People Act, 1951, which allowed the ECI to "take steps in relation to elections...in the State of Assam and the...State of Punjab separately and in such manner and on such dates as it may deem appropriate".

The counting of votes began on December 28, 1984 in states and UTs where polling was held on December 24 and 27, and on December 29 in Nagaland and Meghalaya, where voting took place on December 28. Results were declared for almost all constituencies by December 31.

Rajiv won in Amethi, defeating his sister-in-law and Sanjay's wife Maneka Gandhi. Actor Amitabh Bachchan defeated the former Congressman and veteran leader H N Bahuguna in Allahabad. K R Narayanan, the future President of India, won in Kerala's Ottapalam. Prakash Chand Sethi in Indore, Ghulam Nabi Azad in Washim in Maharashtra, and P V Narasimha Rao, who would be Prime Minister, in Berhampur. Abida Ahmed, the wife of Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed, who was President during Indira's Emergency, won in Bareilly.

NTR's Telugu Desam Party won 30 seats in Lok Sabha. The CPI(M) won 22 seats, Janata 10, CPI 6, and Lok Dal (C) 3. The BJP won just two seats — Chandupatla Janga Reddy from Hanamkonda in Andhra Pradesh and A K Patel from Mehsana in Gujarat. Vajpayee lost in Gwalior, and Janata's Chandra Shekhar was defeated in his home turf of Ballia in UP.

Charan Singh won in Baghpat. Jagjivan Ram, who had left the Congress to join Congress for Democracy and later formed a new party, the Congress (J), won in Sasaram. Sharad Pawar of Congress (Socialist) won in Baramati.

New phase of politics

By the time of the 1984 election, most Opposition giants of the earlier generation had passed on. C Rajagopalachari, the architect of humiliating Congress defeats, died in 1972. Jayaprakash Narayan, the force behind Opposition unity in 1977, died in 1979. J B Kripalani passed away in 1982.

Among the new Opposition parties and leaders, the TDP, founded in March 1982, was the most prominent. Several new faces gained prominence in the Congress too, as Rajiv carried out a revamp of the party.

In 1985, the central government signed the Rajiv-Longowal Accord in Punjab and the Assam Accord with the leaders of the Assam movement. In 1986, the government brought a law in Parliament to effectively nullify the Supreme Court's progressive judgment in the Shah Bano case. The contract with the Swedish arms manufacturer Bofors for the supply of field howitzers was followed by revelations of kickbacks of Rs 64 crore in the deal, which was considered a big amount at the time. The Bofors scandal would haunt Rajiv for the rest of his tenure and his life.

In 1989, the Congress crashed from the dizzying heights of 1984 to just 197 seats in Lok Sabha, paving the way for the formation of another non-Congress government.



EXPLAINED SCIENCE

WHY KERALA TEMPLES BANNED USE OF OLEANDER FLOWERS AS OFFERINGS

SHAJU PHILIP
 THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, MAY 12

TWO KERALA government-controlled temple boards, which together manage 2,500-odd temples in the state, have banned the use of oleander flowers (locally known as *arali*) in temple offerings after a 24-year-old woman died after accidentally chewing some oleander leaves.

Here is what to know about oleander, its medicinal uses, and its toxicity.



Toxicity of oleander has been known since antiquity. *Wikimedia Commons*

First, what happened?

Surya Surendran, a 24-year-old nurse, died on April 30, *prima facie* due to accidental oleander poisoning.

Surendran had got a new job in the United Kingdom, and was set to leave on April 28. That morning, however, she chewed some leaves of an oleander shrub that grew outside her home in Pallipad, Alappuzha. She was on the phone, possibly absent-minded, and probably did not know or understand the danger from the plant.

She soon developed uneasiness, and vomited a few times. She went to Kochi airport, but collapsed there. She was taken to hospital, where she died a couple of days later.

Asked what she had eaten, she told doctors that she had chewed oleander leaves and flowers. The forensic surgeon, who conducted the autopsy, told police that she had suffered oleander poisoning.

What is oleander?

Nerium oleander, commonly known as oleander or rosebay, is a shrub or small tree that grows in tropical, subtropical, and temperate regions around the world, and is known for its drought tolerance. It has flowers of various colours including red, pink, and white, and is often used for ornamental and landscaping purposes.

In Kerala, the plant is known by the names *arali* and *kanaveeram*, and is grown along highways and beaches as a natural, green fencing.

Where is oleander used?

The *Ayurvedic Pharmacopoeia of India* (API), a government document that describes the quality, purity, and strength of drugs used in Ayurveda, mentions oleander. According to API, an oil prepared from the root bark can be used to treat skin diseases.

The plant has been "frequently described in Brihatrayi, Nighantus and other classical Ayurvedic texts. Charaka (*Charak Samhita*) has prescribed the leaves of white flowered variety externally in chronic and obstinate skin diseases of serious nature including leprosy,"

In their election manifestos, how India's main parties see the world



EXPERTS EXPLAIN
 AMITABH MATTOO & CHETAN RANA

WILL PRESIDENT Joe Biden's decision to pause the supply of bombs to Israel change the course of the war in Gaza? Does the Ukrainian decision to allow convicts to serve in its armed forces signal a new desperation in the conflict with Russia?

How are India's political parties gearing up to the challenges of a complex, fractured, but deeply globalised world? Do they have well-defined positions on these issues? As the world becomes increasingly divided along Manichean "cold war" lines, hedging may no longer be an option.

The weltanschauung

On world views, the divide is clear. The BJP's manifesto celebrates India's "civilizational values, thought, wisdom and traditional knowledge", and seeks to craft policies to further India's "national interests with the spirit of Vishwa Bandhu and a Bharat First Attitude". For the BJP, the last decade has seen the transformation of India from one of the "fragile five" to one of the top five economies of the world.

The BJP sees India as a trusted global partner, a first responder to global crises, and the voice of the Global South with a deeply connected and empowered diaspora. The world, according to its manifesto, sees India as the mother of democracy. In the future, the BJP government would assert India's soft power through Thiruvalluvar Cultural Centres around the world, and pioneer International Alliances like the International Solar Alliance, the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure, the One Future Alliance, the Global Biofuels Alliance, and the Big Cat Alliance.

It will also provide the platform of India's digital infrastructure for the global good.

For the Congress, the BJP has deeply eroded India's image abroad, and there is a

need to "uphold continuity in India's foreign policy" and to remain rooted in policy "shaped by the freedom movement and developed through the wisdom of visionary leaders like Jawaharlar Nehru".

The Congress believes its task, if elected, will be to repair India's international standing which has been hit by the "government's intolerance of dissent and suppression of human rights". It also "pledges" to restore India's global reputation as a voice of peace and moderation, and to follow a policy of "peaceful co-existence, strategic autonomy in thought and action, and increased bilateral engagement".

The CPI(M) predictably not only stands for a non-aligned foreign policy, but believes that the BJP government "has totally surrendered to US strategic, political and security designs and to strengthen US imperialism's designs for global hegemony".

On the neighbourhood

Most parties have few imaginative policies on the neighbourhood; the regional parties have emphasised their own domestic agenda.

In a rather thin section, the BJP manifesto argues that it will follow the "Neighbourhood First Policy", and repeats homilies of the past: "being a trusted and responsible partner in the subcontinent" and "promoting regional cooperation and ensuring stability and prosperity". It talks about leveraging "the Northeast as a strategic gateway for Bharat's Act East Policy ensuring connectivity, education, health, economic development and security".

The Congress speaks in terms of bilateral issues and paying "greater attention to the immediate neighbourhood". It promises to "re-establish the primacy of our special relationships with Nepal and Bhutan", "repair relations with Maldives", "enhance economic and cultural relations between India and Bangladesh", and "restore the political and commercial relations" with Sri Lanka and resolve "political issues especially with the Tamils".

On Pakistan, Congress argues that any engagement shall be conditional on Islamabad's "willingness and ability to end cross border terrorism".

The CPI(M), in a brief section, seeks to specifically address the issues around "shared resources". It suggests resuming talks with

Pakistan for "the resolution of all outstanding issues" including terrorism, and promote people-to-people relations. Crucially, it seeks to engage with Sri Lanka to negotiate devolution of powers and provide greater autonomy to Tamils in the country.

The CPI reiterates the principle of promoting "good neighbourly relations", and promises to survey and protect the Indo-Myanmar border.

The DMK's manifesto shows the overlap between neighbourhood relations and domestic politics. It condemns the "attacks and detention of Tamil Nadu fishermen by the Sri Lankan Military", and criticises the government for failing to protect them.

Sri Lankan Tamils are central in the manifesto — the DMK promises that if voted to power, the new Union government shall grant citizenship to the long-camped Tamil refugees, and secure the return of those who wish to go. The much-politicised Kachchatheevu also finds a mention — the DMK pledges "to reclaim Kachchatheevu to ensure India's security and to protect the welfare of the fishermen".

On the Global South

Engagement with the Global South is a long-standing normative principle of Indian foreign policy. Not surprisingly, all parties seek to reiterate the value of Global South solidarity.

The BJP asserts that because of its policies, Bharat has become "the voice of the Global South", and stresses the Prime Minister's "5S approach": *Samman* (Respect), *Samvad* (Dialogue), *Sahyog* (Cooperation), *Shanti* (Peace), and *Samridhi* (Prosperity). It pledges to leverage advances in technology cooperation to improve ties with other developing countries.

By setting up a Global Space Academy under the Indian Space Research Organisation and the Indian Institute of Space Science and Technology, and launching a space forum, the BJP aims to extend substantial support to Global South countries in harnessing space technologies for development, thereby positioning Bharat as a "leading space power".

The Congress, despite plugging the Nehruvian vision in its manifesto, only mentions the Global South for cooperation "to strengthen India's role in multilateral institutions".

The communist parties remain consistent and predictable in this domain. The CPI(M) advocates an "independent and non-aligned foreign policy", and emphasises strengthening cooperation among developing countries to fortify "multi-polarity" in the world, a position that weaves well into the party's larger anti-US position. The CPI also emphasises a policy of non-alignment, combined with proactive engagement in "South-South cooperation".

India has the world's largest diaspora, and is the largest recipient of remittances. There is growing recognition of the important role that the diaspora can play in India's foreign policy calculus. However, only the BJP and Congress have provided the diaspora space in their manifestos, that too marginally.

The BJP has been historically active in engaging the diaspora. Among its achievements, it counts the "evacuation and safe return of 1.5+ crore citizens in distress situations". It promises to strengthen the connection with the diaspora, and involve them "in Bharat's progress and providing unwavering support during their times of need, thereby enriching our mutual cultural and economic ties".

In 2004, the Manmohan Singh government had established the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs, which the NDA government in 2016 brought under the Ministry of External Affairs. The Congress seeks to re-establish the position of a Minister of State for overseas Indians and provide the diaspora "with a one-stop window to address their concerns".

On the diaspora

Despite India's growing role in the international system and the evolving global order, the manifestos of its major political parties suggest a predominantly inward-looking perspective with a somewhat superficial and thin emphasis on foreign policy and international affairs. Across the partisan divide, there is clearly a preference for articulating broad principles and frameworks to guide foreign policy, rather than delineating firm, committed positions on specific international issues.

The big picture

Despite India's growing role in the international system and the evolving global order, the manifestos of its major political parties suggest a predominantly inward-looking perspective with a somewhat superficial and thin emphasis on foreign policy and international affairs. Across the partisan divide, there is clearly a preference for articulating broad principles and frameworks to guide foreign policy, rather than delineating firm, committed positions on specific international issues.

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ECONOMY

MARKET WATCH

MCAP OF 6 MOST VALUED FIRMS DROPS

The combined market valuation of six of the top-10 most valued firms eroded by Rs 1,73,097.59 crore last week, with HDFC Bank and Life Insurance Corporation of India taking the maximum hit in line with weak equities. **PTI**

BRIEFLY

Next India, Asean trade pact review in Jul

New Delhi: Senior officials of India and the 10-nation bloc of Southeast Asian nations - ASEAN - will hold the next round of talks in July to review the existing free trade agreement in Jakarta, Indonesia, an official statement said on Sunday. The last round of the three-day negotiations concluded on May 9 in Putrajaya, Malaysia. The discussions for review of AIT-IGA (Asean-India Trade in Goods Agreement) started in May 2023 to make it more trade-facilitative and beneficial for businesses across the region, the Commerce Ministry said. A joint committee, which is undertaking the review work, has so far met four times. It has finalised its terms of reference and the negotiating structure for the review in its first two meetings and initiated talks for the review from its third meeting, which was held on February 18-19 here. **PTI**

CNG vehicle sales: Maruti expects 30% jump

New Delhi: Maruti Suzuki India expects its CNG car sales to rise over 30 per cent to around 6 lakh units this fiscal, according to a senior company official. The country's largest carmaker also aims to export around 3 lakh units in the ongoing financial year. "So CNG, this year, we did about 4,50,000 (units) in passenger vehicles. We are hoping to do something like 6,00,000 vehicles in FY24-25," Maruti Suzuki India Executive Director Corporate Affairs Rahul Bharti said in an analyst call. The company sells CNG trims across various models like WagonR, Brezza, Dzire, and Ertiga, among others in the domestic market. **PTI**

India's coal import rises 8% to 268 MT in FY24

New Delhi: India's coal import rose by 7.7 per cent to 268.24 million tonne (MT) in FY24 driven by softness in seaborne prices and likelihood of increase in power demand during summer. The country's coal import was 249.06 MT in FY23, according to data compiled by B2B e-commerce company mjunction services. Coal import in March FY24 also rose to 23.96 MT, over 21.12 MT in the corresponding month of the previous fiscal. Of the total volume recorded in March 2024, non-coking coal import stood at 15.33 MT, against 13.88 MT in March FY23. Coking coal import in March 2024 was 5.34 MT against 3.96 MT a year ago. During FY24, non-coking coal import was at 175.96 MT, higher than 162.46 MT imported during FY23. Coking coal import was at 57.22 MT in 2023-24, against 54.46 MT in 2022-23. **PTI**

IN FY24, INDIA'S IMPORTS FROM CHINA ROSE BY 3.24% TO \$101.7 BN

India's top trade partner: China regains spot on higher imports

RAVI DUTTA MISHRA
NEW DELHI, MAY 12

WITH IMPORTS from China crossing over \$100 billion in FY24, China has overtaken the US to become India's largest trading partner after a gap of two years, as per data released by the think tank Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI).

The US was India's top trading partner during FY22 and FY23 after China was the top bilateral trading partner in FY21.

India's bilateral trade with China in FY24 stood at \$118.4 billion as imports increased by 3.24 per cent to \$101.7 billion and exports rose by 8.7 per cent to \$16.67 billion in FY24 compared to FY23, GTRI data showed.

Between FY19 and FY24, India's exports to China witnessed a marginal decline in exports by 0.6 per cent, down from \$16.75 billion to \$16.66 billion, while imports from China surged by 44.7 per cent, up from \$70.32 billion to \$101.75 billion.

In contrast, India-US two-way trade came in at \$118.3 billion in FY24 after exports dipped by 1.32 per cent to \$77.5 billion compared to the previous financial year. Meanwhile, imports also dipped 20 per cent to \$40.8 billion.

During the last five years, trade with the US showed positive growth, with exports increasing significantly by 47.9 per cent from \$52.41 billion to \$77.52 billion. Imports from the US grew by 14.7 per cent, rising from \$35.55 billion to \$40.78 billion. This resulted in an expanded trade surplus for India, which grew from \$16.86 billion to \$36.74 billion, GTRI report said.

India trade relations with China have been under scrutiny largely due to India's dependence on the neighbouring country's critical products such as telecom & smartphone parts, pharma, advanced technology components among others.

However, India has undertaken significant measures to decrease its dependence on China through production linked incentive schemes (PLI), anti-dumping duties along with quality control orders.

"India imported \$4.2 billion worth of telecom and smartphone parts, accounting for 44 per cent of total imports in this category, indicating significant reliance on Chinese components. Laptops and PCs imports from China totaled \$3.8 billion, making up 77.7 per cent of India's imports in this sector, showcasing a heavy dependence on Chinese technology," GTRI report said.



File

In the fast emerging EV sector too, India's dependence on China is high as lithium-ion batteries for EVs, imported from China, were valued at \$2.2 billion, comprising 75 per cent of such imports, critical for India's electrification of transport.

The GTRI report further said that exports to China have remained near stagnant between FY19 and FY24 while imports have surged by nearly 45 per cent which has resulted in widening of the trade deficit from \$53.57 billion in FY 2019 to \$85.09 billion in FY 2024.

During the last five years, Russia's trading figures were marked by a dramatic increase, with exports growing by 78.3 per cent from \$2.39 billion to \$4.26 billion, while imports soared by 95.2 per cent from \$5.84 billion to \$61.44 billion, widening the trade deficit from \$3.45 billion to \$57.18 billion.

However, Saudi Arabia's exports more than doubled, with a 107.9 per cent increase from \$5.56 billion to \$11.56 billion. Imports rose at a slower pace

by 11.7 per cent from \$28.48 billion to \$31.81 billion, which slightly reduced the trade deficit from \$22.92 billion to \$20.25 billion.

"The UAE also saw notable changes; exports to the UAE rose by 18.3 per cent from \$30.13 billion to \$35.63 billion, and imports increased substantially by 61.2 per cent from \$29.79 billion to \$48.02 billion. This shift turned a marginal trade surplus of \$0.34 billion in FY19 into a deficit of \$12.39 billion by FY24," GTRI report said.

Looking ahead, post-general elections, corporate India's strong financial performance in Q4 FY24 is anticipated to be rewarded

₹35,098 crore

FPIs' net investment in March

₹1,539 crore

FPIs' net investment in February

While FPIs may adopt a cautious stance until the election results are clear, favourable outcomes and established political stability could see their return in significant numbers, Trivish D, COO at Tradejini, said

Investors are wary to enter the markets before the election results, Himanshu Srivastava, Associate Director - Manager Research, Morningstar Investment Research India, said

FPIs have turned sustained sellers and domestic institutional investors (DIIs) have turned sustained buyers in all trading days of this month, so far, with cumulative DII buying of Rs 19,410 crore, V K Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist, Geojit Financial Services, said

Poll jitters: Foreign portfolio investors on selling spree

Foreign investors pulled out Rs 17,000 crore from Indian equities in the first 10 days of the month owing to general election and the uncertainty surrounding its outcome coupled with expensive valuations and profit booking

₹17,083 crore:

Net outflow in equities by foreign portfolio investors this month (till May 10), according to the data with the depositories



On the global front, the US Fed has indicated no rate cuts until inflation cools, thus raising scepticism over the possibility of an early rate cut. It led to the appreciation in US dollar leading to a surge in US Treasury yields. On the other hand, FPIs withdrew Rs 1,602 crore from the debt market during the period under review

Source: Data with depositories/PTI

EXPLAINED Pips US to the top after a gap of two years

AFTER A gap of two years, China has overtaken the US to become India's largest trading partner. India trade relations with China have been under scrutiny largely due to India's dependence on the neighbouring country's critical products such as telecom & smartphone parts, pharma, advanced technology components among others. Now, India has undertaken significant measures to decrease its dependence on China through production linked incentive schemes (PLI), anti-dumping duties along with quality control orders.

The US was India's top trading partner during FY22 and FY23 after China was the top bilateral trading partner in FY21.

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Gold ETFs see first outflow after March 2023

NEW DELHI: Gold Exchange Traded Funds (ETF) witness a net outflow of Rs 396 crore last month, making it the first withdrawal after March 2023, owing to profit booking. Despite the decline, the asset under management (AUM) of gold funds rose 5 per cent to Rs 32,789 crore at April-end from Rs 31,224 crore in the preceding month, according to the data with the Association of Mutual Funds in India (Amfi).

As per the data, Gold ETFs saw a net withdrawal of Rs 396 crore in April as compared to an inflow of Rs 373 crore in the preceding month. The last time this asset class witnessed net outflow was in March 2023, withdrawing Rs 266 crore. "In INR terms, gold has done fairly well over the last year but dwarfs in comparison to how equities have fared. Given this backdrop, flows in the Gold ETF category have been somewhat patchy relative to the equity asset class. That said, investors could have opted to book some profits in this segment which has resulted in the asset class witnessing net outflows despite the rise in prices," Melvyn Santarita, Analyst, Morningstar Investment Research India, said.

Recently gold prices in US dollar terms as well as INR terms have scaled new highs. **PTI**

INTERVIEW WITH FINANCE MINISTER

'We will come back with a good majority ... no reason to think the mood has changed'

Finance Minister **NIRMALA SITHARAMAN** believes the BJP will come back with a good majority. In this interview with **PRASANTA SAHU** and **SHOBHANA SUBRAMANIAN**, she says the government will continue with reforms and not let go of schemes which empower the poor.



File

What's your assessment of the Lok Sabha elections so far?

I strongly believe we will come back with a good majority. There is no reason to think the mood has changed just because the opposition wants it to be changed. I don't know from where this negative campaign has started that BJP may not get adequate numbers by saying we didn't perform well in the first two phases. The Home Minister has clearly said that the number of seats (for BJP) will be 370-plus and you will get to know that by 12.30 pm on the counting day. The opposition is only trying to mislead people.

Are we going to see an aggressive agenda on privatisation going forward?

Aggression need not be in your face... We should have the right to choose the right time. We can't be unthinking administrators. We are saying minimum presence of government in businesses. To arrive at minimum presence, I would have to see how many of them have to be divested, how many can be amalgamated to create a scalable and large unit and in some cases, the strategic core has to be retained. Recent privatisations have resulted in the creation of more jobs (in Air India for example).

Have you done a review of the 15% tax rate for new manufacturing firms? Has it worked?

We need to look at it much more carefully to what extent new businesses have come in and capacity has been increased. The offer of a low tax regime for new firms expired in March. A new call may need to be taken in the Budget in July whether we want to extend it further. The lower tax rate for new manufacturing firms was announced just before Covid-19... To be fair, I think many of them lost the opportunity... we will take a carefully considered decision.

Do you think the new income tax regime needs to be sweetened a bit to bring the remaining taxpayers into the fold?

I don't know if it is due to a lack of sweetening, they remain where they are. The old tax regime existed with exemptions added year after year. To wipe it all off from the old regime and give some kind of sweetener in the new tax regime will never really be satisfactory. Each one of them has been tailored differently. So, shifting will happen when taxpayers find it not adequately rewarding to remain in the older system.

How do you see the cancellation of Tesla CEO Elon

Musk?

"An understanding is required that inflation control is not going to happen just through monetary policy-making... An element of inflation also triggers growth, you cannot ignore that"

"Today opportunities are absolutely clear, yet, uncertainties are caused by the interest rates, inflation, the United States Fed's decision, or talks of possible stagflation in some countries"

Musk's visit to India and his almost immediate visit to China?

India is putting itself for the strength that it has. I wouldn't think that any investor's decision should be framed like is he coming to India or is he going to China. In the EV sector, India is also building extraordinary capacities. Everything takes its own time. We will work on policies that will work for Indians as well as others. It is for India's sake, we want investments to come in. It is in this frame, that we look at the decisions taken, let's say by Elon Musk.

Why has gross FDI declined? What can the government do to make India more attractive?

Global uncertainties are growing... India's central bank takes calls itself in the Indian context. But, most Western central banks synchronise actions. As a result, investible funds and their movements are very severely influenced.

Today opportunities are absolutely clear, yet, uncertainties are caused by the interest rates, inflation, the US Fed's decision, or even the talk which has now begun of possible stagflation in some countries. With the speculation (on likely conflict) about Taiwan and the South China Sea, you see the fluctuation in gold prices. The central banks are buying gold. The uncertainties about the currency and the fluctuations in the exchange rate are the thermometer, which shows the temperature. All this definitely will have an impact on the flow of funds. We are looking into this very seriously.

Why isn't investment by the private sector gathering momentum?

If you look at some sectors, you will find them wanting. But there are sectors where they moved aggressively such as renewables. In new areas like battery storage, charging stations and green ammonia, we are having investments which are mostly driven by domestic investors.

How will you supercharge India's manufacturing sector?

We need to have a lot more dialogue with industry, more from the point of view of what they need. It was ironic to hear from some domain experts and economists that India should give up on manufacturing attempts. It is not a good thing to ignore manufacturing or build the service sector so much that you forget manufacturing.

Inflation has moderated... Is it time to bring down the cost of funds?

A lot more pulse of the economy needs to be felt. An understanding is required that inflation control is not going to happen just through monetary policy-making. There is more to inflation control through the fiscal domain. Monetary policy cannot any longer tell us that it is for inflation's sake I am remaining where I am. It has to have a broader look at the economy. An element of inflation also triggers growth, you cannot ignore that. Today, monetary policies have greater challenges when you look at exchange rate fluctuations. The dollar is posing more questions than answers today as a global currency. The shift that many countries are doing away from the dollar, is also a major issue, which monetary policy experts will have to study.

Will the government look at giving a guaranteed pension under NPS?

I will wait for the (finance secretary-led) committee report on the National Pension System (NPS) and for the report to be completely analysed.

Are we expecting aggressive reforms in Modi 3.0?

Reforms are something in which the BJP and PM Modi inherently believe... We have emphasised that our attention will go towards the frontier sectors such as space, renewable energy and rare earths as well as building capacity within industries for a transition towards greater use of AI and making governance more transparent by using technology. We are not letting go of schemes which empower the poor.

Khara: SBI's 85% hires to be engineering grads in FY25

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI, MAY 12

EIGHTY-FIVE PER CENT of about 12,000 freshers set to join the country's largest lender SBI in FY25 are engineering graduates, its Chairman Dinesh Khara has said. The bank is in the process of onboarding up to 12,000 freshers in the roles of probationary officers and associates in FY25, and there is no bias towards onboarding engineers in the ranks, Khara said, stressing that this is not by design.

After training the over 3,000 POs and over 8,000 associates with some banking knowledge, they will be channelised into various business roles. It can be noted that this comes at a time when the banking sector is increasing its dependency on technology as it looks for newer ways of en-

Technology is very important, and none of us can ignore it

— DINESH KHARA
SBI CHAIRMAN

thralling the customer, while some players are also grappling with challenges on this front.

"We expose them into banking and thereafter, channelise them into various roles in business and IT, depending on their aptitude and temperament, and that is something which is helping us ensure that there is a continuous supply of tech manpower to the bank," Khara said. The development also comes at a time when the attrition in the IT sector - a favourite job avenue for engineering grads - is going down, leading to lower hiring by such firms even

as the supply of engineering grads is high. Khara said SBI invests a lot in terms of training the manpower and also has a dedicated in-house institute focused on instilling technology skills. Every staff has to be ahead of the curve on technology, Khara said, pointing out that the bank handles a huge volume of transactions, and the same has to go through.

"Technology is very important, and none of us can ignore it," he said, adding that the bank also gets guidance from the regulator on such aspects on a regular basis.

Lately, the Reserve Bank of India has increased its focus on technology and penalised banks for shortcomings. Khara declined to share the overall tech spending but stressed that it is the highest in the industry, while an official said it is much higher than the industry average of 7-8 per cent of the operational expenses.

Focus on factor market reforms for double-digit growth: ADB Chief Economist

NEW DELHI: India needs to focus on factor market reforms like land and labour to propel India's growth to a double-digit trajectory, ADB Chief Economist Albert Park has said.

"There are still concerns that the basic factor markets like land and labour in the formal sector of unemployment in India are still small. So, you really want to formalise those," he said. The factor market reforms include land, labour, energy, and access to credit, among others, which are critical factors for production.

Talking about other reforms, Park said further regulatory ease and ease of doing business and deregulation of tariffs by simplifying and reducing them will help increase India's share in the global value chain. **PTI**

Promoters' pledged holdings decline to 1.1% in March quarter: Report

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU
MUMBAI, MAY 12

THE PERCENTAGE of promoters' pledged holdings dropped to 1.1 per cent in the March 2024 quarter from 1.17 per cent in October-December 2023 quarter, a report by Kotak Institutional Securities said. In the last quarter of FY24, promoters of 73 companies in the BSE-500 Index have pledged part of their holdings.

The value of pledged promoter holdings stood at Rs1.96 lakh crore or about 0.56 per cent of the total BSE-500 Index's market capitalisation. "Our analysis

₹1,96L CR: VALUE OF PLEDGED HOLDINGS

In the last quarter of FY24, promoters of 73 companies in BSE-500 Index have pledged part of their holdings, a Kotak Institutional Securities report said

of the pledged holdings of BSE-500 stocks shows that the value of the promoter (majority shareholder) pledged holding as a percentage of the promoter holding has come down marginally to

1.10 per cent in the March 2024 quarter from 1.17 per cent in the December 2023 quarter," the report said.

Promoters pledge shares as collateral to secure loans to meet any funding requirement. It is common practice followed by companies. The report said the BSE-500 companies in which pledged promoter holdings declined during the fourth quarter of FY24 included Kalpataru Projects, Bharat Forge, GMR Airports, Lemon Tree and Tata Communications. Max Financial Services, Eris Lifescience, Ashok Leyland, Jubilant Foodworks and Lloyd Metals were among the

companies where pledged promoter holdings increased.

The report clarified that pledging of shares does not necessarily imply that a company or a promoter is under financial stress; banks (lenders) could have sought additional security in the form of promoter shares. Companies in which promoters released almost entire pledged holdings were Bharat Forge, Lemon Tree Hotels and Tata Communications.

In January-March 2024 quarter, there were no companies whose promoters pledged more than 75 per cent of their holdings.

12 IDEA EXCHANGE

NEWSMAKERS IN THE NEWSROOM

Muzamil Jaleel: How is this election different from the last Lok Sabha election that you contested?

This is a very unique election since 1947 because post-August 5, 2019 (the day Article 370 was abrogated), this will be the first election. There has been no Assembly for the last six years. At a macro level, the only three elected representatives from Kashmir, who were in Parliament, were those from the NC. Despite them being there, we lost everything — articles 370 and 35A, which were abrogated. So what (message) we send from here and what they say in Parliament... So I believe that the people of Kashmir deserve to be heard. People of India also deserve to know what is happening in Kashmir.

Muzamil Jaleel: You are fighting an election after 15 years and against the former Chief Minister supported by the Congress. How challenging is it?

The Congress, with all due respect, is not very strong anymore in the North. And we fought the NC in the '80s and that's when Muzaffar Hussain Baig used to fight. At that time, the NC would get around 65 per cent of the votes and we would lose by two-and-a-half lakh votes. When I fought in 2009, I lost by 1.5 lakh (votes). Then we fought in 2014, and lost by one lakh (votes). Last election, we lost by 30,000 (votes) and the difference was seven or six per cent. So the statistics are in our favour. It's up to the people. Statistically, I think it is the NC that should be worried. From 65 per cent, they came to 29 per cent.

Muzamil Jaleel: In 2007, you came out with a vision document titled 'Achievable Nationhood' — your roadmap for a solution to the Kashmir issue. Is that your politics still?

I'd say that it (Achievable Nationhood) is a piece of academic and political work and they never lose relevance. They become relevant depending on the context and the environment. The way we are fighting today, we're desperate to get our statehood back because we have been relegated to a UT. But I'm a firm believer of that document in the long run. Whenever there is a desire to establish eternal peace in South Asia, that piece of work will be relevant in terms of ideas.

Muzamil Jaleel: There is some calm in Kashmir. What do you think about the ground situation at this point?

There have been calms in the previous years too. It's not the only period after 1989 when there has been a calm. I personally would want this calm to continue. But as a student of politics, I'd say it could be a deceptive calm too. A lot depends on how the future governments move on it. But until they don't engage, this calm may not be long-term. You can't have long-term calm purely by management. This is a tried, tested and failed method which the Congress also did in its time. They managed people and managed calm for a certain period. But yes, the only thing where I'd give credit to them is the decrease in civilian killings, which unfortunately, whenever there was a Kashmiri government, were much higher. I do not know the reason. But I think the Kashmiri governments in the past have always come with connivance. They have never been clean — black and white — like in the rest of India. Apparently, (due to) some sort of collusion and understanding, they were allowed to get away with murder and so many civilian killings.

P Vaidyanathan Iyer: Leaders in Delhi say that everything is normal in Kashmir. How do you assess those statements?

As I said, there have been periods of calm in the past also. It's not only during these last five years. But unfortunately, it was the lull before the storm. I'm not one of those people who is waiting for a storm. I'm very happy with the lack of violence, fewer *hartals* and no stone pelting. But I still believe that for long-term peace to prevail, to endure, you would need to engage with the people of J&K. You have to treat them as citizens of India and as equal stakeholders in all the decisions that you take. You can't sit in Delhi and make all the decisions. You can't let bureaucrats run the states. We were given a special status. You took that away. The least we expect is now to be equal Indians. You have to have the same set of laws and rules as in any other part of India. You can't now make us inferior in the name of security or lesser violence or whatever.

Aakash Joshi: Since the BJP is not contesting in the Valley, and Omar Abdullah has been calling you and your party essentially proxies for the BJP, what is your response? Also, what do you make of the BJP's place in Kashmir as a whole?

My problem is not Omar Abdullah. My problem is national journalists who don't have enough knowledge of the Kashmir issue. How many votes did the BJP get in Kashmir in the last Parliament election? Not even one per cent. How can 'not even one per cent' all of a sudden float proxies? This is as absurd as it can get. Omar Abdullah is entitled to his delusions. BJP got one per cent in North Kashmir and 0.25 per cent in Central Kashmir. So have they suddenly become powerful after abrogating Article 370? They are not even on the periphery of Kashmiri electoral politics. They're almost invisible. Had they fought, that would have been a direct indictment of

ON POLICE VERIFICATION

IN POLICE VERIFICATION FOR A PASSPORT, THE INDIVIDUAL IS INVESTIGATED. IN KASHMIR, THE ENTIRE FAMILY IS INVESTIGATED. IF ANY RELATIVE HAS A CRIMINAL PAST, ESPECIALLY IN MILITANCY, THAT PERSON WILL NOT... GET A JOB OR A PASSPORT

what they did in Parliament. So maybe they chose to stay away. What support can they offer us? Yes, Omar Abdullah can paint us as BJP and anti-Muslim and then try to get votes out of it. And that too, from a person whose party has been in power for 32 years. They have had nine MPs in Parliament for 28 years. Rather than fighting an election on the basis of defending his record, he is fighting the whole election on the idea that Lone is a BJP

with them in the Central cabinet. He was the commerce minister. By virtue of his statements, he was made the foreign minister. They passed an internal autonomy resolution in the Assembly, which the BJP government rejected. He stayed on, despite that, for two years. Now he has the audacity to label others as BJP (proxies). They (BJP) are totally absent. He has glorified them as if they are some lions and Kashmiri Muslims are dying to vote for them. That's not the case.

ON THE SITUATION IN KASHMIR

THERE HAVE BEEN PERIODS OF CALM IN THE PAST ALSO... FOR LONG-TERM PEACE TO PREVAIL, YOU'D NEED TO ENGAGE WITH THE PEOPLE OF J&K. YOU HAVE TO TREAT THEM AS CITIZENS OF INDIA AND AS EQUAL STAKEHOLDERS IN ALL THE DECISIONS

proxy. I have been in mainstream power politics for (a few) years, so possibly whatever is wrong here cannot be because of me. That too, as an animal husbandry minister, where I was no big deal. I was not some mover and shaker. I was not a CM. Neither was I a foreign minister in the Vajpayee cabinet. If anybody has a BJP tag here, it is Abdullah. At the height of Babri Masjid demolition, when even being in Shiv Sena's company would have been a stigma for any Muslim, he sat

Muslims were slaughtered, he sat with the same Shiv Sena. Five days back, they met Farooq Abdullah. So, when Shiv Sena sits with them, they are good Shiv Sena. Otherwise, they are bad Shiv Sena. When my father was assaulted by a Shiv Sena goon called Kalki Maharaj, in full public view, in Jammu, that goon had Z-security. He was not even from Jammu and Kashmir.

Naveed Iqbal: Over the last few years you

have repeatedly termed August 5 (2019) as a collective humiliation of Kashmiris.

There is a large consensus of helplessness and collective humiliation, that it was done by a governor. He, who was not a native of this place, signed on behalf of the people of Kashmir. I think most of the people in Kashmir believe that (and the same feeling) might be increasing across Jammu as well. Many people in Jammu, who would not earlier agree with us or for that matter in Ladakh, may agree with us now.

Muzamil Jaleel: What do you think about the restoration of statehood and elections? Is that going to happen?

The Supreme Court is clear on the elections and very unclear and, unfortunately, ambiguous on the statehood. The PM has promised it in Jammu and the Home Minister has promised it too. We're keeping our fingers crossed. We have no other option but to wait and encourage them through our statements that 'yes, we are waiting, people are waiting' and not give them an escape route.

P Vaidyanathan Iyer: What has been your assessment of district development

councils (DDCs)?

This is what I call an unequal India. There is no DDC direct election in any part of India. So, why did you have to create a new creature, somewhat between a sarpanch and an MLA? It was, again, a very belittling process and they did not empower the DDC. They invited them to fight and go into the fray and did actually create a perception that in the new era of inequality, they were going to replace the MLAs.

ON BEING CALLED A 'BJP PROXY'

HOW CAN THE BJP, WHICH IS NOT EVEN ON THE PERIPHERY OF KASHMIRI ELECTORAL POLITICS, SUDDENLY FLOAT PROXIES? THIS IS ABSURD... OMAR ABDULLAH HAS GLORIFIED THEM AS IF THEY ARE SOME LIONS AND KASHMIRI MUSLIMS ARE DYING TO VOTE FOR THEM

I don't think anything like that happened. It was difficult for them to even seek an appointment. The overall attitude of the bureaucracy has been contemptuous.

P Vaidyanathan Iyer: In the period immediately after August 5, 2019, and subsequently, several arrests have been made in Kashmir. Many were detained under PSA. Are you still getting representation from people detained in

different parts of the country? Have you been in touch with the administration?

Administration, I don't talk to them. Once the political class is absent, it's very difficult to talk to a bureaucrat here. But yes, there are many reports. It's not only about being in jail now. There is an added figure which unfortunately nobody talks about and in which I think 40 to 50 per cent of the population is involved, which is the police verification system. In the entire country, where we see police verification for a passport or a job, it is the individual who is investigated. In Kashmir, the entire family is investigated. If any relative has a criminal past, especially in militancy, that person will not get a police verification. So you won't get a job, or participate in government projects, or get a passport. Unfortunately, the shift from individual to family has been done during the NC era. No law was changed. These laws have been implemented by them and other governments in the last 20 years. Now they are doing it with greater vehemence, greater intensity. Not only that, there's a list of over-ground workers, who are not militants, but who in the eyes of the law, facilitated them. Now 50 per cent of these lists, I believe, are fabricated and based on political rivalry, especially from 1996 to 2002 when violence was high and Farooq Abdullah was gifted a government on a platter, which was a selection and never an election. Elections have come and hundreds are being detained under PSA because their names were on the lists. Unfortunately, apart from the Central government agencies, the biggest role in these lists is that of the past governments.

P Vaidyanathan Iyer: In the last four to five years since Governor's rule, and particularly current LG, have there been any discussions on issues of public interest? About the police system adversely affecting people, government employees being thrown out of jobs?

I have met him twice, for less than half an hour. So, imagine how much would I have been able to discuss. This whole termination was done and is being done very unfairly today, and I condemn it. But we have to put it on record, that the NC did it and all the other governments did it. Left alone, they would terminate at least 50 per cent of the employees. In these police verification systems, if in a family of 500, there is one person who has been involved in subversive activities, other's jobs are in danger. Why? Even to get a promotion, you have to get a police verification. Basically, if you want to eat, you have to get a verification.

Shalini Langer: In last Assembly elections, the BJP swept Jammu but didn't win in Kashmir. If a similar scenario is there after the Assembly elections, would any party be willing to have an alliance with them?

I can bet my life that the first party which will go running to them will be the NC.

Shalini Langer: They will not be scared after what happened the last time?

Nobody is with the BJP during the elections. They are always with them after the elections. And everybody says that vote for us to keep the BJP out. And then they go and sit in their lap. The 2014 elections were fought on the premise that we will keep the BJP out. Again, I had made this cardinal sin of meeting the PM. So I was the fall guy. I was a new comer. That was the first time I was fighting Assembly elections. And thankfully I won and my other friend also won. And we got a good number of votes for just fighting from seven or eight constituencies. But both parties were fighting to keep the BJP out and both approached them. One made a government with them, while it didn't work out for the other because the BJP thought it would be against the people's mandate.

Muzamil Jaleel: Do you think any government in Delhi can restore Article 370 and 35A now?

That's what we are telling Omar Abdullah's NC. They are lying to people when they say that we will get back Article 370. We contend that if with three MPs you could not stop it from being abrogated, how can you get (it back) with three MPs? I don't think that the Congress or any other party would be in a position to actually do that, because the popular sentiment seems to be against it. Having said that, Articles 370 and 35A are names specific to Delhi-Srinagar relationship. In academia, the name would be decentralisation — the distribution of powers between the provincial government and the Central government. In the future times, I do see a very economically empowered generation of Indians across the country, including ours, coming up and having the courage to decentralise, to deregulate. I don't rule it out. Deregulation, decentralisation and federalism are a reality. All other phases that we see of concentration of power, I don't think they are permanent. I still believe that at the end of the day, the winds of federalism will be much stronger. They are essential for democracy and I think that they will finally prevail.

Muzamil Jaleel: When do see this happening?

I don't see it happening (now) but after 10 years, I do actually see an economic revolution in India. I do see the coming to power of what is today's younger generation, which has the courage to decentralise and go in for the complete model of federalism, give full powers to any state which is demanding that power.

IDEA EXCHANGE
SAJAD LONE

PRESIDENT, THE PEOPLE'S CONFERENCE

WHY SAJAD LONE

Sajad Lone is in direct contest with National Conference (NC) leader and former J&K Chief Minister Omar Abdullah in north Kashmir's Baramullah. If Lone, who is supported by Apni Party, manages to win this poll, it will be a big blow to the NC, the largest and oldest political party of Kashmir. NC has been accusing Lone of being a proxy candidate of BJP, which, for the first time, hasn't fielded its own candidates in Kashmir. The BJP has said that they are instead supporting 'patriotic' parties in Kashmir and simultaneously termed NC and PDP as 'enemies of people'. Lone, for his part, says that he has no truck with the BJP



Illustration: Suvajit Dey

'Nobody is with the BJP during the elections. They are always with them after the elections'

Sajad Lone, president of the People's Conference, on fighting the Lok Sabha election after 15 years, contesting against Omar Abdullah, his arrest post the abrogation of Article 370, being called a 'BJP proxy' and the disquiet on ground in Kashmir. The conversation was moderated by Muzamil Jaleel, Deputy Editor, *The Indian Express*

IPL SNIPPETS

STANDINGS

| | M | W | L | T | Pts | NRR |
|-----|----|---|---|---|-----|--------|
| KKR | 12 | 9 | 3 | 0 | 18 | 1.428 |
| RR | 12 | 8 | 4 | 0 | 16 | 0.349 |
| CSK | 13 | 7 | 6 | 0 | 14 | 0.528 |
| SRH | 12 | 7 | 5 | 0 | 14 | 0.406 |
| RCB | 13 | 6 | 7 | 0 | 12 | 0.387 |
| DC | 13 | 6 | 7 | 0 | 12 | -0.482 |
| LSG | 12 | 6 | 6 | 0 | 12 | -0.769 |
| GT | 12 | 5 | 7 | 0 | 10 | -1.063 |
| MI | 13 | 4 | 9 | 0 | 8 | -0.271 |
| PK | 12 | 4 | 8 | 0 | 8 | -0.423 |

Can see both sides of story: Hussey on Jadeja dismissal

Chennai Super Kings batting coach Michael Hussey on Sunday felt that the decision to give Ravindra Jadeja out for obstructing the field could have gone either way. Jadeja became the third batter in IPL history to be adjudged out for obstructing the field after a miscommunication with skipper Ruturaj Gaikwad during their chase against Rajasthan Royals here. As Jadeja refused to go for a second run though the all-rounder was halfway down the pitch, the third man hurled the ball to wicketkeeper Sanju Samson, who aimed the ball at the bowler's end. The throw hit Jadeja, RR appealed, and the third umpire was convinced that Jadeja knew in which direction the ball was heading. "Didn't look closely at it. He did try to turn around, so he changed his angle a little bit. But he didn't change his angle while running straight," Hussey told reporters during the post-match interaction. "I can see both sides of the story. I can understand the umpire making the decision. The rule says you cannot change your line, so maybe, it was a fair call." PTI

Tracks like Chepauk bring spinners into play: Ruturaj

Two-paced Chepauk strip where spinners always come into play has been Chennai Super Kings' 17-year template and current skipper Ruturaj Gaikwad finds no reason to deviate from that after a five-wicket victory over Rajasthan Royals in a low-scoring IPL encounter. "Definitely we would love to play on such wickets. It brings our spinners into play and with huge boundaries, there is an amount of risk to hit sixes," the astute young captain said at the post-match presentation ceremony. Taking the pace off deliveries always creates problems and Royals struggled to score posting a below-par total of 141 for five in 20 overs. "That is always the plan whenever you come here. Sometimes, the wicket is flatter and we go to the yorkers. When the wicket is slow and you have a bigger side, you want to take the pace off," he explained. PTI

Slow & steady CSK stay in race for playoffs

On a sluggish Chepauk pitch, Rajasthan Royals' innings doesn't get going before Ruturaj Gaikwad anchors modest chase

SYNOPSIS

On a pitch where both teams played out 82 dot balls, Chennai Super Kings scrap past Rajasthan Royals to keep play-offs hopes alive.

VENKATA KRISHNA B
CHENNAI, MAY 12

No surface tension

Having expressed their displeasure about the pitches at MA Chidambaram Stadium over the course of the season, Chennai Super Kings finally got one to their liking on Sunday. On a slow surface, where the ball stopped and gripped a bit, after their bowlers put up a commanding performance, their batting unit completed the job. The victory means Chennai have managed to keep their tournament alive for the last weekend, and their play-offs destiny remains largely in their own hands. Should they beat Royal Challengers Bengaluru next Saturday, Chennai are most likely to make the play-offs for a record 13th time.

On a hot and humid afternoon, this was a proper slugfest. The dry conditions and the slowness of the surface meant batsmen were always going to struggle for fluency. For Rajasthan Royals to successfully defend 141, they needed their spinners Ravichandran Ashwin and Yuzvendra Chahal to not just be economical, but also make inroads. With Rachin Ravindra finding boundaries off Trent Boult and Sandeep Sharma, Sanju Samson turned to the off-spinner, who removed the left-hander in the first over.

But Daryl Mitchell found four boundaries in two overs as Chennai ended the Powerplay strongly at 56/1. But after



Ruturaj Gaikwad anchored CSK's win over RR with an unbeaten 41-ball 42.

PTI

Ruturaj Gaikwad deposited Nadre Burger over mid-wicket, the slugfest would begin. Like Ashwin, Chahal would begin his spell by removing Mitchell and conceding only a run in his first over. Having got a hang of the pitch by now, the Rajasthan attack went about taking pace off the ball.

With the pitch only getting slower as the innings progressed, all that Gaikwad and Moeen Ali did was rotate strike and

keep the required run rate under check. When Burger returned, Moeen went for an expansive shot for the first time but picked the fielder at deep cover.

As Shivam Dube came in next, it was a make-or-break moment. And the one big over that Chennai needed to bring the required rate under run a ball came in the 14th bowled by Ashwin, as Dube smashed him for a six and two boundaries, before

being dismissed off the last ball. But the job was already done.

Gaikwad stayed till the end and closed out the game in the company of Sameer Rizvi. The only drama in the end was around Ravindra Jadeja's dismissal, who was given out obstructing the field.

Intent goes missing

In each of their 11 matches so far, in

which they notched up 8 wins and suffered three defeats, what has stood out about Rajasthan has been their intent with the bat. With a rounded attack at their disposal that covers all bases, their batsmen have embraced a very bold approach. Their intent has been to take the attack to the opposition. Against a weak Chennai attack, they had an opportunity to bat them out and book their play-off spot.

Instead, on a track which was being used for the third time this season, the usual flair went missing. Yashasvi Jaiswal and Jos Buttler didn't try to be adventurous as only one boundary came in the first three overs.

With quick runs needed before the ball got softer, they went big in the next three, finding four boundaries and a six as they put on 42 in the Powerplay.

It was pacer Simarjeet Singh who removed Jaiswal with a short ball that kept climbing and leaving the left-hander. With two right-handers in, Ravindra Jadeja went about his usual business. He kept it close to the off-stump, denying them room and bowling the length where even if they used their feet, batsmen weren't able to get under it. It meant Buttler and Sanju Samson had to bring out the reverse-sweep or cut, and when they did, were unable to find the gap between short third man and point. With boundaries drying up, Buttler went for a scoop of Simarjeet, only for Tushar Deshpande to cover a bit of ground and take the catch at fine-leg.

With their lower order not in the best of form, for Rajasthan to make a contest out of this, they needed one of Samson and Riyan Parag to bat long and deep. Just when the two were showing signs of freeing up, Simarjeet came back to remove Samson.

BRIEF SCORES: Rajasthan Royals 141/5 in 20 overs (Riyan Parag 47; Simarjeet Singh 3/26) lost to Chennai Super Kings 145/5 in 18.2 overs (Gaikwad 42*) by 5 wickets

Fifth straight win helps RCB put a dent in DC's prospects

SYNOPSIS

Revival artists Patidar and Dayal help extend RCB's winning streak and keep slim playoff hopes alive, after Kohli produces strokes and theatre to hit DC's knockout ambitions.

SANDIP G
MAY 12

Support cast rises to occasion

Two men quietly behind Royal Challengers Bengaluru's turnaround have been Rajat Patidar and Yash Dayal. The latter has bowled with wisdom and sharpness, even if he has not been an epitome of control; Patidar has struck four half-centuries in his last five outings, all of which they have won, dispelling the awful memories of his Test faux pas a few months ago. In another must-win game, they whipped up memorabilia and vital contributions. Patidar with a regal 52 and Dayal with a two-wicket first over plus the scalp of Delhi Capitals top-scorer Axar Patel, who kept his team in the hunt with 57 from 39 balls, in pursuit of 188. All they eventually managed was 140 runs, which was a hammer blow to their playoff ambitions.



Rajat Patidar scored a 32-ball 52 which included three sixes and as many fours. PTI

Whereas against England, Patidar seemed a nervous wreck, here he looked impossibly imperious, the ball flowing from the sweetest spot of his bat. His first boundary was just a push through the covers, with the briefest extension of his bat and front foot. He is blessed with wonderful hands, and his touches are often delicate and precise. His second four was identical, maybe a muscle or two more. He then swivelled and pulled Mukesh Kumar for his third four in five balls.

One could see the logic behind the national selectors' leap of faith in handing him a Test cap. He moves smoothly on either foot, plays with soft hands, the easy bat-swing gives a lot

of time to execute his strokes, and he has a lot of shots too. Besides, he is an exceptional player of spin bowling, which he displayed by carting Kuldeep Yadav's wrong'un down the ground and by picking another brace of sixes off Axar on a track where some balls spun viciously. With Will Jacks, not at his usual free-flowing touch, Patidar combined 88 runs that would form the axis of Royal Challengers' innings.

The total, though, looked inadequate with the short dimensions of the ground and the power-hitters in Capitals' cabin. In the first two overs, Capitals raced to 24 for the loss of David Warner. Enter Dayal, who literally killed the

game with twin blows. He nabbed Abhishek Porel with a snarling short ball; then ran out the dangerous Jake Fraser-McGurk at the non-striker's end, with a deflection off Shai Hope's straight drive.

The Barbadian caned him for three fours in the next over, but he returned at the most opportune moment to deliver the killer blow. In the 16th over, the target still achievable, he bowled a gorgeous slower ball to deceive Axar. That was game, set and match, wherein Kohli yet again took centre-stage.

Kohli produces strokes, theatre

Forget the strokes he has essayed, the verbal punches he had frequently flung, and just soak the pure theatre that Virat Kohli exudes in the middle. He rolled back the ears to the 20-something bundle of energy, displaying his full range of emotions, wearing his heart on the sleeve, getting under the skin of the bowlers, exchanging both glares and words.

The duel with his long-time former India teammate Ishant Sharma was pure pantomime. Kohli semi-edged, semi-steered the first ball of the veteran's second over past the wicketkeeper. Then he gestured to Ishant that he had played the shot deliberately. Ishant, never one to back away, said that he didn't think so. The next ball, though, Kohli creamed him over long-on. A slightly over-pitched ball, he bent his back-knee, got under it, whirled his powerful wrists and smeared the ball over the fence. His eyes wandered for Ishant's. The fast

bowler averted his gaze. Ishant retorted with a beautiful away seamer that beat Kohli's attempt to punch the ball through the off-side. A wide ball followed, and Kohli flashed a mocking smile.

Then came Ishant's moment. He landed the ball just outside off-stump, on a good length, and sealed it a decimal away. Kohli attempted the semi-edge, semi-steer that had come off on the first ball. But this time, the edge was thinner and wicketkeeper Abhishek Porel duly grabbed it. Ishant tried to celebrate and give a lavish send-off, then changed his mind and pulled at his jersey in jest. Kohli took it sportingly and smiled gingerly, although when he reached the dugout, he seemed aghast at his way of dismissal.

But Kohli had played his bit-part in providing a quick start with his 13-ball 27 that featured three most glorious sixes. The one over extra-cover off Khaleel Ahmed was most wondrous, lofting it over the off-side, closing his bat face at the last split-second before it made contact with the ball. The Powerplay turbocharge propelled his team, and made up for the crawl in the latter half of the innings. More so after they lost the revived Patidar in the 12th over for a smooth as satin 52 off 32 balls. There is definitely something about Kohli this season.

BRIEF SCORES: Royal Challengers Bengaluru 187/9 in 20 overs (Rajat Patidar 52, Will Jacks 41, Cameron Green 32*) beat Delhi Capitals 140 all out in 19.1 overs (Axar Patel 57; Yash Dayal 3/20) by 47 runs

WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP

India seriously exploring possibility of hosting Gukesh vs Ding: AICF chief

AMIT KAMATH
MAY 12

THE NEWLY-ELECTED office bearers of the All India Chess Federation have lost no time in unveiling a host of measures to popularise the sport, which is currently in a state of boom in India. At last month's Candidates Chess Tournament, India was represented by five grandmasters — with Gukesh, Praggnanandhaa and Vidit Gujrathi competing in the Open section while Humpy Koneru and Vaishali Rameshbabu competed in the women's event. India's progress in the last couple of years in the sport of 64 squares was highlighted by 17-year-old Gukesh winning the title and becoming the youngest-ever World Chess Championship contender in history.

The question that everyone is now asking is whether India will be bidding to host the World Chess Championship, which was last held in India in 2013 when Chennai witnessed Magnus Carlsen defeating Viswanathan Anand to become the world champion for the first time.

"We do have an intent (to host the World Championship in India) and that's why we have been exploring the possibility of bidding for it. We understand what it means for our nation and what it means for Gukesh. We're very seriously exploring the possibility," Nitin Narang, newly-elected president of AICF told *The Indian Express* earlier this

week.

"After having access to all the documents, we've started assessing the bid now that we have a bid form in front of us. There are a lot of components that go into bidding to host the World Chess Championship, be it the commercial angle, the logistics and managing the entire thing. We're very, very seriously having a detailed deliberation on each and every component. We'll have clarity on this (the possibility of submitting a bid) very, very soon. Once we have that, we can announce officially if we're going ahead with the bid or are there any challenges. Once we have a detailed understanding of every aspect then we'll be able to take a call on this."

Besides India, Singapore also has thrown its hat into the ring to host the World Chess Championship, which was hosted by Astana in Kazakhstan last year.

FIDE, the global governing body of chess, has stated that it will cost about \$8.5 million (approximately Rs 70 crore) to host the World Championship.

Talking about the costs that a hosting nation will incur for hosting the World Chess Championship, Narang said: "FIDE has given a figure of about \$8.5 million. But it also depends on a federation's ability to negotiate. A lot of costs will centre on what we can do. Maybe I can get a partner to take care of accommodations, that takes care of one aspect. So it would not be right to say that \$8.5 million is the exact cost of hosting a World Chess Championship. What FIDE



Besides India, Singapore also has thrown its hat into the ring to host the World Championship match between D Gukesh and Ding Liren. File

has said is that \$8.5 million is the cost that sponsors, and the organisers would incur as an expenditure."

He also revealed that one of the plans that the AICF has is to host elite tournaments in India. Presently there is only the Tata Steel India Kolkata event, which is a regular feature to be held in India. The Chennai Grand Masters, which boasted of being the

strongest ever classical super tournament on Indian soil, was held for the first time last year, which helped Gukesh seal qualification to the Candidates.

AICF's plans

The AICF unveiled its plans for the coming years to popularise the sport in every household. For about 400 players who are

already in the system, there are two-year contracts and cash rewards on offer.

"Players in seven age categories from the U7 to U19 age groups will be given two-year contracts with monthly payments (U7 players will get Rs 20,000 while U19 players will get Rs 50,000 per month). Top 20 FIDE-ranked players will also be given cash rewards up to Rs 25 lakh a year. And the condition we'll have for players to be eligible for that is for players to play at the Nationals," Narang said.

Since getting quality coaching from grandmasters or elite trainers can come at a steep price, Narang also said that they wanted to support 20 online chess academies in various parts of India via grants. In this model, Narang said, grandmasters who have switched over to coaching or elite trainers will also be aided to become entrepreneurs.

"The idea is not to employ these GMs or trainers, but to make entrepreneurs out of them. They will own their own academies, but we will give them funding so that they can also coach players we pick as part of this initiative. We'll identify 20 players from each category right from U7 to the senior category, in men and in women's categories. So we'll have 320 such players getting training for free. These 320 players will be assigned to these 20 academies. Since AICF will fund these 320 players getting coaching, the players will not have to spend to get training under GMs," said Narang.

Carlsen defeats all 9 players to triumph in Poland

MAGNUS CARLSEN claimed a jaw-dropping victory in the World Rapid and Blitz Poland event on Sunday after going on a rampaging run where he defeated all nine other players in the Warsaw event in a row to pip China's Wei Yi by half a point. The World No 1 went on a 10-game winning streak to overhaul Wei, who was leading by 2.5 points after Saturday.

The event had three Indian prodigies — World Chess Championship challenger D Gukesh, Praggnanandhaa and Arjun Erigaisi — besides a host of top grandmasters like Anish Giri, Nodirbek Abdusattorov and Vincent Keymer. But that mattered little as Carlsen went on a 10-game winning streak to secure victory.

While Praggnanandhaa (19 points) was fourth and Erigaisi (18 points) was fifth, Gukesh (12.5 points) ended in last spot.

Carlsen will take home a cool winner's cheque of \$40,000 for winning the Poland event. **ENS**

BRIEFLY

Jaideep, Sujeet bow out of Qualifiers

Istanbul: Sujeet Kalkal and Jaideep Ahlawat resisted their respective rivals well at the World Qualifiers on Sunday but could not add more quotas to India's kitty for the Paris Olympic Games, where the country will have only one male wrestler presenting his challenge. In his crucial 65kg bronze medal contest, Sujeet matched USA's Zain Allen Retherford in terms of skills but conceded a takedown on counter attack to lose 2-2 on criteria. Jaideep was also in fray on Sunday and began with a technically superior win in his 74kg repechage round clash against Turkmenistan's Arslan Amanmyradov. However, he could not do much against home favourite Soner Demirtas, losing the bronze match 1-2. **PTI**

Series against SA helped us: Tete

Bengaluru: Newly-appointed Indian women's hockey captain Salima Tete said the six-match friendly series against South Africa had helped her understand the team dynamics better and also provided insights into the areas that need "refinement" ahead of the gruelling European leg of the FIH Pro League. Salima, 22, who was part of the Asian Champions Trophy-winning side in 2023, took over as captain from Savita Punia earlier this month and led the side against South Africa at home, winning the series 4-2 here. "The series served as a pivotal platform for us to explore and test various player combinations, leveraging the participation of all 24 members from our FIH Pro League squad," said Salima, a mid-fielder, in a Hockey India release on Saturday. "This collective effort not only enhanced our coordination on the field but also provided a comprehensive understanding of our team dynamics." **PTI**

Djokovic exits Italian Open early

Rome: Novak Djokovic put on one of his worst performances at one of his favorite tournaments as he was upset by 29th-seeded Alejandro Tabilo in the third round of the Italian Open on Sunday. It was Djokovic's first match since accidentally getting knocked out the head by a water bottle while signing autographs after his opening win on Friday. Djokovic started off with a double-fault and it didn't get much better for the six-time Rome champion. Djokovic lost his first two service games and went on to lose the match 6-2, 6-3 in just 68 minutes, handing Tabilo the victory when he double-faulted – his fifth of the match – and the boos rang out at the Foro Italico. **AP**

Hockey: Indian men on training block for Paris

Bengaluru: The Indian men's hockey team has identified areas that "needed attention" following its whitewash by Australia in the five-Test series and is ready for the tough European leg of the Pro League, said skipper Harmanpreet Singh. Last month, India lost all their matches to the Kookaburras, raising doubts about their preparations for the Paris Games. But Harmanpreet said the squad has done a lot of high-intensity training and the confidence in the side continues to grow. "We are in the last stages of an intense training block right now. The team has worked on the areas we felt needed attention after the tour of Australia," he said. **PTI**

Unnathi, her mother's progression

Father Aiyappa is a strict taskmaster for the hurdler, while mother Pramila, a Sydney and Beijing Olympian, dons role of mediator

ANDREW AMSAN
BHUBANESWAR, MAY 12

ASIAN JUNIOR medallist Unnathi Aiyappa was barely three when she first saw her mother G Pramila compete in the 2008 Beijing Olympics. A couple of years later, she was again in front of the television cheering her mother as Pramila battled through the heptathlon events at the Guangzhou Asian Games, finally earning a bronze. That was when Unnathi was bitten by the athletics bug.

"From then itself Unnathi told us she wants to become like Mama. Her mother is the biggest inspiration for her," says her coach and father Sri Aiyappa who also doubles up as her physio. Unnathi, now 18, topped Heat 1 of 200m with 24.4s on the clock on Sunday at the Federation Cup in Bhubaneswar.

Unnathi, who is aiming to dip below the 24.35 Jr Worlds qualifying mark at the finals, is coming off fresh from the 100m hurdles bronze medal at Dubai's U20 Asian Junior Championships held in the last week of April. Her 13.66s effort at hurdles in Dubai was within the qualifying bracket for the upcoming Jr Worlds.

The prodigious teenager, like her mother, tried her hand at heptathlon first but eventually found her calling in hurdles. This is apart from dabbling with swimming, basketball and badminton.

"Hepta was Mama's event, so I just wanted to try out if I was also good at it. Mama is really strong, so I don't think I'm as strong as her to train for the heptathlon. Actually, when I was young, they just wanted me to learn how to swim and I used to cry every day. But it's good because now I can swim. They put me into basketball so that I could grow tall. But then I just wanted to continue with athletics," says Unnathi, who is pursuing a bachelor's degree in journalism and political science.

An easy choice

Hurdles was an easy choice to make, feels father Sri who was also Pramila's



Unnathi Aiyappa with father and coach Sri Aiyappa in Bhubaneswar. (Right) Unnathi with her mother (left). Andrew Amsan/Special Arrangement

coach. At 18, Unnathi is almost 5'11 and has long levers that help when leaping over hurdles. Her prowess in sprinting also made it to the list of reasons to opt for hurdles. In the long run, coach Sri wants his daughter to switch to the 400m hurdles where he feels Indians have a better chance to do well on the global stage.

"She has long limbs, so, of course, she will have a good stride length. And she has already done 100-metre hurdles, so already she has got speed in her. The only thing she has to develop is endurance. She is multi-talented. If she focuses on 100m she will eventually become a national champion in it but we have to be smart in choosing



events. 400m hurdles is an event where PT Usha has set a benchmark and shown that Indians can do well in it," says father Sri.

Unnathi was earlier training under Sydney Olympic 110m champion coach Arnier Garcia at JSW's IIS setup but the training routine didn't suit her. It's been almost 9 months since she has been training fully under her father with Bangalore being her base. "I think Papa knows my body better and is able to bring out the best from me," she says.

But having her father as a coach has certain drawbacks as well, says the teenager. "It is good that I can share everything about sports with him but sometimes it feels like he is always there. At home, ground. I can't share things outside sports with him," says Unnathi in a lighter tone as her father nods his head sideways.

For father Sri, coaching his child is a painstaking task as it takes a toll on him mentally at times. "It is not easy to see your own child suffer at times due to harsh training. But you have to push them. At times she takes me for granted because I am always there. Then I have to deal with the disappointments that I never share with her," explains Sri.

With her father being the tough taskmaster, and mother Pramila playing the role of the mediator at home, complaints of harsh training by dad are taken to mom. "She is also tired now and says she can't deal with us (laughs)," says Unnathi. "At home, my dad is a very cool person. On the ground, he is a very different person, very different. He is very strict," she adds.

FEDERATION CUP RESULTS

Finals: Men 400m hurdles: Santosh Kumar T (Tamil Nadu) 50.04 s; **Pole vault:** Dev Kumar Meena (Madhya Pradesh) 5.10m, **Women, 5000m:** Lilly Das (West Bengal) 16:31.05 seconds; **400m hurdles:** Veerpal Kaur (Punjab) 59.43 seconds; **Javelin throw:** Rashmi K (Andhra Pradesh) 54.75m; **Triple jump:** M Anusha (Andhra Pradesh) 13.53m.

Esha, Anish register second win in Olympic Selection Trials

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MAY 12

ESHA SINGH and Anish Bhanwala registered their second Olympic Selection Trial wins in the women's 25m pistol and men's 25m rapid-fire pistol (RFP) respectively here on Sunday.

While Anish had won the first trial in the same event in Delhi, Esha had claimed the second trial in the women's 10m air pistol, also at the Karni Singh range in Delhi.

At the M.P. State Shooting Academy (MPSSA) ranges, Esha notched her first win in women's 25m pistol trial, shooting 43 in the finals. Her score was a point more than the world record set by Korean Kim Yeji at the Baku World Cup earlier this month.

Manu Bhaker came second with 40 hits while Rhythm Sangwan picked up the final podium place, bowing out ahead of the 10th and final series with a score of 33. Simranpreet Kaur Brar and Abhidnya Patil were fourth and fifth respectively.

League of his own

In the men's RFP final, Anish seemed to be in a league of his own, bossing the five-man finals field with three perfect series of five hits in the beginning. He missed just four to finish with 36 hits for the win.

Vijayveer Sidhu did stutter in the beginning, but eventually, held his own to come in second with 31 hits. Ankur Goel was third with 19, while Adarsh Singh and Bhavesh Shekhawat came fourth and fifth respectively.

All 10 shooters will come back on Monday for the fourth trial (T4) and final match in both the events at the Olympic Selection Trials. On average after the first three trials, Manu comfortably leads Esha Singh at the top in the women's sport pistol while Anish is well ahead of second-placed Vijayveer in the men's RFP.

Manu Bhaker came second with 40 hits while Rhythm Sangwan picked up the final podium place, with a score of 33. Simranpreet Kaur Brar and Abhidnya Patil were fourth and fifth respectively.

Nuh running hero Parvej Khan wins 1500 gold at US college event

AISWARYA RAJ
NUH, MAY 12

AT 3:45 AM on Sunday, while villagers of Chahalka in Nuh district of Haryana slept, Khalid Hussain was glued to YouTube on his phone, watching his 19-year-old nephew Parvej Khan wow fans at a collegiate competition in Louisiana, USA, halfway across the world.

Parvej won the 1,500 metres gold and a bronze in 800 metres at the SEC Outdoor Track & Field Championships, a competition for athletes in South Central and Southeastern United States. Back in March he became the first Indian track athlete to compete at the prestigious NCAA championships in Boston. He competed in the one mile race, a non-Olympic event.

Those before him to make a mark in the NCAA are illustrious athletes; triple jumper Mohinder Singh Gill, discus thrower Vikas Gowda and high jumper Tejaswin Shankar.

Khalid quickly got on a call with Parvej's brother Rohit. "At 4 am, when his parents woke up, they came running to check. His mother was disappointed that he couldn't qualify for the Olympics. I told them there

are more competitions...he could still qualify," Khalid said.

His father Nafees Ahmed recalls his son's poor marks in mathematics because he put his heart and soul into running. "When he was in 9th standard, there would be races between villages in Rewari, Nuh, and Manesar on Independence Day, New Years... At 13, he would beat 23-year-olds easily. He would train on the farm land," Ahmed said.

Earlier, video clips of Parvej raising his hand and egging on fans as he pulled away from the other runners in the final stretch of the preliminary heats had gone viral. The on-air commentators would compare his surge with the sassy 1980 Games' tactical British genius, Steve Ovett, saying: "Oh the showmanship to the crowd... Little of Steve Ovett (British middle distance great) down the finishing straight from Parvej Khan, working a little harder than he actually needs to."

The final was a closer race, but Khan used his strong finishing kick to win the gold. He clocked 3 minutes and 42.73 seconds to win the title at the LSU Bernie Moore Stadium.

Parvej will have to go faster in order to book the Paris Olympics berth with the qualifying standard set at 3:33.50. He won a second medal, a bronze in the 800 metres clock-



Parvej Khan after winning the 1500m gold. Gators T&F

ing 1:46.80, over two seconds slower than 1:44.70 - the Olympic qualifying standard.

Talking about his showboating in the preliminary race of the 1,500m on Friday

night, Khan said that he didn't mean to disrespect other athletes and only wanted to entertain the crowd. "My intention was not bad (against) my competitors or rivals. I always respect my competitors and rivals. I am just doing it for my home crowd," Parvej added.

Oly qualification challenging

Parvej was realistic about his chances of qualifying for the Olympics. "It (qualifying) is on my mind, but it is very hard to qualify. I am very far behind, but I am giving my 100 per cent and doing my job every day. Hope I get the Olympic standard."

Parvej has also had a tryst with controversy when he was declared overage and the Athletics Federation of India had to subsequently clarify that there were no restrictions on him competing at the senior level.

Yet Parvej's story has become an inspiration for the youth in Nuh. "Mewat has so many talented boys like Parvej, but they don't reach where they deserve to be, because of the circumstances," Khalid said.

After 10th grade, Parvej left for Delhi to train at the JLN Stadium and stay with his uncle who drives a taxi in the city. However, Parvej needed formal training. "So he de-

ecided to get a coach at Rs 1,000 per month."

After his stint in Delhi, he went to Bhopal where he met Anupama Srivastava, a Sports Authority of India coach. "She had a tremendous effect on him. She would accompany him to races and help him improve. She was also the one who guided him to apply abroad and also choose the University of Florida offer," Khalid said.

Last August, Parvej received two scholarship offers, from a Japanese university and the University of Florida. He was employed with the Indian Navy but chose to study and train abroad. "The scholarship took care of his tuition fee, and hostel fee apart from a yearly stipend equivalent to Rs 2 lakh," Khalid said.

Though Parvej continues to impress, his mother Hansira has a complaint. "He does not call us, and we have to call him to check how he is doing. On Friday, after the heats, he asked us to pray for the finals," Hansira said.

On Sunday, Khalid's phone was buzzing. "He wanted to come back in June, but we told him to stay back till the end of June so he can try and qualify for the Olympics. It is a dream for him and us," Khalid said even as he accepted congratulatory messages.

TITLE HOPE ALIVE

Arsenal beat Man Utd 1-0 to take title race with Man City to final day

JAMES ROBSON
MANCHESTER, MAY 12

THE PREMIER League title race will go to the last day of the season after Arsenal returned to the top of the standings with a 1-0 win at Manchester United on Sunday.

Leandro Trossard struck in the 20th minute at Old Trafford to ensure Arsenal will take defending champion Manchester City to the final round of games next Sunday.

Anything other than a win against United for Mikel Arteta's team could have seen City clinch the title with victory at Tottenham on Tuesday. Arsenal duly delivered and moved one point ahead of its title rival in second place.

Defeat for United was a latest blow for under pressure manager Erik ten Hag, whose team lost for the 14th time in the league this season and extended a damaging run that has seen it win just one of its last eight games in England's top division. Arsenal benefited from slack defending from United when makeshift center back Casemiro was slow to push up and played Kai Havertz aside. The Germany forward took advantage

and drove into the box before crossing for Trossard to convert from close range.

Arsenal will host Everton in the final round, when City is at home against West Ham.

For now, Arsenal has done all it could to keep the pressure on Pep Guardiola's team — improving on last season when a late collapse by the Gunners allowed City to wrap up a third successive title with three games to spare.

While the title is still in City's hands, it will have to win the remaining two games to be certain of a record fourth-straight English league title.

Arsenal is aiming to be crowned champion for the first time since 2004, when Arsene Wenger's team went an entire league campaign without defeat to earn the nickname of the "Invincibles."

Biggest test

The visit to Old Trafford always looked like its biggest test during the run-in and history was not on Arsenal's side, having won only once in its last 16 games at the home of United.

Even so, Arsenal was the favorite to overcome a United team that had been ruthlessly exposed by Crystal Palace ear-



Arsenal's English Premier League title hopes now hinge on Manchester City's final two games of the season. Reuters

lier in the week when routed 4-0 at Selhurst Park.

Casemiro had received heavy criticism

for his performance against Palace, but Ten Hag asked the Brazilian to reprise that role against Arsenal which has one of the most

| SCORELINE | |
|-----------|----------------|
| Man Utd | Arsenal |
| 0 | 1 |
| | L Trossard 20' |

lethal attacks in the league.

It should not have come as a surprise that he was culpable as Arsenal took an early lead.

The bigger surprise was that Arteta's team did not build on that advantage and instead ceded long periods of possession to United, without ever looking likely to concede.

The second half was also short of openings until substitute Gabriel Martinelli weaved his way through United's box and forced Andre Onana to push away an effort that was heading for the top corner of the United goal.

The United goalkeeper had to produce two more saves in quick succession — first to prevent Aaron Wan-Bissaka from heading into his own net and then to palm away Declan Rice's long-range effort into the bottom corner.

Burnley relegated

Burnley was relegated from the English Premier League after Micky van de Ven's 82nd-minute goal earned Tottenham a 2-1 comeback victory on Saturday.

Vincenzo Kompany's Burnley had to claim all three points to keep alive its faint hopes of avoiding an immediate return to the Championship.

Jacob Bruun Larsen's 25th-minute opener gave the visitors hope in north London, but Pedro Porro equalized seven minutes later with a powerful strike.

While Burnley was anticipated to finish strongly in pursuit of taking its Premier League survival bid to the final day, the opposite occurred.

After Spurs manager Ange Postecoglou watched his side squander a number of chances, a tactical switch-up — with Van de Ven moved out to left back — paid off when the Netherlands defender curled home a fine finish with eight minutes left.

It ensured Burnley went back to the second tier but also kept Tottenham in the hunt for Champions League qualification by trimming the gap to fourth-placed Aston Villa to four points. Both teams have two games remaining. **AP**

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