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Supreme Court grants interim bail to Arvind Kejriwal till June 1 in Delhi excise case

KEJRIWAL WALKS OUT OF JAIL

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Embattled Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal walked out of the Tihar Jail on Friday evening, hours after the Supreme Court granted him interim bail in a money-laundering case to enable him to campaign in the Lok Sabha elections. The development is seen as a huge relief to his party struggling to gain momentum in the absence of its foremost leader.

The court, however, barred him from visiting his office or the Delhi secretariat, and signing official files unless absolutely necessary for obtaining the lieutenant governor's approval.

Setting him free for 21 days to hit the hustings for the remaining phases of the Lok Sabha elections after 50 days of custody in the money laundering case linked to the alleged Delhi excise scam, the court said he shall surrender on June 2, a day after the last phase of the seven-phase poll gets over.

The fourth phase of polling will be held on May 13. Kejriwal, 55, thanked the Supreme Court judges for granting him interim bail and the people for their blessings.

"We have to save the coun-

try from dictatorship. I will fight with all my might but need the support of 140 crore people," he told the media after stepping out of Tihar Jail in round neck T-shirt and trousers.

The AAP national convenor, who has often flaunted his devotion to Lord Hanuman, which many feel is an attempt to blunt the BJP's Hindutva politics, said it was because of Him that he was out of jail.

Smiling broadly and waving at his supporters through the sky roof of his car, Kejriwal invited them to join him during his visit to the Hanuman temple at Connaught Place at 11 a.m. on Saturday for his "darshan". Scores of yellow AAP flags with its broom election symbol fluttered as his vehicle inched forward on way to the chief minister's official residence.

A wave of jubilation swept across the I.N.D.I.A bloc parties as the news spread like wildfire, with his AAP terming it a "triumph of truth".

"Truth can be troubled but not defeated. The decision of the Hon'ble Supreme Court is welcome. The dictatorship will end. Satyameva Jayate," AAP Rajya Sabha MP Sanjay Singh, also an

Sandeshkhali women tortured on basis of religion: Amit Shah

SUPROTIM MUKHERJEE
KOLKATA

Union Home Minister Amit Shah today alleged that Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee turned a blind eye to the torture of women of Sandeshkhali "due to their religion". Shah was in Bengal to address three election rallies for his party's candidates in Ranaghat, Birbhum and Asansol constituencies.

"Shame on Mamata. She is a woman Chief Minister, yet during her tenure, women have been persecuted on the basis of religious identity in Sandeshkhali. TMC leaders tortured hundreds of our sisters based on religion. Mamata Didi was not ready to arrest the criminals of Sandeshkhali. Even after the High Court's order, the investigation was not done,



Amit Shah attends an election rally in Nadia West Bengal for the Lok Sabha polls

so the High Court handed over the probe to the CBI," Shah said.

Regarding Sandeshkhali, where complaints of sexual abuse have emerged against Trinamool Congress leaders, Amit Shah said the BJP "will not spare single culprit and will hang them upside down to make them straight".

Shah said it was a matter of shame that "Mamata Banerjee, despite being a woman Chief Minister, tried to protect the culprits".

Shah also said: "Whoever has committed atrocities in Sandeshkhali, even if he hides in the pataal lok, we will find him and put him in prison. The BJP will punish their cases."

INSIDE

EPHEMERAL GOVERNMENTS

The short-lived governments at the Centre in the history of India reflect the complex dynamics of its democracy, characterized by diverse political parties, competing interests, and constant realignments of power.

DETAILS P9

Ruling BJP in Haryana mulling every possible strategy to ward off crisis

DR. RAVINDRA MALIK
CHANDIGARH

With Parliamentary polls drawing near, Haryana is witnessing political turmoil as a new development surfaced in the state politics after the three independent MLAs Randhir Golan, Dharampal Gondar and Somveer Sangwan withdrew support to the ruling Bharatiya Janta Party (BJP).

Speculation rife about resignation of some JJP MLAs. In case three of them quit, government will not be in minority

In the wake of this, the Jannayak Janta Party (JJP) stalwart Dushyant Chau-

tala and former ally of the saffron BJP on Thursday wrote to Bandaru Dattatreya seeking a floor test in the assembly. He said that he would back the main opposition Congress against the BJP government in the state. The entire opposition is persistently demanding imposition of President's rule in Haryana, citing that the BJP lacks majority and the saffron party is

Not allowed to visit CM's office

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Arvind Kejriwal shall furnish bail bonds in the sum of Rs50,000, with one surety of the like amount to the satisfaction of the Jail Superintendent

He shall not visit the Office of the Chief Minister and the Delhi Secretariat

He shall be bound by the statement made on his behalf that he shall not



sign official files unless it is required and necessary for obtaining clearance/approval of the Lieutenant Governor of Delhi;

He will not make any comment with regard to his role in the present case

He will not interact with any of the witnesses and/or have access to any official files connected with the case.

The grant of interim bail will not be treated as an expression of opinion on the merits of the case or the criminal appeal which is pending consideration before us.

RELATED REPORTS

BAIL DOES NOT AMOUNT TO PRIVILEGE: SC P4

KEJRIWAL TO HOLD ROADSHOW TODAY P5

'BJP WILL WIN ALL 7 SEATS IN DELHI' P5

THAROOR, BRINDA SLAM ED P5

Delhi Chief Minister and Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) National Convener Arvind Kejriwal addresses the party workers as he was released from Tihar Jail after the Supreme Court granted him interim bail in the Delhi excise policy case, in New Delhi on Friday. ANI

False narrative, says ECI on Kharge's voting data allegations

ECI issues an unprecedentedly strong response

ABHINANDAN MISHRA
NEW DELHI

In a point-wise rebuttal to the allegations levelled by Congress president Mallikarjuna Kharge regarding the discrepancies in the voting data released by the Election Commission of India (ECI) on 6 May, the poll body has stated that his letter was in "continuance of a design/pattern towards a false narrative" while stating that ECI had come across "a trend of irresponsible statements attacking or attempting to degrade the credibility of the elections".

In an unprecedentedly strong response, the ECI in its reply to Kharge on Friday, issued a point-wise rebuttal to every claims that were made by Kharge in his letter while charging him of vitiating the constitutionally mandated work of the ECI and create disharmony in election management through innuendos and insinuations which can plant



doubts in the mind of voters and political parties and create an anarchic situation.

It has asked Kharge to exercise caution and refrain from making such allegations and statements.

The ECI in its reply, spread across 21 pages and eight annexures, has said that contrary to Kharge's claims, polling data is available in real-time and therefore Congress charge that its release was delayed is wrong. To strengthen its arguments, the ECI has shared newspaper reports and other related data showing how media had reported voter turnout across India as it was being updated on the "Voter turnout" app.

The ECI, further refuting the charges levelled by Kharge, stated that in reality and contrary to what the

Cong wants to make Hindus second-class citizens: PM in T'gana

AGENCIES
MAHABUBNAGAR (TELANGANA)

Continuing his attack on Congress and its leader Rahul Gandhi, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday said that the opposition party "hates Hindus and Hindu festivals so much that it is now being exposed daily" and "wants to make Hindus second-class citizens in their own country".

Addressing a rally in Mahabubnagar in Telangana, PM Modi referred to remarks on former Indian Overseas Congress chief Sam Pitroda about the colour of skin of Indians and some of his other remarks to attack the Congress.

He targeted Rahul Gandhi as "shehzada" and Sam Pitroda as "guru" of the Congress leader.



"Congress hates Hindus and Hindu festivals so much that it is now being exposed daily. The shehzada's guru even went ahead to say that the Ram Temple should not have been built. He went on to say that the construction of Ram Temple and celebrating Ram Navami is anti-India, it is against the idea of India... If you want to visit Ayodhya and celebrate Ram Navami, are you anti-India? Congress wants to make Hindus second-class

I.N.D.I.A bloc will take UP by storm, says Rahul at Kannauj rally

AGENCIES
KANNAUJ (UTTAR PRADESH)

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi exuded confidence in victory in the ongoing Lok Sabha elections on Friday and said that the mandate of both Uttar Pradesh and the country is clear for the party, adding that the storm of INDIA bloc has started approaching the state.

"Mai aapko likh kar de raha hu, Uttar Pradesh mai I.N.D.I.A bloc ka toofan aa raha hai," said Gandhi at a public rally here today.

Taking a dig at the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on Friday, Rahul Gandhi claimed that the ruling party in the state is going to face the biggest defeat in Uttar Pradesh.

"I can put this in writing that the storm of the I.N.D.I.A bloc is approach-



ing here in Uttar Pradesh. There has to be a change in Uttar Pradesh and a change in the country, that is why the people have taken a vow. BJP is going to face its biggest defeat in UP," said Rahul Gandhi.

"Uttar Pradesh paves the way for the country. Uttar Pradesh has made up its mind that a change has to set in here, that a change has to set in in India and that is why the decision has been made. The public has made

India votes in favour of Palestine's UN bid

AGENCIES
UNITED NATIONS

India on Friday voted in favour of a draft UN General Assembly resolution that said Palestine is qualified and should be admitted as full member of the United Nations and recommended that the Security Council reconsider "the matter favourably."

The 193-member General Assembly met in the morning for an emergency special session where the Arab Group resolution Admission of new Members to the



View of the empty General Assembly hall

United Nations', in support of the State of Palestine's full membership in the UN, was

Draft UN General Assembly resolution that said Palestine is qualified and should be admitted

presented by the United Arab Emirates, as Chair of the Arab Group in May.

The resolution got 143 votes in favour, including by India, nine against and 25 abstentions. The UNGA hall broke into an applause after the vote was cast.

The resolution determined that the State of Palestine is qualified for membership in the United Nations in accordance with Article 4 of the Charter of the United Nations and "should therefore be admitted to membership in the United Nations."

It recommended that the Security Council reconsider the matter favourably, in the light of this determination.

India was the first non-Arab State to recognise the Palestine Liberation Organisation as the sole and legitimate

EVERY INCH OF PoK BELONGS TO INDIA: AMIT SHAH

TDG NETWORK KHUNTI (JHARKHAND)
Reacting to Congress leader Mani Shankar Aiyar's remarks that India should "respect" Pakistan because it has an "atom bomb," Union Home Minister Amit Shah slammed the Congress and asserted that every inch of PoK belongs to India and no force can snatch it.

In an April 15 interview with 'Chill Pill', Aiyar said that Pakistan is a respected nation that also possesses an atom bomb so India must enter into a dialogue with them.

Addressing an election rally in Jharkhand's Khunti, Amit Shah said that instead of taking back PoK from Pakistan during their regime, Congress is scaring the people of India by talking about the atom bomb.

"Today Mani Shankar Aiyar has threatened us, he is threatening the country that give respect to Pakistan as they have atom bombs. A few days before INDI alli-



In an April 15 interview with 'Chill Pill', Aiyar said that Pakistan is a respected nation that also possesses an atom bomb so India must enter into a dialogue with them.

ance leader Farooq Abdullah said do not talk about PoK as Pakistan has an atomic bomb. I want to say one thing to INDI alliance and the Congress party. PoK is India's and no one can snatch this from India. Instead of taking back PoK from Pakistan at their regime, Congress is scaring the people of India by

talking about atom bombs. A resolution was passed unanimously in Parliament that PoK is part of India. You (Congress) are now putting a question mark on PoK by talking about the atom bomb. I don't know what has happened to the Congress. BJP's stand is clear that every inch of the land of PoK belongs to

India and should remain in India," he said.

Shah accused the Congress of creating "obstacles" in building the Ram Temple for 70 years and asserted that Prime Minister Narendra Modi constructed the temple in just five years.

"What has the Congress done for the tribals? In the last 10 years, PM Modi completed many works which were not moving. Congress did not resolve the Ram Mandir issue for 70 years. Rahul Baba did not come to Ram Mandir's Pran Pratishtha as he was afraid of his vote bank. Their vote bank is the people who are intruding on the tribal land. If anyone can stop them, then it is the BJP, JMM-led alliance indulged in the land, mining, MGNREGA scams; Won't allow them to digest poor people's money. Can Congress or JMM stop them?" Shah said.

Amit Shah questioned Congress on the lack of tribal Presidents during its rule.

"I want to ask Rahul Gandhi why Congress failed to make any tribal President during its rule," he said.

The Union Home Minister further said that the Prime Minister has ended the Naxalism in Jharkhand and Bihar and initiated development.

"States like Jharkhand, Bihar, Odisha, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, and Chhattisgarh were under the shadow of Naxalism. Due to that, no development happened here. You chose Narendra Modi as the Prime Minister twice and he ended the Naxalism in Jharkhand and Bihar and initiated development. After so many years, free ration cards were distributed among people at Jharkhand's Buddha Pahad, medical shops were opened, and now a public health centre is also being built. PM Modi freed Jharkhand's Buddha Pahad from Maoist menace," he said.

'No one can end your reservation,' Rajnath assures tribals in Jharkhand

TDG NETWORK DUMKA

In his address at a public meeting in Jharkhand, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Friday tore into the opposition for alleging that the BJP was going to end reservations. He assured the tribals that no one could end their reservation.

Singh was campaigning for BJP candidate Sita Soren in the Dumka constituency, where he rejected the opposition's allegations about the reservation and said that no one can end it.

"The opposition falsely accuses the BJP of ending reservation. But I say that I will never let reservation end. I give assurance to the people of the tribal society that no one can end your reservation," Singh at an election rally in Dumka.

"No corrupt person will escape in the Modi government. Whenever Congress government was in power, corruption prevailed. If we say something against the corrupt, opposition parties say that we did wrong.



If we have done wrong, then action will be taken against us. Go to the High Court or Supreme Court. We do not divide anyone on the basis of caste and religion," he said.

Taking potshot at JMM, Singh said once the news came that the Chief Minister of Jharkhand was missing for 24 hours. He had never heard such a thing in his life.

"The people of Jharkhand may be poor but they have self-respect. The Jharkhand Mukti Morcha government has discriminated against you. JMM will be punished for this," Singh said.

In his address he enumerated the works done by PM Naren-

dra Modi, "PM Modi's dream is to eradicate poverty from India. Modi government took the country's economy from 11th position to 5th position," he added.

Singh accused the Congress government of corruption and its ministers who have been jailed. "Congress and Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) are indulging in corruption and are doing politics by lying," Singh said.

Addressing members of tribal community, he said that tribal society played a big role in India's independence and growth.

"The country is progressing under PM Modi's leadership," Singh remarked.

BJP's Navneet Rana booked for remarks against Congress

TDG NETWORK RANGAREDDY (TELANGANA)

Firebrand BJP leader Navneet Rana was booked for her remarks against the Congress at a campaign event in the state, on Friday.

An FIR against Rana, who is seeking a fresh term from the Amravati constituency of Maharashtra in the ongoing Lok Sabha elections, was registered at the Shadnagar police station in the state.

Canvassing for fellow BJP candidate Madhvi Latha, who is contesting the Hyderabad Lok Sabha seat, Navneet said every vote cast in favour of the Congress will be a "vote for Pakistan". Confirming the registration of the FIR against her, the police informed that they acted on a complaint and not suo motu. Krishna Mohan of FST flying squad of the Election Commission (EC), who is currently on election duty in the



state, filed the complaint against the BJP leader, the police said.

"We received a complaint from the FST flying squad, EC for violation of the model code of conduct. The complaint was lodged yesterday. Krishna Mohan, FST of EC who is on election duty in the state currently, lodged the complaint against Navneet Rana's remark that every vote cast in favour of Rahul Gandhi and the Congress was a vote for Pakistan. She has been booked under Section 188 of the IPC," Prapat Lingam, inspector, Shadnagar police station, told ANI. On Thursday, Navneet attacked the AIMIM and the

Congress, claiming that if the people vote for the AIMIM and the Congress, it would mean a vote for Pakistan.

"If you vote for the AIMIM and Congress, it will go directly to Pakistan. The kind of 'AIMIM prem' and 'Rahul prem' that Pakistan is showing is actually intended to ensure Modi-ji's defeat and make Rahul win. The Congress government governed the country as per the whims and dictates of Pakistan. Now, the same Pakistan is returning the favour with its demonstration of love and affection for the Congress and the AIMIM," Navneet said.

Earlier, to AIMIM leader Akbaruddin Owaisi's statement that it would take them all of '15 minutes' to balance out the "Hindu-Muslim ratio" in the country, Navneet hit back at the Owaisi brothers, saying "it would take us 15 seconds if the police were removed or made to stand down".

Rahul, Telangana CM travel in state transport bus

TDG NETWORK HYDERABAD

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi and Telangana Chief Minister Revanth Reddy travelled in a state-owned Road Transport Corporation bus here and explained to the passengers about various schemes included in the party's Manifesto for the 2024 Lok Sabha elections.

Rahul and CM Reddy boarded the RTC bus at Dil Sukh Nagar in the city.

Rahul inquired about the free bus travel facility for women on the RTC buses.

Rahul Gandhi explained to the passengers about Yuva Nyay, Kisan Nyay, Nari Nyay, and Shramik Nyay as included in the Congress Manifesto for the 2024 Lok Sabha election.



Meanwhile, in a public rally in Medak, Telangana, on Thursday, the Congress leader vowed to fill 30 lakh government jobs once the

opposition coalition, INDIA bloc comes to power at the Centre.

Rahul Gandhi attacked Prime Minister Narendra Modi over unemployment woes in the country. He alleged that PM Modi "made crores of youth" unemployed.

"Narendra Modi made crores of youth of the country unemployed. But the Congress party has come up with the scheme of 'first job is permanent'. In this scheme, we will give every educated youth the right to an apprenticeship of Rs 1 lakh. Then as soon as the INDIA govern-

ment is formed on June 4, we will start the work of filling 30 lakh government jobs," Gandhi said while addressing the gathering in Medak.

Gandhi alleged that the Bharatiya Janata Party had claimed to "destroy the Constitution" while calling the ongoing general elections an "election between two ideologies."

"Our Constitution protects the poor, tribal and backward people in the country. Before the Constitution was formed, the poor people in India did not have any rights. The book of the Constitution is the voice of your heart,

which has been achieved by the Congress Party and crores of the people of India after decades-long struggle. But the people of BJP have clearly said that they will destroy the Constitution," he said.

"This election is between two ideologies. On one side is the Congress Party and the INDIA alliance, which are engaged in saving the Constitution. On the other side are Narendra Modi, BJP and RSS, who are trying to destroy the Constitution. We will protect the Constitution. No power can destroy the Constitution of India," Gandhi added.

The Congress leader further alleged that PM Modi has "worked for people like Adani" while promising to make "crores of people millionaires."

"Narendra Modi has worked for people like Adani. Today, 22 people in the country have as much wealth as 70 crore people. Now the Congress party will make crores of people millionaires. One woman will be selected from every poor family in the country and the Congress Party will send Rs 1 lakh per year to her account," he said.

'First puja at Kedarnath performed in name of PM Modi': CM Dhami

TDG NETWORK RUDRAPRAG

As the portals of one of the country's holiest sites, Kedarnath Dham, opened for devotees after a gap of six months, the first puja was performed in the name of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami, who presided over the puja after the ceremonial opening of the doors of Shri Kedarnath Dham temple, welcomed all devotees and prayed for a safe and fulfilling journey for all embarking on the Char Dham pilgrimage.

Speaking to ANI on Friday, CM Dhami said, "The devotees and pilgrims from across the country and beyond wait for this pilgrimage every year. That pious day is upon us today as the portals of



Kedarnath Dham have been thrown open. The devotees and pilgrims have arrived here in large numbers and all necessary arrangements have been made for them. I extend my greetings to all of them. Upon its ceremonial opening, the first puja at the Kedarnath Dham was officiated and performed in the name of PM Modi. The darshan (sighting of the deity) began following all the rituals. Since Narendra Modi became PM, work on the re-development of Baba Kedar

temple has been happening in three phases. We are working to ensure that the project is completed at the earliest."

The portals or doors of one of the country's oldest and most sacred pilgrimage sites were thrown open to devotees in the early hours of Friday.

The portals were opened through rituals and the ceremonial chanting of hymns after a gap of six months, including the peak winter phase.

Chants of 'Har Har Ma-

hadev' rang out from among the crowd of devotees, who gathered for the ceremony, as the portals were thrown open to the chanting of shlokas (hymns).

Ahead of the ceremonial opening of one of the country's holiest places of worship, the abode of Lord Shiva was decorated with 40 quintals of petals.

One of the most revered temples in the country dedicated to the worship of Lord Shiva, Kedarnath draws countless devotees and visitors from across the country and beyond during the six months that it stays open.

The doors of Baba Kedarnath Dham were opened at 7 am for a darshan or sighting of the deity.

Kapil Sibal slams ED for 'playing politics' over CM Kejriwal's interim bail

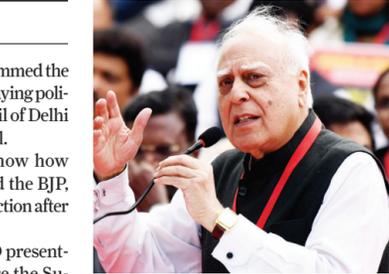
TDG NETWORK NEW DELHI

Rajya Sabha MP Kapil Sibal slammed the Enforcement Directorate for playing politics over the issue of interim bail of Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal.

He also advised them to know how Hardik Patel, who later joined the BJP, contested the election after being convicted.

"Yesterday, ED presented its side before the Supreme Court and said that Arvind Kejriwal should not be granted interim bail because the right to campaign is a legal right, not a Constitutional right...It is correct. But the law also provides that if someone has been awarded punishment and court says that they are staying the punishment, he can take part in campaigning..." Sibal told ANI.

Sibal added: "Ask them how Hardik Patel contested the election. Hardik Patel was convicted, High Court stayed it.



Hardik approached the Supreme Court and the Court stayed it. Hardik contested the election and joined the BJP. Someone, against whom you have evidence and punishment, has the right (to campaign) if the Court stays it. But someone who is just an accused can't be given the stay... What kind of politics is ED doing?..."

Meanwhile, the Supreme Court will pass an order today on CM Kejriwal's interim bail in the money laundering case registered against him by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) in connection with

the Delhi excise policy case.

A bench headed by Justice Sanjiv Khanna on Wednesday told Enforcement Directorate counsel Additional Solicitor General SV Raju that it may pass the order on interim relief to Kejriwal on Friday.

Kejriwal was arrested by the ED on March 21 in connection with a money laundering probe relating to alleged irregularities in the now-scraped Delhi excise policy 2021-22.

Kejriwal, while filing an appeal in the apex court, contended that his arrest after the announcement of the General Elections is "motivated by extraneous considerations."

On April 9, the High Court had dismissed his plea for release from jail and rejected his argument of political vendetta amid the looming Lok Sabha elections. The High Court had said that Kejriwal's absence from nine ED summons over six months undermined any claims of special privilege as Chief Minister, suggesting his arrest was an inevitable consequence of his non-cooperation.

Congress welcomes SC decision to grant interim bail to Kejriwal

ANAND SINGH NEW DELHI

Congress on Friday welcomed the Supreme Court decision to grant bail to Delhi Chief Minister and Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader Arvind Kejriwal till June 1 and also hoped that former Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren, who has also been arrested by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) will also get due justice.

In a video statement, Congress media and publicity department chairman

Pawan Khera said, "We welcome the SC decision to grant bail to Kejriwal."

"We also hope that the Prime Minister gets enough time after June 4 when he becomes former Prime Minister to introspect while sitting in Sabarmati Ashram at the kind of politics he has indulged into," he said.

"We hope that former Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren also gets due justice," Khera added.

Even Sandeep Dikshit, son of former

Delhi Chief Minister Sheila Dikshit also welcomed the SC decision and said now even Soren should get bail.

He also said that with the release of Kejriwal on bail ahead of the polling in the national capital on May 25, the INDIA bloc will get more power during its campaigning.

The remarks from Congress leaders came soon after the top court on Friday afternoon granted interim bail to Kejriwal till June 1.

Congress on Friday distanced itself from that the comments of veteran party leader Mani Shankar Aiyar that India should "respect" Pakistan because it has "atom bomb", which the party dubbed as an old interview that went viral online and sparked controversy.

While disagreeing totally with the remarks made by

Congress distances itself from Aiyar's comments

ANAND SINGH NEW DELHI

Aiyar some months ago, the party said his views did not represent the party's official stand and also questioned an old interview of External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on China.

In a post on X, Congress media and publicity department chairman Pawan Khera said, "Indian National Congress disassociates itself completely from and disagrees totally with some remarks made by Mr. Mani Shankar Aiyar few

months back which have been revived today by the BJP in its attempt to deflect attention from Prime Minister Modi's daily goof ups. Mr Aiyar does not speak for the party in any capacity whatsoever."

Highlighting the role of former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, Khera said, "The Indian National Congress and indeed the entire nation recalls with pride that in December 1971 Pakistan was broken and an independent Bangladesh

emerged thanks to Indira Gandhi's decisive and determined leadership and the valour of our armed forces."

He also said that almost exactly 50 years ago on May 18, 1974 under the leadership of Indiraji, "India's nuclear capability was announced to the world."

"The Indian National Congress has always believed that our decision making should be guided by supreme national interest.

'BJP GOVT WORKS FOR RICH PEOPLE,' ALLEGES CONGRESS CHIEF KHARGE

TDG NETWORK
HYDERABAD

Congress national president Mallikarjun Kharge on Friday accused the BJP government of failing to protect the rights and interests of poor people in the country and said that the Congress will strive to "strengthen" labour laws aimed at benefiting the unorganized sector.

Addressing a press conference, Kharge highlighted the party's election promises and said that the Congress would also provide 50 per cent reservations to women in central government jobs.

"We are giving the guarantee of apprenticeship to the youth. We will also provide those 30 lakh vacant posts in government to the youth..."



We will give 50 per cent reservation to women in government jobs... will work to strengthen the labour laws for the unorganized workers. This Modi government is only for the rich people. It does not work for the poor," he said.

Referring to minimum support price (MSP) for farmers, Kharge said the farmers organized protests earlier demanding MSP but the Central government ignored their demand.

"The Congress would fulfil the aspirations of farmers in the country," he added.

He further asserted that the party has fulfilled five of the six guarantees that the party promised.

"We could not implement 1 guarantee due to MCC. We have proved that we will fulfil what we promise. We will soon decide on the compensation for crop damage due to rains. Karnataka, Himachal, or Hyderabad, we have fulfilled our promises. However, we have to follow the EC guidelines," he said. Kharge further claimed

that Prime Minister Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah are afraid after the three phases of voting in the elections.



"After 3 phases, Modi and Shah are afraid. There is no one born who will dare to snatch the mangalsutra. If there is anyone who dares to snatch anything, it is Modi. They never ask for votes based on their development. They only abuse Congress, and call our leader Shehzaada, and others which is not required.

Ex-diplomat and BJP candidate Sandhu files nomination for Amritsar LS seat

TARUNI GANDHI
CHANDIGARH

Former diplomat and Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) candidate for the Amritsar Lok Sabha constituency, Taranjit Singh Sandhu officially submitted his nomination papers on Friday, amidst a show of support from External Affairs Minister S Jais-



hankar. Sandhu, accompanied by Jai Shankar, engaged in a vibrant roadshow before formally filing his nomination papers. The Union Minister lauded Sandhu's credentials, emphasizing his distinguished service to the nation and expressing confidence in his ability to represent Amritsar effectively.

Jaishankar indicated his willingness to address the matter later, underscoring his current focus on endorsing Sandhu's candidacy. Ahead of filing his nomination papers, Sandhu led a spirited roadshow in an open jeep, joined by a multitude of BJP supporters, with Jaishankar by his side.

Sandhu, a native of Amritsar, recently joined the BJP in March, following his retirement as the Indian envoy

to the United States on February 1. During his tenure as the Indian Ambassador to the US, Sandhu played pivotal roles in fostering bilateral ties, including facilitating then-President Donald Trump's visit to India.

With Punjab set to vote in a single phase on June 1 to elect 13 members to the 18th Lok Sabha, the political landscape is gaining momentum. In the previous general elections, the BJP secured two seats, while the Congress won eight and the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) and AAP each claimed one seat.

The ongoing Lok Sabha elections, spanning from April 19 to June 1, will witness the counting of votes on June 4, encompassing the electoral journey of 543 parliamentary constituencies.

'Happy to see Kejriwal got interim bail': WB CM Mamata Banerjee

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee expressed happiness after the Supreme Court granted interim bail to Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal till June 1 in the excise policy case.

In a post on X, CM Mamata said, "I am very happy to see that Shri Arvind Kejriwal @ArvindKejriwal has got interim bail. It will be very helpful in the context of the current elections".

Aaditya Thackeray in a post on X, said more power to Kejriwal.

"@ArvindKejriwal ji getting justice and relief against the dictatorial regime in the country is a huge sign of winds of change. He has been speaking the truth and that is what the BJP dislikes. More power to him and the INDIA alliance for Bharat.



Aam Admi Party National Convenor and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal received a big relief from the Supreme Court, which on Friday granted him interim bail till June 1 in the excise policy case.

We will protect our Constitution and democracy!"

Delhi Minister and AAP leader Atishi said, "It is not just Arvind Kejriwal who has got interim bail but by Supreme Court's this deci-

sion truth has triumphed, this is a win of the Democracy & Constitution...The SC has played a major role in protecting Democracy..."

Aam Admi Party National Convenor and Delhi Chief

Minister Arvind Kejriwal received a big relief from the Supreme Court, which on Friday granted him interim bail till June 1 in the excise policy case.

A bench of Justices Sanjiv Khanna and Dipankar Dutta granted the Delhi Chief Minister interim bail in the money laundering case registered against him by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) in connection with the Delhi excise policy case.

The bench on Wednesday told Enforcement Directorate counsel Additional Solicitor General SV Raju that it may pass the order on interim relief to Kejriwal today.

Kejriwal was arrested by the ED on March 21 in connection with a money laundering probe relating to alleged irregularities in the now-scrapped Delhi excise policy 2021-22.

In footsteps of PM Modi, Odisha 'chaiwala' to contest assembly polls

TDG NETWORK
PURI

Following in the footsteps of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, a tea seller from Odisha has jumped into the fray for the state assembly.

Sukanta Ghadai (26), who makes a humble living selling tea, filed his nomination from the Brahmagiri assembly constituency in Puri district.

A resident of Karimpur village, Ghadai is among the poorest candidates contesting the state assembly elections that are to be held simultaneously with the Lok Sabha polls on May 25.

In the affidavit that he filed along with his nomination papers, the tea seller declared zero movable and immovable

Urging fellow residents to bless and support in his maiden bid for membership of the state legislature, Ghadai promised to dedicate himself to meeting people's aspirations and honour his pledges if elected.

assets.

Speaking to ANI on Thursday, Ghadai, who is in the fray as an Independent candidate, said, "I drew inspiration from none other than Prime Minister Narendra Modi. If a tea seller could become the prime minister, why can't a fellow tea seller be elected an MLA? I have filed my nomination papers and have resolved to rid Brahmagiri (his constituency) of corruption and be in the sincere service of the people

if elected."

"I wish to work towards making my constituency self-dependent and free from corruption if the people elect me as their representative in the Assembly. I plan to rid this constituency of several ills and malpractices that are currently rampant, including the culture of accepting bribes in the process of enrolment for Aadhaar cards, ration cards and other documents,"

Expanding further on the prevailing issues in

the constituency, Ghadai, said, "I am also determined to address the concern over poor accessibility of ambulances here if I am elected MLA and also reduce road accidents involving stray cattle."

Sharing his campaign plans, he said, "I have decided to campaign on my bicycle."

Urging fellow residents to bless and support in his maiden bid for membership of the state legislature, Ghadai promised to dedicate himself to meeting people's aspirations and honour his pledges if elected. Ghadai is pitted against the ruling BJD's Umakanta Samantaray, BJP's Upasana Mohapatra and Congress nominee Mitrabhanu Mohapatra.

The constituency will poll along with the rest on May 25.

Odisha to be top state by 2034: Biju Janata Dal promises in its manifesto

TDG NETWORK
BHUBANESWAR

The Biju Janata Dal (BJD) on Thursday released its manifesto for the upcoming Lok Sabha and Assembly elections with a promise to make Odisha the top state in the country by 2034, two years ahead of the state's centenary celebration.

Speaking about the nine-point manifesto, BJD president and Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik said, "This manifesto will record history in Odisha. In the last 24 years, the BJD government has transformed Odisha from a poor, hunger-prone, backward state gripped by natural calamities to an identity-based State of modern growth, culture and asmita."

"With the grace of Lord Jagannath and the blessings of the people, the guarantees



The Nua O scholarship money will be increased to Rs 14,000 per annum for girls and Rs 12,000 per annum for boys," he said.

presented in this pro-people manifesto will be implemented through the 5T Governance and by 2034, two years before celebrating 100 years of the formation of Odisha, Odisha will be given the

status of number one state in growth and development in all spheres with the help and strong leadership of all," he announced.

"It is our youth who will write the success story of

Odisha. They will be empowered and enriched to write the future of the number one State. A separate budget of Rs 1 lakh crore will be kept for 10 years for the youth of Odisha. This youth budget will be presented in the legislative assembly on the lines of climate and gender budgets. The Nua O scholarship money will be increased to Rs 14,000 per annum for girls and Rs 12,000 per annum for boys," he said.

Patnaik announced that two lakh Government jobs will be provided in the next five years. Stating that 75 per cent of the households in Odisha are using 100 units of low consumption and another 10 per cent are using 100 to 150 units, he announced free power up to 100 units and discounts for 50 units from 100 to 150 units of power.

'For BJP, politics is about nation-building': Rajnath

TDG NETWORK
LUCKNOW

Amid the political show-down over the Congress' promise of wealth redistribution and an alleged fake video claiming purportedly that the RSS stood against reservation, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh came out in praise of the Sangh saying it has never believed in separating or dividing people on religious lines.

Addressing a public event in Lucknow, the Raksha Mantri clapped back at the Opposition over its divisive charge at the BJP, saying that his party practices the politics of 'nation-building' and not merely forming the government.

Invoking his RSS background, the BJP stalwart said, "I have never had any hesitation in saying that I am a Swayamsevak of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS). I can say

Addressing a public event in Lucknow, the Raksha Mantri clapped back at the Opposition over its divisive charge at the BJP, saying that his party practices the politics of 'nation-building' and not merely forming the government.

with absolute confidence and conviction that the Sangh doesn't believe in separating Hindus from Muslims. For us, politics is about nation-building and is not merely intended at forming governments. There are those whose brand of politics is merely oriented towards forming governments using any means possible. However, we are not among them."

He said the BJP has taken the perceived crisis of confidence and credibility around those associated with politics as a challenge.

"There is a crisis of confidence and credibility around those in politics. This sense has permeated the national conscious and entrenched itself since independence. However, if there's anyone who has taken this crisis as a challenge and is fighting to restore the eroded public trust and credibility to those associated with politics, it is the BJP," Rajnath said.

He added that the country, which ranked 11th in terms of its GDP under the Congress-led UPA, was now the fifth-largest economy and

poised to become the third-largest in the coming years.

"Between 2004 and 2014, when the Congress-led UPA was in power, we ranked 11th among global economies. However, within eight years since Narendra Modi took the country's reins as PM, our economy jumped from the 11th to the 5th position. And it is being said our economy will be the third-largest in the world, before long, if it keeps growing at its current pace," the Raksha Mantri said.

Also assuring the people that the country's borders were safe and secure, Rajnath said, "I urge the Opposition leaders to stop questioning or doubting the valour of our armed forces. When it comes to border or national security, all parties should rise above their differences and speak in one voice. We should stand together regardless of who is in power."

Karni Sena president Suraj Pal Amu resigns from BJP

TDG NETWORK
GURUGRAM

Haryana BJP spokesperson and Karni Sena president Suraj Pal Amu resigned from the party alleging that the BJP gave a Lok Sabha candidate ticket to a person who insulted the Kshatriya community.

He was apparently referring to Union Minister Parshottam Rupala who has been fielded by the BJP from Rajkot Lok Sabha constituency in Gujarat. In his resignation letter to BJP President JP Nadda on Thursday, Amu



also alleged that the party has sidelined Rajput leaders. "The representation of the Kshatriya community in the leadership position in the BJP is also be-

ing reduced continuously in the Bharatiya Janata Party since 2014. Even the prominent leaders of the community are being sidelined from the party. The party has given ticket to a person who made shameful remarks on the character of deceased Kshatriya mothers and sisters. This decision is being felt as an act of insulting the Kshatriya community of the entire nation. I am deeply hurt by giving patronage to a candidate with unethical behaviour," he said in his resignation letter.

Amu had resigned from the BJP's primary membership in 2018 as well, but his resignation was rejected.

From 1990-91, he was the divisional president of the BJP Yuva Morcha, Sohna. From 1993-96, he served as the district general secretary of the BJP Yuva Morcha. He has been working as a state spokesperson of the BJP since 2018.

Amu was at the forefront of the protest in 2018 against Sanjay Leela Bhansali movie 'Padmaavat', which allegedly hurt the sentiments of Rajput community.

Abhishek Banerjee files nomination from Diamond Harbour LS seat

TDG NETWORK
KOLKATA

Trinamool Congress' national general secretary and party's candidate from Diamond Harbour seat, Abhishek Banerjee on Friday filed his nomination for Lok Sabha elections.

Abhishek Banerjee, who is also West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's nephew, is contesting for a third consecutive term from the seat in West Bengal's

South 24 Parganas district. After filing his nomination, he expressed confidence in his victory in the Lok Sabha election from the Diamond Harbour seat and said, "I am contesting an election. I am not an astrologer. I can't predict the future but I have left no stone unturned in serving the people....I am hopeful and optimistic that the margin that Diamond Harbour delivered last time will eventually increase and people's love and blessings

will continue to be showered upon us as we have worked in the last ten years," he said.

West Bengal, which sends 42 MPs to Parliament, is voting in all seven phases. Polling for six Lok Sabha seats in Bengal were held across the first three phases on April 19, April 26, and May 7. Polling for the remaining parliamentary seats will be held on May 13, May 20, May 25, and June 1. The counting of votes has been scheduled for June 4.

In the 2014 Lok Sabha elections, the TMC won 34 seats in the state, while the BJP had to settle for 2 seats. The CPI (M) won 2 seats, while the Congress bagged 4.

However, the BJP came up with a much-improved showing in the 2019 polls, winning 18 seats against the TMC's 22. The Congress's tally dropped to just 2 seats, while the Left scored a blank. The 2024 Lok Sabha elections are being held in seven phases, running from April 19 to June 1.

BAIL DOES NOT AMOUNT TO PRIVILEGE: SC

ASHISH SINHA
NEW DELHI

In a significant development in the Delhi excise policy case, the Supreme Court on Friday granted interim bail to Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal until June 1 for campaigning in the Lok Sabha elections.

A bench comprising Justices Sanjiv Khanna and Dipankar Datta said that the Delhi CM must surrender and return to jail on June 2, 2024.

The top court in its order said that at this stage, it is

not possible for us to either conclude the arguments or finally pronounce the judgment.

“However, there is an intervening factor which has prompted us to consider and pass the present order, namely, 18th Lok Sabha General Elections, which are in progress. As the appeal is pending before us, we do not think it would be proper for us to direct the appellant - Arvind Kejriwal to approach the trial court for interim bail/release. This may not be apt in view of the legal issues and contentions



that are under examination and consideration before us,” it added.

It is no gain saying that General Elections to Lok Sabha is the most significant and an important event this year, the court said. Between

650-700 million voters out of an electorate of about 970 million will cast their votes to elect the government of this country for the next five years.

“Given the prodigious importance, we reject the argument raised on behalf of the prosecution that grant of interim bail/release on this account would be giving premium of placing the politicians in a benefit position compared to ordinary citizens of this country,” it said.

While examining the question of grant of interim bail/

release, the courts always take into consideration the peculiarities associated with the person in question and the surrounding circumstances. In fact, to ignore the same would be iniquitous and wrong, the bench said.

Senior advocate Abhishek Singhvi, representing Kejriwal, pleaded for interim bail until June 5, 2024, a day after the votes are counted on June 4, 2024, but the bench declined the request.

June 1 marks the culmination of the seven-phase elections, with vote counting scheduled for June 4.

Kejriwal walks out of jail

CONTINUED FROM P1

accused in the money laundering case, said in a post in Hindi on X.

However, Union Home Minister Amit Shah sought to downplay his release.

“This is not regular bail. It is an interim bail. He can campaign but every time he goes to campaign, people will be reminded of the excise scam,” he said in West Bengal’s Raniganj.

“Hanuman ji ki jai. This is the victory of democracy. It is the result of the prayers and blessings of millions of people. Many thanks to

everyone,” Kejriwal’s wife Sunita, who was filling in for her husband during his absence from the electoral battleground, said in a post on X in Hindi.

Kejriwal’s release from jail, however transient, is expected to give a boost to the AAP’s Lok Sabha campaign in Delhi where polling is scheduled for May 25.

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee hailed Kejriwal’s release on interim bail. “I am very happy to see that Shri Arvind Kejriwal @ArvindKejriwal has got interim bail. It will be very

helpful in the context of the current elections,” she posted on X.

NCP (SP) chief Sharad Pawar also welcomed the apex court’s decision. “I welcome the interim bail order granted to the chief minister of Delhi, Arvind Kejriwal by the SC. India remains steadfast in the pursuit of democracy,” Pawar wrote on X.

Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Aaditya Thackeray said justice and relief to Kejriwal against the “dictatorial regime” was a huge sign of winds of change.

Sandeshkhali: TMC, NCW move ECI

SUPROTIM MUKHERJEE
KOLKATA

Even as the Trinamool Congress threatened to complain to the Election Commission about National Commission for Women chairperson Rekha Sharma for “misusing her chair and “being one of the major conspirators of the Sandeshkhali matter”, the NCW chief wrote to the poll panel head Rajeev Kumar highlighting the “alarming situation wherein women in West Bengal were being threatened into withdrawing their cases and providing false statements, creating an atmosphere of fear for women in Sandeshkhali”.

The National Commission for Women had recommended to President Droupadi Murmu that the President’s rule be imposed in West Bengal over alleged atrocities on women and violence in Sandeshkhali.

The Trinamool Congress alleged that the NCW chief Rekha Sharma had misused her chair and was one of the major conspirators in the Sandeshkhali matter after multiple women alleged that they were deceived by local BJP leaders into filling sexual assault complaints against Trinamool Congress leaders.

Stating the Trinamool Congress’s intention to move the poll panel against Sharma, West Bengal Minister and party spokesperson Shashi Panja alleged on Friday that the NCW chairperson acted with political bias over the Sandeshkhali allegations and encouraged women of the area to make false allegations of sexual atrocities.

Even as the Trinamool Congress made threatening noises, NCW chairperson Rekha Sharma released her letter to the poll panel chief

The Trinamool Congress alleged that the NCW chief Rekha Sharma had misused her chair

on social media which said: “It has come to the notice of the Commission that the women of Sandeshkhali are being compelled to withdraw their complaints by TMC workers as they are the ruling party in West Bengal. The TMC party workers are instilling fear among the women of Sandeshkhali to suppress victims from coming forward with their complaints, potentially impacting the fairness of the election process in the area”.

The Commission requested the Election Commission to look into the matter

on priority and ensure that women are not compelled to withdraw their complaints due to the threat from Trinamool Congress workers. It urged the poll panel to direct the authorities to take appropriate measures.

“In recent developments surrounding the Sandeshkhali case, the National Commission for Women has noted that few women have suddenly taken their complaints back, which were lodged against Sandeshkhali accused and suspended Trinamool Congress leader Shahjahan Sheikh,” the NCW said.

“The NCW finds this turn of statement deeply concerning, particularly amidst the backdrop of the general elections of 2024. It is important that the integrity of the electoral process is upheld and every citizen’s right to participate freely and without fear,” it stated.

Over-reliance on Modi brand will contribute to BJP’s defeat: Gehlot

AJIT MAINDOLA
NEW DELHI

With the advancement of polls, the war of words has also intensified. Former Chief Minister of Rajasthan Ashok Gehlot has asserted that the NDA government’s departure is imminent. He highlighted the low voter turnout and Prime Minister Modi’s mention of industrialists Adani and Ambani as opportunities for the Congress to question the BJP’s governance.

According to Gehlot, the public sentiment suggests that Modi will not secure another term as Prime Minister. He noted a perceived shift among BJP workers and Sangh supporters away from Modi, resulting in reluctance among BJP voters to leave their homes.

This statement of Gehlot is significant and might have

a major impact as no other Congress leader has spoken with this conviction so far. The words of this veteran leader do carry certain amount of weight. His experience and eloquence needs to be read in between the lines.

During a recent rally in Telangana, Prime Minister Modi made references to deals involving Adani and Ambani without directly mentioning Rahul Gandhi, which prompted a strong reaction from the Congress. Gehlot observed that Modi’s use of Adani and Ambani’s names in his campaign speeches has put even BJP and RSS supporters in a defensive position. This exclusive focus on Modi’s persona in the election campaign proved to be a costly strategy for the BJP, as it led to electoral setbacks.

Gehlot suggested that Mo-



di’s statements reflect a sense of nervousness, indicating potential electoral losses for the BJP. He attributed this to the absence of BJP’s name from the campaign branding, with emphasis placed solely on Modi’s guarantees. Gehlot noted that Modi had made it clear before the elections that they would revolve around his leadership, with slogans like ‘this time again Modi government’ and ‘Modi’s guarantee’, sidelining individual MP candidates and the BJP as a party.

Gehlot said BJP’s name is noticeably absent from the campaign branding nationwide, signifying a departure from traditional political strategies. According to Gehlot, this over-reliance on Modi’s personal brand may contribute significantly to BJP’s defeat in the upcoming elections.

Gehlot remarked that Prime Minister Modi has made unprecedented history by mentioning Adani and Ambani, leaving the entire nation both amused and infuriated. People are bewildered by his statements, and even members of the BJP find themselves at a loss for words.

Modi’s direct accusations against Adani and Ambani, alleging their involvement in funneling black money to the Congress via sacks and tempos, have left many puzzled.

False narrative, says ECI

CONTINUED FROM P1

Congress leader claimed in his letter, no actual contesting candidate of Congress or of INDIA bloc has raised the issue either of unavailability of final polling data (through Form 17C) or the electoral rolls.

The ECI further referred to a letter that it had sent to Congress leader Randeep Surjewala on similar allegations that were raised by him against the ECI during the Karnataka elections in 2023 while stating that EVM machines were brought from South Africa. ECI had warned Surjewala to exercise due caution and not to fall for misleading rumours from dubious and frivolous sources.

On 6 May, after the two phases of polling had taken place and one day before the third phase seats were to go to poll, Kharge wrote a letter to the leaders of I.N.D.I.A bloc parties, regarding the ‘discrepancies’ in the voting data released by Election Commission of India and non-publishing of registered voters.

Kharge, in his letter, wrote that the credibility of the ECI is at an all time low.

“It is in public domain on how the ECI, perhaps for the first time in history, delayed the release of the final voting percentages of the First and Second phase of the Lok Sabha elections. Additionally, it is extremely disconcerting to know, through various media

reports, that even the final registered voters list from the Third phase onwards is also not released.

All these developments cast a dark shadow on the functioning of the Election Commission of India. The inordinate delay in the release of the final voting percentages for the First and Second phases raises serious doubts on the quality of data. In my electoral life of 52 years, I have never witnessed such a high increment of voting percentages, in the final published data, that we now assume came from the later hours of voting on the polling days”, he said in the letter which the party president also shared on social media platform, ‘X’.

PM attacks Congress in T’gana

CONTINUED FROM P1

citizens in their own country. Is this why they talk about vote-jihad?” PM Modi asked.

“The shehzada of Congress set out with ‘Mohabbat ki Dukaan’ but the board of the shop is no longer visible and he is busy dividing the society (samaj me zehar gholne me jut gayen hain)... supporters of ‘tukde tukde gang’ are talking of dividing country into pieces. His advisor, sitting in America, says that the people of South India are Africans. He sees the people of Telangana as Africans... The Congress decides who is Indian and who is African based on the colour of our skin,” he alleged.

The Prime Minister al-

leged that Congress is anti-Hindu by mentality. “Congress is fully involved in giving the reservation of SC, ST, and OBC to Muslims on the basis of religion... Remember one thing, ‘vanchit ka jo adhikaar hai, Modi uska chaukidar hai’,” he said. He said Congress government in Telangana has not worked for farmers.

“This area is blessed by Krishna and Tungabhadra rivers. But the farmers of this area have to migrate for labour. The state government is not going ahead with irrigation projects in the region. Congress has made a false promise of loan waiver for farmers. If anything, Congress has betrayed the farmers,” he said. “If there is something the

Congress party has given to the people of Telangana, it is betrayal, betrayal, betrayal only,” he added. He accused Bharat Rashtra Samithi and Congress of being “very selfish parties” and said they had not served the people of the state.

“They used the people of Telangana to serve their own interests. You chose KCR in 2009, but after Telangana was formed, he forgot you! The new CM of Telangana, similarly, has nothing to do with you. He is busy just in making the high command sitting in Delhi happy,”

“Congress came to power after making a lot of promises. But after it formed the government, it became the ‘photo copy’ of BRS,” he said.

Rahul at Kannauj rally

CONTINUED FROM P1

up its mind,” he added.

Taking a swipe at the Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led BJP government, Rahul Gandhi said, “PM Modi did not take the name of Adani-Ambani for 10 years. Whenever there is a threat, people take the name of the one who can save them and that is why PM Modi has taken the names of his two friends.”

“For the next 10-15 days they will try to divert your attention...Don’t get distracted. There is just one issue in the General Elections in India, all issues arise out of it - the Constitution of India,” Rahul Gandhi added.

Gandhi added, “You take a written guarantee that PM Modi will not become the Prime Minister again.”

Ahead of the four-phase voting scheduled on May 13, Samajwadi Party Chief Akhilesh Yadav and Congress leader Rahul Gandhi today jointly attended a public meeting in Uttar Pradesh’s Kannauj.

Akhilesh Yadav is contesting from the Kannauj Lok Sabha constituency while Rahul Gandhi is from Rae Bareilly. The former Congress chief is also seeking election from Kerala’s Wayanad. SP and Congress are allies in the opposition INDIA bloc formed to take on the BJP in the ongoing 2024 general elections. Aam Admi Party leader and Rajya Sabha MP Sanjay Singh also attended the public meeting.

BJP devising strategy to ward off crisis

CONTINUED FROM P1

not in a position of running government with 43 MLAs--BJP-40, Independents-2 and Haryana Lokhit Party (HLP)-1.

Meanwhile, it has come to fore that a couple of JJP MLAs, who are said to be disgruntled with the JJP leadership and Dushyant Chautala, might resign from the membership of assembly which is most likely to help the BJP to prove the majority easily.

Congress heavyweight and Leader of Opposition Bhupender Singh Hooda had moved a no confidence motion earlier against the BJP government but Nayab Singh Saini-led government won the trust vote.

Technically, two confidence motions cannot be moved within a period of six months. Regarding the issue, Hooda said that the Chief Minister should resign as the state government is in minority.

JJP is a divided house in

the state as out of the 10 MLAs, six of them --Ramkumar Gautam from Narinaund, Jogi Ram Sihag from Barwala, Ishwar Singh from Guhla, Ramniwas Surjakheda from Narwana, Devendra Babli from Tohana and party MLA Ramkaran Kala from Shahabad are disgruntled with the party. Although Ishwar Singh has announced his retirement from active politics, at present Ramkaran Kala is not very active in politics.

However, both his sons had recently joined Congress.

Similarly, another faction in the party comprises Uchana MLA Dushyant Chautala’s mother and MLA Naina Chautala from Badhra, Amarjeet Dhandra from Julana and Anoop Dhanak from Uklana. It is believed that among the three MLAs who are upset with the party, Devendra Babli, Ramniwas Surja Kheda and Jogiram Sihag might resign and bring the BJP government out of the crisis. However, while reacting to the speculations

and the possibility of his resignation, he denied the same.

In the 88 Members house, the BJP needs 45 MLAs to run the government. Currently having the support of 40 party MLAs along with the support of two independent MLAs and the lone HLP MLA, taking its tally to 43, the saffron BJP needs the support of two more MLAs.

With the claimed support of three of the JJP’s 10 MLAs, the BJP’s numbers go up to 46, one more than the magic number required.

After the 3 of the JJP MLAs resign from the assembly members, the BJP will need the support of 43 MLAs in the 85 members House to stay in the government.

Now in this episode it has come to light that BJP has mulled over every possible strategy to stay in power. One of the BJP MLAs said on anonymity that many MLAs of JJP, former ally of BJP in the government, may resign and in doing so, the total number of assembly members i.e. MLAs

will reduce and BJP will not need more MLAs to run the government. Former CM Manohar Lal and independent Ranjit Singh who have been fielded by the BJP from Karnala and Hisar Lok Sabha seats, resigned to contest the Lok Sabha elections. In this situation, with 2 seats lying vacant there are a total of 90 MLAs in the Haryana Assembly.

Since the elections are near, the opposition is continuously attacking the BJP, accusing it of horse trading saying that the government is in the minority. The President’s rule should be immediately imposed in the state. Leader of Opposition and Congress veteran Bhupendra Singh Hooda has said that since there is very little time left for the elections, his party is not interested in forming the government. On the issue of supporting Congress by Dushyant Chautala to topple the government, Hooda said that if JJP wants this, then first write to the Governor.

‘Sandeshkhali women tortured on basis of religion’

CONTINUED FROM P1

these culprits.”

His comments come a day after multiple purported videos of Sandeshkhali women, shared by the Trinamool Congress, claimed that a local BJP leader had made those women sign blank papers which were later filled up as complaints of sexual assault.

He also charged the Mamata Banerjee Government of perpetrating scams amounting to “Rs 12 lakh

crore”. He alleged that the Mamata Banerjee Government had indulged in scams in each and every sphere of public life. “Be it recruitment in schools or in municipal bodies, be it cow smuggling or coal, you have indulged in corruption in every sphere..” he charged.

He said: “Bengal, under Mamata Banerjee, has reached the number 1 rank as far as corruption is concerned”. “Those involved in

corruption won’t be spared and the culprits will be sent to jail, no one will be spared,” he added.

While addressing an election rally at Majidia in Ranaghat Lok Sabha seat in Nadia district, Shah alleged that Banerjee was “misleading” people on the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019 (CAA) and slammed the TMC dispensation over alleged corruption cases in the state.

Shah, while addressing

the considerable Matua population in the Lok Sabha seat, criticised Banerjee for opposing CAA, and “taking out rallies in support of infiltrators”. “But I am telling you clearly, no one can raise a hand on CAA. Mamata has opposed CAA to safeguard her vote bank. Every refugee will be given citizenship,” he said. In one part of the speech, the Home Minister also broached the topic of Ram Mandir.

India votes in favour of Palestine’s UN bid

CONTINUED FROM P1

mate representative of the Palestinian people in 1974. India was also one of the first countries to recognise the State of Palestine in 1988 and in 1996, Delhi opened its Representative Office to the Palestine Authority in Gaza, which was later shifted to Ramallah in 2003.

Earlier this month, India’s Permanent Representative to

the United Nations will get endorsed”. An annex to the resolution said that the additional rights and privileges of participation of the State of Palestine will be effective as of the 79th session of the General Assembly that begins in September this year.

These include the right to be seated among member states in alphabetical order; the right to make statements on behalf of a group, includ-

ing among representatives of major groups; the right of members of the delegation of the State of Palestine to be elected as officers in the plenary and the Main Committees of the General Assembly and the right to full and effective participation in UN conferences and international conferences and meetings convened under the auspices of the General Assembly.

KEJRIWAL TO HOLD ROADSHOW TODAY

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal Friday said he will participate in a roadshow in South Delhi on May 11 along with his Punjab counterpart Bhagwant Mann.

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) national convener was granted interim bail till June 1 by the Supreme Court earlier in the day in a money laundering case linked to the alleged Delhi excise policy scam.

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May 11 along with his Punjab counterpart Bhagwant Mann. The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) national convener

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“This will be Kejriwal’s first roadshow after walking out of Tihar Jail on Friday. The chief minister reached his residence in the Civil Lines area around 8.20 pm from the prison complex.

alleged Delhi excise policy scam.

This will be Kejriwal’s first roadshow after walking out of Tihar Jail on Friday. The chief minister reached his residence in the Civil Lines area around 8.20 pm from the prison complex.

“There is a roadshow in South Delhi. I will participate in the roadshow with Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann,” he told report-

ers while standing through the sunroof of his vehicle. AAP has fielded Sahi Ram Pahalwan from the South Delhi parliamentary constituency.

Under a seat-sharing arrangement between the Congress and the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), the former has fielded candidates from three Lok Sabha seats in Delhi while the latter is contesting from the remaining four.

‘It should have happened even sooner’, says Tharoor on Kejriwal’s interim bail

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

After spending 50 days in Tihar jail, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal walked out on Friday following the Supreme Court’s order granting him interim bail in the excise policy case, Congress MP Shashi Tharoor called the move “good development” and said it should have happened even sooner.

“I consider this to be a good development. I feel personally that it should have happened even sooner. There was no justification to arrest a sitting chief minister who is the leader of a national opposition party during an election campaign. They were conducting an ongoing investigation. They could have pursued it after June 4, said Shashi Tharoor. “They had no reason to do it during a campaign. I’m glad the Supreme Court saw



same logic and gave him bail...But I might add, that they could have even acted on this sooner. I’m sorry it took so long because for many weeks CM Kejriwal has been unable to campaign for his party and of course in Delhi for our alliance,” added Congress MP.

A huge crowd of supporters gathered outside Tihar jail to welcome the Chief Minister on his release. Kejriwal’s wife Sunita Ke-

riwal, Punjab Chief Minister and AAP leader Bhagwant Mann, party leaders Atishi, and Saurabh Bhardwaj and AAP general secretary Sandeep Pathak accompanied Kejriwal when he was released. The Chief Minister headed to his official residence after he was released from Tihar jail.

Kejriwal was arrested by the ED on March 21, 2024, in connection with the alleged liquor policy scam.

SC’s decision on Kejriwal is a tight slap on ED, central govt’s face: Brinda Karat

TDG NETWORK
KOLKATA

CPI(M) leader Brinda Karat on Friday welcomed the Supreme Court’s decision to grant interim bail to Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal till June 1 in the excise policy case and said SC’s decision is a tight slap on the face of ED and central government.

“We welcome this decision of the Supreme Court. SC’s decision is a tight slap on the face of ED and central government.

The central government has used ED as a political agency against the opposition party... When you arrest an elected CM what kind of level playing field is it?” she said.

Several other politicians have also expressed happiness over the Supreme Court’s decision.

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee expressed happiness after the Supreme Court

granted interim bail to Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal till June 1 in the excise policy case.

In a post on X, CM Mamata said, “I am very happy to see that Shri Arvind Kejriwal @ArvindKejriwal has got interim bail. It will be very helpful in the context of the current elections”.

Shiv Sena (UBT) leader, Aaditya Thackeray, also welcomed the decision made by the apex court, saying that the fact that Arvind Kejriwal is getting justice and relief against the dictatorial regime in the country is a huge sign of the winds of change.

“Arvind Kejriwal ji getting justice and relief against the dictatorial regime in the country is a huge sign of change. He has been speaking the truth and that is what the BJP dislikes. More power to him and the INDIA alliance for Bharat. We will protect our Constitution and democracy!” he said in a post on X.



Delhi Minister and AAP leader Atishi also welcomed the Supreme Court decision and hailed it as a victory for truth, democracy and the constitution.

“It is not just Arvind Kejriwal who has got interim bail but by Supreme Court’s this decision truth has triumphed, this is a win of the Democracy and Constitu-

tion...The SC has played a major role in protecting Democracy,” she said.

Aam Admi Party National Convener and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal received a big relief from the Supreme Court, which on Friday granted him interim bail till June 1 in the excise policy case.

A bench of Justices Sanjiv Khanna and Dipankar Dutta granted the Delhi Chief Minister interim bail in the money laundering case registered against him by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) in connection with the Delhi excise policy case.

Kejriwal was arrested by the ED on March 21 in connection with a money laundering probe relating to alleged irregularities in the now-scrapped Delhi excise policy 2021-22.

Arvind Kejriwal is now likely to join the AAP campaign in the ongoing Lok Sabha elections.

Excise policy case: Delhi HC issues notice to ED on K Kavitha’s bail plea

ASHISH SINHA
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Friday issued notice to the Enforcement Directorate’s (ED) response on the bail plea of Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) leader Kalvakuntla Kavitha in a money laundering case linked to the alleged excise policy scam.

Justice Swarana Kanta Sharma has scheduled the matter for further hearing on May 24.

The BRS leader challenged the Rouse Avenue Court’s May 6 ruling, which dismissed her bail plea in the



money laundering case. The trial court also denied bail plea in the corruption case filed by the CBI related to the scam.

The purported scam involves alleged corruption and money laundering in the formulation and execution of the Delhi Government’s excise policy for 2021-22, which was subsequently annulled.

Kavitha is currently in judicial custody in both cases filed by the CBI and the ED, respectively. The investigative agency apprehended K Kavitha (46) from her residence in Banjara hills, Hyderabad, on March 15. The CBI arrested the BRS leader while she was already under judicial custody in the Enforcement Directorate case.

Delhi lawyer seeks probe into alleged tampering of records in Rajiv Gandhi assassination

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

A Delhi-based lawyer has sent a representation to the Union Home Ministry seeking an investigation into alleged culpable omission in the assassination case of former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and who allowed alleged tampering with intelligence inputs. The representation has been made by lawyer Sanjeev Pathak, based on security expert Namit Verma’s recent claim that the Israeli intelligence had shared critical information with India about the possibility of a threat to former Prime Minister Rajeev Gandhi. However, the file mysteriously disappeared under unclear circumstances after the assassination of Rajiv

Gandhi in 1991.

According to the representation by the lawyer, during a discussion titled ‘Intelligence Cooperation and Security Challenges in the Emerging World Order’ on May 2,

Verma had elaborated that the intelligence input from a foreign nation about an assassination plan and payments made for the same was lost from the government record after the assassination of the Rajiv Gandhi. The representation also stated that the report of the Jain Commission of Inquiry (JCI) led by Justice (Retd) Milap Chand Jain has also taken note of the fact that evidence was allegedly tampered with and vital information allegedly withheld by the concerned persons to save the perpetrators of the crime.

Man held in extortion case of car dealer in Delhi

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Delhi Police on Friday said they have arrested one person and solved the case in which a second-hand car dealer in the national capital had received extortion threats.

This follows the arrest a day ago of one of the three men who had opened fire at another car showroom in the city’s Tilak Nagar area, which left several people injured due to the shattered glass and triggered panic among the public.

Delhi Police said today that they have had arrested a 30-year-old man from the Rani Bagh in the national capital for demanding Rs 20 lakh from a second-hand car dealer. A spate of extortion calls to car dealers recently had triggered panic among them and the accused Karan Dhingra (aged 30) allegedly hatched a plan to extort money us-



ing the same modus operandi.

He allegedly demanded Rs 20 lakh from the car dealer who subsequently filed a police complaint on the basis of which Dhingra was arrested.

Initially, Dhingra spoke to the complainant over the phone introducing himself as a “well-wisher,” and urging him to be careful as he could also be targeted, like other car dealers.

Following this the complainant said that on May 8 he had received a “threat letter” delivered to him at his showroom in Rajouri Garden through a bike-courier rider.

The letter carried threat to kill the complainant if he failed to pay Rs 20 lakh.

The complainant also claimed that he had received two phone calls on May 7 in which the caller warned him to take care of his life and those of his loved ones.

Sensing the seriousness of the offence, the car dealer immediately filed a case at Rajouri Garden Police Station, upon which the team started an investigation. Based on the inputs of the bike-courier rider, the police team arrived at the place from where he had picked up the “extortion letter”.

Dust storms, strong winds hit Delhi-NCR

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Dust storm and strong winds hit Delhi NCR on Friday (May 10) evening.

According to the Meteorological Department, gusty winds were reported over Delhi at around 2200 IST. The winds blew with a speed of 77 kmph in Ujwa area; in Jafarpur it was 57 kmph; Lodhi road recorded 61 kmph; Pragati Maidan had 63 kmph; 57 kmph noted in Pitampura; 50 kmph in Narayana; and 40 kmph in Najafgarh. Subsequently, dust storm/thunderstorm with rain (followed by rain) and gusty winds with speed of 40-90 Km/h occurred over and adjoining areas of Sakoti Tanda, Baraut, Daurala, Bagpat, Meerut, Khekra, Modinagar, Kithor, Garhmukteshwar, Pilakhua, Hapur, Gulaoti, Siyana, Sambhal, Sikan-



drabad, Bulandshahar, Jahan-girabad, Anupshahar, Bahajoi, Shikarpur, Khurja, Pahasu, De-bai, Narora, Gabhana, Atrauli, Aligarh (U.P.). Thunderstorm with light to moderate intensity rain and gusty winds with speed of 40-60 Km/h also occurred over and adjoining areas of entire Delhi and NCR in the night. The weather bureau had predicted that dust storms may occur on on Friday and light rain may also be seen in some parts.

DELHI COURT FRAMES CHARGES AGAINST BRIJ BHUSHAN SINGH, WRESTLERS HAIL DECISION

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

After Rouse Avenue Court on Friday ordered the ‘framing of charges’ on sexual harassment allegations levelled by several women wrestlers against former WFI Chief and BJP leader Brij Bhushan Singh and one other accused, several wrestlers welcomed the decision and expressed hope that in the future “women will face no more harassment in wrestling”.

The Additional Chief

Metropolitan Magistrate Priyanka Rajpoot while passing the order said there is sufficient material against Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh to proceed with the sexual harassment of five women wrestlers and with the offence of outraging the modesty of women. The court found sufficient material to proceed against Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh under sections 354 and 354 A (IPC). Addressing the press conference, Sakshee Malikkh said, “This is a step forward to our long strug-

gle. This fight wasn’t for ourselves but for the future generations. What we faced, should not be faced by the younger girls in the game. I welcome the court’s decision. Earlier we were questioned for lack of evidence but now there is adequate evidence. We will fight the case till the accused is punished. Another thing which will not be acceptable to us till the end is that Sanjay Singh remains the President of the Wrestling Federation since he is a close aide of Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh.”

26-year-old dies after falling from terrace in Delhi’s Jamia Nagar

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

A 26-year-old man died after falling from the terrace of a house in Delhi’s Jamia Nagar Police.

Police reached the spot after receiving a call from the locals. The man was rushed to the hospital by CATS Ambulance, where doctors declared him dead, said Ilyas, a local. The deceased has been identified as Md Yaseen.

The man reportedly was jumping from one terrace to another when he got imbalanced and fell from the terrace leading to severe injuries that claimed his life, Ilyas said.

The family members of the deceased, however, said that he was suffering from some mental condition and had been living alone for a long time.

The post-mortem of the deceased will be conducted and further actions will be taken under CrPC section 174.

LUXURY HOUSE SALES GAIN, AFFORDABLE SEGMENT BLEEDS: REPORT

Luxury Housing Supply Share across Top 7 Cities						
Year	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Q1 2024
Total Unit Supply across all budget categories	2,36,560	1,27,960	2,36,690	3,57,635	4,45,770	1,10,860
% Supply Share of Luxury Homes (→INR 1.5 Cr.)	11%	9%	11%	17%	23%	25%
Total Unit Supply of Luxury Homes	25,770	11,490	24,980	60,250	1,00,355	28,020

Source: ANAROCK Research

TDG NETWORK
MUMBAI

The Indian residential property sector surged relentlessly on in Q1 2024 in terms of both sales and new launches, but the gains are increasingly uneven across budget segments. Latest ANAROCK data comparing luxury and affordable housing sales shows luxury gaining markedly while affordable housing continues bleed.

Of approx. 1,30,170 units sold across the top 7 cities in Q1 2024, the share of luxury homes priced >INR 1.5 Cr was 21%, or approx. 27,070 units. This contrasts sharply with the trend of five years ago. In Q1 2019, affordable housing was at its peak, holding a share of 37% out of approx. 78,525 units sold across the top 7 cities. Luxury housing had a mere 4% share.

"Around 26,545 affordable housing units were sold in Q1 2024, accounting for an overall sales share of 20% in the top 7 cities," says Anuj Puri, Chairman - ANAROCK Group. "The mid-range and premium housing segment continued to rule the roost with approx. 76,555 units sold in the peri-

od - a near-59% overall sales share. Affordable housing is nowhere near to recouping its stellar sales share in 2019."

In terms of regions, there are interesting variations. City-wise data indicates that of approx. 15,645 units sold in NCR in Q1 2024, the highest sales - approx. 6,060 units or a 39% share - were in the luxury segment (units priced >INR 1.5 Cr). On the other hand, of approx. 5,650 units sold in Kolkata in the same period, affordable housing saw the highest sales of approx. 2,765 units, or a 49% share.

While Kolkata continues to have similar trends as in Q1 2019, NCR saw a major trend reversal in this five-year period - from affordable segment having the lion's share in Q1 2019 to it slipping to the lowest in Q1 2024.

Bengaluru, MMR, Chennai, Pune, and Hyderabad, on the other hand, saw their highest sales in the mid-range and premium housing segments (priced between INR 40 lakh and INR 1.5 Cr) in Q1 2024.

"As luxury homes gain more traction in both new supply and sales, affordable housing continues its



retreat to the sidelines. The luxury segment is driven by a mounting appetite for bigger homes by branded developers in superior locations," says Puri. "Affordable housing, on the other hand, is driven primarily by lower ticket sizes. The downward spiral of this erstwhile posterchild of the Indian housing industry began during the pandemic, and

then morphed into a broader malaise. Even as the nation awaits the results of the ongoing general elections, any affordable housing revival will hinge on further government sops and incentives for buyers and developers."

Of approx. 1,10,860 units launched in Q1 2024 across the top 7 cities, approx. 28,020 units (or 25%) were luxury homes and just

Affordable Housing Supply Share across Top 7 Cities						
Year	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Q1 2024
Total Unit Supply across all budget categories	2,36,560	1,27,960	2,36,690	3,57,635	4,45,770	1,10,860
% Supply Share of Affordable Homes	40%	30%	26%	20%	18%	18%
Affordable Supply	94,620	38,390	61,540	71,530	80,240	19,995

Source: ANAROCK Research

- Of 1.30 lakh homes sold in Q1 2024 across the top 7 cities, the share of luxury homes stood at 21% with approx. 27,070 units sold; 5 years ago, in Q1 2019, the share was just 7%, thus recording a 3X jump
- Approx. 26,545 units were sold in the affordable segment in Q1 2024 - a 20% overall sales share from 37% in Q1 2019
- Of approx. 15,645 units sold in NCR in Q1 2024, the highest sales (approx. 6,060 units or 39%) was of luxury homes priced →INR 1.5 Cr; 5 years ago, luxury sales share in the region was mere 4% of total homes sold (approx. 13,740 units)
- Of approx. 5,650 units sold in Kolkata in Q1 2024, affordable housing saw the highest sales with approx. 2,765 units - a 49% share
- In Q1 2024, Bengaluru, MMR, Chennai, Pune and Hyderabad saw maximum sales in the mid-range & premium segments (units priced INR 40 lakh to INR 1.5 Cr)
- Of approx. 1,10,860 units launched in Q1 2024 across the top 7 cities, approx. 28,020 units were luxury homes: approx. 19,980 units in the affordable segment



"Around 26,545 affordable housing units were sold in Q1 2024, accounting for an overall sales share of 20% in the top 7 cities." Anuj Puri, Chairman - ANAROCK Group

19,980 units (18%) were in the affordable segment. Five years ago, in Q1 2019, out of approx. 70,480 units launched across the top 7 cities, affordable housing

Segment Wise Sold Units Q1 2024				
City	Affordable Segment	Mid & High-End Segment	Luxury Segment	Total
NCR	4,305	5,280	6,060	15,645
MMR	12,650	20,920	9,360	42,930
Hyderabad	285	13,620	5,755	19,660
Bangalore	1,380	12,950	3,455	17,785
Pune	4,600	16,860	1,530	22,990
Chennai	560	4,420	530	5,510
Kolkata	2,765	2,505	380	5,650
PAN India	26,545	76,555	27,070	1,30,170

Source: ANAROCK Research

comprised a whopping 44% share while luxury had mere 9% share. It is little wonder that developers are aligning supply with the prevailing demand and are launching more luxury housing projects now.

AFFORDABLE VS LUXURY - 5-YEAR TRENDS

If we consider the past five-year data trends, the new supply and sales share of

luxury homes has been rising steadily. In pre-Covid 2019, luxury homes accounted for approx. 11% of the overall new supply in top 7 cities. In Q1 2024, this share has gone up to a whopping 25%. 2019 saw only approx. 25,770 units launched in the luxury segment in the entire year; currently in Q1 2024, 28,020 luxury homes were launched in just this one quarter.

Affordable housing, how-

ever, has seen a major trend reversal. This segment has seen its new supply share shrink considerably over the last five years. In 2019, the new supply share of affordable homes stood at 40% out of the overall new supply additions (approx. 2.37 lakh units) in the top 7 cities. However, in Q1 2024, data indicates that its supply share has dropped to a mere 18% of the total new launches.

INDIA NEWS SURVEY

SURVEY ON KASHI

DATE: 10TH MAY 2024

MALE: 94%

FEMALE: 6%

Q-1 Do you think Narendra Modi has completely changed the infrastructure of Varanasi?

A- Yes	81%
B- No	12%
C- To some extent	2%
D- Can't say	5%

Q-2 Who has played an important role in changing the infrastructure?

A-BJP	82%
B- Cong	8%
C-SP	2%
D-Other	4%
E-Can't say	4%

Q-3 Do you want a grand Shiva temple to be built in Kashi like Ayodhya?

A-Yes	88%
B-No	11%
C-Can't say	1%

Q-4 Did Aurangzeb demolish the temple and build the Gyanvapi Mosque?

A-Yes	70%
B-No	12%
C-Can't say	18%

Q-5 How do you want the solution to the Gyanvapi Masjid dispute?

A- Settlement outside the court	17%
B- Court's decision	73%
C- The situation remains the same	7%
D-Can't say	3%

INDIA NEWS SURVEY

SURVEY ON ARVIND KEJRIWAL BAIL

DATE: 10TH MAY 2024

MALE: 89%

FEMALE: 11%

Q-1 What will be the impact of Arvind Kejriwal's release in 2024 elections?

A- There will be an impact in Delhi	29%
B- Impact in Punjab-Haryana	2%
C- There will be an impact in the entire country	21%
D- There will be no effect	48%

Q-2 Will Kejriwal's interim bail boost the morale of Aam Aadmi Party workers?

A-Yes	68%
B-No	31%
C-Can't say	1%

Q-3 Will the opposition benefit from making Kejriwal the star campaigner of the Indi alliance?

A-Yes	40%
B-No	56%
C-Can't say	4%

Q-4 Should jailed leaders get bail for election campaign?

A-Yes	38%
B-No	45%
C- Decision according to the case	16%
D-Can't say	1%

Q-5 Should Kejriwal resign from the post of Chief Minister before surrendering on June 2?

A-Yes	55%
B-No	43%
C-Can't say	2%

RBI LIKELY TO TRANSFER RS 1 TRILLION TO GOVERNMENT IN FY25

The report highlights that RBI is anticipated to maintain a robust dividend payout for the fiscal year 2025 (FY25).

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) is likely to transfer approximately Rs 1000 billion to the government in FY25 according to a report by Union Bank of India.

The report highlights that RBI is anticipated to maintain a robust dividend payout for the fiscal year 2025 (FY25). This projection represents a slight increase from Rs 874 billion transferred in the previous fiscal year.

"The government has budgeted the FY25 dividend for RBI and PSU banks & financial institutions at INR 1020bn, vis-a-vis INR 1044bn in FY24. In our view, a positive surprise is likely, similar to last year



when initial budget estimate for overall dividend was only INR 480bn" said the report.

Analysts in the report predict a potential positive surprise, akin to the previous fiscal year, when the initial budget estimate for dividends was significantly lower at INR 480 billion. Despite several factors influencing RBI's dividend calculation, such as interest earnings and foreign exchange

(FX) gains, analysts predict a continuation of strong dividend figures.

The majority of RBI's balance sheet, approximately 70 percent, consists of foreign currency assets, with another 20 per cent in domestic government bonds. Interest earnings from these securities are expected to range from Rs 1.5-1.7 trillion.

Additionally, interest from liquidity operations has increased RBI's earnings, particularly as the banking system returned to a deficit mode from September 2023.

While income gains of RBI from FX (Forex) sales decreased slightly due to lower sales volumes, they are expected to remain substantial despite a rise in the weighted average cost of reserves.

Moreover, a decline in pro-

visions likely contributed to boosting RBI's dividend. Provisions for reserves, as per the Economic Capital Framework outlined by the Jalan committee, saw a rise in the contingency fund provision due to increased balance sheet growth.

The impact of the RBI dividend announcement on markets may be limited in the near term, especially with ongoing elections potentially delaying government spending.

However, if the surplus balance is utilized for activities like G-Sec buybacks, it could support the shorter end of the G-Sec curve.

Overall, analysts maintain a positive outlook on longer-duration G-Secs due to favorable demand-supply dynamics.

ISRO completes successful hot testing of rocket engine

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) achieved a milestone with the successful hot testing of a liquid rocket engine produced using Additive Manufacturing (AM) technology.

The test, which took place on May 9, 2024, lasted for an impressive 665 seconds, demonstrating the reliability and durability of this new manufacturing approach. The engine tested is the PS4 engine used in the upper stage of the Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV). In a post on X, ISRO highlighted the breakthrough achieved with this test.

"Design & Manufacturing Breakthrough: ISRO successfully conducts a long-duration test of the PS4 engine, re-designed for production using cutting-edge additive manufacturing techniques and crafted in the Indian industry," ISRO stated.

SAARC Secretary-General Golam Sarwar to visit India today

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

SAARC Secretary-General Golam Sarwar will arrive in Delhi for an official visit to the country from May 11 to 14. He is scheduled to meet the Minister of State for External Affairs Rajkumar Ranjan Singh in Delhi on Tuesday.

During his visit, Sarwar will deliver an address at the 3rd Shakti Sinha Memorial Lecture on 'The Future of SAARC' on Monday, as per a media advisory issued by the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA). He will also meet Foreign Secretary Vinay Mohan Kwatra. He is scheduled to participate in the programme in Delhi on Tuesday.

Golam Sarwar is also scheduled to hold a meeting with Shri Jaideep Mazumdar, secretary (East) in the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA). He will visit South Asian University in Delhi's Maidan Garhi on Tuesday. He is

Golam Sarwar is also scheduled to hold a meeting with Shri Jaideep Mazumdar, secretary (East) in the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA).

scheduled to depart from Delhi on May 15, according to the MEA.

The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) was established on December 8, 1985. It comprises eight member states: India, Bangladesh, Afghanistan, Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. The Secretariat of SAARC was set up in Kathmandu on 17 January 1987, according to the official statement.

The objectives of the SAARC are to promote the welfare of the peoples of South Asia and improve their quality of life, accelerate economic growth, social progress and cultural development in the region and provide all individuals the opportunity to

live in dignity and realize their full potentials, promote and strengthen collective self-reliance among the countries of South Asia, according to an official statement by SAARC Secretariat. In addition, SAARC aims to contribute to mutual trust, understanding and appreciation of one another's problems; promote active collaboration and mutual assistance in the economic, social, cultural, technical and scientific fields, strengthen cooperation with other developing countries, strengthen cooperation among themselves in international forums on matters of common interests and cooperate with international and regional organizations with similar aims and purposes.

Govt blocks over 28,000 mobile sets used in cybercrimes

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Centre on Friday directed telecom operators to block for blocking 28,200 mobile handsets and issued directions to re-verify 20 lakh mobile connections associated with these handsets.

Ministry of Communications in a statement today announced the collaboration of the Department of Telecommunications (DoT), Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) and State Police to curb the misuse of telecom resources in cyber-crime and financial frauds.

This collaborative effort aims to dismantle networks of fraudsters and protect citizens from digital threats.

An analysis carried out by MHA and State Police has revealed that 28,200 mobile handsets were misused in cybercrimes. The DoT further analysed and found that a staggering 20 lakh numbers were used with these mobile handsets.

Subsequently, DoT issued directions to telecom service providers for pan India blocking of 28,200 mobile



handsets and to carry out immediate re-verifications of 20 lakh mobile connections linked to these handsets. DoT also directed telecommunication companies to disconnect after failing re-verification.

The Ministry of Communications, in a press release, conveyed that, "The unified approach demonstrates a shared commitment towards public safety and to safeguard the integrity of telecommunications infrastructure and ensure a secure digital environment."

The Department of Telecommunications (DoT) has taken such steps in the case of cybercrime. On Tuesday, DoT disconnected a phone number used in a financial scam, as well as blocked 20 mobile handsets associated with the number, an official statement said

NIA nabs key absconder, his harbourer in Nettaru murder case

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Friday nabbed a key absconder, who was affiliated with the banned Popular Front of India (PFI), along with his harbourer for the gruesome murder of BJP activist Praveen Nettaru in Karnataka in July 2022.

The arrested accused, identified as Mustafa Paichar, who carried a reward of Rs 7 lakh and had non-bailable warrants against him, is the second absconding accused to be arrested in the case.

He was arrested along with his harbourer Mansoor Pasha in close coordination with sister agencies from the state, said the NIA in a statement.

Netturu, a BJP Yuva Morchha district executive committee member, was brutally hacked to death by two motorcycle-borne assailants in Bellare village of Dakshina Kannada district in Karnataka by PFI cadres.



The arrested accused, identified as Mustafa Paichar, who carried a reward of Rs 7 lakh and had non-bailable warrants against him, is the second absconding accused to be arrested in the case.

The NIA had taken over the investigation on August 4, 2022.

The NIA had, in January 2023, filed a charge sheet against 21 accused, eight

of whom had absconded after the crime.

The anti-terror agency had launched a manhunt for the absconders, and on Friday managed to

trace Mustafa Paichar to Anemahal village in Hassan district in Karnataka. Paichar was arrested along with Pasha, who had harboured the former.

NIA investigations have revealed that Paichar, a resident of Sullia in Dakshina Kannada, was the secretary of PFI Puttur district service team. "He was involved in imparting arms training to PFI cadres in the freedom community hall in the area to prepare them for commission of terrorist attacks."

Along with other accused, Paichar was part of a larger conspiracy to target and kill Hindu leaders, said the NIA, adding "he had, in fact, formed a hit service team of PFI cadres for the purpose."

"It was on his instructions that the hit service team had hacked Praveen Nettaru to death with sharp weapons in a public place. The attack was aimed at striking terror among a section of people in the society," NIA investigations have shown.

IRDAI mandates insurers to meet rural, social sector obligations

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Regulator IRDAI has asked insurance companies to file details of their business in the rural and social sectors, a move aimed at checking if they are fulfilling their obligations in these two areas.

It has asked life insurance companies to report the number of policies covered under the rural sector and the percentage these form in total policies written in a financial year. With regards to the social sector, life insurers have to file details like the number of lives covered under the social sector in the reporting financial year.

General and health insurers have to file details on the amount of premium procured in the rural sector as well as how it compares with their gross premium. They are also to report details about their business in the social sector. IRDAI (Obligations of Insurers to Rural and Social Sectors) Regulations, 2015 stipulates that an insurer has to furnish an annual certificate by

General and health insurers have to file details on the amount of premium procured in the rural sector as well as how it compares with their gross premium.

the CEO or Principal Officer. As per the regulations, 7% of policies written by a life insurer should be from the rural areas in its first year of business and gradually increase to 20% in the 10th year and thereafter. In case of a general or health insurance company, 2% of gross premium should be from the rural areas in the first year and 7% in the 10th year. Similarly, criteria for insurers in respect of social sector too has been defined by the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India. 'Social sector' includes unorganised, informal sector, economically vulnerable or backward classes and other categories of persons, both in rural and urban areas.

India's OMCs' profits surge 543%, IOCL leads in refinery throughput

NIVEDITA MUKHERJEE
NEW DELHI

India's state-owned oil marketing companies (OMCs) combined profit rose over 25-times year-on-year in the financial year 2023-24 even as they navigated rapidly evolving geo politics and wide fluctuations in crude prices. The combined net profit in FY 24 rose

543 per cent as compared with financial year 2013-14, the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas said on Friday.

The OMCs not only ensured fuel availability at affordable rates, with one of the lowest fuel price inflation globally in India, but they have also rewarded the shareholders' trust by posting commendable annual results. The combined profit of OMCs for FY 2023-24 stood at Rs 86,000 crore, over 25 times higher than the extraordinarily difficult previous fiscal year. For the full 2023-24 fiscal, Hindustan Petroleum reported a record net profit of Rs 16,014 crore as opposed to a loss of Rs 6,980 crore in the previous year.

The combined profit of OMCs for FY 2023-24 stood at Rs 86,000 crore, over 25 times higher than the extraordinarily difficult previous fiscal year.

However, it was IOCL which reported historical best refinery throughput and net profit in FY24, the Ministry says. Demonstrating an exceptional year, IndianOil recorded a net profit of 39,619 crore, the highest ever in the company's history and over four-fold increase from the net profit of 8,242 crore in the previous year. This remarkable achievement is supported by a stellar operational performance across business verticals. The company achieved its highest ever sales volume reaching 97.551 million tonnes of products.

Its refining throughput soared to 73.308 million tonnes, coupled with a throughput of 98.626 million tonnes achieved through an extensive 19,500+ km pipelines network across the nation.

These figures stand as historical bests in the operational history of IndianOil.

In alignment with its vision for a greener future, the company has resolved to set up a wholly owned subsidiary (WoS), to undertake low carbon, new, clean and green energy business, with an equity investment of 1,304 crore. As part of its sustainable energy vision, IndianOil plans to establish 1 gigawatt (GW) of renewable energy capacity across the country with an investment of 5,215 crore.

Bharat Petroleum's profit after tax for FY 2023-24 came in at 26,673 crore, nearly 13-times higher than the previous fiscal year. Additionally, the company's planned capital outlay of 1.7 lakh crore over 5 years under 'Project Aspire' underlines its commitment to creating long-term value for shareholders. Markets have reacted positively to the results with BPCL and HPCL share prices rising after the announcement of results.

NCLAT seeks Google's response on pleas against CCI order

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) has sought responses from Google on startup's plea against the Competition Commission of India (CCI)'s refusal to a stay on the Play Store billing policy.

The responses were sought by the watchdog on Friday (May 10) and listed the case for next hearing on May 24.

The appeal was moved by Kuku FM, Indian Broadcasting and Digital Foundation (IBDF) and Shaadi.com, it is reported.

Commenting on the matter, Shaadi.com's founder and CEO Anupam Mittal told Inc42, "... we are happy with the progress, and the courts and authorities appear to recognize that Google & other Big Tech gatekeepers will not be allowed to collect tolls from India's entrepreneurs by abusing their monopolistic power. The future of our economy is at stake."

The fresh development comes on the back of CCI's March order. The order dismissed their interim relief applications that sought a restriction on Google from imposing a fee or commission on developers as



part of its updated payments policy.

Back then, CCI stated that complainants — People Interactive India Private Limited (operator of Shaadi.com and Sangam.com), Indian Broadcasting and Digital Foundation (IBDF), Indian Digital Media Industry Foundation (IDMIF) and Megibio Labs Private Limited (owner of Kuku FM) — did not fulfil the necessary criteria for interim relief as outlined by the Supreme Court.

Consequently, Google was left free to delist the apps of the startups involved from Play Store in case of non-compliance with the payments policies. This dates back to the delisting of some apps from the Play Store by Google which included the likes of Info Edge-owned classifieds site Naukri.com and proptech platform 99acres among others. However, soon after, the US-based tech giant agreed to restore the apps with IT minister Ashwini Vaishnav's intervention into the matter.

India's industrial output slows to 4.9%, manufacturing, & power rise

NIVEDITA MUKHERJEE
NEW DELHI

India's factory output, measured by the Index of Industrial Production (IIP), in March 2024 posted 4.9 percent year-on-year growth, moderating from 5.6 percent in February 2024 and ending fiscal 2024 on a sober note. The IIP growth was led by a robust expansion in electricity even as manufacturing growth rose to a five-month high, albeit on a very low base.

The growth rate of the mining sector for March 2024 over March 2023 was 1.2 percent, manufacturing grew 5.2 percent yoy while the growth rate of electricity for March 2024 was 8.6 percent more than that in March 2023, as per Government data on Friday. Within the manufacturing sector, the top three positive sectoral contributors to the growth of IIP for March 2024 are 'basic metals with 7.7 percent growth, pharmaceuticals, medicinal chemical and botanical products with a growth of 16.7 percent, and manufacture of other transport equipment with the growth of 25.4 percent.

Dharmakirti Joshi, Chief Economist, CRISIL notes that the slowdown in March was driven by infrastructure and construction goods, which reflects moderating government capital expenditure at the end of the fiscal. "Among consumer products, while durables slowed, non-durables revived this month, hinting at a moderation in urban demand and a revival in rural demand," says Joshi. According to CRISIL, the IIP had increased to 5.7 percent on-year in February from 4.1 percent in January, boosted by healthy performance in both consumption and industrial sectors. Meanwhile, January's reading was revised up from the previous estimate of 3.8 percent as IIP growth picked up in all three subsectors of manufacturing, mining, and electricity. Aditi Nayar, Chief Economist, ICRA sees the dip in IIP growth on expected lines as the leap-year effect faded. Nayar observes that the yoy growth in a majority of the available high-frequency indicators witnessed an uptick in April 2024, including vehicle registrations, generation of GST e-way bills, and petrol sales which zoomed

to a 22-month high of above 14.1 percent from above 6.9 percent, partly owing to increased movement in the run-up to General Elections), the output of Coal India and electricity generation to a six-month high of more than 9.6 percent from more than 8.1 percent, owing to rise in temperatures. "In contrast, the yoy performance of diesel sales to more than 1.4 percent from more than 3.1 percent, cargo traffic at major ports to more than 1.3 percent from more than 3.6 percent, and finished steel consumption to more than 9.4 percent from more than 9.6 percent, albeit remaining quite robust deteriorated in April 2024 relative to March 2024. Government data also shows a cumulative growth rate for the period of April-March 2023-24 over the corresponding period of the previous year at 5.8 percent. The cumulative growth rate of mining for the period of April-March 2023-24 over the corresponding period of the previous year is 7.5 percent, manufacturing growth was 5.5 percent and electricity growth, you, for the period of April-March 2023-24 was 7.1 percent.

THE COLLAPSE OF THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN

OPINION

SHWETA SHALINI



2024?

Back in the 90's, a small town Democrat from Arkansas made a daring bid to secure the American Presidency. The lesser known candidate faced the influential incumbent President George HW Bush and Billionaire Ross Perot in a three way contested election. In a campaign which was assumed as just another "nothing to lose" bid, Clinton surprised the world and won the coveted Presidency. Only after the defeat of the "eminent" competitors did the world realize the acumen and scientific rigor behind it. Starting with the internet era in 90's and social media era beginning in 2000's, election campaigns have seen various paradigm shifts across the world. How has election campaign changed in the past few decades and what does it hold for the Indian Lok Sabha elections in

Over the past decades, Elections have moved from being the tussle of competing political sense of campaign teams and differing political views to the rigors of scientific domain. Starting in 90's, data crunching became common. A candidate would put together a team - campaign managers who would double-check their strategies with the electoral marketplace. Famously, the first attempt at rehearsing and measuring everything including jokes begun around this time. Yes, the jokes which candidates tell was usually delivered in front of audience in a scientific lab setting and measured for impact and number of laughs. The candidates were strenuously directed by the campaign manager to rehearse every single act down to the number of steps. Which political reader doesn't remember Clinton walking towards the woman in the audience asking "Tell me how it (national debt) has affected you again?" Followed by the media blitz against sitting President with the "It's the economy, stupid" campaign? Nobody in their 20s or 30s with even cursory knowledge of politics have forgot

the "horses and bayonets" retort of Obama.

Electioneering is a science where so much research has been done that today's candidates merely need to play the role of performer. If the director (i.e. campaign manager) is good enough, the possibility of a hit movie (i.e. electoral victory) can be determined (not just predicted) with very high precision with accuracy. In case of India where little primary research exists compared to western universities, an approximation of their poll strategies combined with a really higher level of political sense can bring in the same scientific rigor and accurate results (although the margin of error is higher considering factors like culture, caste dynamics and difference due to primary research being in Europe/US). If a candidate can shut down from the world few hours each day, consolidate his team and do his homework with respect to devising and fine-tuning a strategy before hitting the ground running, he can succeed more than 80 per cent of the times. The reality is that western democracies are mostly playing the margin of error making it a closer contest compared to countries like India where the opposition is incompetent to deliver such a challenge.

Imagine a sensible campaign manager going to Rahul Gandhi and telling him that as per this science backed method customized to Indian electorate adjusting for higher margin or error, if you go to this locality where the identity of people

are "XYZ" and the income levels are "ABC" and talk about "PQR" issue, you will get 57 per cent of those votes. In short, if the audience is of 500 voters and Rahul Gandhi would deliver those lines on the said issue in a sincere positive manner, he can tick his checklist and say confidently that he got 285 of the votes in those half an hour work. That's science and not probability. A well-crafted strategy composed of such a long list of checklist will make it inevitable for any candidate to win. Yes, science doesn't distinguish between eminence and fools no more than laws of gravity. But Rahul Gandhi being Rahul Gandhi isn't competent enough to do that both at intellectual or practical level even if he manages to secure an expert who can deliver it on his plate.

As elections continue in a phased manner, the narrative being peddled by the opposition is that low voter-turnout will effect BJP's chances. To be fair, the general scientific narrative is that "It cuts both ways". In my opinion, low voter turnout here indicates inevitability of a clear winner or "Abki baar 400 paar". The comparable data being touted by leftist narrative makers is that of 2014 and 2019 to say that turnout increased when BJP won. For explaining 2014 data, there is clear evidence that high anti-establishment mood (as in 2014) combined with a strong challenger predictably improves voter turnout. In 2019 data, the prevailing mood was of nationalism

(after the Pulwama and Balakot incident) which is again proved to improve turnout. In contrast, 2024 data is about continuing to reward good governance and the electorate (both the traditional BJP voter and the shrinking Congress voters) realizing that a Modi win is inevitable. Importantly, it's simple political sense that when turnouts are low either due to adverse weather or an easy one-sided victory, it's the "cadre based parties" which always have the advantage. BJP being a cadre based party has successfully brought its voters to the booth while Congress falling short of leadership and party workers are struggling. The narrative building has failed to enthrone their own traditional voters and INDI alliance is a non-starter with no clear agenda except anti-BJP hatred.

Election Management of BJP which included heavy concentration on Social media this time and targeted Ad placements has ensured a more sophisticated campaigning. BJP's customized approach makes it a personal campaign focusing on each voter and minimizing use of impersonal mediums like loudspeakers, hoardings, flexes and unnecessary ads. Indian elections previously was ridden with illegal hoardings and questionable campaigning method. The rise of BJP has cleaned the campaign environment. Moreover, the excellent track record of BJP Government has made on-the-top advertisement seem like unwanted expenditure.

Why should Advertisements speak for you when the work speaks for itself? Gone are the days of booth capturing and rigging by medieval style Bahubalis in the Hindi heartland. For my generation, elections were literally a festival comparable to Diwali and Dussehra in its grandeur and involvement of public. Billboards flanking every corner and cone shaped loudspeakers blaring campaign promises have all become a thing of the past replaced by subtle strategies aimed at the educated masses. Campaigning into the wee hours and strategy meeting at late nights have remained the same even today.

It's a fact of life that humans are enthralled by close competition. Indian's love it and throng to the stadium to witness India-Pakistan matches at the possibility of Sachin hitting sixes off the legendary bowlers like Shoaib Akhtar and Wasim Akram. Indians jump out in joy when he hits boundaries off the Australian bowling line up including Glenn McGrath and Shane Warne. Indians aren't as excited about the India-Bangladesh match or India-Holland match where victory is one sided. The current Congress party under Rahul Gandhi has ceased to be a match for the powerful BJP electoral machine. "Abki baar 400 paar" will be a reality when counting concludes on June 4th.

Shweta Shalini is a BJP leader, a psephologist & member of election campaign committee in Maharashtra.

PERSPECTIVE
TRUMP CARDPRIYANKA GANDHI,
THE CONGRESS
SPEARHEAD FOR 2024

Even though Rahul Gandhi is widely regarded as the only person, who stood virtually alone at times, against the Bharatiya Janata Party, it is his sister, Priyanka who is making an impact in the 2024 Lok Sabha polls. She has been the most effective tool of the Opposition and in her counters to the Prime Minister in particular, she has managed to hold on to her own while making her point. There was a lot of talk in political circles as to how sibling rivalry had prevented Priyanka from contesting the Parliamentary polls and how there were differences within the family as to who should be viewed as the future leader of the party.

Notwithstanding all these controversies, Priyanka is perhaps the most sought-after leader of the Congress in these polls, and is drawing huge crowds. The question remains that only time would tell whether these crowds and the people who seemed to be watching her closely, shall cast their franchise in accordance with the narrative being set through her fiery speeches. It is never easy to confront a leader like Narendra Modi in the electoral field, since the Prime Minister is a past master in setting the agenda and changing the course of elections midway. But despite getting most of the time on the electronic media, he is now facing an adversary whose oratorical skills are exceptional and is carrying the fight to the camp of her opponents. There is also speculation that in the evolving political scenario, the Congress could consider fielding Priyanka against Modi from Varanasi.

This is most unlikely and if that was to happen, she would certainly emerge as the tallest leader amongst the opposition parties. Priyanka has so far declined to contest solely because she wishes to focus on the campaign and secondly does not want to begin her debut on a doubtful note. She could have easily chosen Amethi or Rae Bareilly for this purpose but after a family meeting her role was defined as that of the star campaigner. It is also a known fact that defeating the Prime Minister is virtually impossible but for some reason, if this fight was to take place, it would be certainly the mother of all battles.

The Congress would be far happier in increasing its tally this time rather than sacrificing its star campaigner in the significant and decisive confrontation with the BJP in 2024. The speculation has commenced only because in certain political quarters there is growing belief that the BJP was vulnerable and was slipping. There is no evidence of all this as yet and one would have to wait till June 4 to know what the truth is. However, so far as Priyanka is concerned, she has made her mark already. Her main limitation is that the Congress organizational network is lacking in most areas and pitted against the might of the BJP, it is nowhere.

It is another story that there is also disquiet in the Saffron brigade over the distribution of tickets and many old BJP loyalists feel that by giving the nomination to those who had come from other parties, the central leadership had perhaps made a grave mistake. There is also a talk of the RSS being neutral or at least not as enthusiastic as it was in the previous elections. This is again not supported by any concrete evidence and things would become clear in the course of time. Priyanka has always been regarded as a charismatic leader by many in her party and there is a section which feels that she and not her brother should have been leading the outfit. It is to Rahul's credit that despite being insulted and humiliated all these years, he has been steadfast in his approach and has continued his fight against the BJP and.

His image has been transformed after his two Yatras and many view him as a possible alternative to the Prime Minister, even though the Congress leadership has made it clear repeatedly that the party was not in the race for the top position, and its main objective was to dislodge the BJP, and save the Constitution and the values which the Nation stood for. Priyanka is someone who is also regarded as the natural heir to her grandmother Indira Gandhi. A few days before she was brutally assassinated, Indira Gandhi while on a visit to Kashmir along with her grandchildren, had shared her thoughts with her political adviser, Makhan Lal Fotedar. She had told Fotedar that he should after her death, ensure that Priyanka entered the political arena. She said that she saw shades of her own personality in her and people would also see her that way. Once she arrives on the scene, people would forget her and follow her granddaughter. Fotedar had conveyed these sentiments to Rajiv Gandhi, after Indira Gandhi's assassination to which the then Prime Minister had smiled and told him, "To Mummy Aise Kehi thi".

After Rajiv died tragically in 1991 in an assassination carried out by a human bomb, Fotedar had passed on this message to Sonia Gandhi. It was evident that Sonia preferred Rahul and thus this exercise ended. The unique thing about the Gandhis is that even when they disagree on issues amongst themselves, they never allow this to come out in the public domain. This is also true of the other stream of Gandhis where Feroze Varun, declined to contest on the BJP ticket from Rae Bareilly on the grounds that he would not do anything against his family and cousins. This bond is invisible but in the end matters. The 2024 polls have Rahul contesting from two places while Priyanka and Varun are sitting out. What the future holds for them is something time alone shall tell.

PANKAJ VOHRA

Improving environment needs election attention

OPINION

PETER DASH



Improving the Environment Needs Urgent Election Attention: Opposition need a cleaner and more spiritually based mindset over politically ignorant platitudes in going green

Many Indian city dwellers, in particular and beyond decry the horrendous, suffocating air quality and sweltering heat, the latter due in part to climate change aggravated by emissions. Pollution levels are even some of the worst in the world, reaching the ranking of maximum 5 of the deep red-purple as reported in many international news reports on India. This acts as discernible friction on maximizing the "Incredible India", incredibly positive story and global tourist campaign, very successfully backed by Delhi.

That being said, specifically and more importantly, residents, even in or near the capitol of representatives who govern the na-

tions, are finding that this situation is affecting respiratory health, most worrisome for young infants, the elderly and asthmatics. This is clearly what no one wants, not by tourists and business people either who create jobs from their useful contributions. Certainly, the vehicle exhaust and various burnings need to be mitigated with little delay. This includes providing real viable long-term solutions, better discussed in all the current important election campaigning.

While the Narendra Modi-led government has an overall stellar record, more headway is understood as needed, and will be made on the environment. This is not unique to India which should not be lectured by the West, which has done so on climate change, but forgetting that countries like Trudeau's Canada have some of the highest per capita, greenhouse gas emissions in the world. And the total consumption levels in the West are far from meeting the goals of responsible consumption, set out by the United Nations strategies such as in Agenda 21, many nations signed onto. In fact, even in so-called advanced Switzerland, seniors there took their government to the European Court of Human Rights, with Bern re-

cently found guilty of breaking their legal commitments to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and thereby, badly impacting elderly health due to resulting heat waves, as the charge goes. Then, the West finger points and wants to chastise highly, countries in the Global South for having poor environmental records. This is hardly an act of generating global solidarity and inclusiveness, concepts of a one holistic Earth, one entire family-like belief the Indian PM has been brilliantly promoting. And the former Prime Minister of Malaysia, Mahathir Mohamad went as far to say that the West wanted to prevent the South from properly developing and becoming economically independent and prosperous by shoving unfairly an excessive and costly environmental burden onto developing countries. This was referred to as eco-(green) imperialism, another kind of western-type "colonialism" and hegemony? Rather, "Made in India" green solutions, even borrowing on important and useful sustainable solutions from the wisdom of elders to ancestors, including positive spiritually-based thinking can make India a much better place environmentally?

So, focussing within India, let us start with the BJP platform, Chapter 14 in their main green policy statement. The Times of India reflects on it by stating, "The BJP, which released its 69-page election manifesto... has dedicated three pages to environment and climate issues under the section "Modi Ki Guarantee for Sustainable Bharat", coming a

long way from just a paragraph on "environment" in the 1999 Lok Sabha elections." Indeed, in the chapter, the party states, "BJP believes in the traditional Indian position that Nature is sacred. The Atharva Veda sets out the principle that Nature is the mother of humans and that humans owe a responsibility to maintain the ecological balance." This reflects that the government significantly recognizes the deep spiritual and traditional basis to having the right mindset as an important starting point on sustainable development. Indian culture looks rightfully to harmonic balance, including with Nature through applying such stated values in the BJP manifesto or would be benefited by their wider appreciation.

For some globalists, who prefer to be societal polarizers and undermine the concept of Bharat and inclusiveness, they may overly focus on a discriminatory approach and tone about the Hindu source of these ideas. That is rather than embracing their wide application and often universality to many religions. They should not be forgetting the huge and positive impact also of many Hindu-based ideas on all Indians and national culture, without discrimination against any legal religion. Such an approach is pro-green inclusive.

Remember, indigenous (tribal) women in places in developing countries like Peru (with applications to Indian farmers' situations), no doubt are expanding and building on their positive traditional knowledge.

That includes potato farming, for example by sourcing biodiversity protecting ideas, handed down by their grandmothers and in turn from their grandmother's. This goes all the way back, well before the time the European's (e.g. Spanish Conquistadors) invasions trying to wipe out, essentially their culture and these important, sustainable agricultural ways. Instead of certain Indian Opposition leaders pushing too hard their outside ideas and often western imposed concepts, might they learn from the tribes themselves about their own many solutions from within. And support enhancement of their practices as the Peru example shows including inherent women empowerment where it exists? But that might be too much for the "prestigiously" western educated, "We know best" by those "globalist" elite member even or wannabes who ignorantly see Indian farmers as simple, clueless peasants without a wealth of sustainable agricultural knowledge to the benefit of the climate and pollution reduction. Farmers should unit against such feudal dynastic arrogance, electorally.

Now, for the Congress party. How indeed does their green policy statement start out? According to Frontline, Congress does not give an wide-reaching, throughout India for an all Indians related approach and policy. According to the same source, in the section, "Reversing the Damage" the Congress states that, "The BJP government has passed many anti-people laws including those related to the

environment and forests, without proper parliamentary scrutiny and debate." In other words, instead of trying to change to, or reinforce positive environmental mindsets widely as in practice, Congress seems to use the environment as part of its wedge campaign to make the pro-inclusive, populist Modi-led government look minority insensitive and authoritarian. It is an old excessive refrain by Congress that could come from certain Washington Human rights interests and reports distorting India's image.

Both parties, however need to get more specific, be it on pushing EVs to natural to propane gas powered vehicles and encouraging responsible supporting helpful foreign assistance. That is like Israel's leading project approved by Delhi to have a million trees planted in the country which would help cool cities and all communities and provide more oxygen and cleaner air. Let us learn more from and about the positive specifics that will save more Indians, everywhere from poor health and positively add to the Incredible India story, worldwide. Treating all Indians to be talked top down that they need less Modi-led government to go green is the pinnacle of political and spiritual ignorance that all Indians, not only tribes and farmers need less of, period.

Peter Dash, an educator, 'lectures' on the environment. He is a graduate of the forestry faculty of UBC, Vancouver. He was a lead researcher on Canada's international environmental image.

EPHEMERAL GOVERNMENTS

The short-lived governments at the Centre in the history of India reflect the complex dynamics of its democracy, characterized by diverse political parties, competing interests, and constant realignments of power.

KAUSHAL VERMA
NEW DELHI

The first elections to the Lok Sabha took place during 1951-52 and since then there were many incidences where the government at Centre failed to complete its tenure of 5 years. The shortest government tenure at the Centre in India refers to the duration a particular government remains in power at the federal level. This phenomenon often occurs due to various political, socio-economic, or constitutional factors.

In the chronicles of India's political history, there exist chapters marked by brevity, where governments rise and fall in the blink of an eye, leaving behind a trail of political intrigue and uncertainty. These short-lived tenures at the Centre, though fleeting, offer profound insights into the intricacies of Indian democracy, coalition dynamics, and the challenges of governance in a diverse and pluralistic society.

The phenomenon of short-lived governments in India is not merely a footnote in its political chronicle but a reflection of deeper structural issues and systemic vulnerabilities. Coalition politics, while emblematic of India's democratic ethos, often amplifies the fragility of governments, making them susceptible to the whims of smaller regional parties and individual ambitions. The absence of a clear parliamentary majority exacerbates this vulnerability, turning every policy decision into a delicate balancing act fraught with the risk of collapse.

Let's delve into the list of some of the shortest governments in India's history and explore the reasons behind their brief tenures.

Chaudhary Charan Singh Government (1979): His government holds the record for being the shortest tenure at the Centre, lasting merely 24 days from July 28 to August 28, 1979. It was a coalition government formed after the fall of the Morarji Desai-led Janata Party government. The government's brief tenure was primarily due to the lack of a stable majority in the Lok Sabha. Charan Singh failed to gather enough support from various political factions, leading to his resignation. He is widely regarded as the "Champion of farmers" after his life has been dedicated to advocating for the wellbeing and rights of farmers. He was awarded Bharat Ratna, highest civilian award of Republic of India, for his contributions to agriculture sector especially in Uttar Pradesh. The Janata Party won the Lok Sabha elections in 1977, its MPs authorised the elder guiding lights of the movement, Jayaprakash Narayan and Acharya Kripalani to choose candidate for the post of Prime Minister. Morarji Desai was chosen and he named Singh Home Minister. Singh was asked to resign in June 1978 following disagreements with Desai, but was brought back to the cabinet as Deputy Prime Minister in January 1979.

In 1979, the Janata government began to unravel over the issue of the dual loyalties of some members to Janata and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS)—the Hindu nationalist, paramilitary organisation. Singh, who as the Union home minister during the previous year had ordered the Gandhis' arrests,



Atal Bihari Vajpayee taking oath as Prime Minister on May 16, 1996.

took advantage of this and started courting Indira Gandhi's Congress (I) party. After a significant exodus from the Janata party to Singh's faction, Morarji Desai resigned as prime minister in July 1979. Singh was appointed prime minister, by President Reddy, after Gandhi and Sanjay Gandhi promised Singh that Congress (I) would support his government from outside on certain conditions. Singh was sworn in as Prime Minister on 28 July 1979, with outside support from Indira Gandhi's Congress (I) party and with Yeshwantrao Chavan of the Congress (Socialist) party as his Deputy Prime Minister.

Chandra Shekhar Government (1990-1991): Chandra Shekhar's government lasted for 226 days from November 10, 1990, to June 21, 1991. It was a minority government formed after the collapse of the National Front coalition government led by V.P. Singh. The government faced significant challenges due to internal dissensions and lacked adequate support from major political parties. Eventually, it fell when the Congress Party withdrew its support. He was also known as Jananayak, and served as the 8th Prime Minister of India. He headed a minority government of a breakaway faction of the Janata Dal with outside support from the Indian National Congress. He was the first Indian Prime Minister who had never held any prior government office. Shekhar was prime minister for seven months, the second shortest period after that of Charan Singh. Subramanian Swamy was instrumental in forming this government with the support of Congress. He also handled the portfolios of Defence and Home Affairs during this period. However, his government could not introduce a full budget because on 6 March 1991 Congress withdrew support during its formulation. As a result, Chandra Shekhar resigned the office of the prime minister after 15 days on 21 June.

I.K. Gujral Government (1997-1998): The government led by I.K. Gujral lasted for 324 days from April 21, 1997, to March 19, 1998. It was formed after the collapse of the United Front government led by H.D. Deve Gowda.

Gujral's tenure was marked by political instability, with his government relying on the external support of the Congress Party. However, the withdrawal of support by the Congress Party led to the fall of his government. He became prime minister as the consensus candidate between others that included Lalu Prasad Yadav, Mulayam Singh Yadav; his government was supported by the INC from outside. In the early weeks of his tenure, the Central Bureau of Investigation asked for permission from the Governor of Bihar, A. R. Kidwai, to prosecute the state Chief Minister Lalu Prasad Yadav in a corruption case related to the Fodder Scam, a move that Kidwai sanctioned. Even legal scholars said that Yadav could not escape prosecution. Subsequently, the demand for the resignation of Yadav was raised both from within and outside the United Front. United Front and Telugu Desam Party leader Chandrababu Naidu and Communist Party of India (Marxist) General Secretary Harkishen Singh Surjeet called for action against Yadav and for the resignation of other RJD members; while the same was said by JD members Sharad Yadav, H. D. Deve Gowda and Ram Vilas Paswan who called for the dismissal of accused RJD members Kanti Singh, Raghuvansh Prasad Singh and Captain Jai Narain Nishad. Though INC chairperson Sitaram Kesri offered minor calls for Yadav's resignation, Yadav then offered Gujral support to run from any Lok Sabha constituency in Bihar to get his support. Gujral, however, was silent on the matter, but later controversially transferred the CBI director, Joginder Singh, who was investigating the case against Yadav, and replaced him with R. C. Sharma, who said Gujral would directly control the CBI and that the pace of investigating many sensational cases "will definitely slacken now." However, Yadav was still expelled from the party by JD leader Sharad Yadav, before forming his own Rashtriya Janata Dal in 1997.

V.P. Singh Government (1989-1990): V.P. Singh's

government lasted for 343 days from December 2, 1989, to November 10, 1990. It came into power after the general elections in 1989, riding on the wave of anti-corruption sentiments with the promise of implementing the Mandal Commission recommendations. However, Singh's decision to implement reservations for Other Backward Classes (OBCs) in government jobs and educational institutions led to widespread protests and political unrest. The withdrawal of support by the BJP over the Mandal issue and subsequent loss of majority support in the Lok Sabha resulted in the fall of

his government. **Deve Gowda Government (1996-1997):** H.D. Deve Gowda's government lasted for 324 days from June 1, 1996, to April 21, 1997. It was formed after the collapse of the Atal Bihari Vajpayee-led BJP government. Deve Gowda's tenure was marked by challenges in managing the diverse coalition of regional parties comprising the United Front. The government faced criticism for its inability to address economic reforms adequately and maintain stability. Internal disagreements and power struggles within the coalition, coupled with external pressures, eventually led to the fall of his gov-



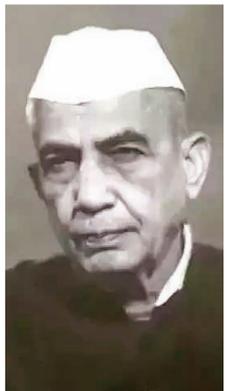
Chandra Shekhar being sworn in as PM by President R. Venkataraman in New Delhi in November 1990.



V.P. Singh



H.D. Deve Gowda



Chaudhary Charan Singh

These short duration governments can be attributed to various factors, including political instability, coalition dynamics, lack of majority support in the parliament, and the inability to fulfill promises or manage crises effectively. Additionally, the complexities of India's multi-party democracy often lead to frequent changes in government, especially when alliances are fragile or based on opportunistic arrangements.

REASONS FOR SHORT DURATION GOVERNMENTS

The short-lived governments at the Centre in India can be attributed to a variety of factors, including:

Coalition Politics: India's political landscape is characterized by coalition governments, especially since the late 1980s. These governments are often formed by multiple parties coming together to secure a parliamentary majority. However, managing diverse interests and ideologies within a coalition can be challenging, leading to instability and frequent collapses.

Lack of Parliamentary Majority: Many short-lived governments in India have lacked a clear majority in the Lok Sabha, the lower house of Parliament. Minority or coalition governments often struggle to pass legislation and implement policies effectively, making them vulnerable to collapse.

Internal Dissensions: Infighting and disagreements within political parties or coalition partners can destabilize governments and lead to their downfall. Factionalism, personal ambitions, and ideological differences often contribute to internal conflicts, undermining the cohesion and longevity of governments.

Economic Challenges: Economic downturns, fiscal crises, and policy failures can erode public confidence in the government and trigger political instability. Governments that fail to address pressing economic issues or implement reforms may

face widespread discontent and lose support, hastening their demise.

Regionalism: India's federal structure gives significant autonomy to states, and regional parties wield considerable influence in certain regions. Governments dependent on the support of regional parties may struggle to maintain stability, especially if regional interests clash with national priorities.

External Factors: International events, geopolitical tensions, and security threats can impact the stability of governments in India. External pressures, such as conflicts with neighboring countries or global economic shocks, may exacerbate domestic challenges and weaken the government's position.

Scandals and Corruption: Allegations of corruption, nepotism, or misconduct can tarnish the image of the government and undermine its legitimacy. Public outrage over corruption scandals can fuel protests, erode support from coalition partners, and ultimately force the government to resign.

Policy Gridlock: Inability to push through crucial legislative measures or policy initiatives due to parliamentary gridlock, opposition obstructionism, or bureaucratic red tape can hinder the functioning of the government. Policy paralysis can lead to frustration among the electorate and contribute to the government's downfall.

terial candidate in the forthcoming elections. Vajpayee himself was reported to be unhappy with the announcement, responding by saying that the party needed to win the election first. The BJP became the single largest party in Parliament in the 1996 general election, helped by religious polarisation across the country as a result of the demolition of the Babri Masjid. Indian president Shankar Dayal Sharma invited Vajpayee to form the government. Vajpayee was sworn in as the 10th prime minister of India, but the BJP failed to muster a majority among members of the Lok Sabha. Vajpayee resigned in less than two weeks, when it became clear that he did not have enough support to form a government. Vajpayee was an Indian politician and poet who served three terms as the 10th Prime Minister of India, first for a term of 13 days in 1996, then for a period of 13 months from 1998 to 1999, followed by a full term from 1999 to 2004. He was the first non-Indian National Congress prime minister to serve a full term in the office. Vajpayee was one of the co-founders and a senior leader of the Bharatiya Janata Party. He was a member of the RSS, a Hindu nationalist volunteer organisation. He was also a Hindi poet and a writer.

Inder Kumar Gujral Government (1997-1998): Gujral's government lasted for 324 days from April 21, 1997, to March 19, 1998. It was formed after the collapse of the H.D. Deve Gowda-led United Front government. Gujral's tenure was marked by coalition politics and external support from the Congress Party. However, the withdrawal of support by the Congress Party eventually led to the fall of his government. Gujral became prime minister as the consensus candidate between others that included Lalu Prasad Yadav, Mulayam Singh Yadav; his government was supported by the INC from outside.

In the early weeks of his tenure, the Central Bureau of Investigation asked for permission from the Governor of Bihar, A. R. Kidwai, to prosecute the state Chief

Minister Lalu Prasad Yadav in a corruption case related to the Fodder Scam, a move that Kidwai sanctioned. Even legal scholars said that Yadav could not escape prosecution. Subsequently, the demand for the resignation of Yadav was raised both from within and outside the United Front. United Front and Telugu Desam Party leader Chandrababu Naidu and Communist Party of India (Marxist) General Secretary Harkishen Singh Surjeet called for action against Yadav and for the resignation of other RJD members; while the same was said by JD members Sharad Yadav, H. D. Deve Gowda and Ram Vilas Paswan who called for the dismissal of accused RJD members Kanti Singh, Raghuvansh Prasad Singh and Captain Jai Narain Nishad. Though INC chairperson Sitaram Kesri offered minor calls for Yadav's resignation, Yadav then offered Gujral support to run from any Lok Sabha constituency in Bihar to get his support. Gujral, however, was silent on the matter, but later controversially transferred the CBI director Joginder Singh, who was investigating the case against Yadav, and replaced him with R. C. Sharma, who said Gujral would directly control the CBI and that the pace of investigating many sensational cases "will definitely slacken now." However, Yadav was still expelled from the party by JD leader Sharad Yadav, before forming his own Rashtriya Janata Dal in 1997.

These short duration governments can be attributed to various factors, including political instability, coalition dynamics, lack of majority support in the parliament, and the inability to fulfill promises or manage crises effectively. Additionally, the complexities of India's multi-party democracy often lead to frequent changes in government, especially when alliances are fragile or based on opportunistic arrangements. These brief tenures underscore the challenges of governance in a diverse and pluralistic democracy like India, where coalition politics often dictate the stability and longevity of governments at the Centre.

SUPREME COURT ORDERED STATUS QUO ON FELLING OF TREES IN DELHI 'RIDGE' FOREST; ISSUED CONTEMPT NOTICES TO OFFICIALS

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court in the case Bindu Kapurea v. Subhashish Panda And Connected Matters observed and has issued notices wherein the contempt proceedings are initiated against government officials for the rampant felling of trees in Delhi's Ridge Forest area in violation of its previous orders in the case M.C. Mehta v. Union of India and Ors.

The court in the matter has also ordered for the maintenance of the status quo in the region.

The bench comprising of Justice AS Oka and Justice

Ujjal Bhuyan in the case observed and has directed to maintain the status quo with regards to the Ridge Area and thus, the court stayed the said proceedings.

Further, the court issued the contempt notices against the Vice Chairman of Delhi Development Authorities, DDA, the Director General of the Central Public Works Department, CPWD, the Director General of Forest and the Principal Chief Conservator of Forest, Delhi.

The court ordered the alleged contemnors to be physically present before the Court on the next hearing of the matter.

The petitioner in the plea contended that the Ridge

which is the only forest region left in the National Capital of Delhi has been subjected to the illegal felling of the trees by the Delhi Development Authorities, DDA to construct the 10.525 km long approach roads from the main Chattarpur Road to SAARC University, CAPFIMS and other establishments at Maidangarhi, Sayurpur and Satbari areas of Delhi.

Further, the court stated that the State Authorities have relied upon the Gazette Notification dated February 14, 2014 issued by the Lt. Governor of Delhi.

It has also been pointed out by the petitioner that nowhere does the notifica-

tion allow for the clearing of trees which are located in the Ridge area

Therefore, the Notification issued does not permit clearing of Land or cutting of Trees either in the Ridge or Reserve Forest or on the Non-Forest Land.

The court noted that the DDA's previous applications seeking permission to fell or translocate 1051 trees were rejected by the Supreme Court in March 04.

The bench comprising of Justice BR Gavai and Justice Sandeep Mehta in the case observed and has issued the contempt notice to the DDA Vice Chairman.

Further, the application filed sought in the 1996 de-

cision in MC Mehta Case wherein the court observed it to be mandatory to preserve the Delhi Ridge in all aspects.

It would be useful to refer to the statutory Master Plan for Delhi Perspective 2001 which provides as under:

2. The Ecological Balance To Be Maintained. Delhi has two distinct natural features. The Ridge which is the rocky outcrop of Aravalli Hills and the river Yamuna and some parts of the Ridge have been erased in the Central city area. No further infringement of the Ridge is to be permitted and it should be maintained in its pristine glory.

However, the provisions

of the Master Plan make it mandatory that the Ridge is to be kept free from encroachers and its pristine glory must be maintained for all times.

Therefore, It being pity that neither the Central Government nor the N.C.T, Delhi Administration has ever applied its mind towards maintaining the Ridge.

The petitioner in the plea contended that during the hearing of the above applications, the DDA failed to inform the Court that the felling has already taken place even before the Court could pass any orders on such kind of applications.

The court stated that the DDA did not inform this

Hon'ble Court during the hearing on March 04, 2024 about the ground reality that the area had already been decimated. It being apparent that the DDA did not wait for the adjudication of the aforesaid Applications and without seeking permission of this Hon'ble Court, went ahead to clear the Ridge reserved Forest and Trees on Non-Forest Land for construction of the road.

The Delhi High Court in the case observed and has already taken note of the aforementioned contemptuous activities of the Contemnor or Respondent No.1 in its Order dated March 18, 2024.

The High Court in the case has taken cognizance of the

illegal forest clearance as it is recorded in photographs submitted to the said court.

The court while considering the facts and circumstances of the case noted that repeated concerns have been shown by the Supreme Court and the Delhi High Court over the illegal destruction of Delhi's sole forest regions providing natural oxygen to the Capital.

The counsel, Senior Advocate Mr Mukul Rohatgi appeared for the petitioners along with Manan Verma, AOR, Mr Ranjeeta Rohatgi and Mr Ankit Shah,

The counsel, Senior Advocates Mr Guru Krishna Kumar and ADN Rao appeared as amicus.

Supreme Court: Names Of Presiding Officer Or Members Should Be Specifically Mentioned In Orders When Signed, Including Interim Orders | JJ Act

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court in the case Child In Conflict With Law Through His Mother Versus The State Of Karnataka And Another observed and has flagged concern about the non-mentioning of the names of the presiding officer or members when the order is being passed under the Juvenile Justice Act, 2015. The bench comprising of Justice CT Ravikumar and Justice Rajesh Binald in the case observed and has stated

that the Presiding Officers or Members of the Board, as the case in hand, or Tribunals do not mention their names when the order is being passed and as a result of which it becomes difficult to find out later on, as to who was presiding the Court or Board or Tribunal or was the member at the relevant point of time and there may many officers with the same name. Thus, insofar as the judicial officers are concerned, unique I.D. numbers have been issued to them.

Adding to it, the court stated that the said court expect that wherever lacking, in all orders passed by the Courts, Tribunals, Boards and the quasi-judicial authorities, the names of the Presiding Officers or the Members JJ and if there being any identification number given to the officers and the same cannot be added. Therefore, the non-mentioning of Counsels Names While Granting Adjudgment Makes It Difficult To Find Out Which Party Is

Delaying The Present Matter It has been stated by the said court that the non-mentioning of the counsel's name in the order sheet, especially at the time of grant of an adjournment makes it difficult to find out which party is delaying the proceedings. The court in its order stated that in may of the orders the presence of the parties and/or their counsels is not properly recorded. The court stated that it being evident as to on whose behalf adjournment has been

sought and has granted. Further, the court stated that it is very relevant fact to be considered at different stages of the case and also to find out as to who was the party delaying the said matter. The court while considering the facts and circumstance of the case stated that at the time of grant of adjournment, it should specifically be mentioned as to the purpose therefor. The same may be helpful in imposition of costs also, finally once we shift to the real terms' costs.

Supreme Court Allowed Interim Release Of Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal Till June 01, 2024

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court in the case Arvind Kejriwal v. Directorate Of Enforcement observed and has stated that it will grant interim bail to Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal in the Delhi liquor policy case till June 1.

The bench comprising of Justice Sanjiv Khanna and Justice Dipankar Datta in the case observed and has stated that the detailed order will be uploaded by evening.

The bench in the case noted that the liquor policy case was registered in August 2022 and Arvind Kejriwal was arrested only in March 2024 after nearly one and half years.

The Enforcement Directorate, ED arrested Arvind Kejriwal on March 21 and has been under custody ever since.

The bench had shown an inclination to consider the question of interim bail for Kejriwal in view of the Lok Sabha Elections and on the subsequent dates, vehement opposition to the grant of interim bail was shown by the counsel, Solicitor General Tushar Mehta and Additional Solicitor General SV Raju, who argued that the Enforcement Directorate, ED had 'ev-

idence' against Kejriwal and election campaigning ought not to be a criteria for considering grant of interim bail.

Further, the bench in the case observed that it was dealing with the case of an elected Chief Minister, not a habitual offender, and the general elections take place only once in 5 years.

On May 07, the bench orally suggested that if indeed interim release was directed, Kejriwal would not be allowed to perform official duties, as that would have a cascading effect.

The Enforcement Directorate, ED filed an affidavit before the Supreme Court wherein opposing the grant of interim bail to Kejriwal.

The counsel, Solicitor General of India Tushar Mehta submitted before the court that Amrit Pal Singh, detained under the National Security Act over Khalistani activities, has also approached the Court for bail to contest in elections. SG stated that grant of bail to Kejriwal on the ground of elections will create a cascading effect.

The bench headed by Justice Khanna stated that, Amrit Pal Singh case is something different.

Further, the Solicitor General of India Tushar Mehta stated that there are no pre-

cedents for releasing a person for campaigning when he himself is not a candidate.

The bench of Justice Khanna stated that let us not put in a straightjacket like that. We are passing an order giving him interim relief till June 1, 2024. We will upload the order by evening.

The bench headed by Justice Khanna also stated that final arguments in Kejriwal's petition challenging the ED arrest would be concluded next week.

The bench headed by Justice Khanna stated that August 2022, the ED registered the ECIR. He was being arrested in March 2024. For one and a half years he was there. Arrest could have been even afterwards or before. Then, 21 days here or there should not make any difference.

It has also been urged by the Solicitor General that the bench should impose conditions for bail such as he should not speak to the press and should surrender on the last date.

The counsel, Senior Advocate Dr Abhishek Manu Singhvi, appearing for Kejriwal, requested that he be granted bail till June 4, the date of declaration of results. However, the bench said that he would have to surrender on June 2.

SC: Section 49 Does Not Bar Jurisdiction Of Civil Courts To Determine Ownership Rights | UP Consolidation Of Holdings Act

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court in the case Prashant Singh And Ors Etc. Versus Meena And Ors. Etc observed and has held that the power to declare the ownership in an immovable property can only be exercised by a Civil Court unless the same is barred under a law, and that the UP Consolidation of Holdings Act, 1953 does not contain such kind of bar. The court also clarified that the power stated under Section 49 of the 1953 Act cannot be exercised to take

away the vested title of a tenure holder, or to grant ownership in a property to one in whom it never vested

FACTS OF THE CASE

The bench comprising of Justice Surya Kant and Justice P. S. Narasimha in the case was hearing the batch of appeals where the controversy revolves around the ownership rights over a piece of land in a village in Uttarakhand, which being an ancestral property originally owned by one Angat, who died leaving behind three sons, namely, Ramji

Lal, Khushi Ram and Pyara. After the death of Khushi Ram, his son Kalyan Singh became a co-sharer or co-owner.

The court in the case observed that consolidation proceedings were initiated in the concerned village, the Consolidation Officer, on being approached by Ramji Lal, passed an order dated May 08, 1960 which being on the basis of a report wherein it was claimed that Kalyan Singh had not been heard for last 8 of 10 years, did not arrive in the village and an affidavit to this effect

was filed by his uncle Ramji Lal and since all the efforts to secure service on Kalyan Singh failed, thus, the Consolidation Officer expunged the name of Kalyan Singh from the record and declared his civil death. Therefore, Ramji Lal on this premise started claiming to be the sole owner of the entire land holding of Angat. In the present case, the suit was filed by Kalyan Singh for the declaration of his half share in the suit property which was decreed in the favour of him and the court dismissed the appeal

of Ramji Lal's against it. Therefore, in Ramji Lal's second appeal before the Board of Revenue, the suit was remanded with a direction to adjudicate the dispute afresh after forming an issue with respect to applicability as it is stated under Section 34 of the Specific Relief Act, 1963. The Kalyan Singh moved the High Court challenging the aforesaid order wherein the High Court allowed his writ petition in its 2013 judgment which was impugned before the Supreme Court in the present appeal.

Plea In Supreme Court Seeks ECI Action Against Alleged Hate Speeches Of PM Modi, Anurag Thakur And BJP

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court in the case Dr. Emani Anantha Satyanarayana Sarma & Anr v. Election Commission of India & Anr observed wherein the writ petition has been filed seeking directions to the Election Commission of India, ECI to initiate appropriate action against hate speeches being delivered by political campaigners, especially those which being on behalf of the Bharatiya Janata Party, BJP for the 2024 General Elections.

The petitioner in the plea seeks direction to the Election Commission of India, ECI to initiate an investigation into the hate speeches allegedly given by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Minister Mr Anurag Thakur. In the present case, the petition has been filed by an ex-IAS Officer Mr EAS Sarma

and a former IIM Dean Mr Trilochan Sastry, thus the plea cites the speeches given by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi on April 21, 2024 and the Union Minister of Information and Broadcasting, and Youth Affairs and Sports Shri Anurag Singh Thakur on April 27, 2024.

Therefore, these speeches were then repeatedly posted on different social media platforms like Instagram and Twitter by the official handle of Bharatiya Janata Party, BJP and sitting MP Mr Arvind Dharmपुरi. It has been stated that the Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi on April 21, 2024 and the Union Minister of Information and Broadcasting, and Youth Affairs and Sports Shri Anurag Singh Thakur on April 27, 2024 have used hate speech demonising and stereotyping the Muslim community which was relayed by different mediums

across the country. The petitioner in the plea contended that the Election Commission of India, ECI has turned a blind eye to the nature of speeches delivered which constitutes a serious breach of the Model Code of Conduct, the Indian Penal Code, 1860, and the Representation of People Act, 1951.

Thus, the petitioners are being aggrieved of the failure of the ECI to take any 'decisive action'. It has been stated that the Election Commission of India, ECI has failed to undertake decisive action, notwithstanding repeated efforts to notify and prompt the statutory body of its obligatory responsibilities. Further, the petitioner in the plea contended that ECI has previously taken suo motu action against members of other political parties who were violating the Model Code of Conduct such as the Aam Adami Party, Bharat

Rashtra Samithi etc. However, the Election Commission of India, ECI in the case issued directives to the Aam Admi Party wherein it mandated alterations to their campaign anthem, while citing perceived insinuations against the Bharatiya Janata Party, BJP and the judiciary. Further, Shri K. Chandrasekhar Rao, the Founder of Bharat Rashtra Samithi, was barred from campaigning due to alleged derogatory remarks which are made against the Indian National Congress.

Therefore, these interventions were being initiated suo motu by the Election Commission. It has been contended before the court that the Model Code of Conduct delineates distinct provisions and standards of adherence applicable to the incumbent government, with a markedly higher threshold of compliance.

THE PETITIONER IN THE PLEA SOUGHT RELIEFS

To Issue a writ in the nature of Mandamus and/ or any other writ/ order or direction to the Election Commission of India for taking appropriate action against the violation of the Model Code of Conduct by the BJP and its representatives; To Issue a writ in the nature of Mandamus and/ or any other writ/ order or direction to the Election Commission of India to exercise its power as stated under Article 324 of the Constitution of India and initiate an investigation into the hate speech propagated by the Hon'ble Prime Minister and Shri Anurag Singh Thakur, which has been further reiterated by the Bharatiya Janata Party, BJP through a video uploaded in its official Instagram account. The present petition has been filed with the assistance of AOR Mr Anas Tanwir.

Senior Advocate Kapil Sibal Files Nomination To Contest For SCBA President Post

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Senior Advocate Kapil Sibal filed nomination to contest for the post of the President of the Supreme Court Bar Association for the 2024-2025 term. The Supreme Court Bar Association Elections are scheduled to take place on May 16, 2024.

Senior Advocate Kapil Sibal

was previously elected as the SCBA President three times, the last instance twenty-three years ago in 2001. Before that, he was President during the 1995-1996 and 1997-1998 terms. The incumbent of the Supreme Court Bar Association is Senior Advocate Dr. Adish C Aggarwal.

The last date of filing for the nomination was May 09, 2024. Last Week, the Su-

preme Court passed an order for the implementation of a minimum 1/3rd women's reservation in the posts of the Executive Committee of the Supreme Court Bar Association. The Supreme Court Bar Association Executive Committee objected to this order, terming it as an interference with the independence of the bar. Later, the Court clarified that women's

SC: Conviction Cannot Be Set Aside Merely Because Prosecution Witness Turned Hostile

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court in the case Selvamani Versus the State Rep. By The Inspector Of Police observed and has held that the evidence of a prosecution witness cannot be rejected in toto merely because the prosecution chose to treat him as hostile and cross-examined him. The bench comprising of Justice BR Gavai and Justice Sandeep Mehta in the case observed and has set aside the conviction of the accused merely because the prosecution witness did not support the prosecution's case in

their cross-examination. The court in the case noted that there was a considerable gap between the prosecution witness's examination-in-chief and cross-examination. The Judgment authored by Justice BR Gavai in the case stated that the witnesses were won over by the accused and they resiled from the version as deposed in the examination-in-chief which fully incriminates the accused.

The court in the case observed and has placed reliance in the case C. Muniappan and Others v. State of Tamil Nadu, wherein the

court stated that the evidence of such prosecution witnesses cannot be treated as effaced or washed off the record altogether but the same can be accepted to the extent their version is found to be dependable on a scrutiny thereof.

Therefore, the court stated that after scrutinizing the testimony of the prosecution witnesses and the victim as stated under Section 164 of Code of Criminal Procedure, CrPC and medical evidence. Further, the court noted that there was sufficient corroboration to the version given by the victim in her chief examination.

SINGAPOREAN MUSLIMS DISTRESSED BY GAZA CONFLICT: LEE HSIEN LOONG

The conflict in Gaza was triggered by the unprecedented attacks against Israel by Hamas militants on October 7 that killed around 1,200 people

AGENCIES
SINGAPORE

Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong has said that he understands that Muslims in the multi-national, multi-racial country are distressed by the "unconscionable and inhuman" conflict in Gaza but underlined that Singaporeans have to work together to acknowledge these feelings and provide help to the Palestinians in a practical manner.



militant group that has ruled Gaza since 2007. More than 34,900 people have been killed in Gaza in Israeli action, according to the territory's Hamas-run health ministry.

The conflict in Gaza was triggered by the unprecedented attacks against Israel by Hamas militants on October 7 that killed around 1,200 people. Israel has launched a massive counter-offensive against the Islamic

The 72-year-old leader said that while the Israel-Palestine conflict is not

about religion, religion is nonetheless an element fuelling the emotions, Channel News Asia reported on Friday. Lee, who has served as Singapore's prime minister since 2004, will step down in a leadership renewal process on May 15.

"You talk about Al-Aqsa Mosque, Jerusalem, and here there is a religious identification. So, the Muslims feel much more strongly about this, generally speaking, than the non-Muslims in Singapore," said the leader of the prosperous island state nestled in Southeast Asia with predominantly Muslim-inclined neighbours in Indonesia and Malaysia.

"I think others too, young Singaporeans, they are worked up, but I would say

if you are Muslim, that is an extra factor which makes sure you are very, very engaged," he said.

Lee said that Singaporeans have to work together to acknowledge those feelings but also provide help in a manner that is practical and not just performative.

"I can strike a pose, say this and that, have a demonstration, burn flags. It is cathartic, but does it help people who desperately need help?" he asked.

Instead, Singapore has arranged donations, with the Singapore Red Cross delivering them to Egypt. The country also collected and airdropped food and medical necessities over Gaza to help the population with their urgent needs, he said.

In November last year, Singapore handed over SGD 2 million (USD 1.47 million) in public donations for humanitarian assistance to civilians in Gaza to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East in Cairo.

Lee said that over a two-week deployment in March, the Republic of Singapore Air Force (RSAF) airdropped over 20 tonnes of food supplies – equivalent to more than 59,000 meals – into the enclave from a C-130 transport aircraft.

In a wide-ranging interview taking stock of his 20-year tenure as Prime Minister, Lee spoke about Singapore's foreign policy interests, challenges, and relations with neighbouring countries.

Japan urges security boost over warship video on Chinese media

TDG NETWORK
TOKYO

Japan's defense chief Friday called for the bolstering of its anti-drone capability after a drone footage posted on Chinese social media showed a Japanese aircraft carrier docked at a restricted navy port west of Tokyo. Defense Minister Minoru Kihara called it a serious security threat.



Kihara's acknowledgement of the vulnerability comes more than a month after a video filmed by a drone showed JS Izumo, one of two Japanese helicopter carriers, being retrofitted to carry stealth fighters to strengthen Japan's counter-strike capability in the face of China's assertive military actions in the Indo-Pacific.

The footage, also showing plants, buildings and other facility at the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force's Yokosuka naval base was posted on a Chinese social media site in March, prompting investigation by ministry officials.

The footage has also been posted on other platforms such as X.

"After the video analysis we have reached a conclusion that the footage was most likely filmed by a flying drone," Kihara told reporters.

"We are taking the findings extremely seriously," the minister added. "If drones harm defense facilities, it could cause serious disruptions to the defense of our country." Kihara declined to comment how the drone was able to fly over the flat-top undetected, citing security reasons. But he stressed

the need to respond to rapid technology advancement of drones and other unmanned vehicles. He also vowed to fortify defense around military bases.

He said Japan will accelerate effort to introduce more capable anti-drone equipment and strengthen counter measures such as forcible landing of drones by jamming. The development comes at a time Japan is accelerating its military buildup to focus on its counter-strike capability with long-range missiles under the ongoing security strategy adopted in 2022. JS Izumo serves a key role in that strategy.

Pak Army chief: No compromise with May 9, 2023 attack planners

AGENCIES
ISLAMABAD

The Chief of Army Staff of Pakistan, General Syed Asim Munir, said that there can be no compromise with the planners and architects of the attacks of May 9, 2023, that took place on military establishments in the country, terming it the 'dark chapter in our history', reported ARY News.



the narrative and implicate the state in this despicable endeavour," he said, according to ARY News.

The Army Chief made these statements, according to the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), to the soldiers and officers of the Garrison at Corps Headquarters in Lahore.

According to General Syed Asim Munir, May 9, 2023, would always be remembered as a dark day in Pakistan's history because on that day, 'deliberately indoctrinated and insidiously guided miscreants' attacked the symbols of the state.

"Due to these deplorable acts of criminally orchestrated violence, enemies of Pakistan were provided the opportunity to mock the state and the nation. COAS deplored that now the same plotters were brazenly and shamelessly trying to twist

Notably, it was during the May 9 riots, military installations were attacked by 'PTI workers' after the arrest of the former prime minister Imran Khan.

The Army Chief made it plain that those who pose as victims and claim to be "real leaders" will be held responsible for their acts, especially if there is unquestionable proof of their involvement and collaboration in sabotage and organised violence. "Our patience not to respond, to daily provocations in this regard made in brazen violation of the constitution, has limits and it must never be misconstrued as weakness," the Army Chief said.

IMF team reaches Pak for bailout talks

AGENCIES
ISLAMABAD

Ahead of the IMF mission's visit to Pakistan, an advance team of the global lender has reached the cash-strapped country to hold talks regarding their request for a longer and larger bailout package, according to a media report on Friday.

Geo News, quoting sources, said a support team of the International Monetary Fund will discuss the first phase of the next long-term loan under the Extended Fund Facility (EFF) with the country's financial team.

The IMF review mission is scheduled to arrive in Islamabad on May 16, the report said. The IMF team will receive data from different departments and will also discuss the upcoming budget 2025 with the Finance Ministry officials, Geo News reported.

The team will reportedly stay in Pakistan for more than 10 days. Pakistan is seeking a new bailout package in the range of USD 6 to USD 8 billion for three years under the EFF, with a possibility of augmentation through climate financing,

Pak lunar orbiter sends first images

AGENCIES
ISLAMABAD

Pakistan's maiden lunar orbiter sent the first images of the sun and the moon, days after it was launched as part of China's moon mission, it was announced on Friday.

Pakistan's mini satellite 'Cube-Qamar' was launched as part of China's Chang'e-6 lunar mission on May 3 from the Hainan province.

The images were unveiled at a ceremony organised at the China National Space Agency (CNSA) to mark the successful mission. Maria Tariq, spokesperson of Pakistan's national space agency Suparco, told Dawn.com.

She said that pictures were



officially handed over to Pakistan's ambassador to China, Khalil Hashmi, at the data handover ceremony in Beijing.

At 16:14 (1:14 pm Pakistan time) on May 8, the Pakistani CubeSat, one of the international payloads carried by the Chang'e-6 mission, "separated from the orbiter near the far moon point of

the 12-hour large elliptical orbit around the moon, and then successfully captured the first image.

Pakistan's CubeSat project achieved the set goal of 'successfully separating and obtaining telemetry' and achieved complete success," the CNSA announcement said.

The first image showed

the sun as a bright spotlight; the second was that of a sparkling half moon while the third image showed the moon on the left and the sun on the right, according to images shared by CNSA online.

The module was designed by Islamabad's Institute of Space Technology (IST) in collaboration with China's Shanghai University (SJTU) and Suparco. It carries two optical cameras to capture the lunar surface.

The cube satellite or cubesat is a miniature satellite typically characterised by its small size and standardised cubic design. They help to collect valuable data for scientific advancement and innovation.

2 killed, 1 injured in separate firing incidents in Balochistan

AGENCIES
ISLAMABAD

Two individuals were killed and another was injured in two separate firing incidents in Balochistan on Friday, reported The Balochistan Post.

In the first incident, a longstanding dispute was triggered when unidentified gunmen fatally shot Bashir Ahmed before escaping in Dera Murad Jamali.

The police immediately reached the incident spot, transferring Ahmed's body to the hospital for forensic examination and later releasing it to his family.

In another incident reported in Dakki, unknown assailants on a motorcycle opened fire on a shepherd in the Ganderi area, resulting in his immediate death. The Balochistan Post reported. The victim, identified by Dakki levies as Raheem Baksh, son of Murad Baksh.

After attacking them, the perpetrators abandoned the motorcycle at the scene and fled. Moreover, levies officials suggested that the Dakki shooting stemmed from a familial dispute.

Taiwan reports Chinese ships in Kinmen's restricted waters

AGENCIES
TAIPEI

As many as 11 Chinese coast guard ships and three fishing boats entered Kinmen's prohibited and restricted waters in two convoys, Taiwan News reported.



The Taiwan's Coast Guard detected the Chinese ships south of Kinmen's water at Thursday noon (local time). As many as seven Chinese coast guard ships along with three Chinese shipping boats suspected of conducting exercises with them entered restricted waters approximately 7 kilometres south-west of Kinmen.

Taiwan's Coast Guard dispatched three patrol boats to monitor and issue warnings to 10 Chinese ships, according to Taiwan News report.

At the same time, four Chinese coast guard ships entered the prohibited and restricted waters south of Kinmen. In response to Chinese activity, the Taiwan coast guard deployed another three patrol boats to

monitor the situation. Shadowed by Coast Guard patrol boats, the Chinese ships left Kinmen waters by 4:30 pm (local time), Taiwan News reported. According to Taiwan's Coast Guard, it was the fourth intrusion by Chinese coast guard ships into waters around Kinmen in May.

Taiwan's Coast Guard stated that the southern waters of Kinmen are important shipping lanes with heavy maritime traffic, the report said.

It further said that the re-

peated high-speed formations of Chinese vessels have affected Cross-Strait peace and stability and endangered maritime safety, obstructing peaceful exchanges between Taiwan and China.

Earlier on May 6, four Chinese coast guard ships entered territorial waters off the coast of Kinmen before being driven out by Taiwan Coast Guard vessels, Taiwan News reported.

Taiwan's Coast Guard Chinese coast guard vessels numbered 14608, 14604, 14512, and 14603 navigated

into Kinmen's territorial waters on Monday. After the Coast Guard dispatched three patrol boats the Chinese vessels withdrew at 4:37 pm (local time).

The Coast Guard said the Chinese coast guard has recently been sailing ships into the waters south of Kinmen. Taiwan Coast Guard personnel have positioned and dispatched patrol boats to intercept and drive away the Chinese vessels.

The report said that the Coast Guard said the waters south of Kinmen are busy with maritime traffic, serving as a crucial thoroughfare, with numerous vessels navigating, entering, and departing ports, as well as anchoring while awaiting port entry, Taiwan News reported.

The high-speed navigation by Chinese Coast Guard vessels in these waters has "severely disrupted cross-strait peace and stability, affecting maritime safety and traffic order," Taiwan's Coast Guard said.

China willing to help Indian firms to cater to its market demand: Envoy

AGENCIES
BEIJING

The Chinese market is open to all countries, including India, China's new envoy to India, Xu Feihong, has said, maintaining that Beijing understands New Delhi's concerns over its burgeoning trade deficit and is willing to address this issue by facilitating more Indian companies to tap the Chinese market.

The trade deficit, a major concern of India for years, stood at USD 99.2 billion in 2023 in the overall bilateral trade of USD 136.2 billion.

In 2022, the trade deficit crossed the USD 100 billion mark by touching USD 101 billion for the first time.

India has been periodically flagging concerns and pressing China to open its IT and pharma sectors besides grains, its major export potential sectors.

In an interaction with the PTI and China's CGTN-TV here before he headed to New Delhi to take up his posting, Xu reiterated Bei-



jing's often repeated assertions that it is not China's intention to seek a trade surplus.

"There are multiple factors behind India's trade deficit. China understands India's concern. It is never our intention to seek a trade surplus."

"The Chinese market is open to all countries, including India. We have sent many trade promotion delegations to India to buy Indian products, and we would like to see more marketable Indian products enter the Chinese

market. We are ready to provide greater facilitation for India's participation at the China International Import Expo, the China-South Asia Expo, the Canton Fair and other platforms," he said.

"China is also willing to help Indian companies cater to China's market demands and tap into the potential for commercial and trade cooperation." "Last year, the Chinese diplomatic missions in India issued nearly 190,000 visas; over 80 per cent were business visas. Business travels in both ways is good

for bilateral trade. We hope that India can also provide more convenience to Chinese businesspeople travelling to India for business opportunities," Xu said.

India-China trade continues to remain high despite bilateral tensions over the eastern Ladakh military standoff as the total trade last year climbed to a record USD 136.2 billion, with India's trade deficit mounting to USD 99.2 billion, a tad lower than last year, according to the data released by China's customs early this year.

OLYMPIC FLAMES



Maria Vysotchanska of Ukraine participates in the Olympic torch relay in Marseille, southern France. Photo: Agencies

PANNUN CASE: 'WON'T SPEAK UNTIL ALLEGATIONS ARE PROVED'

AGENCIES
WASHINGTON

Stating that the investigation into the alleged plot to assassinate Sikh separatist leader Gurpatwant Singh Pannun is an ongoing legal matter, the US State Department said it "won't speak" until "allegations are proved" before a jury.

Gurpatwant Singh Pannun is an India-designated terrorist who holds American and Canadian citizenship.

"There's a publicly returned indictment that contains alleged facts or allegations. Until they're proven before a jury that anyone can go and read, I won't speak to them here because, of course, it's an ongoing legal matter, and I'll leave it



at that," spokesperson Matthew Miller said at a State Department briefing on Thursday (local time).

Miller's remarks came in response to a media query on Pannun's case investigation.

Notably, a Czech court has ruled that Prague can extradite to the United States the 52-year-old Indian, Nikhil Gupta, who is accused by the United States of involvement in the alleged attempt

to kill Sikh separatist leader Pannun, a Czech-based media outlet Seznam Zpravy reported, citing judicial database Infosoud.

As per the US Justice Department indictment, Indian national Nikhil Gupta is currently in custody and has been charged with murder-for-hire, which carries a maximum sentence of 10 years in prison. Czech authorities arrested and detained Gupta on June 30, 2023, under the bilateral extradition treaty between the United States and the Czech Republic.

The US Justice Department had claimed that an Indian government employee, who was not identified in the indictment filed in a federal court in Manhattan, had recruited Indian national

Nikhil Gupta to hire a hitman to allegedly assassinate Pannun, which was foiled by US authorities.

The External Affairs Ministry too, in April, had rejected a report in The Washington Post naming Indian Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) official's involvement in the alleged plot to kill Khalistani terrorist Pannun in the US.

Describing it as an "unwarranted and unsubstantiated" imputation on a "serious matter" that is under investigation, Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) official spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said the US media report was "speculative and irresponsible."

India has also set up a high-level committee to probe the matter.

Pro-Palestinian protesters demand endowment transparency

AGENCIES
MINNEAPOLIS

On college campuses across the country, a rallying cry of pro-Palestinian protesters has been "Disclose, divest! We will not stop, we will not rest."

Now some are winning the first of those two demands: Promises to provide information about how much university endowment money is invested in companies profiting from the Israel-Hamas war.

As part of that effort, the University of Minnesota, for one, disclosed this week that about \$5 million of its \$2.27 billion endowment investments — or less than a quarter of 1% — are tied to Israeli companies or U.S. defense contractors.

To Ali Abu, a 19-year-old University of Minnesota student and member of Students for Justice in Palestine, the disclosure is a first step in what he described as "just the beginning of our fight." The ultimate goal, he said, remains divestment. A meeting with the university's Board of Regents is scheduled for Friday. But Jewish leaders have raised concerns, and endowment experts say the potential fallout from disclosure is hard to predict. Transparency, they say, has pros and cons. "I think the broader trend towards transparency is probably healthy. In response to a very charged situation, I think people get nervous about it.

Police clears pro-Palestinian camps at Penn, MIT, Arizona

AGENCIES
BOSTON

Police made more than 40 arrests as pro-Palestinian protest encampments were dismantled Friday at the University of Pennsylvania and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, hours after police tear-gassed demonstrators and took down a similar camp at the University of Arizona.

The dismantling at Penn came around 5:30 a.m., as campus and Philadelphia police moved in to remove protesters from the encampment that had been in place for more than two weeks. School officials said protesters were given warnings and the chance to leave without being detained. About 33 people, including students and faculty members, were among those arrested without incident and charged with defiant trespass, the school said. In Cambridge, Massachusetts, video showed police roaming through the MIT encampment. Police in riot gear arrived around 4

a.m., encircled the camp and gave protesters about 15 minutes to leave. Ten students who remained were arrested, the university's president said. A crowd outside the camp began gathering and chanting pro-Palestinian slogans but were dispersed by 6 a.m.

At the University of Arizona in Tucson, campus police in riot gear fired tear gas late Thursday at protesters before tearing down an encampment that included wood and plastic barriers on campus. In statement, the university said the encampment violated school policy. "A structure made from wooden pallets and other debris was erected on campus property after 5 p.m. in violation of the policy," the school said in a statement. "University officials issued warnings to remove the encampment and disperse. The warnings were ignored."

The school also said that police vehicles were spiked, and that rocks and water bottles thrown at officers and university staff.



FBI: AI threatens US election integrity

AGENCIES
WASHINGTON

The FBI is concerned that foreign adversaries could deploy artificial intelligence as a means to interfere in American elections and spread disinformation, a senior official said Thursday, describing the technology as an area "that's probably going to see growth over the coming years."

The threat is more than theoretical given the prevalence of AI deepfakes and robocalls and the way such technology has already surfaced in politics.

The official noted an episode in Slovakia early this year in which audio clips resembling the voice of the liberal party chief — purportedly capturing him talking about hiking beer prices and rigging the vote — were shared widely on social media just days before parliamentary elections. The clips were deepfakes.

'Aware of BSF' action at Indo-Bangladesh border

AGENCIES
WASHINGTON

The United States is aware of the reports regarding Border Security Forces (BSF) action at the Bangladesh-India border, US State Department Spokesperson Matthew Miller said.

Addressing a press briefing on Thursday (local time), Miller noted that Indian and Bangladesh border security agencies are in communication and he would defer to them to speak about their respective investigations



An incident in the U.S. involved robocalls impersonating President Joe Biden that urged voters in New Hampshire to abstain from voting in January's primary election. The robocalls were later traced to a political consultant who said he was trying to publicize the dangers of AI deepfakes.

AI technology is a challenge to law enforcement not only because it lowers the barrier of entry for people looking to make mischief but also because it adds to the arsenal of more sophisticated foreign governments

that want to interfere in elections, said the official, who was one of several FBI officials to brief reporters on the topic of election security on the condition of anonymity under ground rules set by the FBI. The three countries of most concern to the FBI in the current election year are Russia, Iran and China. Officials in the past have ascribed different motives and ambitions to the countries in terms of what they hope to achieve by influencing American elections.

In the case of Russia, intelligence officials in 2016 and 2020 have said Moscow had a clear preference for Republican Donald Trump and took steps designed to get him elected, including a sophisticated hack-and-leak operation of Democratic emails before he was elected eight years ago.

A recent intelligence community report assessed that, in the 2022 midterm election, Russia tried to denigrate the Democratic Party, with a goal of weakening U.S. support for Ukraine, and undermine confidence in the elections.

The report said China sought to influence a handful of races featuring candidates from both major political parties, focusing on those with anti-China views and covertly denigrating a U.S. senator. And it said that Iran conducted covert operations aimed at exploiting perceived social divisions.

into the circumstances of the shooting.

Miller's statement came in the wake of media reports claiming that Border Security Forces (BSF) killed two Bangladeshi men in Panchagarh's Tetulia upazila on May 8.

Asked about reports that two Bangladeshi citizens were shot by Indian security forces at the Bangladesh-India border, Miller said, "So, we are aware of the reports about this incident. We understand the Indian and Bangladeshi border security

agencies are in communication with one another, and I would defer to them to speak to their respective investigations into the circumstances of the shooting."

BSF North Bengal Frontier's spokesperson said that the incident happened on the intervening night of May 7-8. According to the spokesperson, 8-10 cattle smugglers from Bangladesh attempted to cross the international border by cutting the fence with the intention of smuggling cattle. They entered 500 metres inside Indian territory. Meanwhile, a patrolling party of BSF saw them and they challenged them and initially lobbed non-lethal

BSF spotted them and challenged them.

The spokesperson told ANI, "The incident happened on the intervening night of May 7-8 around 23:30 hours. There were 8-10 cattle smugglers from Bangladesh who tried to cross the international border by cutting the fence with the intention of smuggling cattle. They entered 500 metres inside Indian territory. Meanwhile, a patrolling party of BSF saw them and they challenged them and initially lobbed non-lethal

PUTIN COMMENCES HIS FIFTH TERM AS THE RUSSIAN PRESIDENT, BACKS INDIA, SLAMS THE US

This week belongs to Putin! From commencing his fifth term as the Russian President to criticizing Western countries for always being aggressive towards Russia to calling them for a dialogue to reiterating his commitment for not giving up in Russia-Ukraine war to backing India and criticising the US over Pannu killing; Putin made most of the global headlines this week.

Since succeeding Boris Yeltsin as the acting President of Russia in 1999 and then becoming President in 2000, Vladimir Putin has commenced his fifth term as the Russian President this week. With almost twenty-five years of service to Russia, he holds the record for being the longest-serving Kremlin

leader since Josef Stalin. Furthermore, Putin's new term is set to continue until 2030 when he becomes eligible to run for re-election according to the constitutional provisions of Russia. While Putin took the oath fifth time, Russia's military began organizing tactical nuclear weapons exercises as well. This highlights the significant transformation that has occurred in Russia since Putin first became president 24 years ago. In his inauguration speech, Putin criticized Western countries openly for their 'policy of aggression' towards Russia and indicated a willingness to engage in dialogue if there were changes in the approach of Western countries. He stated, "Dialogue, including on security and strategic



stability, is possible, but not from a position of strength. Without any arrogance, swagger, and exclusivity claims, but only on equal terms and with due respect for each other's interests." Though this was not a surprise for the US or for that matter the 'Western bloc', the western countries are now speculating the outcomes of antagonised Russia under the leadership of Putin. Though he gets criticised for attacking Ukraine, I try to see the other side of the coin. Russia-Ukraine war is not a conflict between

Russia and Ukraine. This war is actually happening between Russia and NATO led by the US. Putin attacked Ukraine with the insistence that Ukraine should not become a member of NATO for the obvious reasons. How could Putin allow NATO, or for that matter, the US knocking Russia's doors? He was also not happy with the rapid 'NATO'fication of countries in his region. But despite continuous warnings from Putin, Zelenskyy did not pay any attention and became a scapegoat. The US has

played a decisive role in motivating Ukraine to go to this war, and continuing the war. In the early stages of war, Zelenskyy himself several times that he felt that he had been made a pawn of NATO countries. Meanwhile, the US not only strengthened the Western camp's military alliance, 'NATO' with this one move, but also made a lot of profit by being the largest trader of the arms market in the world. Due to this war, small countries around Ukraine not only ran to become members of NATO in fear, they also spent a large part of their overall budget in their military budget to buy weapons from US. In East Asia, for the first time since World War II, Japan indicated spending about

two percent of its GDP on its military capabilities. US not only succeeded in tarnishing Russia's image on the global stage, on the pretext of Russia, it also started an exercise to surround China in Asia.

Whatever Western countries or media may say today, the US also knows that not only is Russia capable of dragging this war for a long time, it is also capable of bringing the world, especially Europe on its feet because of its energy reserves. On the strength of this, Putin was not only able to cope with all the sanctions, he was also able to make unprecedented profits during the war by selling oil and gas at his arbitrary prices. Many nations of Europe are facing serious economic crisis due to this war while

Putin is still fighting the war to achieve far-reaching objectives. And despite losing some of the territories occupied by Ukraine to Ukraine, at least presently it cannot be said that Russia will give up.

While the others may have their own reasons to dislike Putin, India cannot forget his unconditional support. This week, Russia has stated that the US has not presented any credible proof of the involvement of India in the conspiracy to kill a Khalistani terrorist Pannu, while also accusing Washington of interfering in India's internal matters and ongoing elections. In November last year, American federal prosecutors accused an Indian national of collaborating with an Indian

government official in planning assassination of Pannu. Pannu is a wanted terrorist in India.

This is also true that the leaders like Putin consolidate power in their respective nations to remain the supreme authority, which impacts democracy. The world may criticise Putin for this and his other actions, but this is also true that he has been able to maintain balance of power in the global politics by exercising his strength against the Western lobby. This is critical for the nations like India who want to remain 'all-aligned' in contributing towards global good, while 'non-aligned' to any violence or conflict. Hope the power remains balanced in the world!

The author is Professor, School of International Studies, JNU

ALLU ARJUN CONGRATULATES CHIRANJEEVI FOR PADMA VIBHUSHAN AWARD



TDG NETWORK
MUMBAI

Actor Allu Arjun congratulated his uncle and megastar Chiranjeevi after being honoured with the second highest civilian honour, Padma Vibhushan, by the Government of India.

Taking to Instagram stories, Allu Arjun wrote, "My Heartfelt Congratulations to Chiranjeevi garu for be-

Konidela, also attended the esteemed event in Delhi.

Ram Charan posted some memorable snapshots on his official Instagram account, expressing his pride for his father with the caption, "Congratulations dad. So proud of you. #padmavibhushanchiranjeevi @chiranjeevikonidela (sic)." Union Home Minister Amit Shah also hosted a

Chiranjeevi on Thursday received the prestigious award from President Droupadi Murmu in the presence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah.

ing conferred with prestigious honor. #PadmaVibhushan. This is a moment of immense pride for all of us. Thank you for making us proud." Chiranjeevi on Thursday received the prestigious award from President Droupadi Murmu in the presence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah. The ceremony took place at Rashtrapati Bhavan in the national capital.

Ram Charan, Chiranjeevi's wife, Surekha, daughter Sushmita, and daughter-in-law, Upasana Kamineni

dinner for all the Padma awardees at his residence. Chiranjeevi and his family attended the dinner.

Chiranjeevi is among the most influential and successful actors and worked in Telugu, Hindi, Tamil and Kannada films. He is known for his movies such as 'Vijetha', 'Indra', 'Shankar Dada M.B.B.S.', and most recently he was seen in 'Bholaa Shankar'. He made his debut in 1978 with the film Punadhiralu and since then he has been entertaining audience with his versatile acting skills.

ANGELINA JOLIE ACCUSED OF STEERING KIDS AWAY FROM BRAD PITT



TDG NETWORK
WASHINGTON

In the ongoing legal saga between Angelina Jolie and Brad Pitt, new allegations have emerged that the former may have influenced her children to "avoid" spending time with their father during visits.

These claims were detailed in court documents filed by Tony Webb, a security guard who previously worked for the former couple, as per People magazine.

Webb, who worked for Jolie from 2000 to 2020, alleged that he was contacted by a Jolie aide named Michael Vieira, who attempted to prevent two bodyguards from testifying in Jolie's custody battle with Pitt.

According to Webb's state-

time with Pitt during custody visits, as per People magazine.

Responding to these allegations, Paul Murphy, an attorney for Angelina Jolie, dismissed Pitt's attempts to equate common NDAs with an attempt to cover up his actions.

Murphy emphasised that the case was about power and control, with Jolie seeking separation and health for the family.

In their defence, Pitt's lawyers submitted Webb's declaration to illustrate that Jolie herself had utilised NDAs in the past, undermining her objections to signing them in the context of their legal dispute over their French winery, Chateau Miraval.

The legal battle between Jolie and Pitt has been marked

These claims were detailed in court documents filed by Tony Webb, a security guard who previously worked for the former couple, as per People magazine.

ment, Vieira asked him to dissuade the bodyguards from testifying, emphasising that they had signed non-disclosure agreements (NDAs) with Jolie.

Despite the NDAs, one of the bodyguards, Ross Foster, expressed his intention to testify about statements he allegedly overheard from Jolie, encouraging the children to avoid spending

by accusations and counter-accusations, with each party attempting to sway the court in their favour.

Pitt's lawyers accused Jolie of turning the business dispute into a sideshow about family court matters, while Jolie's lawyers suggested that Pitt feared the release of sealed documents related to their custody battle.

PICTURE PERFECT

Bollywood actors Shreyas Talpade, Madhoo, Aksha Pardasany, along with director Soham P Shah pose for a photo during the promotion of their upcoming movie 'Kartam Bhugtam' in Mumbai on Thursday. (ANI Photo)



'I TRY NOT TO REPEAT THE CHARACTERS I PLAY,' SAYS 'NADIKAR' STAR TOVINO THOMAS

LATHA SRINIVASAN
CHENNAI

Tovino Thomas, star of Nadikar, recently appeared on the IMDb original series "Burning Questions" to talk about the movie, amongst other things. The movie, directed by Jean Paul Lal, follows the life of superstar David Padikkal.

When asked about a performance of his that he feels is underrated, Thomas revealed, "Mayaanadhi as a film, I felt people, especially people living outside, had limited opportunities to watch. If more people had watched it, I think it was a film they would have loved."

Responding on the one piece of advice from a fellow actor that has stuck with him, Thomas replied, "During my first few films, maybe because I worked with



a bunch of really good and sensible people. Even though there is a lot of hard work, if you really love the job, you should put in your maximum even though there is struggle and we should aim to do it to perfection. Doing it and trying to do it are two different things. When you try to do something that you desire and you do it with perfection, even if you struggle,

there is no fault in it. You will get the results if not today then tomorrow. I received this motto from the people I worked with during my first few films. During those films, the director, the technicians, and the actors who were with me, all of their inputs and feedback I received benefitted me."

Thomas also talked about a genre, story, or collaboration

he's eager to pursue.

"One thing I always make sure is that the films I do should be different. I try my best not to repeat characters. Only then I feel people will be able to enjoy my performance. There should be some unpredictability. In my career, I feel there are several genres and subgenres that I have to explore. I think now, we have that space to do all of that. Earlier there were films we couldn't even think of trying, which we now have the space to do," he said.

When asked what he watched to prepare for this role, Thomas mentioned, "In Malayalam cinema, Udayananu Tharam while in Tamil cinema, Iruvar. Otherwise, there's this movie that I really like called Tropical Thunder starring Ben Stiller.

Rashmika Mandanna on board Salman Khan's 'Sikandar'

LATHA SRINIVASAN
CHENNAI

The latest news from Bollywood about Salman Khan's new film is that Animal actress Rashmika Mandanna has been signed on for the project. Sikandar is being directed by Tamil film director AR Murugadoss who delivers numerous hits earlier, including the film Ghajini that starred Aamir Khan. This is the first time that all three are working together.

The Bhai of Bollywood has already started shooting for this film and pictures leaked from the sets went viral on Thursday. Sikander is set to release for Eid 2025. Salman Khan announced the film's title on Instagram on April 11 and shared its poster with the caption, "Iss Eid 'Bade Miyan Chote Miyan' aur 'Maidaan' ko dekho aur agli Eid Sikandar se aa kar Milo (Watch Bade Miyan Chote Miyan and Maidaan



on this Eid, next Eid, meet Sikandar) Wish u all Eid Mubarak!"

Sikandar also marks the reunion of Salman and Sajid Nadiadwala after the success of Kick in 2014. Pre-production began a few months

back and the film is now on floors in Mumbai, followed by a few international shooting schedules. Sikandar will be a special film for Salman Khan because he turns 60 in 2025. The Bollywood star has had some of his biggest

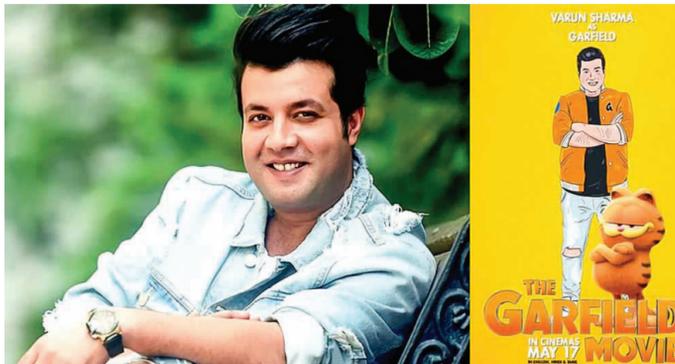
releases during his milestone years namely, Karan Arjun at 30, No Entry (at 40 and Bajrangji Bhaijaan at 50. Sikander could also turn out to be big blockbuster turning his 60th birthday a memorable one.

VARUN SHARMA GATHERS HIS FRIENDS TO PARTY THE GARFIELD WAY!

LATHA SRINIVASAN
CHENNAI

The anticipation for the next adventure of the coolest cat in town, Garfield, in The Garfield Movie, is increasing each day. Promising to be the summer's ultimate fun adventure for both parents and kids, the makers of this family entertainer have released a first of its kind innovative idea that will get you grooving with your friends.

The makers have created a special song that features Varun Sharma, who is set to voice the Hindi version of the film alongside his young friends! For the first time, more than 10 young influ-



encers have come together to party like Garfield.

This time around Garfield, the world-famous, Monday-hating, lasagna-loving in-

door cat, is about to have a wild outdoor adventure! After an unexpected reunion with his long-lost father - scruffy street cat Vic - Gar-

field and his canine friend Odie are forced from their perfectly pampered life into joining Vic in a hilarious, high-stakes heist.

BRAIN PICKING

“The more successful you become, the more known you become, everything you say is minutely scrutinised a lot.”



—KRITI SANON
(Indian Actress)

'I TRY TO HIGHLIGHT COUNTRY'S HERITAGE, DIVERSITY...': SONAM KAPOOR

TDG NETWORK
MUMBAI

Fashionista Sonam Kapoor never misses a chance to dish out fashion goals with her appearances in public and always makes sure that her presence is felt whether in India or globally.

Sonam has always proudly showcased the Indian craftsmanship globally.

On showcasing India's beautiful heritage, history, and diversity on top global platforms, Sonam said in a statement, "If I had to represent India in one way or another, I would highlight the country's diversity and resilience. The fact that we have such a strong cultural heritage and ancient civilisation means that whatever is made in India has great value. It is a multicultural place where people from many faiths live together in harmony, and representing that is of utmost importance."

She added, "Besides being the land of yoga and spiritualism, for which India is renowned in other parts of the world, it is also celebrated for its music and artisanal craftsmanship. It is the realm of jewellery and embroidery. Most notably, numerous haute couture and luxury houses have their clothing intricately embroidered in India."

Sonam through her fashion and style always tries to



impact pop culture. And she often inspires her fans by using her social media handle to champion Indian craftsmanship.

On this, she stated, "When you have a platform, there is a responsibility to put your most authentic self forward, you must represent your truest self and not a facade. When you have the right moral values and world views, it is interesting to see how people appreciate that and attach themselves to it."

Recently, Sonam Kapoor expressed her gratitude after global art museum Tate Modern inducted her as a member of their South Asia Acquisition Committee.

In a statement shared by the actress' team, Sonam said, "I'm deeply honoured to join the prestigious Tate Modern as a member of their South Asia Acquisition Committee.

POOJA BHATT JOINS SUNIEL SHETTY IN LIONSGATE'S ACTION THRILLER



TDG NETWORK
MUMBAI

Pooja Bhatt is all set to reunite with Suniel Shetty in Lionsgate's upcoming action thriller. On Friday, she gave a sneak peek to her fans.

Taking to Instagram, Pooja shared a still from the sets along with a caption, that read, "A sneak peek from my next project with Lions Gate India. So looking forward to working with you again Suniel Shetty." The picture shows Pooja wearing a black saree, standing in front of a camera. Pooja Bhatt and Suniel Shetty starred in JP Dutta's film Border in 1997.

As soon as the post was shared, fans and industry members chimed in the comment section. Suniel Shetty wrote, "You're looking good Pooja...and yes the pleasure is all mine. Looking forward."

One of the users com-

mented, "Wow this is so exciting. As per a source close to the film's team, Pooja Bhatt's 'Iron Lady' character in Lionsgate's explosive new action thriller.

On her upcoming project with Lionsgate, Pooja Bhatt said, "I have always had the privilege and made the choice to portray empowered women on screen. I was immediately drawn to this character for the sheer power, depth & empathy she exudes. Her ability to take a stand for what she believes in and face challenges head-on is something I connect with on a personal level. Can't wait for audiences to see this new avatar."

Recently, Suniel Shetty announced that he's gearing up for his next role in the action thriller. He shared the look from his next untitled project and mentioned, "Can't wait to get back into 'Action'"

AN ODE TO ALL MOTHERHOOD

PAMARTY VENKATARAMANA

Mother, the most sacred being of this planet. As a word, it is also the most endearing one in the dictionary of mankind.

To be a mother is a blessing: not many men seem to realise the depth of love and compassion involved in the process of becoming a mother and more importantly, in being the mother for all times to come.

Reams of paper throughout the evolution of civilisation have been devoted to the praise of mother and motherhood but little has been said on the huge fact that Godhead is attained only if one sees the divine aspects of motherhood.

As one who has dealt with unique as well as unfortunate court cases of mothers being deprived of their

due respect and rewards not only by the spouse and parents but even by progeny, I advocate the need for all adolescent students in schools in particular to be given a conducted tour of maternity wards and childbirth surgeries.

REASON ?

The pangs as well as labour pains which all men escape from can be observed, felt and aid in redesigning a more humane and less beastly society. The incidence of molestations and murders will drastically come down.

Mothers are stoic in their silent sufferings and loud in their cry of mercy, love, kindness and compassionate care of all who take shelter under their wings. It requires tenacity of purpose, inhuman sacrifices and a great deal of both tolerance as well

as patience to don the role of being the mother, a beacon of hope, lighthouse for an entire family. She is an amalgam of a whole gamut of emotions often surpassing even divinity.

An ode to the mother would but be incomplete without mentioning the lengths and extent to which a mother would go to protect life, liberty and honour of her flock.

Many clap in amazement at a mother hen or a duck or the monkey king and a pride of lions marching past in a line but how many of us in today's world of deepfake, artificial intel-

ligence and virtual reality world actually ponder or salute the magical presence of the Mother in life's journey. I for one was always pampered by my beloved Mother and raised to be a gentleman in

a world where perception and reality grossly mismatch. Those who know you would know your mother's temperament says an old Sanskrit saying. If each one of us live to upkeep the prestige

and good upbringing by the Mother, there would be a harmonious environment conducive to peaceful co-existence which is the avowed goal of every religion and constitution worth its name in the world.

Mothers are the most precious and priceless treasure of mankind. Manhood is not to be gauged by abs and tricks but by the way he treats a woman, be it his wife, daughter, companion, stranger or anybody's mother. This message ought to go out to every school going child and only then can the child be the mother of a better world.

To all mothers and motherhood, I bow in reverence and gratitude. Mankind can become Humanity only if tempered with Divinity, which is amply reflected in a Mother.



“
Reams
of paper throughout
the evolution of civilisation
have been devoted to the praise
of mother and motherhood but little has
been said on the huge fact that Godhead
is attained only if one sees the divine
aspects of motherhood.”

TOUCHING TRIBUTES ■ Inspiring Mother's Day Quotes to celebrate the heart of every home

Mother's Day is a day to celebrate the unique bond between mothers and their children, and to show them how much they are cherished and valued. Whether it's a simple gesture of affection or a grand celebration, it is an opportunity to express love and appreciation for the incredible women who shape our lives.



DR REEMA NADIG

Momprenuers exemplify the art of balance, juggling the demands of entrepreneurship with the commitments of motherhood. It's about prioritizing, delegating, and most importantly, embracing the flexibility that comes

with running your own business. Today, we celebrate the mompreneurs who blend professionalism with parenting, showing us that success is not about doing it all, but doing what's important well. They are the proof that with the right support and mindset, work-life balance is not just possible, but sustainable.

Co-Founder and COO, KITES Senior Care



NAMRATA KOHLI

There is no point if you love her but don't respect her... or you respect her but don't empower her," loved this line from the fiery feminist I interviewed recently Javed Saab @jaduakhtar at @tarcindia Tripundra event

on 21st September evening... "Love, Respect, Empowerment - all are needed if you really care about a Women... patriarchy makes her Superhuman... just treat her as human." Powerful lines.. the more I think, the more I agree with this Day to you MOM and to every mom who goes above and beyond her capacity to nurture her family.

Journalist



RUCHITA BANSAL

Ruchita Bansal shares a heartfelt message to all mothers on the occasion of International Mother's Day. "I believe every mother is a protective shield to her children, caring for nothing more than her kids in the world. She is

an epitome of love, a foundation stone of the family, an ever-supportive friend, and a never-fading superstar! Her dedication deserves a lifetime of celebrations! Let's cherish their love and everything they've given to us! Wishing every mom a very Happy Mother's Day!

Founder and creative Director of Izzhaar



APEKSHA NIRANJAN

As a Bharatnatyam dancer, I've mastered the art of storytelling through movement.

On this Mother's Day the story I want to talk about is Motherhood. Mothers are artists creating their unique masterpiece that is their child.

Just like a dance, Motherhood requires balance, fluidity, and adaptability to navigate its ever-changing choreography. A Mother's selflessness, endurance, and boundless love are etched in her child's heart.

Let's honor these tales, and celebrate the silent strength of mothers everywhere.

Bharatnatyam Artist

5 HEARTFELT ACTIVITIES TO CELEBRATE MOTHER'S DAY TOGETHER



Mother's Day is a fantastic time to celebrate the unique bond between mothers and their children. It's an opportunity to craft cherished memories and strengthen the connection that lasts a lifetime.

What better way to honor this special relationship than by spending quality time together? From cooking up delicious meals to embarking on creative adventures, here are five delightful activities to make this Mother's Day memorable for both of you.

ENGAGE IN A CREATIVE WORKSHOP:

Get creative together by joining a fun workshop with your mom. Try out activities like painting, pottery, or coffee making - whatever catches your interest. You can either go to a nearby art class or create your workshop at home. Let your imagination flow freely and have a good time exploring your creative side. It's all about having fun and bonding while discovering new talents together.

COOK AND BOND TOGETHER:

Bond with your mom this Mother's Day by steaming up a batch of nutritious Moong Dal and Vegetable Idli in the Serie 8 Bosch Steam Oven with Home Connect. Together, blend lentils, rice, and fresh veggies, filling the kitchen with aromas of togetherness. The oven's 4D air technology and Home Connect app ensure even steaming and precise temperature control, locking in flavors and nutrients. You can even monitor and adjust the settings remotely from your smartphone.

Serve the light, protein and fiber-rich idlis hot with a zesty coconut-mint chutney. Savor the deliciousness as you share stories and laughter, celebrating your nurturing bond. The connected steam oven creates a space for cherished moments, making this Mother's Day truly special.

HOP ON A MOVIE MARATHON:

Snuggle up on the couch with some popcorn and indulge in a movie mara-

thon featuring your favorite films or TV shows. Whether you're into classic rom-com, thrillers, or heartwarming dramas, choose a selection of movies that you both love and enjoy a cozy day of binge-watching together.

BE FIT TOGETHER:

Nurture your mind, body, and spirit with a relaxing yoga session. Roll out your mats, find a peaceful spot in your home or garden, and practice yoga together. Yoga not only promotes physical health but also fosters emotional well-being and mindfulness. Connect on a deeper level as you breathe, stretch, and flow through the practice.

DIY SPA DAY:

Treat your mom to a relaxing spa day at home. Create a serene atmosphere with scented candles, soothing music, and fluffy robes.

Pamper her with homemade face masks, foot baths, and massages. It's a wonderful way to help her unwind and feel appreciated.

POEM



MANISHA GAWADE

MY LITTLE FAIRY GIRL

*I saw you as the tiniest thing I have ever known,
yet those sparkling eyes still touch my soul.*

*Your feet as if a fairy's pride,
your smile fills me in so bright.*

*The thought that you are mine,
surely seems like the plan divine.*

*I wonder and I gaze,
as your little hands touch me
with a warm embrace.*

*I was always left in awe,
of your rapid growth that I saw.*

*This was all looking back in time,
but now I see a young lady
who simply loves to mime,
and she sings a song,
as if cheering on the time.*

*As the clock starts to tick,
I see your rainbow feathers,
shimmering in so quick.
And it's only a matter of time,
before your charming prince
comes in to dine.*

SIGNS THAT YOUR MOTHER-IN-LAW IS ADJUSTING TO MAKE YOU COMFORTABLE AFTER MARRIAGE

JEEVIKA SHARMA

is adjusting and making her daughter-in-law feel at home.

1. The mother-in-law is welcoming. When your mother-in-law is making efforts to make your life comforting in the house.
2. If your mother-in-law is making slight changes in the house to suit your comfort and allows you to make any required changes.
3. If your mother-in-law is prioritising you over your partner then she is making your life after marriage comfortable.
4. If your mother-in-law does not burden you with all the household chores, then she is making you comfortable after marriage.
5. A mother-in-law is adjusting when she supports her daughter-in-law professionally and personally.
6. In most cases, the mother-in-law helps the daughter-in-law in cooking or teaches how to cook showing that the mother-in-law

7. A sign that your mother-in-law is adjusting is when she does not pass any taunts or criticize you. Mother-in-law should give time to the daughter-in-law to adjust and learn and should also help her be a better person.
8. If a mother-in-law tells her son to take a stand or to be good to his wife, this shows that your mother-in-law is caring adjusting.
9. A mother-in-law is adjusting and makes her daughter-in-law feel comfortable after marriage when she lets her daughter-in-law to make the household decisions or is fine with her participating in the decision-making
10. Your mother-in-law is comforting when she does not put unnecessary restrictions on you. If could be overdressing or going out with friends or husband or anything else.



HABITS OF A POWERFUL LIFE



MANDA PATEL

When I think of someone who could be said to have lived a powerful life, I think of only one person. I spent 40 years watching her, travelling with her, translating for her, and Dadi Janki (late Administrative Head of the Brahma Kumaris) was someone whose life was powerful in the way that it matters most – a life that gave positive inspiration to others. Her every act, every thought, had an impact on others, and she made sure that the impact was positive.

Her life began in an ordinary way, like the rest of

us, although her family was religious, her father kindly, and she was certainly spiritually inclined from a very young age. She was looking for truth and for God. Those of us who spent a lot of time with her, saw how she created the powerful life she lived, until the age of 104. She created it herself by the habits she adopted, in full recognition of the importance of those habits. She woke and rose early every day for the whole of her spiritual life, and no matter what had happened the day before, she was present in the early morning 4 o'clock meditation. She never wasted a moment of her time and yet, she had time for everyone. She was incredibly courageous because she had become fully aware of the truth. Truth for her, as a point of reference, was the Divine, God. Therefore, she knew that abiding by that truth would only have a positive, beneficial outcome. She was never afraid of failure, because for her such a concept did not



To make life that powerful is to create habits that make life full of meaning.

exist. Things that did not work out as may have been expected, were not failures but learning opportunities. Her diet was simple, nothing spicy or elaborate. She ate in silence, maintaining the awareness of the consciousness of being the soul within

the body she was alighting. It was not that she ignored her companions, but would indicate that it would be better to discuss something after the meal was over. Her life was not for herself, it was for others, but she loved her life. Her spiritual faith ran

so deep that nothing could change it. She was never fazed by anything because she had the ability to go beyond the confines of space and time. She could catch what 'is' and remain still and stable in a state of conviction of the present moment with

the understanding that what was to come was going to be right.

One of the most powerful lessons I have learnt from her is that I am the creator of myself. I create every aspect of my personality. Habits are completely under our con-

One of the most powerful lessons I have learnt from her is that I am the creator of myself. I create every aspect of my personality.

control. A powerful life is meaningful, consistent, generous, courageous, compassionate and kind. To make life that powerful is to create habits that make life full of meaning and allow me to place my hand on my heart at the end of the day and know that I did the best I could for myself and for everyone else. Dadi Janki would say that you create a habit when you recognise the value and importance of that habit. One of the most powerful habits is the habit of love. Love is not an emotion, or based on attraction or infatuation –

love is actually our state of being, intrinsic to the soul. The habit of love gives space and time to every individual and every situation, and this brings tolerance and patience.

The way to do this is to become aware of the self as a pure, spiritual, unconditional being. Waking early and spending time with the self, the real self, and connecting to the Supreme Being is a life-changing habit. It is then that we can gather energy and see our own beauty and truth. What made Dadi Janki so powerful was her relationship with God. A constant, unconditional presence of the love of and for God, was there for her all the time. This is what made her life powerful, and this is a habit we can create. We can make God our point of reference in all that we think, say, and do. There is nothing more powerful than that.

Manda Patel is a Rajyoga teacher based at the Brahma Kumaris Global Retreat Centre, Oxford, UK.

Loving detachment



ENRIQUE SIMO

There is a metaphor that beautifully encapsulates the essence of detachment. It is a tree, in autumn. The tree gracefully releases all the leaves and lets them fall to the ground. It holds an inner wisdom that for new things to blossom, old things, that no longer serve, must be let go. How many of us are so aligned with the laws of nature and the laws of spirituality? Am I watching the seasons of my life change and flow with the changes and new opportunities, or am I stuck – in old ideas, my way of seeing life, my entrenched position and old opinions? Our lives are like books and each day is a clean page for writing something new, thinking something new, doing something

differently.

Do we really understand deep down that nothing is permanent – everything changes? And, when it comes to love, do we love the other and give them freedom to grow or do we set limits, erect boundaries, demand that our needs be fulfilled? Do we interfere in their lives, giving unwanted and unasked for advice?

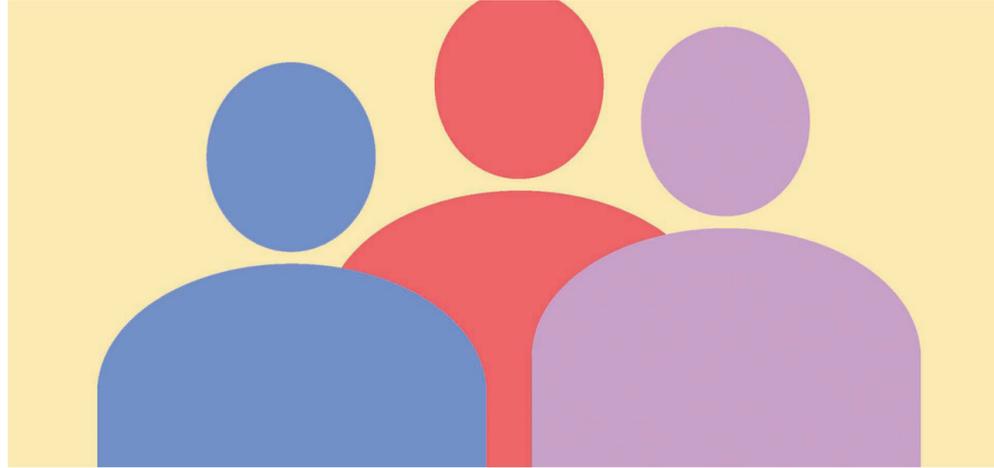
Real love is giving the other respect, appreciation, and above all, freedom. This requires a loving detachment, and it requires us to love this detachment, so that we can enjoy giving love and support to those around us, appreciate them, give them positive feedback, and cherish the fact that they are in our lives, for one reason or another.

There are five ways to loosen the ties of attachment.

Accept others as they are; do not try to change them. Allow them to be who they are and fulfil their potential.

Acknowledge what you are feeling and the feelings of others, without judgement.

Adapt and be flexible in how you communicate. Be open to changes in relationships and



To be detached and loving means accepting others as they are, giving them respect, appreciation, and freedom.

forget the past, your own and that of others.

Allow people to be themselves – give them space to grow.

Appreciate and express the appreciation – do not just think it, say it.

When we love in this way, it can encompass the whole of humanity and go beyond limitations, because this is spiritual love. This kind of love, combined with detachment, only comes through meditation and understanding, that each

one is my brother or my sister, we are in the world together, experiencing it together. To cultivate this attitude of being loving and yet at the same time being detached we can:

Stay present. Let go of past worries and concerns about the future, connect with now.

Accept change and not cling on to the false stability of laziness and fear.

Be kind to ourselves so that we can develop.

Be generous and serve others with an open heart – this

gives them a new vision of themselves.

Understand – first ourself and then others.

Be grateful – cultivate an attitude of gratitude, there is so much to be grateful for.

Become aware of our spiritual identity. I am not a body, I am a soul – a living, conscient energy. I am eternal and can never die. I take care of the body with gratitude, but detach from identifying with it.

Practise meditation and a connection with the Divine.

Connect with the Being who is never a human being. The Supreme Being is always there, and in silence, in meditation, absorb the light and power of that One. Being connected in this way brings a natural detachment from all things and all beings, but with the ability to bestow deep spiritual love on them all.

Enrique Simo is an executive coach and coordinates the activities of the Brahma Kumaris' Spanish headquarters in Madrid.



A THOUGHT FOR TODAY

Spiritual energy is unseen. It can only be perceived by a subtle intellect that can see beyond the surface veil to the invisible truth hidden behind. As my intellect refines and tunes into the subtle, it keeps me free from illusion. Today let me refine my intellect and discern subtle truths.

Humility brings many blessings



B.K. SHEILU

According to Christian mythology, it was pride that changed angels into devils. It is humility, then, that makes humans angelic. Humility has been exalted as the solid foundation of all virtues. It is said that if we wish to rise, we have to begin by descending; if we plan a tower that will touch the clouds, we must first lay the foundation of humility.

Humility brings manifold blessings. Those who are humble tend to be more approachable and open-minded, as they have no image or idea about

themselves to project or defend. This fosters better communication and collaboration in personal and professional relationships. Humility also enables us to acknowledge our limitations and be open to learning from others. Humble people have no inhibitions about seeking inputs from others and considering different perspectives before making decisions, so they are able to make more well-rounded and thoughtful choices.

Humility perhaps makes its greatest impact when it goes hand in hand with leadership. Humble leaders are more empathetic, supportive, and willing to admit mistakes, which helps to cultivate a positive work environment. At the workplace, having a humble boss rather than an arrogant one can make a world of difference to the state of mind of those working there, the vibrations of the place, and the group dy-



The quality of humility, reflected in our words and behaviour, naturally serves others.

Humility perhaps makes its greatest impact when it goes hand in hand with leadership. Humble leaders are more empathetic, supportive, and willing to admit mistakes, which helps to cultivate a positive work environment. At the workplace, having a humble boss rather than an arrogant one can make a world of difference to the state of mind of those working there, the vibrations of the place, and the group dynamics.

namics.

Humble leaders inspire trust and loyalty among team members, which fosters cohesion and cooperation, resulting in greater success in the team's collective efforts. Humility also promotes harmony by diminishing conflicts that may arise from egotistical

behaviour or a sense of superiority. Even in the event of a setback, humble individuals are more resilient as they are not consumed by ego-driven emotions like pride or defensiveness.

NATURE TOO TEACHES US THE VALUE OF HUMILITY

The more a tree is laden with fruit, the lower its branches are. The tree does not preen itself over its flowers and fruit – they are offered to others silently, selflessly, year after year.

Similarly, the quality of humility naturally serves others. Their words and behaviour, free from pride, do not hurt anyone's feelings, and they naturally respect others. This is why the company of a humble person is pleasant and soothing. Contrary to the fears of some that if they are too humble the world will walk all over them, humility earns us genuine love and respect. Humility does not mean thinking less of yourself, it is thinking of yourself less. There is regard for the concerns of others, which makes us helpful and generous. In return, we earn love, goodwill, and blessings. The humbler we are, the greater the regard others have for us.

But how do we become

humble? Only those who have genuine love for everyone can be truly humble. Without love, one can neither be compassionate nor humble. That kind of unselfish love can arise only from a spiritual outlook. When we recognise and accept the fact that we are souls, and begin to see others too as souls, our spiritual kin, then the critical attitude, prejudice, suspicion, and mistrust that arise from identifying the self with a race, country, religion, or ideology, begin to melt away. We begin to notice the good in others and the commonalities we share with them. We realise that we are all part of one family in which each individual is valuable in their own unique way. When this happens, we no longer have to make an effort to be humble; humility comes naturally.

B.K. Sheilu is a Rajyoga teacher at the Brahma Kumaris headquarters in Mount Abu, Rajasthan.

VIRAT KOHLI HAS GOT A PERFECT WEAPON AGAINST SPINNERS

MANOJ JOSHI
NEW DELHI

Virat Kohli used to play spinners very well but for some time now he has been struggling in front of spinners. Sometimes, left-arm spinners and sometimes leg spinners have troubled him a lot in the last two years. Even in this IPL, he was seen playing with great caution against spinners, but looking at his confident shots in front of the spinners in the last three matches, it seems that he has once again started looking better in front of the spinners.

The main reason is that he has started playing cut shots and slog sweeps against spinners very well. His confidence has returned after sending the ball across the boundary line with a slog sweep. He also played cut shots and slog sweeps against Gujarat



Titans' Noor Ahmed, left arm chinaman. His strategy of hitting lofted shots on Rashid Khan was effective. Although he has hit slog sweeps even before the IPL, these shots have started appearing in large numbers in the last few matches of the IPL. The risk in such shots is higher than that of normal shots. If Virat hits similar shots as per requirement in the T20 World Cup, it will help him

in increasing the run rate, especially in the middle overs against the spinners. The good thing about Virat is that he uses the slog sweep on the front foot as well as on the back foot. Because of this shot, he scores lot of runs on the on side. Last year, before the World Cup, the same Virat was continuously getting trapped in front of left-arm spinners and before that he was getting out in front of leg spinners in the same

manner, but the way he has scored runs with confidence in front of Noor and Rashid. Be it sixes on two consecutive balls on Sai Kishore or boundaries hit by slog sweep and flick shot on Livingstone, he has raised hopes with such shots. The need should be to reduce the degree of risk on such shots in the initial overs. In view of this, it is obvious that this time he will be seen scoring a lot of runs in the World Cup also. Now the issue is not just strike rate.

The need is to survive and score fast runs in the middle overs. Actually, the biggest quality of Virat Kohli is that he knows how to make his weakness his biggest strength.

In the first nine matches of IPL, his strike rate against the spinners was 123.58, but in the next three matches his strike rate reached 167.7. There is a need to take this form forward.

Gill, Sai Sudharsan propel GT to 231/3 against CSK

TDG NETWORK
AHMEDABAD

Shubman Gill and Sai Sudharsan's brutal-bashing and 210-run partnership powered Gujarat Titans (GT) to 231/3 against Chennai Super Kings (CSK) in a must-win clash of Indian Premier League (IPL) 2024 here at Narendra Modi Stadium on Friday. Ahmedabad witnessed the absolute carnage from captain Gill and Sudharsan, who slammed 103 and 104 respectively while stitching a 210-run partnership stand. For CSK, Tushar Deshpande was the only bowler who went back with two wickets. Put to bat first, Shubman Gill and Sai Sudharsan got off to a slow start however the duo shifted gears and slammed CSK bowlers for boundaries. The CSK captain Ruturaj Gaikwad then introduced



spin in the attack however the GT opener had a cracking answer to it as the Sudharsan slammed two big sixes off to Ravindra Jadeja. In the 10th over, the opener brought up a 100-run partnership stand-up. Gill also brought up his fifty with a maximum just like Sudharsan did and the duo smacked 6,4,6,6 in Simarjeet Singh's over.

The duo kept the carnage going while slamming the CSK bowlers all around the ground.

Slamming a boundary past square leg, Gill brought up his maiden century in this season and his fourth in the IPL, followed by a customary jump and roar celebration. Tushar Deshpande then

Ahmedabad witnessed the absolute carnage from captain Gill and Sudharsan, who slammed 103 and 104 respectively while stitching a 210-run partnership stand.

gave GT two blows as he removed Sudharsan for 103 and Gill for 104 in the 18th over. In the last over, GT only managed to gather just 12 runs to take their total to 231/3 in 20 overs. **Brief score:** Gujarat Titans 231/3 (Sai Sudharsan 103, Shubman Gill 104; Tushar Deshpande 2-33) vs Chennai Super Kings.

Gukesh storms back, Pragg moves to joint third; Carlsen takes lead

TDG NETWORK
WARSAW

World Championship challenger D Gukesh bounced back from a sedate start to defeat compatriot R Praggnanandhaa and Germany's Vincent Keymer before holding world No.1 Magnus Carlsen after round six of the Superbet rapid and blitz tournament here on Friday.

However, Praggnanandhaa produced a strong fifth round, defeating Holland's Anish Giri and he followed it with a win over Keymer in the sixth round.

Norway's Carlsen shares the lead with Wei Yi of China with eight points apiece while Praggnanandhaa and Shevchenko share the third spot on seven points each.

Nodirbek Abdusattorov of Uzbekistan, Gukesh and Arjun Erigaisi are joint fifth on 6 points, a full point ahead of local star Duda Jan-Krzysztof.

With four points, Keymer is in ninth spot in the



\$175000 prize money tournament, a point clear of Giri.

However, the dream run of Romanian Kirill Shevchenko was ended by Erigaisi, who scored his first victory in the event.

Starting with losses in the first two rounds followed by a lone draw, Gukesh showed pluck to prevail over Praggnanandhaa in the fourth round in 41 moves.

The middle game arising out of a double fianchetto by white did not offer much scope for Gukesh and his position worsened as Praggnanandhaa launched a King side attack by advancing his pawns.

Athletes will get sports-specific help from support staff: IOA chief Usha

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

IOA president PT Usha on Friday assured Olympic-bound athletes of best possible assistance in Paris, saying sports-specific support staff would be housed closer to the Games Village in order to be able to provide help without wastage of time.

Usha, who returned to India after finalising the arrangements of Indian athletes and support staff in Paris, said the IOA had also ensured that shooters and golfers stay closer to their respective event venues.

The Chateauroux Shooting Centre is about two hours outside Paris, while the Le Golf National is an hour's drive from the Olympic hub.

"We have been able to secure accommodation for a number of sports-specific support staff a short distance away from the Athletes' Village. We want to



The Chateauroux Shooting Centre is about two hours outside Paris, while the Le Golf National is an hour's drive from the Olympic hub.

ensure no athletes are devoid of their support system and hence we have booked apartments in the vicinity,"

said Usha in a statement. "We have ensured that our shooters and golfers stay close to their respective

venues," she added.

Elaborating on the need for a robust support system, Usha said Indian athletes have evolved tremendously over the years and they needed a good support system for achieving peak performance.

"As an athlete and coach myself, I have seen the evolution of the support system for our athletes. They have become very professional in the approach to training and competition. I believe it is our duty to ensure that (they) have similar, if not better, support during the Olympic Games. It is for this reason that we will have apartments for the support staff," she said.

She also said that the support team would be under the control of Dr Dinshaw Pardiwala, a leading sports medicine and orthopaedic expert in the country.

The IOA delegation had also visited the International Olympic Committee headquarters in Lausanne.

ATP Challenger Tour: Andy Murray to make comeback in Bordeaux

TDG NETWORK
PARIS

The former World No. 1 Andy Murray will compete in next week's ATP Challenger Tour in Bordeaux while making a return from the ankle injury before playing at the Geneva Open.

Murray is also expected to play in the Geneva Open after he received a wild card.

"I will see an ankle specialist when I return home to determine the next steps. Goes without saying this is a tough one to take and I'll be out for an extended period. But I'll be back with one hip and no ankle ligaments when the time is right," Murray said as quoted by Sky Sports.

Although Murray chose not to have surgery, there were concerns that the former world number one would not be able to enjoy his Wimbledon match.

On the other hand, Murray's wild card for the ATP clay-court competition in



Geneva starting on May 18 was revealed on Wednesday, suggesting that he intends to compete in the French Open the following week.

Murray hasn't performed at Roland Garros since 2020, the only time he's been there since his hip issues started three years earlier.

The former No.1 indicated that he would most likely not play beyond this summer with the two-time Olympic gold medalist dreaming of competing at the Paris 2024 Olympics before retiring from tennis.

"I'm likely not going to play past this summer.

Defending champion Rybakina pulls out of Italian Open

TDG NETWORK
ROME

Defending champion Elena Rybakina on Friday withdrew from the Italian Open due to illness ahead of her first-round match.

The No.4 seeded player Rybakina was scheduled to face Irina-Camelia Begu at the Center Court on Friday.

"I am disappointed to have to withdraw from Rome this year, but unfortunately I do not feel well enough to com-



pete. I have such good memories from last year and was looking forward to defending my title," Rybakina said in a

statement as quoted by ATP. "Rome is so special to me, and I look forward to being back next year to reclaim

my title and play in front of the Italian fans," she further added.

Rybakina will be replaced by France's Oceane Dodin, the tournament said in a post on X. "We wish our 2023 champion a speedy recovery," they added.

This is the second time, Rybakina withdrew from an event as the defending champion. In March, she pulled out of the Indian Wells, also citing a gastrointestinal illness.

Leverkusen draw with Roma to reach Europa League final

TDG NETWORK
LEVERKUSEN (GERMANY)

Bayer Leverkusen are through to the Europa League final 4-2 on aggregate after a stoppage-time goal from Josip Stanisic snatched a 2-2 draw at home on Thursday, extending their unbeaten run to a record 49 games. In a rematch of last season's Europa League semi-final, Roma came to Leverkusen 2-0 down after the first leg but levelled the tie up despite having little possession thanks to penalties in each half from Leandro Paredes. With the tie heading for extra time, Alex Grimaldo curled in a corner which goalie Mile Svilar failed to catch, the ball going into the net after bouncing off Roma defender Gianluca Mancini.

Stanisic then kept Leverkusen's stunning record of late goals alive by scoring on the counter in the seventh minute of added time, breaking Benfica's European unbeaten record dating back to 1965.

"We had chances to score goals early and didn't -- but hey we will in Dublin," Leverkusen boss Alonso told RTL.



"It was a special evening. There were tense moments but it showed the personality and the mentality of the team."

"We didn't know ourselves how we were 2-0 behind," Leverkusen midfielder Granit Xhaka said.

"To come back against a team like this is unbelievable -- our desire is incredible. We're in the final, we're on our way to making our dream a reality and will do everything to bring the trophy back to Leverkusen."

Bundesliga champions Leverkusen will meet Atalanta, who beat Marseille 3-0 (4-1 on aggregate), in the final in Dublin on May 22 with hopes of a remarkable treble still alive.

Alonso again mixed things up tactically and made six changes including

surprisingly leaving star attackers Florian Wirtz, Victor Boniface and former Roma striker Patrik Schick on the bench, instead leading the line with Adam Hlozek.

The changes did not impact Leverkusen's rhythm as the hosts exploded onto the pitch, carving Roma up with creative, fluid movement.

Roma by contrast brought the fight and tried to unsettle the Bundesliga champions, picking up four yellow cards inside the opening 30 minutes.

Exequiel Palacios was the target for much of Roma's roughhousing but the Argentinian World Cup winner almost had revenge after 29 minutes when his low shot hit the inside of the post and came close to

bouncing in off goalkeeper Svilar's back.

Svilar produced a spectacular double save to keep out shots from Amine Adli and Hlozek on the 38-minute mark.

Roma sent a long ball up the other end and within moments the referee pointed to the spot, after Roma's Bayer Leverkusen-loanee Sarder Azmoun went down in a tussle with Jonathan Tah.

Palacios' Argentinian teammate Paredes sent the ball down the middle and Roma were 1-0 up and back into the tie just before half-time. The second half began like the first, with Leverkusen unable to make their dominance count on the scoreboard -- before Roma won another spot-kick, this time via VAR for a handball against Hlozek.

Paredes scored again, sending the ball left to take a two-goal lead in the match and level the tie.

Roma held on for dear life and went to ground frequently to hold onto the lead, reminiscent of their performance at the same venue in last year's semi-final which netted a 0-0 draw and a spot in the final.

Malaysian footballer in acid attack 'responding well' to surgery

TDG NETWORK
KUALA LUMPUR

A top Malaysian footballer is "responding well" after undergoing a three-hour skin allograft surgery, a sports official said Friday, following an acid attack that left the player in intensive care and shocked the country.

The attack on Selangor FC and Malaysia winger Faisal Halim last week at a shopping mall outside capital Kuala Lumpur has marred the planned kick-off this weekend of the country's football



season after a series of violent incidents involving players. Faisal was left with fourth-degree burns that impeded his movement and speech,

just days after his Malaysia teammate Akhyar Rashid was injured in a robbery outside his home in the eastern state of Terengganu. But

Faisal was "responding well to the procedure" that transplants skin tissue sourced from another human, Shahril Mokhtar, deputy president of the Selangor football association, told AFP.

"Faisal had a three-hour skin allograft surgery in various burnt areas of his body last night," Shahril said after meeting Faisal on Friday morning. "But the next few days will be critical days because doctors have to monitor the reaction of the reconstructive surgery."

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