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AP-born Gopi 1st Indian to go to space as tourist

Andhra-born Gopi Thotakura made history on Sunday as he became the first Indian citizen to enter space as a tourist. He was part of the crew for Blue Origin's NS-25 mission, reports Surendra Singh. Gopi, an entrepreneur & a pilot, flew to space with Ed Dwight (90), now the oldest man to go to space, and four others. **P 14**



BJP running Operation Jhaadu to jail all AAP netas: Kejriwal

Delhi CM Leads Protest Against Aide's Arrest

Abhinav Rajput @timesgroup.com

New Delhi: Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal on Sunday alleged that BJP was running 'Operation Jhaadu', aiming to arrest all top functionaries of his party to eliminate AAP, as it saw them as a challenge.

Kejriwal made the statement during his address to party workers before leading a protest march to BJP headquarters following the arrest of his aide, Bibhav Kumar, in the Swati Maliwal assault case.

Rajya Sabha MP Raghav Chadha, who had been missing in action for months due to an eye surgery that even led to speculation over his affiliation with the party, was also present. Addressing party



Kejriwal and AAP functionaries marched towards BJP HQ and sat on the road as police barricades prevented them from approaching the office.

workers, he said PM Modi could get all functionaries arrested in one go instead of taking them one by one. He told the cadre to be prepared to face bigger challenges ahead.

"The top leaders of our party, all ministers, MLAs, MPs, councillors and office-bearers are present here. Why did we have to gather here today? Because the PM has made up his mind to completely destroy

► 'Let probe continue', P 7

Delhi Cops ready 50 questions for Kumar

Delhi Police is learnt to have questioned members of the security team stationed at Kejriwal's residence. A special team has been assembled by police to interrogate the CM's personal assistant, Bibhav Kumar, who is currently in custody. A questionnaire consisting of approximately 50 questions has been prepared for him. **P 7**

'AAP protesting to save accused'

As AAP functionaries marched to BJP's headquarters, Swati Maliwal accused her party of taking to the streets to "save the accused". Congress functionary Sandeep Dikshit said only a probe would reveal what exactly happened between Maliwal & Kumar. **P 7**

Centre raps K'taka, says notification on wildlife articles is 'bad in law'

Sandeep Moudgal @timesgroup.com

Bengaluru: The Centre has pulled up the Karnataka govt for issuing a notification seeking return or surrender of wildlife articles by people of the state under amended Wildlife (Protection) Act of 1972, calling the state's decision "bad in law" and directing the state to roll it back immediately.

On Jan 10, Karnataka had issued a notification after passing an amendment to the Wildlife (protection) Act of 1972, which said "illegal" wildlife artifacts must be surrendered within 30 days of the notification. The law took shape after a participant in a Kannada TV reality show was arrested for sporting tiger claws in late 2023.

Within days, the Centre wrote an official note to the state asking them to "withdraw" the notification immediately. The letter, issued by

ACTION POST POLLS

► Centre slams Karnataka's notification on wildlife articles, asks the state govt to roll it back immediately

► The Jan 10 notification sought return or surrender of wildlife articles by people

► State can chalk out its stand only after MCC ends in June 1st week after LS results

► It has to also decide on articles already surrendered

Rakesh Kumar Jagenia, deputy inspector general of forests (wildlife) on Jan 24, had quoted the Karnataka govt's Jan 10 order and said: "The notification is bad in law."

The Centre's order has come to light only now and the state govt can chalk out its stand only after the model code of conduct ends in the first week of June after LS results are announced.

► State's amendment, P 4

Iran prez Raisi, foreign minister 'at risk' after helicopter crash

A helicopter carrying Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi and his foreign minister crashed on Sunday as it was crossing mountain terrain in heavy fog, an Iranian official said.

The official said lives of Raisi and foreign minister Hossein Amirabdollahian were "at risk following the

► Khamenei protege, headline prez, sanctioned by US, P 14

► helicopter crash". "We are still hopeful but information coming from the crash site is very concerning," said the official. Turkey is sending 32 rescue specialists to help Iran. On X, PM Modi said, "Deeply concerned by reports regarding President Raisi's helicopter flight today. We stand in solidarity with the Iranian people in this hour of distress, and pray for well being of the President and his entourage." **P 14**

179 AI Exp flyers stranded for 13 hours in B'luru

An engine of an Air India Express plane flying from Pune to Kochi caught fire 10 minutes after it took off from Bengaluru following a scheduled stopover late Saturday evening, forcing a return and emergency evacuation of its 179 fliers, who were then stranded in the city for nearly 13 hours.

The flight, IX-1132, had six crew members, report Joy Sengupta & Nithya Mandyam. A spokesperson for Bangalore International Airport Ltd said "a full-scale emergency was declared and the fire promptly extinguished upon landing". "We took off (from Bengaluru) at 10.50pm. Around 11pm, we noticed fire in the engine from the windows. The flight then turned back and landed in Bengaluru at 11.15pm," said Piyano Thomas. **P 4**

17-year-old boy seen voting for BJP 8 times in video, detained

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Lucknow: A viral video showing the 17-year-old son of a panchayat chief purportedly voting eight times at a polling station in UP's Farrukhabad constituency on May 13 led the authorities to file an FIR and detain him late Sunday, initiate disciplinary proceedings against officials managing the booth, and recommend a reproof.

SP chief Akhilesh Yadav, Wayanad MP Rahul Gandhi, and Congress's X handle were among those who shared the 2-minute, 19-second video compilation showing the offender flashing different ID cards at intervals and appearing to press the EVM button in front of BJP candidate Mukesh Raj-

CASE REGISTERED

► FIR registered under various sections, including those related to violation of secrecy of voting, says UP's chief election officer

► Boy's father says he was taken by polling agents 'to participate in EVM machine inspection/ randomisation'

put's photo and the lotus symbol. He is seen wearing two shirts in the video of multiple frames stitched together.

In a statement, UP's chief election officer Navdeep Rinwa identified the underage voter as the son of Anil Singh Thakur, gram pradhan of Khiri Pamaran village in Etah district.

► 'Loot democracy', P 17

Pawar: MVA will win at least 50% of Maha seats

Sharad Pawar, in an exclusive interview to TOI, said, "I think Narendra Modi's opinion (opposition leaders focussed on setting up their children) is wrong; it is not a crime to follow in your parents' footsteps."

On the PM's prediction of NDA winning 400 Lok Sabha seats, Pawar said, "I do not know on what basis he has arrived at a figure of 400, which is very difficult to achieve. I am doubtful if BJP will reach the majority figure in view of severe discontent against NDA across the country." "In my opinion, the performance of Maha Vikas Aghadi will be impressive, it will win at least 50% of the seats," Pawar said. **FULL Q&A, P 8**

longer trust TMC after the sins that were committed in Sandeshkhali...As for our sisters from SC/ST families, TMC does not even think of them as humans," Narendra Modi said in Purulia. **► Bengal demography, P 14**

Modi: TMC shaming Sandeshkhali women to save its 'Shahjahan'

Rohit Khanna, Falguni Banerjee & Sujoy Khanra | TNN

Kolkata/Purulia/Kharagpur: A fortnight after the first of the purported Sandeshkhali videos emerged to give Trinamool ammo to accuse BJP of engineering the unrest there, PM Modi broke his silence on the row on Sunday by accusing chief minister Mamata Banerjee's party of "questioning the character of the women of Sandeshkhali to save their (Sheikh) Shahjahan".

"TMC came to politics with a promise to safeguard 'maa, mati, manush'. Today, TMC is preying on maa, mati, manush. Bengal's women no

► 'Reviewing reports', P 5

MUTUAL FUN
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Porsche runs over 2 techies, teen held

Two software engineers, both aged 24, died after a Porsche Taycan, driven by the 17-year-old son of a builder, hit their bike near a pub in the upscale neighbourhood of Kalyaninagar, Pune, at 2.30am Sunday. The driver was detained and JJB freed him later with conditions. **P 6**

IPL last 4: It's KKR vs SRH, RR vs RCB

IPL 2024 league toppers KKR will play second-placed SRH in the first qualifier while RR and RCB will meet in the eliminator after the final league game between KKR and RR was washed out. **P 15**

Bangla pirates kill Sundarbans guard

Bangladeshi pirates hacked a forest guard to death in Sundarbans Tiger Reserve Saturday night, while three others escaped by jumping in the river. **P 7**

Ecstatic RCB fans break into near-riotous celebrations

Manuja.Veerappa @timesgroup.com

Bengaluru: On a rainswept Saturday night, a resurgent Royal Challengers Bengaluru — with six straight wins in a stunning comeback — sealed their place in the Indian Premier League playoffs. The 27-run win against Chennai Super Kings at M Chinnaswamy Stadium here was a tribute to their loyal legion of fans, who have endured 16 trophy-less seasons. Acknowledging their fans' unwavering support, Faf du Plessis and his men went on a lap of honour inside the stadium. By then, outside the stadium and beyond,



STREET CELEBRATIONS

the celebrations had started gaining shades of unruly and boorish behaviour. While a stadium packed to the rafters saw the RCB magic unfold, thousands across the state joined in the revelry. Unfortunately,

the victory was overshadowed by widespread drunken brawls, rash driving and people bellowing on the streets, making fun of CSK team supporters.

Rain ensured the match ended around midnight and the festivity of RCB fans extended into the early hours of Sunday. Outside the stadium, there was pandemonium as RCB fans lined Cubbon Road in thousands shouting celebratory slogans. But the moment they spotted a CSK fan or, for that matter, anyone wearing yellow, they wasted no time in stopping them and jeering into their faces.

► Cops outnumbered, P 2

Weak buildings: Kids from 19 BBMP schools shifted

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Bengaluru: Nearly six months after a dilapidated 50-year-old BBMP nursery school building in Bharathinagar, east Bengaluru, collapsed hours before classes began, Palikeya has shifted students from 19 other schools whose buildings were in poor condition to other nearby schools or facilities.

While BBMP had initially identified 67 school buildings that needed attention, a second survey showed that these 19 were in dire state prompting it to initiate shifting of the students. According to a report accessed by TOI, new buildings will come up at these 19 locations. Repair work will be undertaken at the

'NO FIN CRISIS'

► BBMP shifts students from 19 schools and new buildings will come up at these locations

► Report says work orders issued to carry out repair works at 33 schools; MCC has delayed some projects

► A senior official says no financial constraint as BBMP has access to Rs 180 crore under Amrutha Nagarothana scheme

other locations. "Work orders have been issued for repair work at 33 schools while the process of issuing orders for construction of new buildings at 34 locations will begin soon," the report read.

► BBMP has funds, P 4

No bar on 2nd divorce plea on cruelty grounds, says K'taka HC

Vasantha.Kumar @timesgroup.com

Bengaluru: There is no legal bar on filing a second petition seeking dissolution of marriage on grounds of cruelty if the earlier petition has been dismissed for non-prosecution, Karnataka HC has observed in a judgement. "Even if it is assumed that the husband has failed to discharge his obligation towards the son, the same cannot be a ground to deny divorce if he is able to establish the ground of cruelty against his wife," a division bench comprising Justices Anu Sivaraman and Anant Ramanath Hegde has added,

"...This court is of the view that the claim of the appellant that he is subjected to mental cruelty on account of the false allegation of illicit relationship against him is established. This aspect of the matter is completely overlooked by the family court... — HC division bench

setting aside the judgement of a family court in Mysuru. The bench granted divorce to the appellant-husband, a resident of Mysuru. The couple working in Mysuru got married on Jan 28, 2007, and welcomed a son on Jan 26, 2010. After their re-

lationship turned sour, the husband admitted his son to a school in his hometown Ooty in 2014 so that the boy will stay with paternal grandparents.

Within a month, his wife admitted the boy to a school in Mysuru, where she was working. In the meantime, the custody battle ended in a compromise as the boy's parents agreed the boy will be with the mother and both equally sharing educational expenses till he attains majority. Later, the wife registered a police complaint against her husband, saying he had demanded Rs 3 lakh from her father.

► Mental cruelty, P 4

22 villas affected as SWD block sees enclave street flooded in Yelahanka

Locals Point To Poor Teamwork By Civic Bodies

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Bengaluru: The blocking of a stormwater drain's entry into Puttenahalli Lake, near Yelahanka, resulted in the inundation of an entire street at Northwood Housing Society, which comprises 22 villas, near Anantapur Gate on Saturday night, with the water stagnation continuing into Sunday morning. According to BBMP officials, 20 villas have been flooded.

Prakash MB, a resident of the villa complex, said there was 3ft-deep water on the street in the morning. Palike officials visited the spot and assured the residents they would clear the water by pumping it out as a temporary arrangement and would also implement a long-term solution to the problem.

Another resident told TOI that she has lived in the area for seven years and had witnessed flooding there in 2022 during heavy rain across the city. However, she blamed the flooding this time around on the lack of coordination between the civic bodies and the forest department.

She added the flooding started on Friday itself, before the rain even began. Sewage flow into the SWD was the main reason, and the rain only added to it. She said there are 22 villas on the street and the residents of the flooded villas are now staying in nearby hotels or with relatives.

On Sunday evening, BBMP control room officials said the situation remained the same in the villa complex.

Karee Gowda, zonal commissioner of Yelahanka (BBMP), told TOI the govt had notified Puttenahalli Lake as a bird sanctuary in 2015. The forest department closed the SWD entering the lake to prevent sewage entry after it became a sanctuary. This arrangement didn't affect the area for a few years as there was a deviation nearby.

"The area has developed a lot in the past few years and the deviation has also disap-



Pics: Chethan Shivakumar & TOI



peared. So, water from the SWD started entering Northwood Housing, a low-lying area, on Saturday, leading to flooding in the area," he said.

Gowda also told TOI the forest department would be requested to allow BBMP to lay a pipeline bordering the lake. "We'll deploy staff to pump out water as a temporary solution. We'll also write to the forest department for its nod to start pipeline-laying work," said Gowda.

INUNDATED: The city witnessed heavy rain on Sunday evening, leaving commuters struggling. Twenty villas were flooded at Northwood Housing Society near Anantapur Gate over the weekend

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10 trees fall; flooded roads hold up traffic

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Bengaluru: Heavy rain lashed the city Sunday evening, bringing down over 10 trees and branches and flooding several roads.

BBMP officials claimed there were no complaints of flooding in residential areas but confirmed that trees and branches fell at various places. They said tree-fall complaints were reported from MS Palya and Talakaveri Layout near Yelahanka, Shakambari Nagar near JP Nagar, Kadugodi Main Road, and Subramanya Circle.

BBMP chief commissioner Tushar Giri Nath has directed zonal commissioners to visit the rain-hit areas and resolve issues. Since Saturday night, 15 trees and 49 tree branches fell across the city till late Sunday night.

Vehicular movement was affected at various places, including Hennur-Bagalur road, due to waterlogging.

According to traffic police, slow-moving traffic was reported at Hebbal flyover, Veerannanapalya, Manyata flyover towards Hebbal, Yegeshwar Nagar and Devinaagar near Hebbal. The situation was similar at MS Palya, Venkatala (flyover), Kamadhenu Nagar near Yelahanka, various roads in Whitefield

and Varthur, Gunjur road and Panathur RUB, Ramamurthy Nagar-Tin Factory and Sanjay Nagar Cross on Ballari Road.

Hunasamaranahalli service road, BEL to Hebbal, Anil Kumble Junction-BRV Junction, Yelahanka Railway underbridge, Anjaneya junction on Double Road, Marathahalli service road, Kadubeesanahalli road, Karthik Nagar on ORR near HAL, and even on Peenya flyover also experienced slow-moving traffic.

Traffic police appealed to the public not to throw used water bottles and other waste on the road. They said the plastic bottles block drains, leading to waterlogging.

They said they formed multiple teams at each traffic police station to attend to waterlogging on the roads. According to meteorological department officials, Bengaluru city received 8.4mm of rain till 5.30pm on Sunday, while HAL airport area received 22.6mm rain. IMD predicts light-to-moderate rain and thundershowers associated with winds at many places over Bagalkot, Belagavi, Dharwad, Gadag, Haveri, Kalaburagi, Ballari, Bengaluru Rural, Bengaluru Urban, Chikkaballapura and other districts on Monday.

Cybercrook poses as DC, messages cops for money

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Bengaluru: Police have registered a case against unidentified miscreants for allegedly misusing the identity of the Bengaluru Rural deputy commissioner and seeking money from a few cops.

Vishwanathapura police registered the case based on a complaint filed by Abhishek HD, personal assistant to Shivashankar N, DC and district magistrate, Bengaluru Rural, on May 9.

Abhishek stated that a miscreant used Shivashankar's name and photo on his WhatsApp display picture and began sending messages from 12.20pm on May 9 to Vijayapura circle inspector Anand Naik, Channarayana sub-inspector Annapa, and Nandish, an SI recently transferred out of



CLICKBAIT

Vishwanathapura station.

Initially, the miscreant greeted the receivers with messages like "hi" and "how r u" (sic). Later, he enquired about their whereabouts. After exchanging a few messages, the miscreant requested financial assistance from the cops, seeking the transfer of Rs 50,000 via UPI to a person named Kanakaraju.

"There's an urgent transaction. I need you to initiate on my behalf now as this is

for a project. I'm currently busy in a meeting at the moment with limited access. Let me know if the transaction can be processed on my behalf immediately so I can give further details of the account, prospects are waiting to receive it now. I'll reimburse you before the end of the day. Thanks (sic)," one of the messages read.

According to police, the three receivers didn't make any payment. They called the DC's office and found that some cybercrook was attempting to trick them. Shivashankar, upon learning about his name and photo being misused, instructed his assistant to file a police complaint. Police have registered a case under IPC Sections 511 (attempt to commit offences) and 419 (cheating by personation), and a few sections of the IT Act.

Goa man held for 'communal' posts

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Bengaluru: City police on Sunday arrested a Goa resident for allegedly posting messages that could "incite communal discord" on social media.

The FIR, registered at the cybercrime police station on April 22, states that Vinit Narayan Naik, 53, who is from Mumbai and lives in Goa, posted the messages in the name of Bhiku Mathre@MumbaichaDon on X, keeping the Congress manifesto in mind. The case was registered under the IT Act. Police said the suspect claimed to be a professor.

A special police team reached the suspect's residence in Goa on Saturday and detained him for questioning. After bringing him to Bengaluru, they announced his arrest and produced him before a judge at the National Games Village, Koramangala. The judge remanded him in police custody for two days.

Condemning the arrest,

BJP's IT cell head Amit Malviya posted on X, "Karnataka Police has arrested @MumbaichaDon from Goa. We are in touch with his family and will ensure he gets all legal support. Congress has unleashed anarchy and is intolerant of dissent. But there won't be another #Emergency in this country, ever."

Naik's son, Nagesh, took to social media to decry the arrest, questioning its relevance to the purported charges levelled against his father. He posted, "My father @MumbaichaDon has been arrested by @Dgpkarnataka @CPBlr @BlrCityPolice. A mail was sent by Twitter (X) and suddenly in the evening the police showed up at the doorstep and took away my father! FIR is totally NOT pertinent! #ReleaseBhikuMhatre."

Bangalore South MP Tejasvi Surya posted, "This is a blatant abuse of power by Karnataka Congress govt. We will fight this, both inside the courts and outside."

Ziplining nurse killed after cable snaps

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Bengaluru: A 35-year-old staff nurse ziplining at a resort in Bettahalli village near Harohalli of Kanakapura taluk, Ramanagara district, was killed after the cable snapped on Sunday morning, sending her hurtling to the ground.

Ranjita N, resident of Atibele and employed in a private hospital, had gone to the Jungle Trailz resort with 18 colleagues, Harohalli police said. "After breakfast, Ranjita and the others started participating in different activities. Around 11.30am, Ranjita decided to try her hand at ziplining on a 100-metre-long inclined cable. Midway through, the cable gave away and she fell and hit the ground. With serious head injuries, Ranjita was shifted to a nearby private hospital where she died," a police source said.

Ranjita is survived by her husband and two children.

Police have booked a case under Section 304 (culpable homicide not amounting to murder) of the Indian Penal Code against the resort management, and also arrested manager Putamadu.

BBMP: Help identify dry trees, branches

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Bengaluru: The forest department of BBMP has been calling upon members of the public to help identify and report dry trees and branches that pose a danger within city limits.

The call comes in the wake of over a thousand trees or tree branches falling during rain, causing damage to both public safety and property. The department is also actively removing dry and dangerous trees and

branches from roadsides and on govt lands across Bengaluru.

In a bid to promote environmental consciousness, the BBMP forest department is also offering free saplings to the public and voluntary organisations. Citizens interested in obtaining these saplings can contact designated nurseries, submit an application, and receive the plants. This initiative was announced by BLG Swamy, deputy conservator of forests.

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HOW YOU CAN SHARE INFORMATION

Details about such trees can be sent via WhatsApp with a photograph for verification

Contact East | Thimappa (9380090027)
West | Shivaram (9449659252)
South Harish HR (9480685039)
Dasarahalli | Chandrappa (9164042566)

Bommanahalli | Narendra Babu/ Mahesh GR (9580685399/ 9480685539)
Yelahanka | Chandrappa/ Muthurajju (9164042566/ 9483139438)
RR Nagar | SR Krishna/ Jagadish (7760553545/ 9880516322)
Mahadevapura | Pushpa M/ Sudharsha (8147276414/ 9480685541)



Bescom engineer masquerades as policeman, nabbed

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Bengaluru: A 54-year-old assistant engineer (AE) from Bescom has been arrested by Peenya police for pretending to be a police officer and carrying a walkie-talkie.

The suspect, Gangadhar, is a resident of north Bengaluru. According to police, constable Sanjeev Maruthi Gatanatti, attached to Peenya police station, received a tip-off that a person was using a

police sticker on his private car. Gatanatti alerted his senior officer and pursued Gangadhar.

He spotted Gangadhar at HMT Layout, off Peenya, on May 14. Gangadhar owns a Renault Kwid and had placed a 'vigilance police' board on his car. Gangadhar was also using mobile number 9448080151, which, when searched on Truecaller, displayed his name as Inspector Peenya. Additionally, he had a fake ID card from

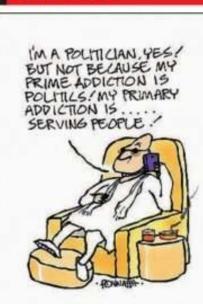
the police department's Criminal Investigation Department (CID). According to police, Gangadhar had faked his identity to cheat people, but they are yet to ascertain his exact intentions and how he was cheating people.

A senior police officer stated that Gangadhar claimed the walkie-talkie was issued to him by Bescom many years ago. It had been taken back from other employees, but he had not returned it. The case

has been handed over to the Central Crime Branch (CCB). He was produced in court on Friday and taken into police custody for further probe.

When Peenya police interrogated him, he did not reveal anything, prompting the transfer of the case to CCB, said a senior officer. It was learnt that Gangadhar has been faking his identity for years, and most people in and around Peenya and Jalahalli believed he was a police officer.

OFFSIDE



Two children rescued from alcoholic father

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Ramanagara: Police and child welfare committee (CWC) members rescued a 10-year-old girl and a seven-year-old boy who were allegedly being tortured by their alcoholic father in Kudur Magadi taluk.

Police and the CWC members were shocked to see burn marks on the two children, who said their father had caused them.

Their mother had died a few years ago and the father was reluctant to take care of them, neighbours told police. The children's paternal grandmother took care of them, but she was helpless in stopping her son from beating and tormenting the kids, police said.

"A few days back, the father branded the son and the daughter and poured hot water on them. Unable to bear the pain, the children started

crying and the neighbours rushed in. The father abused them, saying it was his family matter and they should not intervene. However, the neighbours took the children to their home and alerted police and the children's helpline," an investigating officer said.

"The man (accused) is an alcoholic and thinks that the two children are a financial burden on him," the police officer added.

Schoolchildren explore the many wonders of science

Millennium World School recently organised a Science Day event called 'Millennials Eureka 2024-Where Ideas Spark!'. The event was held to commemorate National Science Day, celebrated on Feb 28. School directors Santosh Singh, Mahek Shah and Sanjay Reddy, and principal CG Shanthi were present on the occasion. The event was an exciting



WHERE IDEAS ARE BORN

opportunity for students from classes 1 to 8 to showcase their scientific knowledge and creativity through various experiments and working models. The students designed and piloted

drones, simulated Chandrayaan launch, and created models using recycled materials to promote sustainability. The event was a resounding success, with students demonstrating their scientific curiosity and innovation. The celebration emphasised the importance of hands-on learning in nurturing scientific talent and fostering innovation among students. It was a testament to the school's commitment to providing a dynamic learning environment.

Team loyalty should come with respect for fellow humans

Anet Ellois

Chennai Super Kings losing wasn't the only low point of Saturday night. What unfolded at M Chinnaswamy Stadium and on the streets of Bengaluru left us traumatised.

Inside the stadium, people were using slogans that involved bad words and homophobic slurs (like calling CSK fans 'csags') and I had to correct the gang that 'gay' wasn't a bad word. That said, there were also fans who clapped and appreciated the game.

My nightmare started outside the stadium. People were on bikes riding triples, enjoying and teasing us. And no, I'm not complaining about it because every fanbase does that. But I'm also not normalizing it. I just put my head down as I didn't want to give them the attention they wanted, but something didn't feel right when people started gesturing in an insulting way to go home, screaming into our ears, and trying to make us uncomfortable.

It started getting serious when a guy almost came to attack us. He came extremely close to me with his chest up and I had to move back. Thankfully, I was accompanied by my partner, who tried to protect me. Two or three people had to drag away that fan. Many who witnessed this incident were seen making videos and laughing.

We walked towards our bike and there was a man in an inebriated condition who tried to abuse us. When I picked up my phone to record him, he gave us a stare and went back.

Loyalty to your team is fine, but loyalty along with respect for fellow humans would have saved us from a traumatic experience of Saturday night.

(As told to Manuja Veerappa. Anet Ellois is a Bengaluru-based professional and CSK fan who was present at Chinnaswamy stadium on Saturday)

The morning after: Ploggers collect 350kg waste from around stadium

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Bengaluru: When ploggers went around M Chinnaswamy Stadium Sunday morning to clear the trail of waste left behind by Saturday night's Indian Premier League match, they had their hands full: 350kg of waste was mopped up in a space of two hours!

POST RCB-CSK MATCH

This was the second highest amount of trash collected from a playground, after the 550kg picked up by 60 volunteers from Shalini Ground after a political event in Oct 2023.

Shravya MN, a second-year BCom student, put away the sixth bagful of trash she had picked up from around Chinnaswamy Stadium. This was her first post-event plog, and one with 16 ploggers from different walks of life. Four pourakarmikas and two BBMP marshals also participated.

"Every 20 minutes, a 5kg bag would get filled and I'd empty it in one lo-



THE CLEAN-UP CREW

which hung around the stadium to catch a glimpse of the RCB bus exiting. It didn't help it was closing time for watering holes as inebriated RCB fans spilled onto the streets. Perched on car bonnets and rooftops, revelers raced through the city even as many fans scurried to safety.

Harshvardhan, who was stopped on Brigade Road, said, "The traffic was moving slowly. Just as we approached the Brigade Road-Church Street junction, a mob of around 10 men stopped our car, got on to the bonnet and insisted that we join

und. Even so, we're taught to keep our waste in separate bags till we see a bin. But that too wasn't done."

G Nagaraj, popularly known as Plograj and founder of Indian Ploggers Army, said the most visible trash heaps were near the stadium's entry gates. Ploggers picked up several plastic bottles, ice cream covers, filled matchboxes and lighters, food boxes, banners and flags. "One of the most difficult waste items to pick up was the thin film plastic cover—about 2,000 of them that filled around six bags were stuck to the ground because of the rain. These were covers for the jerseys that fans wore. It seems plastic bottles, although not allowed inside the stadium, made their way till the gates," Plograj said.

Vidhya Prasad, a member of Runners High and one of the organisers of the zero-waste running event 'Anandayana' in the city, said, "Wearing a green jersey for a match and exchanging a sapling doesn't create impact. You have to walk the talk."

Cops were outnumbered & couldn't do much: Witness

Continued from page 1

Vindhya Rao, a marketing professional, said, "Things looked fine when we exited the stadium. But what followed was scary. I was wearing a CSK jersey and I was almost manhandled by drunken men on Cubbon Road. The policemen were clearly outnumbered and couldn't do much. We managed to reach the Cubbon Park police station and stood near the compound for an hour..."

Police had to frequently resort to lathicharge to control the crowd,

which hung around the stadium to catch a glimpse of the RCB bus exiting. It didn't help it was closing time for watering holes as inebriated RCB fans spilled onto the streets. Perched on car bonnets and rooftops, revelers raced through the city even as many fans scurried to safety.

Harshvardhan, who was stopped on Brigade Road, said, "The traffic was moving slowly. Just as we approached the Brigade Road-Church Street junction, a mob of around 10 men stopped our car, got on to the bonnet and insisted that we join

their 'Ee Sala Cup Namde' chants." In Kattigenahalli, Yelahanka, it was reported that police barricades were damaged. Unmindful of senior citizens, fireworks went off for more than an hour across the city even as people lit bonfires with CSK flags on roads and danced around it. The hooliganism spilled on to social media as well as the so-called RCB fans trolled users who called out the unruly behaviour: RCB fans had a lot to cheer for on Saturday, but some chose to use the occasion to tarnish the image of the team's fandom and the city.

'Save environment' initiative

PEAS (Programme for Environmental Awareness in Schools), held at Acts Secondary School, was a dream project of the founder. All the monthly activities culminated in presentations by students and a rally. The presentations were a part of PEAS School Challenge, where learners were put into groups and encouraged to look around them and think about what they could change.

Being a group task, they were required to collaborate, creatively find and decide solutions to a problem. Once this was done, the group had to make a plan and put it into action. At the end of this three-month project, the learners presented their work. The presentations were very impressive and it was evident the learners had actually worked towards change by interviewing people in their community, raising awareness drives, and writing letters to the govt.

The learners and teachers then went on a rally, walking along the main Hosur Road and turning into the busy market area of Hosa Road.

Recognising the 'best language teacher'



PURSUIT OF EXCELLENCE

Richa Srivastava, a teacher at Delhi Public School-East, was recognised for her efforts and honoured with the 'best language teacher of the year' award for 2024 by Kiteskraft productions. Her unwavering commitment, relentless pursuit of excellence, and invaluable contributions to the teaching-learning dynamic stand as a testament to her exceptional dedication. The management, principal, and staff extended their heartfelt congratulations to her.

In remembrance

यद्यदाचरति श्रेष्ठस्तत्तदेवेतरो जनः।
स यत्प्रमाणं कुरुते लोकस्तदनुवर्तते ॥

Whatever action a great man performs, common men follow.
And whatever standards he sets by exemplary acts, all the world pursues.

- The Bhagavad Gita 3.21



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Fire in plane forces emergency landing

179 Flyers Stranded For Nearly 13 Hrs

Joy Sengupta & Nithya Mandyam | TNN



The flight was coming from Pune to Kochi with a stopover at Bengaluru

Pune/Bengaluru: An engine of an Air India Express plane flying from Pune to Kochi caught fire around 10 minutes after it took off from Bengaluru following a scheduled stopover late Saturday evening, forcing a return and emergency evacuation of its 179 flyers, who were then stranded for nearly 13 hours. The flight, IX-1132, had six crew members.

This was Air India's second fire scare within days. On May 17, one of its Bengaluru-bound planes had returned to Delhi after a fire warning from its auxiliary power unit.

Speaking about Saturday's event, an AI Express spokesperson told TOI, "The crew accomplished evacuation with no injuries to any guests. A thorough investigation with the regulator shall be accomplished to establish the (fire) cause."

A spokesperson for Bangalore International Airport Ltd (BIAL) said, "A full-scale emergency was declared and the fire promptly was extinguished upon landing."

Sources said that apart from the airline's investigation, the Directorate-General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) would conduct a probe.

"We took off (from Bengaluru) at 10.50pm. Around 11pm, we noticed fire in the engine from the windows. The flight then turned back and landed in Bengaluru at 11.15pm," said Piyano Thomas, a passenger, adding they had take-off from Pune at 8.20pm instead of 7.40pm.

Her husband Jose said after the aircraft stopped, the cabin crew also opened the emergency exits. "Evacuation slides were deployed. We were asked to exit immediately and run towards the field near the runway. It was a scary situation, and our hand baggage was left back in the plane. As we ran, fire tenders and airport officials rushed towards the aircraft. We were in the field for around 15 minutes before being

taken to the terminal in a bus. The ground and cabin crew did a commendable job," he said.

However, problems for the rattled fliers continued. "For a long time, there was no information on onward journey. We sat in cramped chairs waiting for some news. Around 5am, we got our luggage back," Jose said.

According to Jose, airline officials initially assured them of an alternative flight. "Later, they backed out, saying there would not be any flight. This angered fliers and a major argument started. Security had to intervene. Finally, the airline agreed and issued us fresh boarding passes."

But of 179 fliers, 122 were given boarding passes initially. The fliers stood in solidarity and the airline finally gave the remaining fliers passes. "The flight took off at 11.20am and landed in Kochi at 12.10pm on Sunday," he said.

Liquid nitrogen paan leaves girl with hole in stomach

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Bengaluru: A seemingly fun experience with liquid nitrogen paan turned into a nightmare for a 12-year-old girl, Ananya (name changed), and her family when the child developed stomach discomfort in the end of April. Rushed to the hospital, she was diagnosed with perforation peritonitis or in simple terms, a hole in her stomach.

"I just wanted to try smoky paan because it looked interesting, and everyone was trying it. No one else got hurt

or felt any pain, but the discomfort I experienced was terrifying," recalls Ananya.

At Narayana Multispecialty Hospital in HSR Layout, the examining doctors determined that surgery was necessary to prevent further complications.

Ananya underwent an exploratory laparotomy with intra-op OGDscopy and sleeve gastrectomy. "It is a procedure where an endoscope, a flexible tube equipped with a camera and light is used during surgery to examine esophagus, stomach, and duode-

How chemical can affect your body

Liquid nitrogen, with a liquid-to-gas expansion ratio of 1:694 at 20 Celsius, poses significant health risks. The rapid vapourisation of liquid nitrogen in an enclosed space generates immense force. This volatile chemical can damage skin and present severe health hazards to chefs or other food handlers. Inhaling the vapours can lead to breathing difficulties.

Source: Narayana Health

num, the first part of the small intestine," explained Dr Vijay HS, operating surgeon (surgical gastroenterology), who led the surgical team. Subsequently, a portion

of stomach, measuring about 4x5cm on the lesser curvature, was removed. The incident has alarmed medical practitioners. "As the popularity of liquid nitrogen in culi-

nary circles continues to grow, it's crucial for one to exercise caution and prioritise safety. Vigilance and increased awareness are essential to avoid potentially devastating consequences," said Dr Vijay. He cited another example of a case of 2017, where a person in Gurugram fell ill after drinking a cocktail infused with liquid nitrogen.

"We must take these isolated incidents seriously before they become a pattern," said the surgeon.

Ananya was discharged from the hospital recently.

Owners of 3.6L properties owe ₹71cr tax, says BBMP

Nithya.Mandyam @timesgroup.com

Bengaluru: With owners of over 3.6 lakh properties owing more than Rs 711 crore in taxes, BBMP is facing a significant challenge in recovering the arrears from defaulters, especially prestigious institutions, hotels, developers, educational institutions, charitable trusts, and shopping malls.

Bommanahalli accounts for the highest number of defaulters: 57,043 properties owing Rs 95 crore. "We send SMS daily and make IVR-based calls to defaulters. But they are not paying their tax arrears. We will start a special recovery drive as per law soon," said Munish Moudgil, special commissioner, BBMP (revenue).

Property tax is a crucial revenue source for BBMP. It relies heavily on property tax collections to fund essential civic services, infrastructure projects, and urban development initiatives. Despite its efforts to enforce compliance, including issu-

ZONE-WISE DETAILS OF TAX DEFAULTERS

Zone	No. of properties	Tax+ Cess (Rs in Cr)
Bommanahalli	57,043	95
Dasarahalli	17,223	24.2
East	49,385	98
Mahadevapura	76,132	174.9
Rajarajeshwari Nagar	55,073	54.3
South	35,742	108.3
West	35,084	103.3
Yelahanka	38,188	53.7
Total	3,63,870	711.7

ing notices, sealing properties, confiscating immovable property, and even freezing bank accounts, many property owners remain indifferent to their tax obligations.

"Whenever we send notices to the defaulters, they bring a stay from courts, tying our hands. What is the point of having a revenue cell that cannot function optimally due to the stays? We have even introduced a settlement scheme, hoping many might pay up," he added.

He said the scheme offers a 5% discount on payments made within an extended period. Yet, compliance remains disappointingly low, with many property owners

unwilling to settle dues.

Those ignoring notices are issued form 13, initiating the process of recording BBMP's claim in the records of deputy registrar's office. This legal step is intended to create a lien on the property, making it difficult for owners to sell or transfer their properties without clearing the outstanding taxes.

"We have even publicly released the list of top defaulters. By naming and shaming them, BBMP hopes to pressurise them into paying their dues. Though, this approach has had limited success in the past, we need to see if it will be more effective now," Moudgil added.

Constable caught taking ₹5k bribe

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Bengaluru: A head constable was caught red-handed Saturday by Lokayukta police, accepting a bribe of Rs 5,000 from an individual to release him on bail in a property dispute case.

Ningaraje Gowda was posted at Byadarahalli police station in west Bengaluru. The anti-corruption police have launched a manhunt for SI Shivaraj of the same station, who allegedly demanded Rs 50,000. According to Lokayukta police, Shivaraj was investigating officer in the case, where an individual was arrested on charges of attacking opponents in a property dispute. Shivaraj and Gowda had demanded Rs 50,000 and Rs 5,000 respectively to release him on station bail. However, the family filed a complaint with Lokayukta police. Acting on the complaint, a trap was laid and the officials raided police station Saturday evening when Gowda was allegedly accepting Rs 5,000.

State's amendment runs afoul of Wildlife Protection Act: Centre

Continued from page 1

The Centre has said the amendment brought by the state govt to Wildlife (Protection) Act of 1972 runs afoul of the very Act itself under Section 42A.

"As per Section 42A, surrender of such articles is allowed only by persons having certificate of ownership. Further, the rules notified by govt of Karnataka appear to find illegality only in those cases where the animal article was not sourced from hunting. However, as per the Wildlife (Protection) Act, the act of possession without an ownership certificate (not having made a declaration) itself is an offence for Schedule I species," read the letter.

With the maximum number of wildlife articles, without ownership certificate, being seized from Bengaluru, the state govt will have to decide on how to go about those which have been surrendered. "The Centre, under a new govt, is likely to bring in a uniform law for the purpose of seizing all wildlife articles. Govt is yet to decide whether to destroy or preserve such articles for display," said a forest department officer.

Work will not face financial issue as BBMP has access to ₹180 crore: Official

Continued from page 1

A senior BBMP official said: "MCC has delayed some work, but we will soon start construction of these buildings. We had got clearance of Rs 10 crore earlier and another Rs 16-17 crore has been earmarked for this project."

The official added that repair and reconstruction work will not face any financial constraint as Palike has access to Rs 180 crore under Amrutha Nagarothana scheme.

He added 19 schools will be part of the 34 where new buildings will come up. As on date, estimations totalling more than Rs 7.2 crore have been made for seven buildings: Construction of schools at Austin Town, Kodihalli, Sivanchetty Garden (including library), Ulsoor, Vasanthnagar, Muthyalanagar and Motinagar.

Of these, nearly Rs 2.3 crore will be spent on the school in Austin Town, Rs 2.2 crore at Motinagar, while Rs 91 lakh will be spent for the

school and library at Sivanchetty Garden and the remaining on buildings at other locations.

The 19 schools are located across zones. In East Zone, Austin Town Kindergarten and primary school students have been moved to Austin Town Boys High School Building, while those from CNS (Corporation Nursery School) Kodihalli have been moved to BBMP office building on HAL main road and CNS Gundappa Park students to Gautampura Kinder-

garden. Students from CNS Payappa Garden have been shifted to Tasker Town Primary School Building and those from CNS Central Bazaar to Broadway Primary School Building.

Those from CNS Ulsoor will be shifted to Murphy Town Building. Students from CNS Sivanchetty Garden are being shifted to a BBMP training centre facility, while CNS Ashoka Nagar students will go to a BBMP public gym. In West Zone, students from CNS Muthyalana-

gar are proposed to be shifted to the BBMP ward office or a community hall. Those from CNS Biradevaragudi are to be shifted to "GLPS" building in Cottonpet, while those from CNS Kalasipalya will be shifted to the "GUPS" building. Students from CNS Motinagar may shift to Motinagar Muslim Education Society (BBMP building) and those from CNS Valmikinagar will be shifted to BBMP high school building in Kasturbanagar.

—Tvisha Sinha

Bank guard on the run after stealing colleague's shotgun

Chaithanya.Swamy@timesgroup.com

Bengaluru: An armed security guard deployed at a bank has been on the run after allegedly stealing his colleague's shotgun recently.

Binod Kumar, in his 40s and his colleague, Shriram Sharma, both from Bihar, worked with a private security agency and were deployed at HDFC Bank's branch on Richmond Road.

Based on Sharma's complaint, Ashok Nagar police registered a case under IPC section 380 (theft in dwelling house) on May 15 and launched a manhunt for Kumar. Sharma told police that he reported to duty around 8:45 am on May 13 and found his double-barrel breech-loading (DBBL) gun stolen from the gun box. "I had kept my gun in the box and locked it around 5:30 pm on May 9 after my working hours and had given the room key to the reception. The bank had holidays from May 10 to May 12. I came back to duty on May 13 and found the gun missing," he told TOI.

Sharma alerted his agency and the bank's senior officials. CCTV footage showed Kumar leaving the bank after

7:30 pm on May 9 with a backpack. "I suspect he kept the gun in his backpack. When we tried to reach him, we found both his mobile phone numbers were switched off," Sharma said.

On that day, Kumar left a message for one of his seniors in the agency stating that he was going to Bihar to be with his seriously ill father. The bank staff tried to reach him until May 13 and then filed a complaint. According to Sharma, only he and Kumar had access to the room where their guns were kept. Kumar had a single-barrel breech-loading (SBBL) shotgun and claimed it was licensed. Sharma has an all-India permit for his gun, which he used for work. "I bought the gun in Nagaland 21 years ago by paying Rs 25,000, citing safety reasons. Now, it is not so easy to get a licence or buy a gun as the prices have gone up," he said.

An officer said, "Kumar was deployed to work in the bank for the last eight months while Sharma has been working there for a year. Only after catching Kumar will we know more details."

Police are also looking into whether there was any negligence on the security agency's part.

Court: Man was subjected to mental cruelty by wife

Contd from page 1

The same ended with the police filing a 'B' report. Thereafter, the wife alleged the husband had an illicit relationship with a colleague. The husband, who had earlier filed a divorce petition and withdrew it on the advice of friends and relatives in 2018, filed a fresh petition in 2019, after the wife made these allegations.

On Jan 22, 2021, the family court rejected the petition filed by the husband, holding he has failed to prove the allegation of cruelty and added



he had neglected the boy. The husband argued the family court had failed to consider the cruelty against him in form of his wife's baseless allegations of illicit relationship. The HC's division bench pointed out it is apparent that the couple had mutually agreed to the issue on the boy's custody and maintenance. "From the evidence, (it is

evident) the allegation (of an illicit relationship — a serious charge) against the husband is not established. The appellant has worked the wife visits his workplace and insults him in front of colleagues. This evidence is not disputed in cross-examination. This being the position, the claim of the appellant that he is subjected to mental cruelty on account of the false allegation of illicit relationship against him is established. This aspect of the matter is overlooked by the family court," the division bench noted.

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Now, cross-voting threat looms large over MLC election from assembly

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Bengaluru: Maharashtra chief minister Eknath Shinde's open claim that an operation will be launched to topple the Congress govt in the state post the Lok Sabha polls, has triggered all sorts of speculation and challenges for the three major parties ahead of legislative council elections next month.

Aware of the opposition's plan, Congress brass has reportedly prepared a counter, and the MLC polls from the legislative assembly — likely in mid-June — could test both the stability of the govt and the strength of the opposition. With the electorate being MLAs, the likelihood of cross voting is a clear and present danger, and all three parties face the challenge of keeping their flock together.

"The BJP-JD(S) alliance has threatened to unleash Operation Lotus," said MB Patil, industries minister. "But they will not succeed as the unity of the alliance itself is in doldrums with many of their legislators willing to join Congress."

Patil recently said more than 20 of BJP's 66 MLAs and 13 of the 19 JD(S) MLAs are ready to switch to the governing party. Already, two senior BJP MLAs, Shivaram Hebbar and ST Somashekar, have all but declared their



Union minister Pralhad Joshi and MLA Arvind Bellad (in pic) on Sunday visited the family of Anjali Ambiger who was murdered recently at Veerapur Oni in Hubballi by a youth for rejecting his proposal

TRAGEDY AFTERMATH

likely to be announced this week. Each candidate requires 20 votes to win. Congress, with 138 MLAs in the 224-member assembly, is certain of winning seven seats. BJP and JD(S) may win three and one seat respectively.

But dissent and the prospect of poaching could upset these calculations. For instance, Dalit legislators in Congress, led by PWD minister Satish Jarkiholi and home minister G Parameshwara, have been holding not-so-secret meetings. They are said

to be unhappy since their contributions to the party's win in last year's assembly polls have not been adequately "rewarded".

CM Siddaramaiah and his deputy DK Shivakumar are likely to meet party MLAs to assuage hurt feelings.

Home department hijacked by powerful persons: Ashoka

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Bengaluru: R Ashoka, leader of the opposition in the assembly, on Sunday claimed home minister G Parameswara "is not in control of his department" as it has been "hijacked". He was referring to the ongoing investigation into the sex scandal allegedly involving Hassan MP Prajwal Revanna.

Following a meeting with former Prime Minister HD Deve Gowda — who turned 91 on Saturday — at his residence in Bengaluru, Ashoka said deputy chief minister DK Shivakumar was pulling strings behind the scenes in the pen drive case. He pointed to an audio clip purportedly between Shivakumar and BJP functionary G Devarajegowda, now in SIT custody, as evidence.

"Devarajegowda released an audio clip in which he is heard implicating Shivakumar. There is clear evidence of Shivakumar's involvement in the pen drive



R Ashoka meets Deve Gowda

case," Ashoka said. "The home minister cannot function independently since highly placed persons like deputy chief ministers are involved. This is the reason why we are demanding a CBI probe into the case," said Ashoka.

As for the MLC polls from teachers and graduates constituencies on June 3, Ashoka said he convinced BJP rebel candidates to withdraw and exuded confidence that his party would win all three seats.

As for the MLC polls from teachers and graduates constituencies on June 3, Ashoka said he convinced BJP rebel candidates to withdraw and exuded confidence that his party would win all three seats.

Devarajegowda brought to B'uru for grilling

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Bengaluru: A local court in Hassan on Saturday extended the police custody of advocate and BJP member G Devarajegowda by two more days.

The special investigation team (SIT) probing the sleaze and sexual abuse videos allegedly involving Hassan MP Prajwal Revanna had on Thursday arrested Devarajegowda and produced before the court on Friday, which handed him to one-day custody of SIT. Again on Saturday, SIT produced him before the court, requesting for four more days of custody. However, the court extended it by two more days, directing the SIT to produce him before it on Monday.

Devarajegowda has been arrested in connection with a complaint filed by a JD(S)-BJP worker over distribution of pen drives containing the videos on the eve of Hassan Lok Sabha poll on April 26.

Officials on Sunday morning brought him to the headquarters of Criminal Investigation Department

PEN DRIVE CASE

(CID) on Palace Road here.

"He was taken into custody for questioning on the source of the pen drive and how the videos got leaked and who was behind it. Several months ago, he had announced in a press meet that he has sex videos of a family

member of Revanna (Holenarasipura MLA from JD(S) and Prajwal's father). Devarajegowda seems to have more information on these videos," a senior officer said.

Advocate's claims are false: Ex-MP

Bengaluru: Former MP LR Shivaram Gowda sought to distance himself from BJP's G Devarajegowda's claim that Congress state president DK Shivakumar had offered him Rs 100 crore to malign JD(S) and BJP functionaries by releasing the sex pen drive case. Devarajegowda had said Shivaram was the intermediary in it. **TNN**

Parliamentary poll verdict will reflect Congress govt's one-year performance

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Bengaluru: The state govt, led by chief minister Siddaramaiah, will mark its first year in office on Monday. To commemorate this milestone, the administration plans to release a comprehensive list of its achievements.

However, the ultimate test of the Congress govt's performance will come on June 4, when the results of the Lok Sabha polls are announced.

One of its most notable accomplishments over the last 12 months has been the implementation of five key poll guarantees, collectively costing around Rs 60,000 crore annually. These welfare schemes, which include free travel for women in state-run buses, free electricity of up to 200 units per household every month, and monthly financial assistance of Rs 2,000, have been especially popular among women.

Despite these welfare achievements, the govt has faced criticism on several fronts. Infra-

structure development has progressed slower than expected, with major projects like the Bengaluru suburban railway still in the early stages. Additionally, there have been concerns over law and order following a spate of murders involving young women.

"It has been an eventful year overshadowed by the Lok Sabha elections. They have implemented their guarantees and this election will be a test of the public response. They have ensured party unity, though frictions become visible from time to time. They could have managed law and order much better," said Sandeep Shastri, a psephologist, summing up the govt's performance.

"After a decisive victory in the 2023 assembly elections, the Congress govt has focused on implementing its five guarantee schemes to gain support for the Lok Sabha elections. Their efforts have been bolstered by the party's victory in Telangana, promoting the 'Karnataka Model' as a national strategy dubbed



AT THE HELM OF AFFAIRS

'Panch Nyay (one lakh rupees for each woman head). Whether this will convert into votes remains to be seen," said political analyst Prof Ravindra Reshme.

However, he noted that the financial strain of these welfare programmes is evident, affecting transport corporations and electricity companies which are already facing losses. The direct cash transfers to BPL women and unemployed youth have further burdened the state's finances. "The Lok Sabha results will reveal if the public, especially women, support these free schemes

of govt, which appear to be run by hired strategists rather than seasoned politicians and administrators," Reshme added.

The public sentiment regarding the govt's performance remains mixed. Several women beneficiaries of the three guarantees targeted at women expressed appreciation for the welfare schemes. "The Gruha Lakshmi scheme has been a lifeline for my family," said Lakshmi Devi, a beneficiary from Kalaburagi. "It has given us financial stability and the ability to plan for the future."

Conversely, urban residents have voiced frustration over infrastructural delays and safety issues. "The traffic situation in Bengaluru is worsening, and we need quicker solutions," said Ramesh Desai, a software engineer.

The second year is expected to be more challenging, with speculation rife that there might be a change of guard. Internal conflicts within Congress have already surfaced, with reports suggesting that DCM DK Shivakumar may take over from Siddaramaiah after the Lok Sabha polls.

Audio clip on Hassan MP scandal goes viral

Mysuru/Hassan: A one-minute audio clip of a conversation about the scandalous pen drive incident in Hassan, allegedly involving MP Prajwal Revanna, has gone viral.

The clip, includes a discussion supposedly between a former elected representative and an advocate about the incident, and both ex-PMHD Devegowda and ex-CM HD Kumaraswamy are ridiculed over the incident during the conversation. The authenticity of the audio clip could not be independently verified by TOI. **TNN**

Gang-rape suspects' bail applications rejected

A Haveri court rejected bail pleas of 17 accused in Hangal gang-rape case. However, two other accused had filed bail pleas in HC, but withdrew them voluntarily. In the Haveri court, the public prosecutor strongly objected to bail, expressing concern that the accused may try to influence witnesses if they come out. **TNN**

Woman, who spent 3 days with dead mom, dies

A mother and her daughter died within four days of each other, with the daughter, a diabetic with one of her legs amputated three months ago, not being aware of her mom's death in another part of their house in Udipi district's Kundapur town.

The twin tragedies occurred in Kundapur taluk's Gopadi village. While mother Jayanthi B Shetty, 61, is suspected to have died in the bathroom of their house in the middle of last week, her daughter Pragathi Shetty, who had not eaten for three days, passed away at a hospital on Saturday after she didn't respond to efforts to revive her.

Police said Pragathi, who wasn't married, had been living with Jayanthi, also a diabetic. It's suspected Jayanthi had a fall in the bathroom, and her death went unnoticed since the doors of the house remained closed and no one came to their house those three days. The incident came to light on the night of May 16.

When a police team led by police sub-inspector Vinaya K, who, while on night rounds, received information and arrived at the scene, they found Pragathi alive, but in a critical condition. They broke open the door to rescue her and rushed her to the hospital.

As the team continued to search for the source of the stench, they found her mother's body in the bathroom. The presence of maggots on Jayanthi's body suggested she may have passed away at least three days earlier.

A case has been registered at the Kundapur Town police station, and investigations are going on about the cause of death. **TNN**

Reviewing reports: DGP

Continued from page 1

A DGP (law and order) R Hitendra said they were reviewing media reports and statistics on law and order of comparable years.

He visited the residences of Neha Hiremath and Anjali Ambiger and consoled with family members. Police commissioner Renuka Sukumar, Dharwad SP Gopal Byakod and other officials reportedly attended the meeting.

Anjali's minor, who attempted suicide on Saturday night, was admitted to KIMS Hospital and discharged by Sunday evening.

The girl said she was shocked and shattered by the murder of her sister, and "disappointed" to know the alleged accused, Girish Savant alias Vishwa, was getting treatment at a hospital and yet he spoke ill of Anjali.

UNVEILING SURYADEV'S FE550D CRS TMT BARS, LAUNCHED TO CONQUER CORROSION

The revolutionary & innovative corrosion resistant Suryadev Fe550D CRS TMT bars launched at Leela Palace Chennai.



From L - R : Mr.S. Balachandran, Sr. GM-Sales & Marketing, Mr.Naman Agarwal, VP-Business Development, Mr.Mukesh Agarwal, MD, Mr.SRS. Krishnan, ED, Mr.Yashpal Sharma, Sr.Manager.

Suryadev has launched its latest innovation, the Fe550D CRS TMT bar, made from high-quality iron ore and a blend of copper, chromium, and nickel. The all new Fe550D CRS shows excellent anti-corrosion properties and offers unmatched protection against natural elements.

At the grand event held at Chennai's opulent Leela Palace, Suryadev TMT unveiled its innovative product, the Suryadev Fe550D CRS TMT bar, marking a significant advancement in construction materials. The event commenced with the opening address by Mr. S. Balachandran, Senior General Manager of Sales and Marketing followed by an insightful address to the media by Mr. Mukesh Agarwal, Managing Director. The revolutionary Suryadev Fe550D CRS TMT bar was launched by Mr. SRS. Krishnan, Executive Director, Suryadev Alloys and Power. The event concluded with the closing note from Mr. Naman Agarwal, Vice President, Business Development.

Corrosion is a significant issue in India owing to the diverse climatic conditions across the terrain. Elements like the salty sea air in coastal cities to the harmful industrial pollutants in inland regions pose a challenge, severely affecting the steel used in

construction. This nationwide concern costs the Indian economy an estimated 3-4% of its GDP annually. Advanced studies have revealed that areas far from the coast are affected by industrial pollutants, which can accelerate corrosion and lead to a loss in the structural integrity of buildings by 1-3% annually.

The latest Suryadev Fe550D CRS TMT bar from the house of Suryadev Alloys and Power is a smart and innovative solution to combat corrosion. These TMT bars exhibit exceptional strength and ductility while also showing significant resistance to moisture and corrosion.

Founded in 2006, Suryadev Alloys and Power is a prominent player in the Indian steel industry, known for its commitment to quality and innovation. The company operates Tamil Nadu's largest TMT bar plant with an annual capacity of 600,000 tonnes. As an integrated primary steel producer, Suryadev is equipped to meet the nation's rising demand for steel with its diverse range of intermediate and finished steel products.

For more information contact: Mr.Hari Babu Contact No: +91 93818 50028 Email: haribabu@suryadev.in

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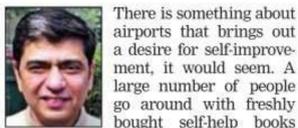
NC CHIEF FAROOQ ABDULLAH DEMANDS PROBE INTO TWIN TERROR ATTACKS IN J&K, ASKS PAKISTAN TO STOP TERRORISM



The Self-Help Question

CITY CITY BANG BANG

SANTOSH DESAI



There is something about airports that brings out a desire for self-improvement, it would seem. A large number of people go around with freshly bought self-help books from the airport bookshop, determined to make a dent in whatever defect they believe they possess. Usually they read a few pages desultorily on the flight, before succumbing to the charms of their iPad or surrendering to beauty sleep. Airports are not the only places where we are overcome by this desire; bookshops across the country are testament to our growing fondness for the self-help genre as these books have slowly squeezed out most other kinds, not only from the bestseller list but also from the shops themselves.

Given the popularity of these kinds of books, one would imagine that they hold seven potent secrets of life that unleash a new transformative self in 10 steps or 28 days. Surely they contain some dramatic, radical perspectives that change the way we see the world and ourselves.

A quick scan of the websites of many prominent Indian motivational gurus reveals nuggets like *Follow Your Heart. Come What May. Never Give Up. Remember the Power of Concentration. Don't Repent. Nothing Can Stop the Power of a Great Idea. Believe in Yourself. You are Your Worst Enemy.* As you can see, all very original and revelatory insights. These are usually dressed up in tales of people who have either succeeded because they acted on such distilled words of wisdom or failed because they did not apparently remember to 'follow their hearts'.

This begs the question. Can anything be dumber than the kind of advice peddled by self-help gurus? Arguably, self-help is nothing but superfood for morons, a trace of obvious wisdom mashed into mush, sweetened with the milk of human kindness till it becomes pap digestible for dribbling idiots. It contains nothing but banality wrapped

in cliches, and states staggeringly obvious things over and over again, dressed up by stories and anecdotes.

The ambassadors of this genre, the motivational speakers, come in a few varieties: people who have either succeeded in one sphere and are now spreading the gospel based on their experiences; people who have overcome hardships and embody the wisdom they speak about; those who have struggled repeatedly with failure before finally coming good; and of course, there are charlatans with false degrees from obscure universities and grubby fingers looking to get rich quick.

Priests and spiritual leaders across religions follow a similar template. In most cases, the messages they impart are rudimentary, but their style is revelatory. Their narrative skill is what draws

Often, the need for self-help prescriptions is a function of time. At critical moments of our lives, for instance, when we lose a loved one, we find that what comforts us most is the cliched, but heartfelt support expressed by those close to us

millions to them to hear what is usually nothing more than self-evident cliches. With spiritual leaders, what helps is that the aura of holiness gives them a presumptive right to 'wisdom'. Anything that comes out of their mouths is seen as blessed by a touch of divinity.

What drives this inexorable need to hear the obvious and then to find it so transformative? The need to arrogate wisdom to an external agency and to surrender one's good sense in order to feel a momentary surge of renewed hope seems to be a strong underlying need.

There has to be a reason why, worldwide, so many people feel the need to listen to this kind of advice and pay good money in order to do so. It cannot be that a large chunk of humanity consists of people who are dribbling idiots, although that

is an oddly satisfying idea that explains so much. Trump, for instance.

As the world becomes a lonelier place and as yardsticks for success become ever more stringent and multiple, there is enormous pressure on individuals to find their way all by themselves. Traditional institutions that served as support systems, like the family, the community, and organised religion, are not as strong as they used to be. Besides, the world is changing so rapidly that they themselves do not have answers.

The need to look for outside support, for someone above all, to accept us as we are without judgement and give us hope that we will be in a better place tomorrow, is an idea that has a great deal of resonance. The important thing perhaps is not to ask how original or intellectually satisfying the advice is, but how much empathy it shows for the audience it is addressed to, and what kind of concrete hope it can hold out for the possibility of change. People need to believe that they have some agency, that their efforts can make a difference.

Also, there is a difference between thought and action, between knowing what is the right thing to do and being able to actually do it. The self-help genre aims to bridge this gap, by showing us ways of making it happen.

Often, the need for self-help prescriptions is a function of time. At critical moments of our lives, for instance, when we lose a loved one, we find that what comforts us most is the cliched, but heartfelt support expressed by those close to us. We don't look for brilliance in condolence messages; we look for a sign that, at this moment, we are not alone. At difficult times, the most ordinary messages can have a profoundly comforting effect.

To judge the success of this genre either by the outcomes it delivers or the quality of the input it provides, would then be a mistake. Its primary role is to make us all feel legitimate and to give us a path to believing in a better self or an improved future. To be heard, to be spoken to, and to be given hope is a special thing, no matter if the package that it comes in feels intellectually deficient.

santosh365@gmail.com

Will financial capital beat voter apathy & keep date with polls?

Mumbai Will Seek To Boost Turnout, Which Crossed 50% Only Thrice Since 1991

Reeba.Zachariah
@timesgroup.com

Mumbai: Today, Mumbai's corporate honchos will trade their suits for sneakers as queue up to vote. Reliance Industries chairman Mukesh Ambani and Tata Sons chairman N Chandrasekaran will cast their votes at Villa Theresa High School on Peddar Road, while Mahindra Group boss Anand Mahindra will exercise his franchise at Walsingham School in Malabar Hill.

Section 135 B of the Representation of the People Act mandates businesses and establishments in the voting area declare a paid holiday on voting day. Essential services, including hospitals and electricity providers, have implemented flexible schedules to ensure that both civic duties and critical services are maintained.

"To facilitate casting of votes on Monday, functional



Poll officials carrying EVMs and other election-related material ahead of duty on the eve of the 5th phase of LS elections, in Mumbai, on Sunday

heads may allow employees to either report late or leave early up to a maximum duration of three hours if their duty timings are between 7am and 5pm," read the memo of a news media outlet.

At air conditioning and commercial refrigeration major Blue Star, "employees in customer service and those attending to emergency operations will be given compensatory off," said the company's MD B.Thiagarajan.

In a city notorious for voter apathy, authorities have been going all out to boost the turn-

out and bring it closer to the 2019 Lok Sabha polls' national average of 67%. Mumbai's overall voting percentage has risen over 50% only three times since 1991. In 2019 polls, the six Lok Sabha constituencies in Mumbai recorded a voter turnout of 55%. However, debates have emerged in certain quarters on whether providing an election holiday results in higher voter turnout.

"Employees are vital for success in any organisation and for the nation. Enabling them to vote without work commitments can be a signif-

icant catalyst for increasing voter turnout," said Homesy's head of people's process Neha Mishra.

However, the fact that election day in Mumbai is on a Monday, the first day of the corporate week, may dampen enthusiasm due to the pressure of meeting various deadlines. Blackstone-backed Aahar Housing Finance MD Rishi Anand said: "While voting is not obligatory, a day off will definitely encourage voters to cast their ballot." vote but not force them to do so. "If they do vote, it will help in deciding who will be the people's representative to run the country on our behalf."

Meanwhile, on a lighter note, the National Restaurant Association of India's Mumbai chapter is offering a "democracy discount" on Monday and Tuesday, providing a 20% reduction on dine-in bills to those who cast their votes. An inked finger will be mandatory to avail the offer.

Pune builder's 17-yr-old son rams Porsche into bike, 2 techies killed

Gitesh.Shelke
@timesgroup.com

Pune: Two young software engineers died after a Porsche Taycan, driven by the 17-year-old son of a prominent builder, hit their motorcycle near a pub in the upscale neighbourhood of Kalyaninagar in Pune around 2.30am Sunday. The driver was detained and Juvenile Justice Board (JJB) released him later with conditions. Police identified the deceased as Aneesh Awadhia, 24, and Ashwini Koshta, 24, both from Madhya Pradesh. They had studied at a Pune engineering college before joining a software company.

According to the police,



Mangled remains of the car. It also hit a car and a two-wheeler before coming to a stop

the accident occurred when Awadhia was dropping Koshta home. The Porsche struck their bike from behind, dragging Koshta 50ft.

The vehicle also hit a

parked car and a two-wheeler before coming to a stop.

Aneesh's friend Aqib Ramzan Mulla, 23, witnessed the accident and filed a complaint. Mulla, along with passers-by, chased the Porsche, which had its airbags deployed, hindering the driver's visibility. People pulled the driver and his two friends — classmates from a prominent Pune school — out, thrashed them, and wrecked the car before police detained the trio. DCP Vijay Magar said: "Preliminary investigation revealed that the driver and his friends were returning home from a pub in Mundhwa. We have collected the driver's blood samples to check for alcohol."

Dalit couple in MP beaten and paraded with garland of shoes

Bhopal: A Dalit couple was paraded with garlands of shoes, tied to a pillar and thrashed by members of an influential family in a village of MP's Ashoknagar district on Friday. Police rescued the couple but none of the accused has yet been arrested.

Karan Singh (46) and wife Betibai (40) had been away from Kilara in Mungoli region, 180km from Bhopal, for the past three months fearing harassment by a strongman from the village. The dispute between the two families started after the couple's son was accused of molesting a woman from the influential family. The couple had repeatedly requested police protection but received no assistance. When they returned to Kilara Friday evening, they were targeted by the family Kanna suffered a fractured leg and Betibai multiple wounds. TNN

Wrong implant inserted during hand surgery, allege Kerala youth's kin

Kozhikode: Yet another allegation of medical negligence surfaced at Kozhikode medical college after the relatives of a youth, who underwent surgery on Saturday, alleged that a wrong implant was inserted in his dislocated joint. The Kothi

native had fractured his forearm and dislocated a joint following a two-wheeler accident on May 12. He was initially treated at the Beach Hospital and later referred to Kozhikode medical college and a surgery was performed on him on

Saturday noon. Medical college authorities strongly refuted the allegation of using a wrong implant. "A plate was fixed on the broken forearm and a K-wire was inserted from outside to the dislocated joint. The cut end of K-

wire was left protruding outside to prevent its migration inside and it will be removed after four weeks," said Dr Jacob Mathew, head of the orthopaedic department. Medical college police registered a case over the incident. TNN

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Tender Notice

Union Bank of India invites vendors for following items. **GeM Bid No- GEM/2024/B/4958966Dated:18.05.2024**

Item/Job Description - Bid for Supply and Implementation of Application Programming Interface Management Solution

Bid End Date/Time - 10.06.2024 16:00 hours

For other details and downloading of bid document, please visit Government e_Market (GeM) Place portal <https://gem.gov.in> or Bank's website www.unionbankofindia.co.in for participation in the tender.

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I Charvi, D/o Girish K, R/at No.65, 6th Main, 2nd Stage, K H B Colony, Basaveswaranagara, Bengaluru has changed my name from G. R. Chaya to CHARVI for all future purposes

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I Rajat Duggal r/o D504 Ajmera Infinity E city 1 Bengaluru have changed my son's name from Jash Duggal to Jash Duggal for all purpose.

NORTH CENTRAL RAILWAY E-Tender Notice

Divisional Railway Manager (Works) N.C. Railway, Jhansi for and behalf of President of India invites sealed "Open Tender" through on Line (E-Tendering) for the following work.

Description of Work: Supply, installation and commissioning of electronic type track-based rail lubricator (carry down effect of 1 Km) in Jhansi-Manikpur, Lalitpur - Khajuraho & Mahoba-Khajuraho section under sub-division of ADEN MBA. **E-Tender No.:** JHS-ENGG-E-2024-96

Approx Cost : ₹ 41477144.41 **Earnest Money :** ₹ 357400.00

Description of Work: Supply, installation and commissioning of electronic type track-based rail lubricator (carry down effect of 1 Km) in Jhansi-Manikpur, Khairar - Bhimsen, Lalitpur - Khajuraho, Mahoba - Khajuraho & Bansapahar - Ohan section under sub-division of ADEN/BNDA. **E-Tender No.:** JHS-ENGG-E-2024-99

Approx Cost : ₹ 49743939.00 **Earnest Money :** ₹ 398700.00

Date of closing of all Tender: 14.06.2024 at 15:00 hrs. **Date of Completion/period from issue acceptance letter:** 60 Months. Tender online can be submitted up to 15:00 hrs on 14.06.2024. For full details and submission of bid please see the Indian Railways website www.ireps.gov.in 878/24(DG)

North central railways @CPRONCR @northcentralrailway www.nctr.indianrailways.gov.in

NORTH CENTRAL RAILWAY E-TENDERING TENDER NOTICE Dated 16.05.2024

For & on behalf of President of India, Sr. Divisional Mechanical Engineer (C&W), Prayagraj North Central Railway, Prayagraj invites OPEN E-Tenders in prescribed forms, from reputed contractors with adequate experience and financial capability for the under mentioned work up to Date & time of closing of tender on GeM website-

GeM Bid No: GEM/2024/B/4948436 Dated 16.05.2024

Name of work: Custom Bid for Services Comprehensive work of Mechanized and Manual Cleaning of Kanpur Coaching Depot and premises area for the period of Four Years.

Tender system: Two packet system **Tender Value:** 1,59,88,752/-

EMD: 2,29,950/- **Cost of E-tender Form:** NIL **Period of Work:** 04 Years

Date of publishing on GeM website: 16.05.2024. **Bid End Date / Time:** 07.06.2024 At 14:00 Hrs. **Note-1.** The complete information along with tender booklet of above E-Tenders will be available/ uploaded since Date of publishing on GeM website and shall be remained on Website www.GeM.gov.in on the due date of tender opening. 2. Bids other than in the form of E-Bids shall not be accepted against above tenders. For this purpose, vendors are required to get themselves registered with GeM website. 3. Document being attached should be signed by the tenderer. 4. E-Tender Forms shall be issued free of cost to all tenderers. 5. In case of any difficulty helpdesk available on the website of GeM may be approached. 6. Online E-Tender can be submitted up to Date & time of closing of tender. 7. JV bidders are allowed to participate in instant tender. 872/24 (P)

North central railways @www.nctr.indianrailways.gov.in @northcentralrailway @CPRONCR

NORTH CENTRAL RAILWAY E-Tender Notice No: 2024-May-03 Dated: 16.05.2024

Divisional Railway Manager (Engineering), N.C. Rly Agra for and on behalf of the President of India invites "Open Tender" through on Line only (E-Tendering) for the following works. The details of the tender are as under-

S.No.: 1 Tender No.: 2024-May-03-01 **Approx. Cost (Rs.):** ₹ 32046910.80

Description of work : Provision of minimum essential amenities & facilities for divyangjan At Kiraoli, Papra & Nadbai stations.

S.No.: 2 Tender No.: 2024-May-03-02 **Approx. Cost (Rs.):** ₹ 22516488.32

Description of work : Provision of bore well and Over OHT for PFS with pipeline arrangements PTLI (50KL), MIQ (50KL), KLB (50KL), BR (50KL), & BIQ (50KL) stations in and provision of 04 nos. hand pumps at platform of AED, NGLT, BAMA & SNPR Halt stations in IDH-BXN section.

S.No.: 3 Tender No.: 2024-May-03-03 **Approx. Cost (Rs.):** ₹ 28062096.43

Description of work : Provision of bore well and Over OHT for PFS with pipeline arrangements MURD (110KL), IK (50KL), PPEA (50KL) & HK (50KL) stations in IDH-BKI section & FAB (100KL), UDMR (50KL) in BHA-ETW section and provision of 03 nos. hand pumps at platform of NHB, TBL & BUDA Halt stations in IDH-BKI section.

For full details and submission of bid please see the Indian Railways website www.ireps.gov.in. Tenders can only be submitted through web portal www.ireps.gov.in up to 15.00 hrs on 10.04.2024. 879/24 (A)

North central railways @www.nctr.indianrailways.gov.in @northcentralrailway @CPRONCR

CHITTARANJAN LOCOMOTIVE WORKS CORRIGENDUM

No. PCMM/CLW/HWH-E-Procurement/CORRIGENDUM/24/10 Dated: 17.05.2024. The following Corrigendum of E-Tender's is for supply of materials for manufacture of Electric Locomotive. The Prospective/likely suppliers are requested to look up the website www.ireps.gov.in for detailed instructions. These are E-Tenders only electronic offer bids shall be accepted. SI. No.; Tender Notice no.; Tender No.; Tender Opening Date are as follows:

[01]; SI. No. 119 of PCMM/CLW/HWH-E-Procurement/24/25 Dated: 24/04/2024; 25245073; Tender Opening Date is to be read as "30/05/2024" instead of existing entry; [02]; SI. No. 112 of PCMM/CLW/HWH-E-Procurement/24/24 Dated: 19/04/2024; 25245054; Tender Opening Date is to be read as "27/05/2024" instead of existing entry; [03]; SI. No. 111 of PCMM/CLW/HWH-E-Procurement/24/24 Dated: 19/04/2024; 29245072; Tender Opening Date is to be read as "23/05/2024" instead of existing entry; [04]; SI. No. 110 of PCMM/CLW/HWH-E-Procurement/24/24 Dated: 19/04/2024; 29245028; Tender Opening Date is to be read as "29/05/2024" instead of existing entry; [05]; SI. No. 106 of PCMM/CLW/HWH-E-Procurement/24/24 Dated: 19/04/2024; 29245023; Tender Opening Date is to be read as "28/05/2024" instead of existing entry; [06]; SI. No. 48 of PCMM/CLW/HWH-E-Procurement/24/15 Dated: 08/03/2024; 29245019; Tender Opening Date is to be read as "23/05/2024" instead of existing entry; [07]; SI. No. 105 of PCMM/CLW/HWH-E-Procurement/24/23 Dated: 16/04/2024; 29245030; Tender Opening Date is to be read as "23/05/2024" instead of existing entry. PR8/424 PCMM/CLW/HWH

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WESTERN RAILWAY - RAJKOT DIVISION SUPPLYING & LOADING OF BALLAST

Let the investigation continue, and everything will be clear: Min

'Public Is with Us, You Can See How Much Love Given To AAP'

Continued from page 1

They arrested me, Sanjay Singh, Manish Sisodia and Satyendar Jain. Yesterday, they even arrested my PA. Raghav Chadha has just come back; now they are saying that he will also be arrested. They are saying that Atishi, Saurabh Bharadwaj and Kailash Gahlot will also be arrested soon," he said.

He said that in the coming days, the party office would be locked. "ED's lawyer has already given a statement in court that AAP's bank accounts will be frozen immediately after the elections," the CM said.

After the speech, Kejriwal led a march towards BJP's headquarters and sat on the road as police barricades prevented them from reaching the office. There was heavy police presence on Deen Dayal Upadhyay Marg.



Raghav Chadha, Sanjay Singh and Arvind Kejriwal at the party office

RS MP Sanjay Singh, ministers Gopal Rai and Kailash Gahlot, and other senior functionaries were present. After staging a protest for around half an hour, they left.

Singh said, "As per his promise, Kejriwal himself came with other functionaries of the party to get arrested, but they (BJP) left the ground and ran away." Gahlot said, "We waited

for over half an hour, they could have arrested us. The public is with us, you can see how much love has been given to Kejriwalji and AAP because of the good done by us. Let the investigation continue, and everything will be clear."

Earlier in the day, Delhi Police had ramped up security around BJP's office. To manage the crowd,

AAP taking to streets to save accused: Maliwal

New Delhi: As AAP functionaries marched to BJP's headquarters in Delhi to protest against the arrest of chief minister's aide, Bibhav Kumar, in an assault case, Rajya Sabha MP Swati Maliwal accused her party of taking to the streets to "save the accused".

"There was a time when we all used to come out on the streets to get justice for Nirbhaya. Today, after 12 years, we all came out on the streets to save the accused who made the CCTV footage disappear and formatted the phone. I wish so much effort had been put in for Manish Sisodia. Had he been here, maybe things wouldn't have been so bad for me," Maliwal said on X. TNN

Chhattisgarh Maoist drops AK-47 for pen, clears Class X exam

Partha Behera
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Raipur: Plucked from his classroom by Maoists at age 16, handed a rifle and dragged through jungles of Abujmahar, Libaru Korram aka Naxal Diwakar always yearned to return to school. He did. And, has now cleared his Class 10 examination. Hailed as a hero by fellow surrendered cadres, Korram proudly shows a worn printout of his marks.

"I was taught to fire AK-47, SLR, Insas, and .303 rifles. I'd much rather wield a pen," Korram, who carried a bounty of Rs 1.4 lakh, told TOI. His journey is inspiring school dropouts in Maoist-affected villages to return to education. Korram has now set his sights on passing Class 12, and helping his wife, Lakshmi, an ex-Maoist, clear her Class 10 exam.

"Diwakar, now 34, was taken by Maoists when he was in Class 5 at an Abujmahar school. Maoists forced him into a vasectomy, which was reversed after he surrendered to police in Kawardha in 2021. He has since married a woman from Suk-



Surrendered Maoist Libaru Korram plans to clear Class 12 exam and help his wife, also an ex-Maoist, clear Class 10 exam

ma," Kawardha SP Abhishek Pallava said. "Diwakar's 35% is equivalent to 90% marks achieved by students who have access to all resources."

"I cannot forget the day Maoists took me away from school," said Korram. He was initially used to recruit other tribal boys and after 2017, was part of operations in Abujmahar and Narayanpur. "After surrendering, he had no interest in joining police force, but favoured a position in education or health department. He wanted to continue his education," said the SP. He tried twice but failed. Not one to give up, he tried again, and passed this time.

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Krishnendu Mukherjee & Monotosh Chakraborty | TNN

Kolkata: A 59-year-old forest guard, on the verge of retirement, was hacked to death while three other forest workers escaped by jumping in the river inside Sundarbans Tiger Reserve on Saturday night after an alleged attack by Bangladeshi fishermen who had entered Indian waters. It has also highlighted acute staff shortage in STR, where the current strength of forest guards is 36 in contrast to the sanctioned strength of 110.

at Netidhopani camp. Sources said such a heinous incident has not occurred in the tiger reserve area in recent times. In 2019, a group of foresters was assaulted by villagers in South 24 Parganas division while probing a tiger poaching case. Last Dec, forest dept arrested six Bangladeshi fishermen who had entered Indian waters. It has also highlighted acute staff shortage in STR, where the current strength of forest guards is 36 in contrast to the sanctioned strength of 110.

Delhi Police leaking 'selective' info to tarnish party's image: AAP min

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: Aam Aadmi Party minister Saurabh Bharadwaj on Sunday hit out at Delhi Police, accusing it of operating at the behest of BJP. He alleged that police were leaking "selective and incorrect" information to the media to tarnish the party's image before the elections.

Addressing a press conference, Bharadwaj alleged: "As soon as Swati Maliwal called Delhi Police, not only was the information leaked by police, but the photo of the DD entry was also released. Why did Delhi Police do that? Because they have a vested interest in it; their political agenda is being served."

He added: "I have never seen the photo of a complaint being shared with the entire country, especially that of a woman. Who leaked it to the media? None other than BJP's Delhi Police. Maliwal

Maliwal case: BJP accuses Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal of 'political drama'

New Delhi: Delhi BJP chief Virendra Sachdeva slammed AAP supremo Arvind Kejriwal on Sunday and alleged that the chief minister was enacting a "political drama" over Swati Maliwal's "assault" charge, while maintaining silence on the issue. Sachdeva asked how had AAP concluded that BJP was involved in the matter when Maliwal, an AAP Rajya Sabha member, was allegedly assaulted at Kejriwal's residence by his close aide Bibhav Kumar.

"Maliwal is an AAP leader. The incident occurred at Kejriwal's residence. She was beaten was confirmed by AAP MP Sanjay Singh, then where is BJP in this whole matter," he said. TNN

did not file her complaint, which BJP did not take well."

Maliwal had on Monday alleged in a PCR call that she was assaulted by Kejriwal's personal assistant, Bibhav Kumar, at CM's residence. This led to police arriving at the scene. Later, she went to Civil Lines police station to file an FIR. However, after receiving some phone calls, she left. After a couple of days,

she filed an FIR, following which Kumar was arrested.

AAP minister said that everyone knew that Kumar was with CM in Lucknow and, yet, "Delhi Police spread the news that Kumar was absconding. He (Kumar) had a flight ticket in his name to go there." Bharadwaj added that Kumar had himself written an email to Delhi Police, stating that he was ready to cooperate.

Cops ready 50 questions for Kumar

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: Delhi Police is learnt to have questioned members of the security team stationed at chief minister Arvind Kejriwal's residence as part of its investigation into the alleged assault on AAP Rajya Sabha MP Swati Maliwal, sources said on Sunday.

The officers confiscated additional CCTV footage and DVRs from CM's residence on Sunday to determine the sequence of events and identify individuals present at the time of the incident. Those identified will be questioned accordingly. The seized footage has been forwarded for forensic analysis. A special team has been assembled by police to interrogate Kejriwal's personal assistant, Bibhav Kumar, who is currently in custody. A questionnaire consisting of approximately 50 questions has been prepared for him.

Jaipur tourist loses an eye in J&K terrorist attack

Ashish Mehta
@timesgroup.com

Jaipur: Sunny Khan, a 38-year-old resident of Pathanon Ka Chowk in Jaipur's Brahmपुरi neighbourhood, has lost vision in one eye and faces the risk of partial vision loss in the other. He is currently battling for his life in the ICU of a military hospital in south Kashmir's Anantnag. His wife Farah Khan is also in critical condition.

The couple, along with 50 members of their extended family, had gone on a holiday to Kashmir on May 10, intending to return on May 20. But their vacation took a tragic turn when terrorists



The son of BJP neta Aijaz Ahmad Sheikh is being carried by his relative for the last rites of the former sarpanch in Shopian on Sunday. Aijaz was killed in a terrorist attack in Jammu and Kashmir's Heerapora on Saturday

attacked them Saturday evening while they were heading to a resort in Pahalgam for dinner.

"Some people removed their blankets and started shooting. A bullet pierced my

brother's eye. My sister-in-law has a shoulder wound," Sunny's elder brother Parvez Khan, 39, recounted Sunday the horror that unfolded before his eyes the previous night. "Oh, we're so happy coming to Kashmir!" he exclaimed with grief and sarcasm from Anantnag.

His brother is in ventilator support. "My brother's one eye has been removed, and the other is being operated upon," said Parvez. He and his wife are taking care of Sunny and Farah's two children. Since the attack, Parvez has been inundated with phone calls. "Just pray," he implored. "What has my brother done, or our family? Why was he targeted?"

Labourers from J'khand shot in Imphal, one dead

Guwahati: Unidentified assailants killed a 41-year-old migrant labourer from Jharkhand and wounded two fellow workers from the same state in a shooting around 8pm on Saturday in Imphal, marking the first instance of an attack on people from outside the Northeast since ethnic conflict erupted in Manipur in May last year, reports Kangan Kalita.

The body of the deceased, identified as Ram Hangsada, is kept at the morgue of Regional Institute of Medical Sciences in Imphal. Bittu Murmu, 22, and Mitalan Soren, 50, are recuperating at Raj Medicity in Imphal East, police said Sunday. "The trio came from Godda district in Jharkhand. The wounded men's condition is stable," an officer said.

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PM promises return of seized bribe money to poor in J'khand

Says Legal Advice Sought To Thrash Out Process

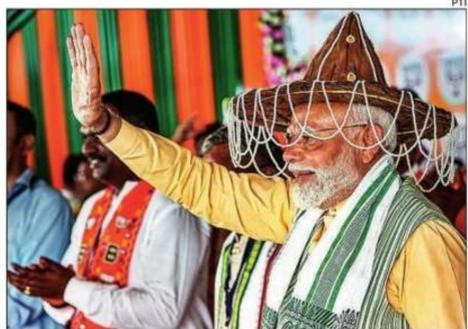
B Sridhar@timesgroup.com

Ghatshila (Jamshedpur): Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced Sunday that the bribe money seized in Jharkhand will be returned to its rightful owners, with legal advice being sought on the process. "The ill-gotten money will not be kept in govt treasury. It will be given back to the poor who were looted by Congress-JMM-RJD functionaries," he said at an election rally in Moubhandar, Ghatshila.

Modi criticised INDIA bloc parties for the state's lack of development, asserting that corrupt parties should not be elected. He claimed that Congress failed to work for the poor and marginalised during its 60 years in office. "The mindset of Congress is such that their functionaries consider the country their personal property," he said.

Without taking his name, the PM accused Congress MP Rahul Gandhi of adopting Maoist tactics, saying: "Like Naxalites who don't let investors work without paying extortion, Congress's shehzada is doing the same... His language is anti-corporate. Investors who come to meet me say they will not invest in Congress-governed states as the party's ideology is anti-corporate."

The PM questioned whether INDIA bloc parties



PM Modi during an election rally in Jamshedpur on Sunday

in Maharashtra agree with the Congress MP's views on corporates and investors.

Modi also criticised JMM, noting that a former CM (He-manth Soren) is jailed for land grabbing, including attempts to seize military land. He also accused RJD functionaries of acquiring land from job seekers in exchange for employment, questioning their trustworthiness. "Do they qualify to be trusted by the people?" he asked.

Modi addressed the stalled Dhalbhumgarh airport project, blaming JMM-led coalition govt for creating obstacles. He praised BJP-led NDA govt's efforts in improving road infrastructure, reducing the travel time between Ranchi and Jamshed-

pur from six hours to three.

Responding to Modi's remarks, JMM general secretary Supriyo Bhattacharya said the PM should have provided hope to voters in his first visit to Moubhandar in a decade. "The people of Moubhandar, Musaboni, Jaduguda, Ghatshila were expecting the PM to speak about the closed mines of Hindustan Copper Ltd (HCL). He did not say a thing," Bhattacharya said, while claiming that the crowd at Modi's rally was brought in from different parts of Kolhan division.

He refuted PM Modi's statement about NH-33, asserting that its rapid construction occurred under JMM's governance, not during BJP's tenure.

Shah: It's Ram Bhakts vs those who fired at them

Lucknow: Union home minister Amit Shah on Sunday said people will have to choose between 'Ram bhakts' who ensured completion of Ram temple in Ayodhya and those who were responsible for opening fire on 'kar sevaks', report **Shalabh & Kapil Dixit**.

Addressing rallies in Prayagraj and Machhlishahr constituencies, Shah said those talking about "bringing back triple talaq and Article 370, putting lock on Ram temple and quashing CAA should not be allowed to form govt".

"After four phases of polling, BJP has already achieved the figure to form a majority govt and is heading towards its target of 400 seats," said Shah.

Training his guns at Congress MP Rahul Gandhi and SP president Akhilesh Yadav, Shah said voters should hold them accountable for minority appeasement.

"Congress remained in office for 70 years but could not construct Ram temple in Ayodhya. SP govt was responsible for firing on 'kar sevaks' during the temple movement," Shah said.

Lauding Yogi govt in UP, Shah said the CM eradicated mafia raj in state.

'Modi has lost confidence; MVA will win at least 50% of Maha seats'

Undeterred by the unprecedented rebellion, **Sharad Pawar** embarked on a new mission, he relaunched himself, forming a new party with a handful of supporters and is determined to show miracles in the Lok Sabha polls. In an interview with **TOI's Prafulla Marpakwar**, Sharad Pawar spoke at length on the formation of the INDIA bloc, its priorities and the future of MVA comprising Shiv Sena (UBT), NCP (SP) & Congress. Excerpts:

PM Modi says opposition leaders are more focused on setting up their children...

■ I think Modi's opinion is wrong; it is not a crime to follow your parents' footsteps. Many doctors feel that their son or daughter should take up the medical profession, similar is the case with politicians too. All will depend on his/her professional competence, if he has ability, he will shine in life; all will depend on the capacity and professionalism of the individual.

PM Modi says BJP will get a historic mandate...

■ Modi's opinion appears to be unrealistic. Ever since the Lok Sabha elections were declared, he has given a slogan, 'Abki baar, 400 paar' (This time, more than 400 seats). I do not know on what basis he has arrived at a figure of 400, which is very difficult to achieve. I am doubtful if BJP will reach the majority figure in view of severe discontent against NDA across the country. In all southern states, NDA's performance will be dismal. In addition, it will be a disappointing situation for BJP in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and UP among several other states.

Are you sure that the INDIA bloc will form govt. In that event who will be the Prime Minister?

■ We, in the INDIA bloc, at the end of four phases of polling, are confident that it should not be difficult for the INDIA bloc to dislodge the Modi-led NDA govt. With regard to our prime ministerial candidate, it will be decided in the meeting of newly elected MPs. A few decades ago, when Morarji Desai was elected as Prime Minister, a decision was taken in the meeting of the MPs, Then Jai Prakash Narayan had taken a lead in the formation of the new govt.

What will be your priorities?

■ Our top priority will be to provide a stable govt, draft a comprehensive action plan for providing remunerative price for agriculture produce, tackle unemployment, and halt farmer suicides and spiralling prices of essential commodities. Above all, halt gross abuse of central agencies. Investigations by ED and CBI is a matter of concern for people from different walks of life.

PM Modi is frequently ad-



TOI INTERVIEW

dressing election rallies in Maharashtra...

■ I think Modi is the first Prime Minister who is concentrating on Maharashtra. It appears that he has lost confidence, therefore, has chosen Maharashtra for extensive campaigning. In the past, PMs like Jawaharlal Nehru and Indira Gandhi would address just one or two election rallies.

What will be the outcome of the Lok Sabha elections in Maharashtra?

■ In my opinion, the performance of Maha Vikas Aghadi will be impressive, it will win at least 50% of the seats. I was stunned and surprised by the language used by the PM during his campaign in Maharashtra. Shockingly, he called me Bhakti Aatma (wandering soul) and described Shiv Sena (UBT) as fake. Such lan-

guage is not expected from a PM; he has lowered the dignity of the post. I am not disturbed by the PM's comment. In the past too, social worker Anna Hazare and former BMC official G R Khairnar had levelled serious charges against me, now no one knows the whereabouts of these two persons.

Several legislators have quit NCP and Shiv Sena. Will it have an impact on the election outcome?

■ In my opinion, even if legislators have joined hands with Ajit Pawar and Eknath Shinde, grassroot-level workers are still with the original parties. I have seen in most of my meetings, there is a massive presence of members of the younger generations. Similar is the case with Shiv Sainiks, they are still loyal to Uddhav Thackeray.

For a long time, you were a voter in Baramati, you shifted to Mumbai, and now again, your vote is in Baramati...

■ It's a fact that my name was in Baramati parliamentary constituency. When I took a lot of interest in the cricket association, I was told that if you are a permanent resident of Mumbai, then only you can contest the election to the association. After one attains the age of 70, one is not eligible to contest the election, then I decided to shift my name from Mumbai to Baramati, my home town.

Stampede-like situation as Akhilesh, Rahul leave rally without speaking

Kapil Dixit@timesgroup.com

Prayagraj: Chaos prevailed for over an hour at a joint rally of INDIA bloc — attended by Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav and Congress MP Rahul Gandhi — at Padila in Phulpur on Sunday. The SP chief left the venue without addressing the crowd after he found the microphones not working, leaving SP supporters in a frenzy. They damaged the barricading and created a ruckus which caused injuries to three persons.

"As soon as SP national president Akhilesh Yadav left the dais after he failed to address the rally, party supporters went berserk and jumped in front of the dais," an eyewitness said.

The SP national president had arrived at the dais around 1.25pm and left the spot at 1.55pm.

Later on Sunday evening,



Police personnel try to control the gathering during Rahul Gandhi and SP chief Akhilesh Yadav's rally in UP's Prayagraj district on Sunday

Akhilesh posted in Hindi on X: "It wasn't just barricades that were broken. Records of victory margins would also be broken in the elections for Phulpur and Allahabad seats."

"The sea of humanity that had turned up at the two meetings indicates that INDIA bloc candidates are all set to register a historic win. The enthusiasm of the people also predicts a historic defeat for BJP, which will

thereafter be wiped off public memory," the post said.

In a video shared on the official social media handles of both SP and Congress, people on the stage could be heard asking supporters to move back. The appeals made from the stage failed to have any effect on the crowd. Then, Rahul and Akhilesh had a brief discussion before they left the stage while being surrounded by their security staff.

Over 50% of BJP, Cong candidates have assets worth over ₹5cr: Study

Dipak Dash@timesgroup.com

New Delhi: More than 50% of the 768 candidates fielded by BJP and Congress in the seven phases of the ongoing Lok Sabha elections have assets worth more than Rs 5 crore each and a little over 27% are from 'dynastic' backgrounds, according to a study conducted by a not-for-profit organisation.

Prajatantra Foundation's study has revealed that 'financial status' and 'dynastic background' as the two most prevalent "gatekeeping" factors when it comes to selecting candidates. Beyond dynastic politics, the most common pathways for candidates are party organisational politics (15.4%), local politics (12.2%), and student politics (9.5%).

"Of the 27.6% of dynastic candidates, 71.2% are sec-

The report highlights how Karnataka, Bihar and Maharashtra have the highest percentage of dynastic candidates among larger states and Haryana leads among smaller states

ond-generation politicians... the sons, daughters, nieces, or nephews of current politicians. Another 25% are first-generation dynasts, meaning they are siblings or spouses of current politicians. Approximately 3% of dynastic candidates come from multi-generational political families, underscoring the deep-rooted legacy and continuity of political power within certain families in India," the study said.

The report also highlights how Karnataka, Bihar and Maharashtra have the highest percentage of dynastic candidates among larger states and Haryana leads among smaller states.

As per the report, the two parties have given only 13.4% of tickets to women candidates, and over 50% of them have dynastic backgrounds.

The study, which has collated information on 10 parameters from candidates' affidavits, their teams, stringer networks and news reports, mentions that money emerges as the most prevalent gatekeeping barrier. It said that around 81% of the candidates have assets worth Rs 1 crore or more. "This is closely followed by individuals with criminal antecedents, who constitute 38.8% of the candidates," it said.

Hour before PM rally, Bengal BJP MP joins TMC

Jhargram: Bengal BJP's outgoing Jhargram MP Kumar Hembram joined Trinamool Congress, just an hour before PM Narendra Modi's rally on Sunday in Kharagpur, 42km away, reports **Sujoy Khanra**.

Denied renomination by BJP, Hembram criticised his former party's "imposition of Hindutva on tribal identity" and pledged to campaign for TMC candidates in the ongoing Lok Sabha polls.

While inducting Hembram, TMC general secretary Abhishek Banerjee said: "Jhargram played a crucial role in ensuring that CM Mamata Banerjee came back to office for a third time in 2021. People gave us all four seats. In 2019, BJP won this seat by 11,700 votes."

"Now, Hembram himself says after five years with BJP, he has realised they are 'jana jati birodhi' and 'Adivasi birodhi'," he added.

Hembram said his decision was well-considered, praising Trinamool's work in Jangalmahal over BJP's, adding that he didn't harbour any personal ambitions before making the switch.

3-time BJD MLA & ex-minister joins Odisha BJP

Bhubaneswar: Three-time MLA from Nimapara and former Odisha minister Samir Ranjan Dash quit BJD on Sunday and joined BJP after he was denied a ticket for the assembly polls in the state, reports **Debabrata Mohapatra**. Two sitting MPs and seven MLAs of BJD resigned ahead of polls this time and joined BJP.

Dash represented Nimapara in the assembly in 2009, 2014 and 2019. "I switched loyalty to BJP after being neglected by BJD. BJD leadership lost its confidence in me. After losing their trust, it is not proper for me to stay in the party," Dash said.

Kharge poster defaced at Bengal Cong office day after spat with Adhir

Rohit Khanna @timesgroup.com

Kolkata: A day after Mallikarjun Kharge and Congress's Bengal chief Adhir Chowdhury crossed swords over CM Mamata Banerjee's role in INDIA bloc, ink was smeared Sunday on a poster of the AICC president in front of the state party's headquarters in Kolkata. Party workers washed the ink off with milk.

Chowdhury was in Behrampore and asked Congress functionaries to file an FIR about the defacement outside the headquarters, Bidhan Bhavan. This was done soon after.

Kharge had said TMC chief Mamata was "very much a part of INDIA bloc". Told that this did not align with Chowdhury's views, Kharge asserted it was the party high command that

EC transfers SP of Purulia, 3 others

EC has transferred Purulia SP, Avijit Banerjee, five days ahead of polls in the district on May 25. Similarly, SDPO of Contai in East Midnapore, Dibakar Das, along with two officers-in-charge were also transferred. EC had received complaints against these officers, reports **Debashis Konar**. An official said EC found that Purulia SP had played a partisan role and it also previously received similar complaints when he was SP of Diamond Harbour.

took final decisions on alliances. Chowdhury responded to this with a veiled dig at Mamata, saying he could not be expected to "appease someone who wanted to decimate Congress in Bengal".

Rohit Pawar gives 'proof' of booth capturing in Beed; probe ordered

Prasad Joshi @timesgroup.com

Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar: After NCP (SCP) candidate from Beed, Bajrang Sonawane, alleged booth capturing in some places during voting for the Lok Sabha seat on May 13, DC and returning officer Deepa Mudhol Munde ordered an inquiry on Sunday.

Rohit Pawar, the party's MLA from Karjat Jankhed, on Saturday produced three videos & an audio clip to support the charges. Sonawane has demanded a re-poll. Pawar said on X, "Will Parli witness goonda raj instead of democracy in future? If this continues, Maharashtra will be soon reduced to UP. Will EC stop all this or will it remain a mute spectator?" He demanded an impartial probe into the alleged incidents of booth capturing instead of merely registering offences of violation of model code.

Munde said there is no clarity on location in the videos. "We are taking help of cyber cell to find out the locations. Once they are identified, we will record statements of polling officials and staff," she said.

"It will be too early to arrive at any conclusion. We will submit a detailed report to EC," Munde added.

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In Bundelkhand, the fields are thirsty for water, people for change

Vishwa Mohan@timesgroup.com

Banda/Hamirpur: Six of the seven districts in the poll-bound Bundelkhand region of UP, spread over four parliamentary constituencies, come in the top 100 riskiest districts in the country in terms of their vulnerability to climate change and future hazards, and this is reflected on the ground in depressed agricultural activities, water scarcity and land degradation in all four Lok Sabha seats that will go to poll on Monday.

Out of 109 'very high risk' districts in the country, 22 fall in UP and six of them — Hamirpur, Banda, Chitrakoot, Mahoba, Jalaun and Jhansi — are in the Bundelkhand region, according to the vulnera-

bility assessment done by Indian Council of Agricultural Research. The list shows Hamirpur as the riskiest in UP followed by Banda. Nation-wide, Hamirpur is the ninth riskiest whereas Banda is at number 20 due to constant rise in minimum temperatures, extensive degraded land and high drought proneness.

The situation, that has affected farming operations, has already led to rural unemployment and migration. Though free ration and annual income support under PM-Kisan schemes are a help, farmers in the region desperately look for permanent irrigation facilities like what their counterparts in western UP have. Such facilities and other adaptation



Jal Saheli, a group of women water warriors, protesting for rejuvenation of the Gorari river in Simrawari area of UP's Jhansi district

measures will help them face the challenges of climate change in future.

"We cannot survive without irrigation facilities. Underground water is depleting quite fast. We use diesel pump sets for irrigation. But the high price of diesel and high

cost of deep boring make farming expensive," said Ashok Singh of Banda tehsil. Other villagers have similar concerns, saying their district needs industries so that more and more people get jobs.

Though the Centre has approved the Ken-Betwa river

linking project that will provide permanent irrigation facilities to 2.6 lakh hectares of land spread over Banda, Mahoba, Jhansi and Lalitpur districts of UP, it will take at least eight years for the project to get completed. The project envisages transfer of surplus water from Ken river to Betwa river through a 230-km concrete link canal.

"Betwa river is flowing through our district but we don't get its benefit due to lack of irrigation canal network like what western Uttar Pradesh has. We hope to get such a network once the Ken-Betwa river link project is completed but all people will leave villages by then," said Vinay Kumar Ahirwar of Nirni village in Hamirpur district.

Villagers in Lalitpur district of Jhansi parliamentary constituency have similar concerns. Jitendra Rajput of Kandhari Kalan village in Lalitpur district said, "Our village will also benefit from Ken-Betwa river link project, but no one knows when it will happen as nothing has been done so far on this project in my district."

Meanwhile, farmers in his and other villages of the district are using diesel pump sets for irrigation. "It is quite expensive and villagers have to depend on local moneylenders to meet their farm input cost every season. Annual income support of Rs 6,000 under PM-Kisan scheme is, however, a big help," said Rajput, who has five acres of land.

TOI LINE OF NO CONTROL SANDEEP ADHWARYU



EC asks T'gana CEO to act on Cong complaints

U.Sudhakarreddy @timesgroup.com

Hyderabad: Election Commission (EC) has directed Telangana chief electoral officer (CEO) to take appropriate action on several complaints filed by Congress leader G Niranjan against BJP and BRS leaders, including PM Narendra Modi. EC has forwarded Niranjan's complaint to the CEO for 'further appropriate action as per the extant laws and instructions' regarding complaints against PM Modi and BRS leader KT Rama Rao.

EC mentioned two complaints from Niranjan, one regarding the use of children in the campaign and the other on fabrication of Rahul Gandhi's speech. The Congress has filed a complaint against Modi, alleging that he was holding a child during the election campaign. Niranjan in his complaint alleged "Modi breached EC directions by stopping his car at Laxmipuram on his way to an election meeting on May 10 at Warangal, calling a child and her mother to his car, and taking the child in his arms for publicity and to influence voters."

"Irrespective of our complaint the previous day, Modi repeated the act during his election meeting at Narayanpet in Telangana by saying 'kitne pyaare bachche hai'. He also mentioned that a child wanted to give a photo to

The Congress has filed a complaint against Modi, alleging that he was holding a child during the election campaign

him and asked nearby persons to bring it to him. He mentioned that the opposition doesn't like the love of these children towards him," the complaint said.

In another complaint forwarded to the CEO by EC, Niranjan alleged that "Rahul Gandhi released the Congress 'Nyay Patra' on April 6 at Thukkuguda in Hyderabad, and explained various programmes of the party and its intention to take up a census of various sections of people and assured them benefits in accordance with their share in the population."

"BJP fabricated a false video of Rahul's speech and is propagating it as Congress planning to loot wealth from the people and intending to give it to Muslims," the complaint added. Niranjan also filed a complaint against BRS leader KT Rama Rao for alleged violation on the polling day on May 13. At the Nandi Hills polling station in Secunderabad parliament constituency, KTR said he voted for the party that brought Telangana and the leader who brought it.

Will preserve video footage of EVMs, EC assures court

New Delhi: Election Commission (EC) has told the Delhi high court it will preserve video footage of EVMs for Rampur Lok Sabha constituency in UP in accordance with protocol.

The commission's statement was in response to a petition filed by a lawyer contesting from Rampur. Advocate Mehmood Pracha, an independent candidate, had sought a direction to the EC, asking it to follow the Manual on Electronic Voting Machines for safeguarding the video footage. EC counsel Sidhant Kumar said the commission is bound to follow protocol for preservation of videography or CCTV coverage at various stages of the electoral process for every Lok Sabha constituency. Justice Sachin Datta took the EC's stand on record and disposed of the plea where it had earlier asked the commission to file an affidavit on the videography conducted and CCTV footage maintained with regard to EVMs. **TNN**



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BATTLEGROUND INDIA | APRIL 19-JUNE 4, 2024

Personal touch, spunk and spontaneity: How Priyanka lifted Amethi-Rae Bareilly campaign

Shalvee.Sharda@timesgroup.com

Rae Bareilly/Amethi: Recently, when Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi reached Bachrawan in Rae Bareilly for addressing an evening election gathering, the time window given by the police for the meeting had expired. That meant she couldn't use the public address system. Under-terred, the star campaigner got the venue's noisy genset shut down, sat atop her SUV and spoke extempore without a mike, with the crowd providing illumination with mobile-phone torches. Videos of the address rapidly went viral (see pic on right).

Several election analysts have noted that they are seeing a more spontaneous and articulate Priyanka in these elections. This was evident in her intensive campaign in Rae Bareilly and Amethi, where she was canvassing for brother Rahul and Gandhi family's close associate Kishori Lal Sharma. "Her campaign incorporated a fair dose of randomness and unpredictability. She stopped anywhere and walked up to anyone who welcomed her for



Congress workers say Priyanka Gandhi has energised the local party cadre after taking charge of campaigning in Rae Bareilly and Amethi

an interaction," said a Congress spokesperson.

Most palpably, her taking charge of the campaign energised Congress workers in the twin constituencies. In her maiden address to party workers, Priyanka said they had to pull up their socks and be ready to work 20 hours a day.

Those working with Priyanka said 'Didi' (as she is affectionately called) led by example. "She began her day with a quick strategy meet and hit the road by 10.30am, returning as late as 11pm," a

team member said. "After returning, she convened meetings to finalise the next day's schedule and retired only after midnight," he added. Her speeches generally began with warm greetings and an apology if she had reached the venue late. "Mera abhivadan sweekar kijiye aap sab aur maaf kijiyege thodi si vilamb ke liye. Aapko dhoop mein baithna pada (Please accept my greetings, and apologies for coming late and making you wait in the sun)," she said, at times mentioning the reason for the delay.

Her poll pitch has been sharp and she has been quick to respond to barbs and issues raised by the saffron camp. But more than these, Priyanka's personal touch has added to the enthusiasm of local people and workers. "The respect Priyanka shows to Sharma — who was dubbed as her 'peon' by some BJP leaders — has also been appreciated," said a Congress supporter. "Kishori Bhaiya ne aap sabka bahut khayal rakha hai itne saal. Wo aapke aur humare rishtey ka pul hain. Is baar pratyashi ban ke aaye

hain. Hum sab ko mil ke inki jeet sunishchit karni hai (All these years, brother Kishori has acted as a bridge between you and the party leadership. He is the candidate this time and we have to ensure his victory)," Priyanka said during a public meeting.

Often in her speeches, Priyanka has swiftly changed gears to aggressively attack BJP, PM Modi and the party's candidates before softening her tone again to explain to the people the importance of their vote. In a public meeting, she called Amethi

and Rae Bareilly "her family" and, with teary eyes, narrated how Amethi helped her recover from the tragic death of her father as she went from village to village to build the Congress organisation in 1999 for her mother's first election.

At a meeting in Kamalganj, when a woman talked about the problem of stray cattle while another recalled how she benefited from the self-help group network evolved during Rahul's tenure as Amethi MP, Priyanka seized the moment to target the saffron camp. "The BJP played politics and got the SHG scheme closed."

During a 'nukkad sabha' in Naseerabad, a youth walked up to Priyanka and pointed to a statue of former PM Rajiv Gandhi, urging her to offer floral tributes. Priyanka descended from the stage and almost ran to the statue, with the crowd following her.

"She's running on pure resolve. She barely eats through the day. Foxnuts and 'nimbu pani' are her staple. At times, she prefers a 'parantha aachar' roll and eats in between public meetings," said a Congress functionary.

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Shinde banks on connect in ground zero of battle for Balasaheb legacy

Manoj Badgeri | TNN

Thane: Supporters of the erstwhile undivided Shiv Sena may still be in two minds as to which faction to favour with their vote. However, in Thane on Mumbai's outskirts, it is not unusual to find Shiv Sainiks who take part in rallies taken out by both factions.

"Deep inside, Sainiks know what is right and wrong for them and will express it through their vote on June 4," says an old-timer. Whether to stick with Uddhav Thackeray or shift allegiance to CM Eknath Shinde is a dilemma that is central to these LS polls in Maharashtra. In all, there are 13 seats where the two Senas are pitted against each other. And, as the polls in Maharashtra enter the final leg, Thane — a citadel of the undivided Shiv Sena and a rapidly growing urban cluster — is likely to see a close fight on May 20.

Two of the district's three LS seats — Kalyan and Thane — are represented by Sena MPs: Kalyan by CM's son Dr Shrikant Shinde and Thane by Uddhav's nominee Rajan Vichare. Control over the region will be seen as passing to the rightful claimant to the legacy of the late Anand Dighe, Sena stalwart who grew the party in the district under Balasaheb Thackeray's leadership. In recent years, Dighe has been deified through a Marathi film that portrays him as a messiah of the underprivileged.

For CM Shinde, who was mentored by Dighe and has spent most of his three-decade-long career nurturing the constituency as his hometown, winning Thane has enormous significance. Apart from helping him retain his salience in state and national politics, it will give him the political lift to tackle the upcoming assembly polls in October. Shinde has fielded former mayor and close aide Naresh Mhaske as the Mahayuti candidate



IT'S ALL ABOUT MAKING THE RIGHT MOVES

from Thane. With the local civic body (which has no elected corporators currently) and at least two assembly segments in Thane city with Shinde's Sena, Mhaske has the upper hand, though support from BJP, which has an equally strong base here, is crucial.

Indeed, the district was largely a BJP stronghold till it was wrested by Shiv Sena in assembly and local-body polls. Using a blend of Hindu-tva and regional pride, stalwarts such as Dighe and Shinde held it for nearly 25 years, with the exception of 2009. Of course, it has helped that BJP has not produced a leader of stature in the state for several years now.

The district is predominantly an Agri-Koli and Marathi bastion, but is gradually turning cosmopolitan as the industrial and services sectors expand, bringing in a migrant workforce. In all, the Thane region comprises over 18 assembly segments, eight civic bodies and several gram panchayats.

"The fight here will show who inherits the legacy of Balasaheb and Dighe. The Thackerays want to avenge the 'betrayal' by Shinde in Thane, the city where the party won its first civic polls, while Shinde has to justify his rebellion and retain his dominance to strengthen his standing with the BJP brass," said an observer.

Shinde is banking on vote transfer from BJP. In Thane alone, BJP has four MLAs with three more in Kalyan. So, while the Shinde faction has held sway in some of the now-dissolved local bodies, MLAs working under the guidance of the state leadership retain clout in disbursing aid and commissioning public works.

During seat-sharing talks, the CM was able to persuade deputy CM Devendra Fadnis and BJP's central leadership that there was no way his party could concede Thane (they kept Kalyan too where the CM's son is the sitting MP). BJP cadre were expected to fall in line,

but there is simmering discontent.

"Supporters of MLA Geeta Jain from Mira Bhayander and former BJP MLA Ganesh Naik are miffed," said a BJP supporter. There's also the case of BJP MLA Ganpat Gaikwad firing on Sena Kalyan unit chief Mahesh Gaikwad inside a police station. "That's still on the minds of our karyakartas," he added. Gaikwad is in judicial custody. Shinde's Thane nominee Mhaske has sought to build bridges and reach out to workers acquainted with him since his days as a youth activist. However, he has a formidable opponent in Rajan Vichare, a two-time MP and Thackeray supporter. There is a sympathy wave for the Thackerays and they are harping on the loyalty factor faced with the organisational might of the Mahayuti.

"A prominent part of our campaign is to convey how the traitors deserted the Thackerays in a time of need, which would never have been tolerated by Dighe saheb," said a Thackeray loyalist. However, sources close to Shinde say he has managed Thane district well for nearly two decades and strengthened his bonds with the public and netas alike. His access to PM Narendra Modi and Union home minister Amit Shah is seen as a plus.

"He may not speak much, but his loyalists know he has a plan for everything, including fixing issues raised by the opposition," says a supporter who is impressed with Shinde's interactions over chai and vada pav with grassroots workers.

Shinde occasionally talks about his humble origin as a first-generation migrant from western Maharashtra who drove autorickshaws for a living. In his trademark spotless white attire, rubbing shoulders with Modi and Shah at rallies, Shinde has been making an emotional pitch: "You've supported me all these years. I expect this support even now," he says.

Ranjan.Dasgupta@timesgroup.com

Nashik: In the heart of the country's 'onion bowl', Lasalgaon, Ganesh Kokane produces more than 200 quintals of the kitchen staple every year. Auctioning them for Rs 2,500-Rs 3,000 per quintal at APMC mandi would cover his expenses and, in good times, even fetch him a good profit. However, last Nov, unseasonal rains wreaked havoc as the crop was ready for harvest. All he could salvage from his 25 acres was a meagre 25 quintals.

Then, before Kokane could recover from the blow, the Centre announced a ban on export of onions in the first week of Dec. "I was forced to sell off my stock for Rs 1,000 a quintal. It was a double whammy," Ganesh said. But his ordeal had just begun.

As moneylenders turned up the heat on Kokane, he was forced to find other sources of income. He finally ended up as a labourer at the APMC. "I blame the Union govt for my plight. Even though it lifted the embargo later on, it did not help improve the wholesale prices," he said. Now, he earns a paltry Rs 40 for unloading onions from farmers' tractors and loading them on to traders' vehicles. He handles about 10-15 vehicles daily.

Kokane's is not an isolated case. Distress and anger are palpable among nearly 8 lakh voters who are directly or indirectly associated with onion cultivation in the Dindori LS seat, which comprises six assembly segments — Nandgaon, Kalwan, Yeola, Chandwad, Niphad, and Dindori. Voting here is on May 20.

At the receiving end of the ire is BJP candidate and Union minister Bharati Pawar, who is under immense pressure to retain the seat that the saffron party has held since 2009.

Shiv Sena MLA from Nandgaon, Suhas Kande, said Mahayuti bigwigs are working overtime to contain farmers' resentment. "But in no way will (Bhaskar) Bhagare's victory help stabilise prices. Organisationally, Mahayuti is strong and that alone will ensure Bharati Pawar's victory."

BJP hopes onions won't leave it weepy in Dindori

CONSTITUENCY WATCH

Dindori Maharashtra VOTES ON May 20



2024 FACE-OFF

Mahayuti | Bharati Pawar (BJP)

Maha Vikas Aghadi | Bhaskar Bhagare (NCP-SCP)

2019 LS POLL PERFORMANCE

Bharati Pawar (BJP) Winner Votes 5.7 lakh

Dhanraj Mahale (NCP) Runner-up Votes 3.7 lakh



Bhagare, a schoolteacher, is the NCP (SCP) nominee. Party insiders say their chief Sharad Pawar picked him for his clean image and popularity.

A BJP politician, who did not want to be named, said farmers snub them when they visit villages for campaigning. "To placate them, we are highlighting the multiple schemes run by the Centre, including the PM Kisan Samman Nidhi that provides Rs 6,000 annually to marginal farmers."

In April, residents of Malwadi put up a board requesting the current MP not to visit their village. "Before the ban came into effect, we were getting Rs 2,500-Rs 3,000 per quintal. Now, prices have dropped while fertilisers and petrol have become dearer," said Ganesh Ahire of Nandgaon taluk.

While accepting that Bharati Pawar faces the ire of onion growers, a state Cabinet minister said: "The unseasonal rain severely hit the crop in Dindori. Had the Centre not banned exports, there would've been huge shortages in the country. That would've complicated matters for NDA, especially in urban areas."

What has further queered the pitch for BJP is CPI(M) nominee Je-

eva Pandu Gavit's withdrawal from the race. CPI(M) had fielded Gavit in 2019, too and he had got more than one lakh votes. Anticipating that Gavit might repeat his performance and take away anti-BJP votes, Sharad Pawar convinced the CPI(M) brass to pull him from the race.

Bharati Pawar, however, claims the opposition is misleading farmers. "When Sharad Pawar was the Union agriculture minister under UPA, prices of onion had dropped drastically several times. But since this is election season, the opposition is raking up the issue," she said.

BJP had poached Bharati Pawar from NCP before the 2019 elections, giving her the ticket instead of the then MP Harisandra Chavan.

Bhagare, a political greenhorn, faced the setback of four party MLAs switching to deputy CM Ajit Pawar's NCP camp. But he hopes farmers' ire will see anti-BJP voters rally around him. "Given the anger among onion growers, my opponent's defeat is certain. Though our MLAs have deserted us, we are counting on Sharad Pawar's popularity among the farmers," Bhagare said at a campaign rally.

Revival instinct: 'Little Europe' clings to last vestiges of its heritage

Zeeshan Jawed & Falguni Banerjee | TNN

Kolkata: Much before the British founded Calcutta (now Kolkata), "Little Europe" had already started taking shape in pockets of Gangetic Bengal.

The first European colony in Bengal was established by the Portuguese in Bandel on the Ganges riverbank in the early 16th century. The Dutch followed in Chinsurah, the French in Chandernagore (formerly Chandernagore), the British in Calcutta and, finally, the Danes in Serampore.

These former colonial enclaves, which are now part of the Serampore and Hooghly parliamentary constituencies, will vote today. The approximately 20 lakh electors in these seats want their representatives and both state and central govt to revive tourism, restore the architectural relics, preserve their heritage and renew trade and commerce.

The towns, roughly 60km north of Kolkata, started flourishing in trade and commerce and witnessed an influx of capital, becoming home to some of the biggest riverine ports. The foreign rulers also brought in their cuisine, culture and architecture and constructed churches and mansions.

With Kolkata acquiring more significance under the British in the 18th century, the "Little Europe" settlements were relegated to the background as their magnificent architectural heritage began crumbling and their cuisine disappeared and trade dwindled.

"These places have been reduced to being mofussil (suburban) towns that are bursting at the seams. The state of infrastructure is abysmal, the drainage system is a mess and unplanned real estate development has affected the quality of living," said Soumen Banerjee, a former English professor at Serampore College, which was built in 1827.

BOULEVARDS OF BROKEN DREAMS

Portuguese settlement Bandel	Dutch settlement Chinsurah	French settlement Chandernagore	British settlement Calcutta	Danish settlement Serampore
1571	1635	1673	1686	1755

Towns lining Hooghly river are dotted with structures dating back to the days when European traders were setting up bases in Bengal

The locals feel the areas have great potential for tourism by virtue of their tangible and intangible heritage.

"These towns have been holding on to traces of their European heritage in public spaces, buildings and culture. The colonial architecture, cultural practices and memories in "Little Europe" are now at risk due to rapid urbanisation. They need urgent conservation measures and a solid revival plan," said Susmita Mukherjee, who runs a cafe in Bandel.

West Bengal Tourism is promoting these areas along the Hooghly and showcasing the settlements of European traders around its banks.

To preserve and document the heritage, UK and India have jointly funded The Hugli River of Cultures Project.

A team of academic researchers, who reside in and around Chandannagar, and partner teams from the University of Liverpool

and the Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur, are collaborating on the project.

"Several monuments, including churches and public spaces, have already been restored. The number of tourists visiting these places has also risen," said an official of the tourism department.

Restoration of The Denmark Tavern, using traditional construction techniques and materials, has not only drawn tourists and spurred public interest but also rekindled hopes for the restoration of other heritage monuments in a way that benefits the local economy. The tavern, dating back to the 1780s, served as a hang-out offering drinks, books and recreational activities to European visitors.

"The restoration of the Danish tavern can be used as an example for other places of historical importance," said Anirban Ghosh, who conducts heritage walks in various areas of "Little Europe".

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No. CA7/SVN38/1/2024-25 **42024-25** **20-05-2024**

PUBLIC NOTICE FOR CALLING CLAIMS RELATING TO M/S. SEVENHILLS SOUHARDA SAHAKARI COOPERATIVE LTD

Public Notice under Section 7(2) of the Karnataka Protection of Interest of Depositors in Financial Establishments Act, 2004 (KPIDFE) calling for submission of claims from the secured creditors and depositors of M/s. Sevenhills Souharda Sahakari Cooperative Ltd.

Claim forms will be issued at the office of the Special Officer, & Competent Authority, (IMA & Other KPID Cases) 4th Floor, Podium block, Vishveshwaraiah Tower, Dr.B.R.Ambedkar Road, Bengaluru-560001 to the depositor/ authorized representative/nominee and in the absence of the nominee, the power of attorney holder on production of identity proof and proof of investment such as original copies of Bonds, official letter and PoA documents.

Starting date of issuing claim applications	21/05/2024	10-00 AM
Last date for submission of claim applications	19/06/2024	05-30 PM

DOCUMENTS TO BE PRODUCED FOR VERIFICATION:

- Original ID- Aadhar, PAN/EPIC with xerox for attestation.
- Bank pass sheets 2 months prior to date of investment to till date in - M/s. Sevenhills Souharda Sahakari Cooperative Ltd. duly attested by the bank manager to be furnished,
- Copy of passbook with copy of pages showing KYC.
- Original Bonds / Agreements / Notarized Affidavits/Other Substitute Documents issued.
- General power of attorney in the case of Authorized Agent and statutory documents shall be produced in the original.
- Where copies are allowed as support documents, either ink signed attested clear xerox copy of every page shall be provided or original shall be provided alongside xerox copy for attestation by concerned officer. Scans / WhatsApp copies are not acceptable.
- Passbook Issued by FE
- As per Section 7(4) and 7(5) of the Act, the secured creditors are required to value the security before the expiry period of 1 month from 21/05/2024 and send it along with their claim statements, failing which the competent authority shall get the valuation of the security to the best of its judgement which shall be binding on the secured creditors.

In case of death or hospitalization of the depositor, his nominees/heirs have to submit the following documents as proof for their identity and investment.

Sl. No.	Depositors/ Depositor's Nominees	Documents to be submitted.
1	Depositors	Depositors should submit the documents duly notarised with Notary/Gazetted Officer/ and with self-declaration.
2	Nominee	1. Death certificate of the depositor 2. Family tree (To be obtained from Tahsildar) 3. Nominee should self-attest the above documents.
3	Legal heirs	1. Death Certificate of the depositor 2. Family tree (To be obtained from the Tahsildar) 3. Death certificate of the specific nominee (Specific Nomination of the Death Certificate) 4. Legal heir's Certificate - Court Order 5. Legal Heir should submit self-attested above documents. 6. Consent from other Legal heirs
4	PoA - Power of Attorney	1. Documents supporting hospitalization of the depositor. (In case of critical illness, a report from Medical Officer should be submitted) 2. Apostilled copy citizen card and passport in case of depositor residing outside India. 3. For Sl. No. (1) and (2) notarised Power of Attorney certificate should be submitted. 4. POA holder should submit self-attested above documents.
5	Guardian of minor	1. Death certificate of depositor. 2. Document regarding appointment of guardian. 3. Self-attested documents of above.

Applicants submitting the claim applications should submit the below mentioned documents as proof of investments in M/s Sevenhills Souharda Sahakari Cooperative Ltd..

Sl. No.	Depositors/ Depositor's Nominees	Documents to be submitted.
1	Pigmy Deposit	1. Copy of front page of passbook with photograph. 2. Pigmy Deposit Passbook issued by the financial establishment 3. Transaction Statement page in Passbook of claimed amount. *Depositors/Nominees/Legal Heirs/PoA holders must submit the above documents duly attested by Notary/Gazetted Officers/self.
2	Fixed Deposit	1. Copy of front page of passbook with photograph. 2. Deposit Bond/ Certificate/Fixed Deposit Certificate/Other 3. Transaction Statement page in Passbook of claimed amount. *Depositors/Nominees/Legal Heirs/PoA holders must submit the above documents duly attested by Notary/Gazetted Officers/self.
3	Cumulative Deposit	1. Copy of front page of passbook with photograph. 2. Cumulative Deposit Certificate 3. Transaction Statement page in Passbook of claimed amount. *Depositors/Nominees/Legal Heirs/PoA holders must submit the above documents duly attested by Notary/Gazetted Officers/self.
4	Recurring Deposit	1. Copy of front page of passbook with photograph. 2. Recurring Deposit Passbook issued by the financial establishment 3. Transaction Statement page in Passbook of claimed amount. *Depositors/Nominees/Legal Heirs/PoA holders must submit the above documents duly attested by Notary/Gazetted Officers/self.

* Any application received after the last date fixed for submission of claims under Section 7(3) of the KPIDFE Act shall not be accepted under the provisions of the Act.

* Any claim based on concocted documents or forged documents shall be rejected and criminal action will be initiated against such applicants.

* For more information regarding the procedures for submission of applications, applicants may contact the Office of the Special Officer & Competent Authority, (IMA & Other KPID Cases), 4th Floor, Podium block, Vishveshwaraiah Tower, Dr.B.R.Ambedkar Road, Bengaluru-560001

* Applicants who have invested in more than one scheme in M/s.Sevenhills Souharda Sahakari Cooperative Limited must submit the claims in separate applications.

Note that the depositors of the FE who had earlier submitted their claims in response to the public notice dated 25.07.2019 to the previous Competent Authority, Assistant Commissioner, Kolar Sub division are also required to submit fresh claim application now in response to this Public Notice.

Sd/-
Competent Authority of M/s.Sevenhills Souharda Sahakari Cooperative Ltd.

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FROM POLITICAL U-TURNS TO SEAT-SHARING LOGJAMS

NAVIGATE THEM ALL

With The Economic Times' insightful election coverage, you can cut through the clutter and get to the stories that matter.

Catch all the action on **THE ECONOMIC TIMES** **POLL CALL 2024** **THE MORNING BRIEF Podcast**

Shut the gate! No one should leave the hotel.
This is not seat sharing, this is musical chairs.
But they said it's a 5 star hotel.
I've switched to another party.
Welcome to the party.
Will they throw us out of the party?
Looks like Shetty is getting the tickets, but from which party?
This party is over.
Where are you taking him?

CONTRAPUNTO

We have to free half of the human race, the women, so that they can help to free the other half

-EMMELINE PANKHURST

Don't Play This Game

Poll rhetoric that weaponises women victims is a new low

Women voters outnumbered men in the May 13 phase of elections in Bihar, Jharkhand, Odisha and Bengal. In Lok Sabha election 2019 the gap between male and female turnout ended – women voted at higher rates than men for the first time. Of course, far fewer women are registered as electors, but fact is for political parties, women are in focus – in election campaigns and in policy initiatives. These have included BJP and Modi's extensively ramped up outreach to women voters, JDU's prohibition policy, Odisha's umbrella policy that included 'changing attitudes', and Bengal's enhanced compensation for grassroots women govt workers.

But such focus has a dark underbelly. No Lok Sabha election has seen the weaponising of violence-against-women to this extent. The Swati Maliwal case is only the latest in a string of high-profile cases where political brass, even a constitutional authority, and/or their associates, have been accused of physical violence and sexual assault. Such allegations should mean swift investigation and closure, whether Sandeshkhali or Hassan Lok Sabha candidate Prajwal Revanna's videos, or allegations against Bengal governor Ananda Bose.

On Swati Maliwal's FIR, her alleged abuser has been arrested. Yet, politicians will not allow the Rajya Sabha MP the space she requires to de-traumatise but have embarked on making the case a trial by election. Maliwal's status and position helped her seek police help and demand justice. What victims in other cases have faced is an invisibilisation of their trauma, yet at the same time, a greater fear of their identities made public. Several victims in Prajwal Revanna's case have had to flee their villages and hamlets, their privacy destroyed without a stab at justice. A special court has finally issued an arrest warrant against Prajwal, who is still at large outside the country.

The political sluffest started before poll season – to last year's video from Manipur that shook the nation into demanding central action into the months-long violence and killings. At the party-level, the response was to accuse Rajasthan and Bengal of being "more unsafe for women". Cut to election season, and allegations that erupted of sexual abuse by politicians in Bengal's Sandeshkhali drove campaign speeches.

The political tit-for-tat rhetoric, playing 'protector', on survivors is reprehensible. It is a new dehumanising of victims, and highlights mostly the decay in investigative institutions and alignment of police with political powers – victims be damned.



UNCUET

NTA's exam prep still leaves much to be desired. Too many students are paying the price

In its inaugural year the CUET-UG exam stretched up to Aug 30, one painful glitch after another. In 2023, it wrapped up by July 5, snags remained but were dramatically reduced. So when NTA released the May 15-24 schedule for this year, its brevity represented a larger promise of a much pleasanter exam experience. But halfway through, this promise has already proved false for too many students.

Delhi doldrums | All the candidates appearing at test centres across Delhi got a rude jolt on the eve of the very first exam day, with the scheduled tests postponed to May 29 "due to unavoidable reasons". Subsequent exam days have also seen complaints galore. These range from malfunctioning biometric systems to unsanitary washrooms, broken fans, and over-casual invigilation.

Kanpur woes | Also sitting for exams on May 29 will be the unfortunate students from a Kanpur exam centre, who were handed the wrong question papers. Students from an Indore centre have similarly complained that they were given the Chemistry paper in English, despite having selected the Hindi option. Poor preparations for the hot weather have also been reported from places other than Delhi, such as Lucknow.

Meghalaya murmurs | From Meghalaya there are reports of a stampede-like situation because of poor coordination between NTA and a Shillong test centre. While this listing can go on, the point is surely already clear: The quality control of test centres that was the biggest challenge in 2022, still leaves much to be desired. Note that only the pen-and-paper exams have taken place so far. When the computer-based tests commence tomorrow, the tech challenge will come into play. And NTA must rise to it. The agency must deliver fairplay for all the 13 lakh students who have registered for CUET-UG across 380 cities.

Ebony in India

On foreign spouses, desi parents and rough relations

Bikram Vohra



They just celebrated their 45th wedding anniversary. Was it just the other day in 1979 my friend 'trunk called' from Houston (only three minutes) and said, hey I'm getting hitched tomorrow, no one knows, coming home next week, be at the airport, this might be rough. I said, why rough, good on you. He said remember Ebony, I married her. I said, oh, okay oops, whatever, she is lovely. The night before the flight he called home and told them he had got married and was arriving Monday with her. Shocked parents reeled for a while, mummy went into woe is me, dad was stoic and grandma said at least the children would be fair, chalo that was a plus point.

Except, Ebony (Ebs to her friends and admirers) is an Afro-American, like burnished coal, stunningly beautiful, a nuclear physicist to boot, even more breathtaking than current supermodel Nyakim Gatwech.

With me being the only one privy to this bridal information, we all trooped up to Palam airport just after midnight. His family was there en masse, nervously excited about meeting their American bahu. Garlands were held in hands trembling with anticipation and a few relatives and neighbours had also fetched up, buoyed by a mix of curiosity, envy and conjecture, what would this phoren bride be like...blonde and blue eyes...hmmmm.

The flight landed and weary passengers staggered out in post Immigration & Customs clumps. Then I saw him and her. Somewhere Eb had been tutored that the Indian way of greeting was to prostrate yourself in front of your in-laws. Which she now proceeded to do on the cold airport floor under the Arrivals sign.

Not that it mattered. The fam went into fibrillation, the neighbours grinned with glee, no blue eyes here and relatives pretended all was well as they exchanged triumphant glances, this was a winner in the social stakes, how the mighty had fallen, send children abroad, yahi hotha hai.

The entourage reached home, mummy leapt into bed with palpitations, daddy, always so liberal, froze into a 'how could you do this to us' posture and sundry rishiedars commiserated about today's youngsters and their values as tension zinged through the house. No fair babies here.

The couple moved to a hotel the next morning. He called me and said bring the car, we must get out of here. We drove away with Eb wondering what she had done to invite such wrath. They never came back. But they have three adult kids and a great marriage. You think Sam Pitroda was racist. Look within and ask what are we if not...then what.

VOCAL DALITS, SILENT MUSLIMS

Notes and whispers from travels in UP in poll season • Yogi's made UP better
• Strong opposition is necessary • MPs don't inspire • Who'll lead Dalits?

Anand.Soodas@timesgroup.com



Life confuses Amit Sharma. Elections too. Not very long ago he had three taxis in Ghaziabad, with all-India permits. Then, during Covid, he lost two of his cars. Back at square one, he said, "I'll need to work my heart out to retrieve the vehicles I had to let go."

Ferrying passengers in the middle of the poll season in UP, where voting in its 80 constituencies is spread over seven phases, he was amused elections could throw up such tough choices.

400 one too many? | Articulating a sentiment often heard while travelling across UP, Sharma said he agonised over weeks whether he should vote for the dispensation in office or look for a formidable

POLLITICS
Special Series on Elections

rival, "just to strengthen the opposition". Administrations, he said, should be on their toes to do their best work for citizens.

"And that can happen when numbers in Parliament aren't so utterly skewed. Too much concentration of power leads to misuse. *Badhiya virodhi dal toh bilkul chahiye* (A robust opposition is absolutely necessary)." In Shahjahanpur, trader Pulkit Garg said he'd feel "uncomfortable" if BJP did go on to win "400 seats as promised". His vote for the saffron party, he is quick to clarify: "Just that it's not good for democracy."

Missing Behenji | Mayawati's 'absence' from the political arena suddenly seems to have hit home among large sections of Dalits in the state. In these elections more than any other, SC voters are feeling the vacuum. Whether Nagina with a sizeable Dalit presence or Hathras, where the killing of a young woman and the quick disposal of her remains in 2020 had shaken the country, members across its various sub-groups spoke of a strong BSP with longing.

Vociferous in their calls for 'leaders' and organisations who would clearly prioritise the cause of the downtrodden, they hoped for Behenji's resurgence and Chandrasekhar Azad's rise. They often mentioned words like 'identity' and 'existence'. "It'd have been an

easier decision for many among us to take," said Sanoj Nigam, a teacher, in Muzaffarnagar. Asked if he, too, was afraid the Constitution could be tweaked by a party that manages to get an overwhelming majority post these elections, he answered, "I personally don't think so, but in debates with my friends and relatives, it does come up quite a bit. There is some apprehension, for sure. INDIA played this well."

They then went on to say how they follow political news and developments on social media but restrain themselves as much as possible from speaking out. "It takes nothing for things to flare up. We've never profited from a polarised election. We're silent, we're afraid and we're careful. But I feel there will be greater voting by us this time. We've chosen candidates and parties with some care. Votes won't be split unnecessarily. Not just in UP, I think that's the guiding thought elsewhere too. Let's see..."

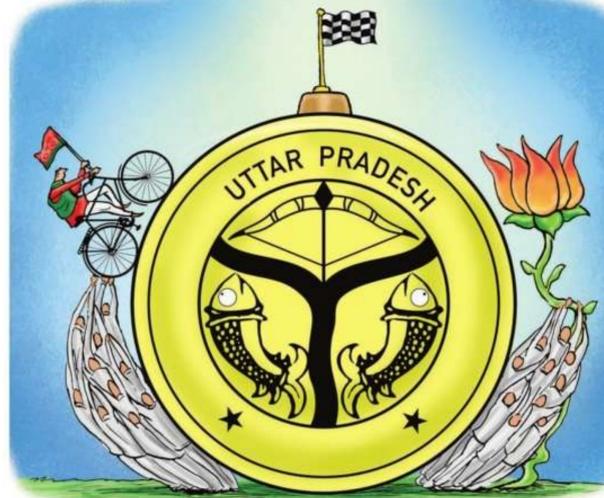
India shining | The new Ram Mandir in Ayodhya has filled many Hindu hearts with pride and joy. As have reports of the "disappearance of stone-pelters" in Kashmir. UCC and CAA were hardly mentioned at *chaupals* and street corner addas during exchanges and altercations, but India's "growing stature" in the globe was in discussion.

However, even the staunchest of some BJP supporters complained that a bunch of the party's MPs had become lazy and stopped nursing their constituencies. "All they keep doing is Modi-Modi," hotelier Samrat Gupta said in Bareilly. "And they now talk about UP's improving law and order situation. Shouldn't that be left to Yogi Adityanath as the CM to brag about? MPs hardly broach local issues. A lot of people are extremely upset with them for ignoring their seats. Elections can't be about the Centre alone."

Building roads | In catchment areas for army jobs – large swathes in UP – Agniveer has been a sore point. Young people also spoke about paper leaks and joblessness. And yes, roads. Everyone wanted shiny thoroughfares. In fact, in Farukhabad one of the biggest grouses against the sitting MP was that he'd done little on that front. A persistent remonstrance was: "Look at districts like Mainpuri. We demand an expressway to take us where the prosperous regions have gone."

It may be premature to say Congress is on a certain comeback trail in UP, having frittered away opportunities, lost comrades – or sat in sullen silence as they jumped ship – in the past decade and more, but the frequency with which it was mentioned as an alternative, especially by Dalits and Muslims, was somewhat striking. There is, of course, vast ground to cover. But it's something the Gandhi siblings would perhaps do well to build on.

UP votes today (14 seats) in the fifth of its 7-phase polls



Chait Crowe

Agniveer has been a sore point. Young people also spoke about paper leaks and joblessness...It's premature to say Congress is on comeback trail, given how it frittered away opportunities the last decade, but it found frequent mention as an alternative, especially by Dalits and Muslims

Silence speaks | At a bustling workshop in Meerut's Ghataghar, a group of young Muslim men asked to see my 'press card' before replying to a few questions. "Sorry," one of them apologised. "We need to know who we're talking to."

Flying For Democracy: IAF & Voting

Air force works closely with EC to transport election manpower and equipment for every polling booth. There are challenges aplenty. These are also overcome away from public limelight

Manmohan Bahadur



Indian armed forces have a halo of being protectors of the nation – which they surely are. However, there is also a not too publicised side of their work, as nation-builders. The foundation of our Republic is our secular democratic base, and holding of free and fair elections is the cornerstone of nation-building. With the ongoing general elections to the 18th Lok Sabha too, as in the past, vital aid is being provided by the Indian air force.

Foundational airlifts | IAF started its life in free India through its emergency airlift of army troops to Srinagar valley on October 27, 1947, to save Kashmir from Pakistani raiders. This is how the map of India was stabilised into the form we see to date.

There was also the year-long airlift to the besieged Poonch garrison, with IAF Dakotas landing (including at night) on a makeshift *kutchra* runway to supply food and armament to the civilians and army troops. IAF's decades-long air dropping supply missions in the outlying border areas of Northeast (where road connectivity was non-existent) fulfilled one additional vital need of the populace – that of an emotional connect with the 'mainland'.

Of course, in the four wars thrust on us, the offensive element of IAF came to the fore.

The work relationship with EC | What the man on the street is not conversant with is the fact that no national poll can be completed without the involvement of IAF. As the 2024 elections move toward the concluding phases, the role of IAF continues to be discussed only in dribbles in media. But it is crucial and here is how it happens.

• Election Commission of India holds meetings with air headquarters, represented by Assistant Chief of Air Staff looking after operations of transport aircraft and helicopters – ACAS (T&H), many months before elections start.

• Initially, it's just an outline of ECI requirements that are spelt out, region-wise and state-wise. As time progresses, these meetings increase in frequency, with details of election manpower and equipment that have to be transported for every district and polling booth.



• Also added on is the humongous requirement of movement of police and central para-military personnel, which could be from one end of the country to another – literally anywhere to anywhere.

• So, one is talking of heavy lift aircraft like C-17 and Il-76 for troop transportation down to the complete helicopter inventory of Mi17, ALH Dhruv and the Chetak/Cheetah fleet for the last-mile carriage of EC poll parties to inaccessible and insurgent-prone areas.

• And these requirements change if the law and

order situation deteriorates or someone in a polling party falls sick and requires replacement.

The massive 2024 exercise | While the air warriors on the flightline ensure timely task completion through their flying, in the Directorate of ACAS (T&H) there is never a dull moment and the ACAS's cell phone never stops ringing. I write this from the experience of holding the ACAS position in 2009 when elections were held in five phases – this year there are seven!

In just the first phase this year, according to EC, IAF flew 439 sorties, the highest being in Maharashtra where 850 officials for 206 polling booths in the Naxal-affected areas were deployed (and brought back). Similarly, 1,000 personnel were positioned in 156 polling stations in the violence-affected Bastar area.

The flying effort required to transport troops by transport aircraft would be huge too. Going by past data available in media one can easily expect around 1,000 hours of helicopter flying – and transport aircraft flying hours in hundreds by the time the elections get over on June 1.

Thereafter, the task of de-induction of police forces back to their bases by heavy lift transport aircraft would start.

Your duty, their duty | Are there hiccups in the three-month period of electioneering? Of course there are, but have you ever heard of polling not taking place at a remote polling booth at 14,000ft in the Ladakh hills due to non-deployment of a polling party?

So, as you look at your inked finger signifying completion of your duty of electing your govt, spare a thought for the men and women in blue who have done their part in this endeavour of nation-building.

Air Vice Marshal Bahadur (ret'd) served as Assistant Chief of Air Staff

Calvin & Hobbes



Sacredspace



We need the tonic of wildness...At the same time that we are earnest to explore and learn all things, we require that all things be mysterious and unexplored, that land and sea be indefinitely wild, untraversed and unfathomed by us...

Henry D Thoreau

Romancing Honeybees That Give Us Life

Narayani Ganesh

When the bee population dies out, it will spell the end of life on earth, conclude scientific researchers who are ringing alarm bells to conserve and respect bees. Hence, we have a special World Bee Day, and this year's theme is 'Bee Engaged with Youth'. The idea is to get young people involved in creating awareness of the importance of bees as a species that is integral to the continuation of our ecosystem, and for our very survival.

What comes to mind is the charming depiction of Kamadev's bow and arrows – Madhuyasti Dhanush, the bow, is made of sugarcane; the arrows are fragrant flowers, and the bowstring is composed of bees. His vehicle is the parrot. As the counterpart of Cupid in Hindu mythology, Kamadev – known as Manmada, one who agitates the mind and as Madana, one who intoxicates –

symbolises love and romance. Perhaps bees in this case indicate fertility, vital for propagation of life and desire, the seed of creation. Kama is the son of Vishnu and Lakshmi, and his consort is Rati. In other puranic references, he is the manasaputra – mind-born son – of the god of creation, Brahma.

When Shiva was in deep meditation, the young, handsome Kama was sent to distract him. When he shot his love arrow, a disturbed Shiva opened his third eye, reducing Kama to ashes. The story goes that Kama was reborn on earth as the eldest son of Krishna and Rukmini, as Pradyumna.

Kama, which means erotic desire in Sanskrit, is the reason why life comes into being. The Rig Veda describes creation of the universe as arising out of divine desire, intense heat, resulting

in a situation similar to the scientific theory of the big bang and this was followed by formation of celestial bodies and germination of life. In mythology, the bee is seen as the sacred bridge between the natural world and the underworld.

Bees are pollinators; they feed on honey in flowers, and when they rub their legs together, the pollen sticks to them and is carried forth to other places, enabling propagation of species. The Smithsonian describes the process thus: "Pollination is an essential part of plant reproduction.

Pollen from a flower's anthers, that is, the male part of the plant, rubs or drops onto a pollinator who carries this to another flower, where the pollen sticks to the stigma, the female part. The fertilised flower later yields fruits and seeds."

Not only do bees act as pollinators,

propagating life, they store the collected honey in their hives which beekeepers harvest for human consumption. The virtues of honey as healing agent have been well-known since ancient times. The shelf life of pure honey is almost infinite. Tombs of pharaohs have been discovered to contain pure honey in sealed jars that are unspoiled and edible even after centuries.

It is no surprise, therefore, that bees have been venerated as life-givers in some mythologies across cultures. In some stories they are seen as creators, in others, as sustainers. Other pollinators like butterflies, beetles, moths and hummingbirds have not gained the primacy given to bees as ace pollinators, as their reach and extent of work far exceeds those of others. Hence the oft-heard saying, 'Busy as a bee' – the hardworking species that ensures life goes on.

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THE SPEAKING TREE

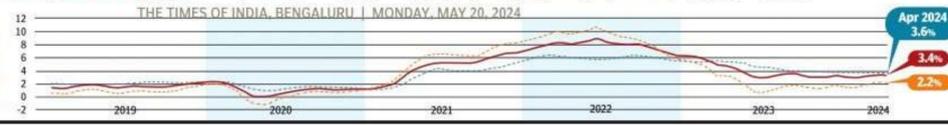
US Inflation Momentum Slows But Housing, Services Stay Hot

Inflation in US urban areas, indicated by Consumer Price Index-U, rose at 0.3% in April, shedding momentum from 0.4% in March

Energy costs went up by 1.1% in April, mainly due to a 2.8% rise in gasoline prices

Food prices stayed the same in April, but groceries at home got slightly cheaper by 0.2%

CPI for urban consumers in the US (YoY change)



Other goods and services, excluding food and energy, saw a 0.3% increase in prices, mostly driven by higher housing costs

Source: US Bureau of Labor Statistics, Statista

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CL 1364

Banking sector net crosses ₹3L crore for first time in FY24

Private Lenders' Net Jumps 42% Over Public Sector Banks' 34%

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Mumbai: For the first time, the banking sector's net profit crossed ₹3 lakh crore in FY24. The net profit of listed public and private sector banks rose 39% to ₹3.1 lakh crore from ₹2.2 lakh crore in FY23.

While public sector banks generated a record ₹1.4 lakh crore in net profit during the year — an increase of 34% over the year-ago period — private sector banks increased their net by 42% to nearly ₹1.7 lakh crore compared to ₹1.2 lakh crore a year ago. As a result, the earnings gap between the two sectors has widened.

To put things in perspective, ₹3 lakh crore is approximately the total quarterly profits of all listed companies in the first three

Amt Equals To Net Of All Listed Cos In 3 Of 4 Qtrs

Public sector banks generated a record ₹1.4L cr in net profit in FY24, but private sector banks grew even faster. As a result, the earnings gap between the two sectors has widened.

PSUs would have had a higher net profit in FY24 if not for a one-time provision that several banks had to make towards pensions

Banking sector (profit in ₹L cr)



To put things in perspective, ₹3 lakh crore is approximately the total quarterly profits of all listed companies in the first three quarters of the fiscal

quarters of the fiscal. In fact, banks' profits are much higher than those of IT services, which have been the most profitable group in recent years — listed IT services companies reported a net profit of nearly ₹1.1 lakh crore for FY24.

In the preceding years, public sector banks had narrowed their profit gap with private banks as they cleaned up their balance sheets and increased earnings. In fact, the net profit of public sector banks has more than quadrupled in the last three years.

Public sector banks would have had a higher net profit in FY24 if not for a one-time provision that several banks had to make towards pensions. However, because the pension provisions were lower than expected, it led to a gain in their shares. Some public sector banks like Bank of Baroda also took a hit due to provisions for their exposure to Go Air, although the loan is collateralised.

On a consolidated basis, Reliance Industries still has the highest annual profit of ₹79,020 crore. However, on a standalone basis, its profit was flat at ₹42,042 crore in FY24. Of the top 10 listed companies, TCS reported a net profit of ₹43,559 crore for FY24, Indian Oil (₹39,618 crore), ONGC (₹38,828 crore) and Infosys (₹27,234 crore).

Kumar, Pai not to renew advisory role with Byju's

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Mumbai: Former SBI chairman Rajnish Kumar and former CFO of Infosys Mohandas Pai are stepping down from Byju's advisory council.

In a statement on Sunday, the troubled edtech firm said that company and advisory board members Kumar and Pai have mutually decided not to renew the contractual agreement scheduled to end on June 30, 2024. Byju's had constituted the council last year to assuage investor concerns following a series of financial and corporate governance lapses at the firm. The council was tasked with advising and mentoring Byju's board and CEO Byju Raveendran.

"Our engagement with the company as advisors was always on a fixed term basis for a year. Based on our discussions with the founders, it was mutually decided that the tenure of the advisory council should not be extended. Though the formal engagement concludes, the founders and the company can always approach us for any advice. We wish the founders and the company the very best for the future," Kumar and Pai said in a joint statement. The development comes at a time when the Bengaluru-based startup is mired in a series of litigation involving its investors and foreign lenders.

Govt concerned over telcos' service quality

To Tighten Norms, Strengthen Parameters, Ensure Lower Call Drops, Better Net Speed

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New Delhi: 5G may be touted as one of the fastest-growing mobile offerings in India, but poor quality of services has raised concerns with the government, which has now decided to tighten the quality norms to ensure reduction in call drops and better internet speed.

"We are concerned on the issue of quality of services and are now looking at ways to strengthen the parameters that go into assessing mobile services quality," a top official with the telecom ministry told TOI.

As India's telecom ecosystem matures with abundant supply of spectrum and data adoption shooting up, quality of services continues to remain a nagging issue, often vitiating customer experience. There have been complaints by customers as well as consumer groups about deteriorating services, even as telcos such as Reliance Jio, Airtel and Vodafone Idea ar-

ould be earmarked for them. Telecom companies, however, argue that excessive regulations might not work. Jio said that introducing "overregulation and unnecessarily stringent benchmarks and financial disin-

centives" will impact the ease of doing business principle. "Furthermore, from our experience, we understand that the most complaints are about when the customer will get 5G and nearly none about the quality of experience on 5G. Evidently, there is no valid ground for making such massive changes in a regulation," Jio said in a representation to Trai.

Airtel said there are sufficient number of drive tests being conducted to measure network performance, and thus more stringent norms may not be needed. It blamed "other external factors" behind poor network quality. Also, it blamed growing usage of OTTs for some consumer experience disturbances.

TRAI WANTS BETTER QUALITY

Govt wants to revisit parameters amid complaints that consumers are not getting promised services, despite 5G

regulation and better implementation of standards to ensure better customer quality

Excessive regulations may not work, say telecom companies



Some cos did not comply with FAME II norms: Report

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: A committee appointed by the ministry of heavy industries investigating violation of localisation norms under FAME II schemes for electric two-, three- and four-wheelers has said that testing agencies have followed uniform and consistent process, while concluding that certain companies did not comply with norms, which were finalised after consultation with industry players. Hero Electric Vehicles, Okinawa Autotech, Amo Mobility Solutions, Greaves Electric Mobility, Revolt Intellicorp and Benling India Energy and Technology were found to be wanting in complying with the prescribed localisation norms. Govt has recovered incentives from most companies.

Why alarm bells over F&O trading by retail investors?

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

MNirmala Sitharaman and CEA V Anantha Nageswaran recently flagged the growing risk of futures & options (F&O) trading for retail traders. Why are policymakers cautioning retail investors on F&O, also called derivatives trading? Here is an explainer:

What's F&O trading? Futures and options are two derivative instruments where a trader buys or sells an underlying asset at a pre-determined price. As the name suggests, derivatives are financial products that derive their value from other assets like stocks or bonds.

What are futures and options? Futures are derivative contracts that give the buyer the right to buy a specific asset on a specific date at a speci-

fic price from a seller, unless that contract is sold off to someone else or closed. On the other hand, an options contract gives the buyer the right to buy or sell a specific asset at a specific price on or before the last date of the contract (called date of expiry). In options contracts,

TOI Explains

the buyer has the right but not an obligation to buy or sell the specific asset. An options seller has the obligation to deliver the assets to the buyer but no right to deny selling that.

When you buy an airline ticket...

A train or a flight ticket gives the passenger (the buyer) the right to travel on a specific date but no obligation to do the same. At the last moment, the passenger could cancel the ticket or

abandon the travel plan. On the other hand, the railways or the airline (the seller) has an obligation to provide the passenger the service on the specific day and the time for which the ticket was bought. The seller has an obligation to provide the service but has no right to cancel the ticket unless under extreme circumstances.

Why is govt concerned about F&O trading by retail investors?

F&O trading is being used as a speculative tool to make a quick buck in the stock market. But the reality is that most retail investors are losing money. In Jan 2023, SEBI came out with a study that showed 89% of the people in the F&O space were losing money. That means only one in 10 people made money. But F&O trading volumes are rising at a pace that surprises market veterans.

FPIs offload ₹28,200 crore in equities in May

New Delhi: Foreign investors have pulled out a massive ₹28,200 crore from Indian equities so far this month, owing to uncertainties about the outcome of the general elections and attractive valuations of Chinese markets. The withdrawal was higher than a net pullout of over ₹8,700 crore in April on concerns over a tweak in India's tax treaty with Mauritius and a sustained rise in US bond yields. Feb. Going forward, there is likely to be a dramatic change in foreign portfolio investors' equity flows in response to election results. AGENCIES

GCCs driving 23% of India's IT exports

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Bengaluru: Global capability centres (GCCs) have emerged as a strong alternative to outsourcing, and they often work in tandem with IT companies on transformation projects. The growing prominence of GCCs is evident from their expanding contribution to India's IT exports.

According to a report by HSBC Global Research, the overall share of GCCs in Indian IT exports has risen to 23% in 2023 from 18% in 2015, showed a HSBC Global Research report.

This significant increase highlights the evolving role of GCCs in the country's IT sector, as they continue to gain traction and establish themselves as key players operating as an extension of their parent entities.

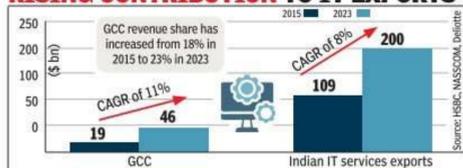
GCCs have grown 3 percentage points faster than the top five Indian IT companies in every year since 2015 (11% vs 8% on average). However, the report suggests that the worst is behind and the in-house to outsourcing ratio is reaching an equilibrium at the industry level. To remain

competitive, the report said Indian IT companies need to improve their onshore to offshore value proposition by offering offshore services at more attractive rates while increasing onshore rates.

IT industry body Nasscom reported that India has 1,600 GCCs and an installed total base of 1.6 million people in the 2022-23 financial year. The HSBC report highlighted that GCCs' cost per head is 30-40% higher than that of Indian IT service providers (ISPs) due to an inferior pyramid and higher like-for-like salaries at most levels. "This is due to an inferior pyramid and higher like-for-like salaries at most levels. However, as ISPs have a significant offshore markup (pricing over costs), GCCs' cost per head is 20-25% cheaper than the billing rate of ISPs. Lower cost is a compelling proposition, although it is not just about cost now," its analysts Yogesh Aggarwal and Prateek Maheshwari in a research note.

The report also noted that mature GCCs in the banking space have nearly 30-40% of their global tech and oper-

RISE IN CONTRIBUTION TO IT EXPORTS



ations staff in India, which the analysts believe is a stable state. The GCC to outsourcing ratio is expected to stabilise at 70:30 in the long term, currently at 65:35. Some migration may continue over the next 1-2 years, but beyond that, as costs per head escalate and GCCs' pyramid structure bloats, there could be some value migration back to ISPs.

GCCs are closely aligned with their parent organizations, working on various functions such as HR, finance, tech, and product development. Some companies are performing 70%-80% of their finance operations from GCCs in India, but on average, a 30-40% penetration is considered a stable state, with a few exceptions at either end of the spectrum. The HSBC analysts identified a few key

triggers for GCC expansion since Covid-19. The shift from the waterfall development model to the agile model has favored GCCs, as they are superior to ISPs in terms of domain expertise, although they may fall short on technology prowess. "Additionally, the resilience of the off-premise delivery model has been proven during the Covid-19 pandemic period, which created an almost compulsive scenario for many business executives to off-shore work to India," they wrote in a research note.

GCCs in India are currently home to nearly 5,000 global leadership roles, according to Deloitte. ISG Index Insider, in a recent note, highlighted three primary benefits that GCC leaders are realizing from their centres. Ap-

proximately one-third of the enterprises surveyed indicated that access to strategic talent is the primary benefit of their GCC, while 20% pointed to strategic innovation. Nearly half of the respondents cited value, which encompasses cost optimization, improved productivity, or streamlined operations for the parent organization, as the main advantage. In 2023, ISG surveyed more than 300 leaders from Global 2000 firms about their GCC plans to date and what they plan to do in the next 24 months.

Research and discussions with enterprises have made it evident that aligning a GCC with the company's objectives is of utmost importance. "We expect GCC activity to remain high as more enterprises evaluate the potential merits of this operating model, in addition to — or as an alternative to — outsourcing. Meanwhile, we also expect to see strong market activity from service providers (including those who have a relationship with the parent organizations) who are interested in buying GCCs that are not meeting enterprise objectives," ISG said in a note.

TOI **Borrow Against MF Units For Short-Term Fund Requirements**

IN THE CLASSROOM

Money is sometimes needed for short tenures like 2-3 months or up to a year. One option is to redeem your mutual funds to the extent of money required; financial planners suggest borrowing against your funds for such short-term needs.

How Can One Get A Loan Against MF Units?
A loan against your equity or hybrid mutual fund units can be taken from a bank or a non-banking finance company. The interest rate could be in the range of 9-11% based on the loan amount and tenure. Once you pledge your MF units, they are marked as under lien, which means you cannot sell or switch the units. Financial planners recommend borrowing against equity-oriented mutual funds and not against liquid or debt-oriented funds.

Invesco Mutual Fund

An investor education and awareness initiative

For Know Your Customer (KYC) guidelines along with the documentary requirements and procedure for change of address, phone number, bank details, etc., please visit the Education and Guidance section on www.invescoindia.com. Investor should deal with only SEBI registered Mutual Funds, details of which can be verified under "Intermediaries/Market Infrastructure Institutions" on <https://www.sebi.gov.in/index.html>. For any grievance / complaint, please call us on 1800-209-0007 or write to us at mf@invesco.com. Alternatively, complaints can be registered on the SEBI SCORES Portal at <https://scores.gov.in>

Mutual Fund investments are subject to market risks, read all scheme related documents carefully.

What's The Pro Of Borrowing Against MFs?
Loan against MFs gives you the option of receiving immediate liquidity against the fund units that you own. It is like an overdraft facility for short-term monetary requirements, with a relatively shorter tenure compared to other loans. It can be used judiciously by people looking to leverage their otherwise idle mutual fund investments, and also raise capital quickly for short-term financing needs. You need not sell your mutual fund units, hence your financial plan remains intact and neither is your ownership of fund units divested after pledging them for a loan. However, do not use this money to buy stocks or equity mutual funds. This is because in the near term, volatility can be high and you could end up making a mark-to-market loss while also paying the interest on the loan.

How Does One Apply For A Loan?
There are many NBFCs that offer loans through their websites in a paperless format or with small paperwork. Some portals offer loans quickly if you hold units in demat form and have prior approval.



Even if you hold units in physical form, you could apply for a loan online. The financier will ask the MF registrar — CAMS or Karvy — to mark a lien on a certain number of units that are being pledged. Financiers typically lend about 50-60% of the value of the pledged units. The registrar in turn will mark the lien and a letter is sent to the lender with a copy to the investor confirming the marking of lien on the units. If your documents are in place, some websites claim to have the loan ready in less than an hour. However, if something is not in order, it needs to be addressed and can take 2-3 business days.

How To Remove The Lien On MFs?
After the loan is repaid by the borrower, the financier can ask for a removal of the lien and send a request letter to the fund house. The lender can also request for partial removal of the lien, in which case, the lien on some of the units will be removed, making them "free" units. This will happen only when the lender receives part payments.

What Happens In Case Of Default?
In case the borrower defaults in making payment, the lender can enforce the lien i.e. send a signed request for redemption of the units and claim the proceeds.

—PRASHANT MAHESH



SPLITSVILLE FOR BENNIFER? RUMOURS RIFE COUPLE WHO GOT MARRIED IN 2022 ARE LIVING SEPARATELY

SEAN DIDDY APOLOGISES AFTER '16 CCTV CLIP OF HIM ATTACKING EX-GF GOES VIRAL: 'BEHAVIOUR INEXCUSABLE. TAKE FULL RESPONSIBILITY'



Copter with Iran prez, foreign min onboard crashes: Official

Lives Of Raisi & Amirabdollahian At Risk; Crash Happened When Chopper Was Crossing Mountain Terrain In Heavy Fog; Rescuers On Way To Site

Dubai: A helicopter carrying Iranian Prez Ebrahim Raisi and his foreign minister crashed on Sunday as it was crossing mountain terrain in heavy fog, an Iranian official told Reuters, and rescuers were making their way to the site of the incident. The official said the lives of Raisi and foreign minister Hossein Amirabdollahian were "at risk following the helicopter crash", which happened on the way back from a visit to Iran's border with Azerbaijan. "We are still hopeful but information coming from the crash site is very concerning," said the official, speaking on condition of anonymity.



A video grab shows rescuers heading towards the crash site in the Jofa region of the western province of East Azerbaijan on Sunday

The bad weather was complicating rescue efforts, the state news agency IRNA reported. The chief of staff of Iran's army ordered all the resources of the army and the elite Revolutionary Guard to be put to use in the search and rescue operations. State TV stopped all its regular programming to show prayers being held for Raisi across the country and, in a corner of the screen, live coverage of rescue teams deployed on foot in the mountainous area in heavy fog. The rescue teams were expected to reach the site of the crash later on Sunday evening, state TV reported.

Azerbaijan prez says his prayers with Raisi



Azeri Prez Ilham Aliyev said on Sunday he was profoundly troubled by news of the Iran prez's helicopter crashing landing after bidding a friendly farewell to Ebrahim Raisi earlier in the day. "Our prayers to Allah Almighty are with President Raisi and the accompanying delegation. As a neighbour, friend, and brotherly country, the Republic of Azerbaijan stands ready to offer any assistance needed," he said. REUTERS

Iraq offers Iran help in search

Iraq on Sunday offered neighbouring Iran help in search and rescue efforts after Iranian state media said Prez Ebrahim Raisi's helicopter was involved in "an accident" in poor weather conditions. Iraqi PM Mohamed Shia al-Sudani "instructed the interior ministry, the Iraqi Red Crescent and other relevant authorities to offer the Islamic Republic of Iran the available resources to aid in the search for the Iranian president's aircraft," govt spokesman Bassem al-Awadi said in a statement. Iranian state television announced that the "accident" happened in the Jofa region of the western province of East Azerbaijan. AFP

Amirabdollahian, the semi-official Tasnim news agency reported. State television broadcast live footage from the country's holy shrine in the northeastern city of Mashhad, Raisi's birthplace, showing pilgrims praying for Raisi. Others believed to be on board Raisi's helicopter included the governor of East Azerbaijan province and the supreme leader's representative in the city of Tabriz, Iranian media said.

Raisi, 63, was elected president in 2021, and since taking office has ordered a tightening of morality laws, overseen a bloody crackdown on anti-govt protests and pushed hard in nuclear talks with world powers. In Iran's dual political system, split between the clerical establishment and the govt, it is the supreme leader rather than the president who has the final say on all major policies.

But many have seen Raisi as a strong contender to succeed his 85-year-old mentor, Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who has strongly endorsed Raisi's main policies. Raisi had been at the Azerbaijani border to inaugurate the Qiz-Qalaisi Dam, a joint project. Interior minister Ahmed Vahidi told state TV only that one of the helicopters in a group of three had come down in the incident, and that authorities were awaiting further details. REUTERS

Khamenei protege, hardline prez, sanctioned by US

Dubai: Hard-line Prez Ebrahim Raisi has long been seen as a protege to Iran's supreme leader and a potential successor for his position within the country's Shia theocracy. News of his helicopter making what state media described as a "hard landing" on Sunday immediately brought new attention to the leader, who already faces sanctions from the US and other nations over his involvement in the mass execution of prisoners in 1988. Raisi, 63, previously ran Iran's judiciary. He ran unsuccessfully for presidency in 2017 against Hassan Rouhani, the moderate cleric who as prez reached Tehran's 2015 nuclear deal with world powers. In 2021, Raisi ran again in an election that saw all of his potentially prominent opponents barred from running under Iran's vetting system. He swept nearly 62% of the 28.9 million

votes, the lowest turnout by percentage in the Islamic Republic's history. Millions stayed home and others voided ballots. Raisi was defiant when asked at a news conference after his election about the 1988 executions, which saw sham retrials of political prisoners, militants and others that would become known as "death commissions" at the end of the Iran-Iraq war. After Iran's then-Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini accepted a UN-brokered ceasefire, members of the Iranian opposition group Mujahedeen-e-Khalq, heavily armed by Saddam Hussein, stormed across the Iranian border from Iraq in a surprise attack. Iran blunted their assault.



The trials began around that time, with defendants asked to identify themselves. Those who responded "mujahede-

en" were sent to their deaths, while others were questioned about their willingness to "clear minefields for the army," according to a 1990 Amnesty International report. Rights groups estimate that as many as 5,000 people were executed. Raisi served on the commissions.

The US treasury in 2019 sanctioned Raisi "for his administrative oversight over the executions of individuals who were juveniles at the time of their crime and the torture and other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment of prisoners in Iran, including amputations." It also mentioned his involvement in the 1988 executions.

Raisi ultimately is run by its 85-year-old supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. But as prez, Raisi supported the country's enrichment of uranium

up to near-weapons-grade levels, as well as it hampering international inspectors as part of its confrontation with the West.

Raisi also supported attacking Israel in a massive assault in April that saw over 300 drones and missiles fired at the country in response for a suspected Israeli attack that killed Iranian generals at the country's embassy compound in Damascus, Syria. He also supported the country's security services as they cracked down on all dissent, including in the aftermath of the 2022 death of Mahsa Amini and the nationwide protests that followed. The monthlong crackdown killed more than 500 people and saw over 22,000 detained. In March, a UN investigative panel found that Iran was responsible for the "physical violence" that led to Amini's death after her arrest for not wearing a hijab to the liking of authorities. AP

At graduation event, Biden faces silent protest by anti-war students

Atlanta: US Prez Joe Biden renewed his call for a temporary ceasefire in Gaza in a speech at Morehouse College's graduation ceremony, where some participants donned Palestinian colours in protest at Israel's military incursion. Biden's address at the historically black school in Atlanta brought him face to face with some of the campus unrest set off by the Israel-Hamas war. "What's happening in Gaza and Israel is heart-breaking," Biden said Sunday, referring to the Oct. 7 attack on Israel by Hamas militants and the plight of "innocent Palestinians" caught up in Israel's military response.

Several students and faculty members at the commencement wore keffiyeh scarves, which have become a symbol of protest against the war in Gaza. At least one student draped a Palestinian flag over his graduation gown and a faculty member wore a stole with the Palestinian colours while receiving an award on the podium. Biden didn't acknowledge the silent protests and told the ceremony it's his job to tackle "one of the hardest, most complicated problems in the world." BLOOMBERG

Pak min: Trade ties with India suspended due to 'heavy duties'

Islamabad: Foreign minister Ishaq Dar has said that trade ties between Islamabad and New Delhi have remained suspended since 2019 due to the imposition of "heavy duties" by India on imports from Pakistan after the Pulwama attack.

In a written reply submitted to the National Assembly on Saturday, Dar, who also holds the deputy prime minister's slot, said: "India decided to impose 200% duty on imports from Pakistan, suspended the Kashmir bus service and trade across the LoC after the Pulwama attack."

According to the Dawn newspaper, Dar was responding to a question by Pakistan Peoples Party lawmaker Sharmila Faruqi seeking details about trade challenges faced by Pakistan in its relations with neighbouring countries, especially India. In March, during a press conference in London, Dar highlighted the eagerness of Pakistan's business community to resume trade activities with India. However, his office later clarified that Pakistan has no plan to resume trade relations with India which has been "non-existent" since 2019. PTI

Andhra-born is first Indian to go to space as a tourist

Surendra Singh @timesgroup.com

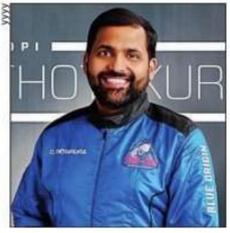
India-born Gopi Thotakura made history on Sunday evening as he became the first Indian to venture into space as a tourist. He was part of the elite crew for Blue Origin's New Shepard-25 (NS-25) mission, which took off from the company's West Texas launch site in the US around 8.05 pm (IST), an hour late from its scheduled launch time of 9:35 am (local US time).

Born in Vijayawada (Andhra Pradesh), Gopi, an entrepreneur and a pilot, journeyed to the edge of space beyond the Earth's atmosphere along with five others. He is officially the second astronaut from the country after Wing Commander Rakesh Sharma, who flew as a professional cosmonaut to space on board Soyuz T-11 on April 3, 1994, as part of the Soviet Interkosmos programme. Astronauts Kalpana Chawla, Sunita Williams, Raja Chari, and Sirisha Bandla were all US citizens of Indian origin who also went to space as professional astronauts.

TOI had earlier reported on Gopi's probable entry to the elite astronaut club. Following takeoff, the NS-25 vehicle reached beyond the boundary of space smoothly. The rocket and capsule then returned to Earth, with the rocket landing upright a few minutes after takeoff. The capsule successfully touched down, using two of its three parachutes, roughly 15 minutes after takeoff. Introducing the Indian space tourist, a Blue Origin statement said, "Gopi Thotakura is a lifelong pilot and aviator who learned how to fly before he could drive. He flies jets commercially, in addition to piloting bush,



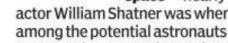
A screen grab shows the Mission NS-25, with the New Shepard 4 rocket & crew capsule, taking off from Texas's Van Horn on Sunday



Gopi Thotakura is a pilot and aviator. He flies jets commercially, in addition to piloting bush, aerobatic, and seaplanes

60 years on, America's 1st black astronaut candidate finally goes to space at 90

America's first Black astronaut candidate finally rocketed into space 60 years later, flying with Jeff Bezos' rocket company on Sunday. Ed Dwight was an air force pilot when President John F Kennedy championed him as a candidate for NASA's early astronaut corps. But he wasn't picked for the 1963 class. Dwight, now 90, got to experience a few minutes of weightlessness with five other passengers aboard the Blue Origin capsule as it skimmed space. Launch officials said all of the astronauts were well shortly after the capsule parachuted down after a flight of roughly 10 minutes. The brief flight from West Texas made Dwight the new record-holder for oldest person in space — nearly two months older than "Star Trek" actor William Shatner was when he went up in 2021. Dwight was among the potential astronauts the air force recommended to NASA. But he wasn't chosen for the 1963 class, which included eventual Gemini and Apollo astronauts, including Apollo 11's Buzz Aldrin and Michael Collins. NASA didn't select Black astronauts until 1978, and Guion Bluford became the first African American in space in 1983. Three years earlier, the Soviets launched the first Black astronaut, Arnaldo Tamayo Mendez, a Cuban of African descent. AP



Ed Dwight

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aerobatic, and seaplanes. Gopi is a co-founder of Preserve Life Corp, a global center for holistic wellness and applied health." He studied for a BSc in aeronautical science at Embury-Riddle Aeronautical University, US. Gopi has worked in medical air evacuation services in India in the past. This flight is Blue Origin's first tourist mission on New Shepard since Aug 2022. The company was forced to halt flights of the rocket after a New Shepard vehicle suffered an engine failure mid-flight during an uncrewed mission in Sep 2022. This mission was the seventh human flight for the New Shepard programme and the 25th in its history. In all, New Shepard has flown 31 humans, the company said.

'Slovak PM's attacker likely not a lone wolf'

The suspect in an assassination attempt on Slovak PM Robert Fico may not have been just a "lone wolf" as previously believed, the interior minister said on Sunday. Deputy PM Robert Kalinak said earlier on Sunday that Fico's life was no longer in immediate danger, although his condition was still too serious for him to be moved to a hospital in the capital Bratislava.

Interior minister Matus Sutaj Estok said an investigation team had been set up, which would also look into whether the suspect acted as part of

a group of people that had been encouraging each other to carry out an assassination. One factor suggesting the involvement of others was that the suspect's internet communications were deleted two hours after the assassination attempt, but not by the suspect and most likely not by his wife, Estok said. "This indicated the crime may have been committed by a certain group of people."



The Slovak Specialised Criminal Court ruled on Saturday that the suspect, identified by prosecutors as Juraj C., would remain in custody after be-

ing charged with attempted murder. Local news media say the suspect is a 71-year-old former security guard at a shopping mall and the author of three collections of poetry. Estok said on Thursday the suspect was angered by the govt's Ukraine policy. Fico's govt has ended military support for Ukraine and taken a more pro-Russian line on the conflict. The govt has said he became radicalised after Fico ally Peter Pellegrini won a presidential election last month, and that he had told police about his dissatisfaction with the govt's reforms of the prosecution service and public media. AP

US & Iran held indirect talks in Oman: Report

Washington: Senior US and Iranian officials held talks through intermediaries in Oman this past week, the first such conversations since Iran launched a retaliatory attack on Israel with hundreds of missiles and drones last month, according to a person familiar with the recent meetings.

Brett McGurk, the top White House official on West Asia policy, and Abram Paley, the deputy special envoy for Iran, attended the talks in Oman.

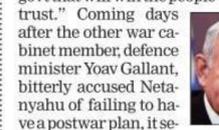
The goal was to try to get Iran, which supplies weapons and training to militias across West Asia, to move to rein in its partners. Since the Israel-Hamas war broke out, several Iran-backed militias in Iraq and Syria have stepped up attacks on US troops, raising fears of a wider war. The most powerful of the regional militias, Lebanon-based Hezbollah, has been exchanging fire with the Israeli military in northern Israel and southern Lebanon. However, US intelligence officials assess that neither Hezbollah nor Iran wants to engage in a wider war. The US has had no diplomatic relations with Iran since 1979, and discussions are often conducted through intermediaries and back channels. The format of the talks in Oman was similar to ones held in Jan: The Americans sat in one room while their Iranian counterparts sat in another, and Omani officials shuttled between the rooms. NYT



Brett McGurk (above), the top White House official on West Asia policy, and Abram Paley, the deputy special envoy for Iran, attended the talks in Oman

Israel's war cabinet is in turmoil, but Bibi 'secure'

Benny Gantz, facing the cameras with gravity on Saturday told PM Benjamin Netanyahu to shift course on the Gaza war or he'd quit the three-man war cabinet. Israel, he said, needs "a govt that will win the people's trust." Coming days after the other war cabinet member, defence minister Yoav Gallant, bitterly accused Netanyahu of failing to have a postwar plan, it seemed that Netanyahu was being isolated by his two senior generals, both former top generals, and Israel was headed toward political crisis.



But analysts on Sunday said Netanyahu's coalition, 64 parliamentary seats out of 120, remains secure. Even if Gantz carries out his threat to resign by June 8 — not a certainty — little is likely to change in the short to medium term, they said. The war cabinet might collapse but

Netanyahu would continue to govern with his far-right partners. "Gantz's chances of overthrowing the govt are slim," said Mazal Muelem, who's written a recent political biography of Netanyahu. "There is almost no chance that members of Netanyahu's Likud party will rebel against him, given the political cost. The second way is through massive public protest. But public sentiment isn't there. Gantz's move was a mistake."

All that said, if five Likud legislators do rebel or if Ultra-Orthodox partners walk out over court-enforced efforts to draft their young men, Netanyahu would be in trouble and may result in polls. His extremist partners could push him to adopt policies that would lead to massive anti-govt stir and objections from the US, either of which could lead to change. BLOOMBERG

2 Chinese warships dock in Cambodia for naval drills

Sihanoukville (Cambodia): Two Chinese warships docked on Sunday at a commercial port in Cambodia, in preparation for joint naval exercises between the two countries.

The Jingangshan amphibious warfare ship and Qijiguan training ship sailed in to the Sihanoukville Port as onlookers waved Cambodian and Chinese flags from the piers.

The port is north of the Ream Naval Base, where China has funded a broad expansion project that has been carefully watched by the US and others over concerns it could become a new outpost for the Chinese navy on the Gulf of Thailand.

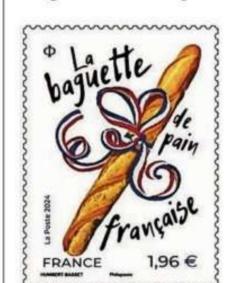
The Gulf is adjacent to the South China Sea, which China claims virtually in its entirety, and would give easy access to the Malacca Strait, one of the most important shipping lanes in the world. Wang Wentian, China's ambassador to Cambodia, dismissed concerns about Ream, telling reporters at Sihanoukville that "we bring friendship, we bring cooperation" and nothing else. "The cooperation between the two armies is conducive to the security of both countries and the security of the region," he said, standing on the pier. The Jingangshan and the Qijiguan are due to take part in naval exercises from the Ream base from May 24-27, along with two Chinese corvettes that have been docked at Ream's new pier for more than five months. The joint training is the naval component of the regularly held Golden Dragon exercises. Controversy over Ream Naval Base initially arose in 2019 when Wall Street Journal reported that an early draft of a reputed agreement seen by US officials would allow China 30-year use of the base, where it would be able to post military personnel, store weapons and berth warships. Cambodia's then-PM Hun Sen denied there was such an agreement. AP

AROUND THE WORLD



NIGHT DELIGHT: A bright comet fragment lit up skies over parts of Spain and Portugal on Saturday as it flew at a speed of 45 km/sec before burning up over the Atlantic, the European Space Agency said. One Lisbon resident said the dazzling display 'felt like a movie'

France govt issues scratch-and-sniff baguette stamps



Joining the ranks of screen goddess Brigitte Bardot and the Eiffel Tower, another French treasure is being celebrated with its own postage stamp: the baguette. And this one is scratch-and-sniff. The latest showcasing of French cultural heritage as Paris prepares to host millions of visitors for the Summer Olympics and Paralympics, the new stamp features a cartoon image of a baguette wrapped in a tricolor ribbon. It was

unveiled by France's postal service Thursday — May 16, the feast day of Saint Honore, the patron saint of bakers. Priced €1.96 each, the stamp is intended to be used for international letters of up to 20 grams. The baguette is one of the most talked-about breads in the world and certainly the most popular in its native France: Six billion baguettes are made every year, the postal service said.

Hershey faces lawsuit over missing design on candies

Hershey is facing a lawsuit claiming it misled consumers about the amount of artistic detail they would find on several Reese's peanut butter candies after opening the packaging. In a proposed class action on Friday, four Reese's consumers in Florida said they were "very disappointed" that the candies they bought late last year looked plain, and lacked the "explicit carved out artistic designs" shown on the packaging. Photos included in the complaint showed pumpkin-shaped candies missing the advertised eyes and crooked mouths, and a football-shaped candy that resembled an egg because it lacked stitching.

How 2020 election deniers claimed the upside-down American flag

After Prez Joe Biden won the 2020 election, supporters of Donald Trump rallied around the inverted US flag, displaying it at their homes, on their cars and on social media to show that they believed Trump's lie that the election was stolen. Now, the practice has burst into the national conversation after NYT reported on Thursday that it had recently obtained images of an upside-down flag flying outside the home of Justice Samuel Alito in Jan 2021 in Virginia. At the time, the Supreme Court was



The practice started with sailors signalling distress but evolved into a form of protest, most recently among Trump supporters

still contending with whether to hear a 2020 election case. Alito said he had "no involvement whatsoever in the flying of the flag." "It was briefly placed by Alito in response to a neighbour's use of objectionable language on yard signs," he wrote, referring to wife, Martha-Ann. Once a call for help at sea

Before it became an emblem of political protest, flying a nation's flag upside down was one of the only ways for sailors to call for help. The practice seems to have originated in the British Isles in the 17th century during

the Anglo-Dutch wars. That meaning was reflected in the US flag code, an official set of guidelines for the flag, which was first published in the 1920s. It reads: "The flag should never be displayed with the union down, except as a signal of dire distress in instances of extreme danger to life or property. Protest emblem

The upside-down flag also has a long history as a political emblem. In 1854, Henry David Thoreau delivered a scathing anti-slavery speech while standing under an upside-down US

flag on a stage. In the 1960s and '70s, protesters carried the flag upside down as a symbol of opposition to the Vietnam War. In more recent years, the inverted flag has been displayed by Tea Party activists who opposed the reelection of President Barack Obama. In 2020, an AP photo of a protester carrying a US flag upside down next to a burning building in Minneapolis circulated widely, capturing the fury in that city after the murder of George Floyd by police officers. Now, a 'Stop The Steal' symbol

In 2020, the upside-down

flag became established as an emblem of Trump supporters who denied the legitimacy of Biden's victory. Matthew Gutler, a professor of American Studies at Brown University, said flying the flag upside down "seems to have become a part of our hyperpartisan symbolic surround, especially on the right, where it symbolises the impending death of the nation and a call to arms." Other symbols include thin-blue-line flags, a pro-police symbol, and a Punisher skull, based on the comic-book vigilante, he said. NYT

XUV 3XO EVERYTHING YOU WANT & MORE

41 Sixes scored by Abhishek Sharma in 13 innings in this IPL are the most by any batter apart from the most by an Indian player in the competition. He surpassed Virat Kohli's tally of 38 in 16 innings in 2016

15 wickets taken by Pat Cummins to become the first pacer to bag fifteen wickets as captain in an IPL season

Stats: Rajesh Kumar

SCOREBOARD

Punjab Kings: Taide c Sanvir b Natarajan 46, Prabhsimran c Klaasen b Vijaykanthi 71, Rossouw c Samad b Cummins 49, Shashank (run out) 2, Jitesh Sharma (not out) 32, Ashutosh c Sanvir b Natarajan 2, Shivam Singh (not out) 2. **Extras: (LB-5, W-4, NB-1) 10. Total (for 5 wkts, 20 overs) 214.**
Fall of wickets: 1-97, 2-151, 3-174, 4-181, 5-187.
Bowling: Bhuvneshwar 4-0-36-0, Cummins 4-0-36-1, Natarajan 4-0-33-2, Vijaykanthi 4-0-37-1, Shahbaz 1-0-13-0, Nitish 3-0-54-0.
Sunrisers Hyderabad: Head b Arshdeep 0, Abhishek c Shivam b Shashank 66, Tripathi c Arshdeep b Harshal 33, Nitish c Shivam b Harshal 37, Klaasen b Brar 42, Shahbaz c Shashank b Harshal 3, Samad (not out) 11, Sanvir (not out) 6. **Extras: (LB-6, W-10, NB-1) 17. Total (for 6 wkts, 19.1 overs) 215.**
Fall of wickets: 1-0, 2-72, 3-129, 4-176, 5-197, 6-208.
Bowling: Arshdeep 4-0-37-2, Rishi 3-0-35-0, Harshal 4-0-49-2, R Chahar 4-0-43-0, Brar 3-0-36-1, Shas hank 1-0-5-1, Taide 0.1-0-4-0.

SUNRISERS RISE TO NO.2

Abhishek's 28-Ball 66 Helps SRH Overhaul Punjab's 214/5 And End League Phase On A High

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Hyderabad: Abhishek Sharma continued his marauding form with a quickfire 28-ball 66 (5x4, 6x6) as Sunrisers Hyderabad defeated Punjab Kings by four wickets to brighten their prospects of a top-two finish in the standings.

The victory at the Rajiv Gandhi International Cricket stadium took SRH to 17 points and the second spot on Sunday. However, the outcome of the match between Kolkata Knight Riders and Rajasthan Royals will confirm their final position in the table.

Chasing Punjab Kings' 214/5, thanks largely to Prabhsimran Singh's 71 (45b, 7x4, 4x6), Abhishek added 72 runs for the second wicket with Rahul Tripathi (33 off 18b) and 57 runs with Nitish Kumar (37 off 25b) for the third wicket as the hosts finished at 215/6 with five deliveries to spare.

That after Sunrisers lost their in-form opener Travis Head to the very first ball, as he was cleaned up by Arshdeep Singh. But Tripathi and Abhishek plundered 72 runs in just 30 balls. Though Tripathi departed in the sixth over, caught by Arsh-



MAKING A POINT: Abhishek Sharma on Sunday

deep, the hosts had by then powered to 84/2 in the powerplay. Abhishek continued his aggressive approach despite losing two partners. He hit Harshal Patel for consecutive boundaries to reach his half-century in 21 deliveries and then lofted Harpreet Brar for consecutive sixes to take Hyderabad to 129/2 at the halfway mark. However, he perished to the first ball of Shashank Singh's next over.

Nitish and Heinrich Klaasen then kept the hosts on course. Both hit sixes off Brar and Rahul Charar to bring down the required run rate to just over six by the 13th over. With 39 required from 37 deliveries, Nitish departed after adding 47 for

the fourth wicket. With eight runs needed for victory, Klaasen (42 off 26b) too fell, cleaned up by Brar. But Abdul Samad hit Atharva straight down the ground for a boundary to take his side to victory.

Earlier, openers Prabhsimran and Atharva Taide (46 off 27b) added 97 runs for the opening wicket in nine overs, 61 of them in the first six, after Punjab elected to bat. Natarajan got rid of Taide in the 10th over, but Prabhsimran reached his half-century in 34 balls.

Rilee Rossouw and Prabhsimran hit Nitish for 20 runs in the 12th over before the latter departed after adding 54 runs for the second wicket. Rossouw then smashed

Nitish for a six and a four before a mixup with Shashank Singh resulted in the latter's run out. Cummins then removed Rossouw (49) and Natarajan got rid of Ashutosh Sharma in the next.

BEST OF THE LEAGUE

ORANGE CAP



RUNS **708**

VIRAT KOHLI (RCB)

R Gaikwad (CSK) **583**

T Head (SRH) **533**

R Parag (RR) **531**

S Sudharsan (GT) **527**

PURPLE CAP



WICKETS **24**

HARSHAL PATEL (PBKS)

J Bumrah (MI) **20**

Arshdeep (PBKS) **19**

V Chakravarthy (KKR) **18**

T Deshpande (CSK) **17**

HOW THEY STAND

TEAM	M	W	L	NR	NRR	PTS
KKR	14	9	3	2	1.428	20
SRH	14	8	5	1	0.414	17
RR	14	8	5	1	0.273	17
RCB	14	7	7	0	0.459	14
CSK	14	7	7	0	0.392	14
DC	14	7	7	0	-0.377	14
LSG	14	7	7	0	-0.667	14
GT	14	5	7	2	-1.063	12
PBKS	14	5	9	0	-0.353	10
MI	14	4	10	0	-0.318	8

I wouldn't want to bowl to Abhishek: Cummins

Hyderabad: Batting at a strike rate of 209.41 this IPL season, Abhishek Sharma on Sunday received the biggest compliment of his life when premier pacer Pat Cummins said he wouldn't like to bowl at the explosive left-hander as "it's scary".

In the ongoing edition of the league, Abhishek has put fear in the minds of bowlers, including Cummins, his skipper at Sunrisers Hyderabad.

He blazed away to a 28-ball 66 in SRH's four-wicket win over Punjab Kings here. The young left-hander hit six sixes and five fours as SRH shot down Punjab Kings' target of 215 with five balls to spare. "He (Abhishek) is amazing. I wouldn't want to bowl to him. It's scary as he plays with freedom, not only against pacers but also against spinners," the Australian fast bowler said at the post-match presentation.

The 23-year-old, who represents Punjab at domestic level, has been in phenomenal form

this season, aggregating 467 runs from 13 matches at a strike rate of nearly 210 while hitting 39 sixes and 35 fours.

Cummins also hailed Nitish Reddy who made a crucial 25-ball 37 while batting at No 4. "Nitish is a class player, matured beyond his age, seems to sum up the game really well, he is perfect for our top-order," he said.

Meanwhile, Abhishek said he has benefitted a lot after working with batting great Brian Lara, who was involved with the franchise in the past. "I have done some work with him, he's in touch. That's helping me now," Abhishek said.

"My days are going good so I should utilise it for my team. I wanted to contribute as the target was big today," he added.

RR end 3rd after washout

Guwahati: Rajasthan Royals paid the price for their shoddy show during the business end as a washout of their final IPL league game against table toppers Kolkata Knight Riders on Sunday pushed them to third place behind Sunrisers Hyderabad.

RAIN PAIN

While KKR finished the league engagements on 20 points with nine wins and two more solitary points courtesy washouts, SRH (17 points) pipped RR (17 points) by virtue of a better net run rate (NRR). SRH finished with 0.414 compared to RR's 0.273. KKR will play

Sunrisers Hyderabad in the first Qualifier in Ahmedabad on Tuesday followed by the 'Eliminator' between Rajasthan Royals and Royal Challengers Bengaluru at the same venue.

Rajasthan Royals would blame themselves for getting into a little rut after an incredible run during the first half of the tournament when they had won eight out of their nine games. But their campaign lost steam towards the back end as they lost four games on the trot and with no Jos Buttler for crunch games, facing a marauding RCB in a winner-takes-all match, could be a very tough proposition. AGENCIES

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Royal Challengers Bengaluru Ride On Teamwork To Script A Stirring Tale

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Bengaluru: Years ago, Royal Challengers Bengaluru fans, ever hopeful of their team winning the Indian Premier League title despite being on the brink on several occasions, came up with the catchline, 'Ee sala Cup namde'. The wait for the trophy, though, has stretched 17 seasons and the catchline has been a subject of much mockery and jeers.

This season, RCB changed Bangalore in their name to Bengaluru and the catchline changed to 'Hosa adhyaya' (A new beginning). But with one win in seven matches at the half-way mark, it seemed pretty much like the RCB of old. On April 24, they came agonisingly close to snapping the losing streak but went down by a solitary run to Kolkata Knight Riders. Yet, it was the turning point.

Over the course of the next six games, Faf du Plessis and his men cashed in on the several positives from that match, notching up win after win. The last one, a nervy 27-run validation

RCB 2.0

of their resurgence on Saturday night at their home ground, came against old nemesis — Chennai Super Kings. TOI looks at the six factors which have worked for RCB:

VIRAT KOHLI'S FORM

Virat Kohli has struck a purple patch and has donned the Orange Cap for the better part of the season. Yet, when the team's chips were down, his strike rate and not his performance was the talking point. Kohli has amassed 708 runs this season with a century and five half-centuries at a strike rate of 155.60. Like in many seasons before, he has been at the helm of the turnaround, pushing his boundaries in the power plays and ensuring good starts.

PATIDAR PACKS A PUNCH

Handed a clear role and a consistent slot, Rajat Patidar has come into his own. With five half-centuries and a strike rate touching 180, Patidar has filled the vacuum for an Indian batter other than Kohli. He has accelerated consistently, and the standout feature has been his six-hitting abilities, especially against spinners. With 31 maximums and 19 fours, RCB have found a match-winner in him.

FAF FACTOR

Du Plessis is among a few in the RCB dugout who knows what it feels like to lift the IPL trophy. He has done that twice with Chennai Super Kings. The 38-year-old can hand a lesson or two in soaking up pressure. His unbeaten 42-ball 67 against Sunrisers Hyderabad in the 2018 qualifiers (for CSK) and the



BACK FROM THE BRINK

DELIGHTED: Royal Challengers Bengaluru players celebrate their win at the Chinnaswamy stadium on Saturday

match-winning 86 against Kolkata Knight Riders in the 2021 final stand testimony to his versatility as a batter. After Kohli's exit on Saturday night, on a wicket made tricky by the dampness, the South African brought all his experience to the fore and his 54 proved to be a clincher.

THE FOREIGN FLAVOUR

A stumbling Faf du Plessis, Glenn Maxwell with a cold bat, and the indifferent form of Reece Topley, Will Jacks and Cameron Green were a major worry for RCB. But in the second half of the season, Jacks raised the tempo with the bat and Green filled the role of an overseas all-rounder with aplomb.

BOWLERS COME TO THE PARTY

Bowling has often proved to be RCB's Achilles' heel. It was the case in the first half of the season. But in the latter half, discipline and precision have been the key. The foreign pacers like Green and Lockie Ferguson have complemented the efforts of Mohd Siraj and Yash Dayal, while a returning Maxwell and Swapnil Singh have fortified the undercooked spin attack.

CATCHES WIN MATCHES

Fielding at mid-off, Du Plessis struck a one-hand stunner to dismiss CSK's Mitchell Santner off Siraj's bowling on Saturday. This was one of the instances of RCB's sharp fielding in a season where dropped catches have been the norm. The likes of Du Plessis, Maxwell and Kohli have made up for the shortcomings of a few others. Kohli's sensational direct hit to dismiss Shashank Singh in the match against Punjab Kings is another instance of RCB's tight fielding.

ROHIT LASHES OUT AT BROADCASTERS

India skipper **Rohit Sharma** on Sunday lashed out at the IPL broadcasters for "breaching" cricketers' privacy by recording their conversations with friends and colleagues at training and on match days and then telecasting the contents. Rohit expressed his disappointment after a video involving him and Kolkata Knight Riders assistant coach Abhishek Nayar, in which the former is seen contemplating his future at the Mumbai Indians, went viral.

"The lives of cricketers have become so intrusive that cameras are now recording every step and conversation we are having

in privacy with our friends and colleagues, at training or on match days," Rohit posted on X. He added, "Despite asking Star Sports to not record my conversation, it was and then played on air, which is a breach of privacy."

"The need to get exclusive content and focus only on views and engagement will one day break the trust between the fans, cricketers and cricket. Let better sense prevail." Rohit was seen making a request to the broadcasters to shut down the audio while recording him after his chat with Nayar. ❧



Dayal's redemption: From horror to happiness

Manuja.Veerappa@timesgroup.com

Bengaluru: On Saturday night, Chennai Super Kings needed 17 runs off the final over to deny Royal Challengers Bengaluru the lone slot up for grabs in the playoffs. Faf du Plessis tossed the ball to pacer Yash Dayal. The bowler from UP delivered a low full toss to MS Dhoni, which the CSK maestro sent out of the park.

Dayal watched the ball disappear and one could not help but think about the last over bowled by the pacer for Gujarat Titans against Kolkata Knight Riders last season. KRR's Rinku Singh had hammered Dayal in the last over, smashing five consecutive match-winning maximums. Face buried in a towel, Dayal was a picture of despair.

That infamous over haunted Dayal for a long time. The UP bowler wouldn't play a game in the season after that, with GT

eventually releasing him. It got so bad that mother Radha even took ill seeing her son's demotivated state.

Picked by RCB at the auction, on Saturday, at their home ground, following Dhoni's 110-metre effort, for a fleeting moment those ghosts may have resurfaced for the 26-year-old.

"When I got hit off that ball, I subconsciously went back to that place (match against KKR). But I have done well after that, so all that was running through my mind was to deliver a good ball. I didn't want to look at the scoreboard or the result. I just wanted to bowl well. I was confident of executing well," Dayal would say later.

A ball lost, a ball replaced, Dayal knew he had a

new weapon to counter Dhoni with. The new ball stuck on the wicket and the slower deliveries gripped. Dhoni then topped a slower one for Swapnil Singh to pouch at deep backward square, sending the packed stadium into a tizzy. For Dayal, it was personal redemption unfolding as he bowled slower deliveries and gave away just one run in the next four to seal RCB's win.

"God's plan baby," an ecstatic, and somewhat relieved, Rinku would post on social media. The young Dayal himself would worry about his mother: "Kaisa feel kar rahi ho (How are you feeling mom?)," would be his first words to his mother on a video call.

"After what happened to me last time, there was nervousness," he would say. "Since coming to this RCB set-up, I have practised a lot and have

delivered in matches. All that was going through my mind was to deliver two balls well. Even if I didn't execute it well, there were seniors right behind me. That helped me a lot."

Dayal revealed that it was Dinesh Karthik and Du Plessis who took the call for him to bowl the last over.

"I was supposed to bowl the 19th over. Suddenly, DK-bhaiya and Faf talked to each other, and it was decided that Lockie (Ferguson) would bowl the 19th and me the last," he said.

Decoding the final over, RCB skipper Faf du Plessis explained, "The way Yash bowled was unbelievable. I told him pace off is the best option on this pitch and trust your skills and enjoy, this is what you trained for. In the first ball, the yorker did not work, and he went back to pace off and it worked unbelievably well." The South African would later dedicate his man of the match award to his born-again left-arm bowler.



SNAP SHOTS

ARAVINDH IN SOLE LEAD

Indian Grandmaster Aravindh Chithambaram defeated local star AR Saleh Salem to emerge as the sole leader on 4.5 points after the end of the fifth round of the Sharjah Masters chess tournament on Sunday. Chithambaram is now followed by four players on four points. Top seed Arjun Erigaisi is in the next pack of eight players on 3.5 points.

Select Indian results (Round 5): Aravindh Chithambaram (4.5) bt AR Saleh Salem (UAE, 3.5); Arjun Erigaisi (3.5) drew with Volodar Murzin (Fid, 3.5); Sankalp Gupta (3.5) drew with Samuel Sevian (US, 3); Shreyas Royal (Eng, 3) drew with Nihal Sarin (3); Leon Luke Mendonca (3) drew with Nikolas Theodorou (Gre, 3); P Nindiyar (3) drew with Teimour Radjabov (Aze, 3); V Pranav (3) bt Nodirbek Yakubov (Uzb, 2); B Adhikari (3) bt Pouya Idani (Iri, 2).

Manu most successful shooter: Olympian Manu Bhaker emerged as the most successful shooter in the Olympic Selection Trials (OST) Rifle/Pistol, winning the women's 10m air pistol trial 4 on the concluding day of the exercise in Bhopal on Sunday. Overall, this was Manu's fourth win in the trials across two events, the other being the women's 25m sports pistol. Earlier, Elavelini Valarivan won the women's 10m air rifle with a score of 254.3, 0.3 above the current world record of 254.0 set by China's Han Jiayu in the ISSF World Cup in Baku this month. **Other winners: Men: 10m AR: Divyansh Panwar; 10m air pistol: Ravinder Singh.**

All 3 Indians finish T-24: Diksha Dagar shot a closing five-under 67 to finish tied 24th with fellow Indians Pranavi Urs, who shot three-under 69, and Tvesa Malik (71) at the Amundi German Masters near Berlin on Sunday. All three Indians finished with a tournament aggregate of one-under 287. German Alexandra Forsterling edged out Emma Spitz on the second playoff hole to emerge triumphant.

Indian scores (after 72 holes): 287: Pranavi Urs (74, 73, 71, 69), Tvesa Malik (72, 77, 67, 71), Diksha Dagar (74, 73, 73, 67, 74-24).

Nishad wins silver; Pal bronze at World Parada: The Indian team picked up its first medals in the World Para Athletics Championships with high jumper Nishad Kumar and 200m runner Preethi Pai winning a silver and bronze respectively at Kobe, Japan on Sunday. Kumar cleared 1.99m to finish second in the men's 147 high jump final and pick up India's first medal on the third day. Preethi Pai then added a bronze in women's T35 200m final in 30.49 seconds.

Kadam, Tarun, Suhas qualify for Paralympics: Ace Indian para shuttlers Sukant Kadam, Tarun and Suhas have sealed their berths for the upcoming Paralympics in Paris. Kadam will be competing in the men's SL 4 category. Apart from him, Tarun and Suhas have also qualified from the same category. Mandeep Kaur in SL3 women's, Nithya and Sivarajan in mixed doubles SL6 category also made the cut. The Paris Paralympics will be held from August 28 to September 8.

Dallas reach NBA Western Conference finals: Luka Doncic posted a triple-double and PJ Washington drilled the deciding free-throw as the Dallas Mavericks erased a 17-point deficit to beat Oklahoma City 117-116 to reach the NBA Western Conference finals on Saturday. The Mavericks beat the top-seeded Thunder 4-2.

ELECTRIC CITY: LIGHTNING STRIKES 4 TIMES

Pep's Army Wins Record Fourth Consecutive Premier League Title As Arsenal Dreams Dashed

Manchester: Manchester City created English football history on Sunday, overcoming West Ham 3-1 to win their fourth straight Premier League title and break Arsenal's hearts.

Phil Foden scored two goal goals at an expectant Etihad to put his side on the brink of the title before Mohammed Kudus pulled one back with a spectacular overhead kick. But Rodri struck just before the hour to restore City's two-goal cushion and the home side rarely looked troubled as they coasted to the win. Arsenal started the day two points behind their rivals and praying for a miracle to deny City their coronation.

The Gunners, without a Premier League title since 2004, came from a goal down to beat Everton 2-1 but had to content themselves with second in the table for a second straight season. City stand alone as the only English team to have won four straight top-flight titles. Elsewhere on the final day of the Premier League season, Luton's relegation was confirmed with a 4-2 loss at home to Fulham. They will join Burnley and Sheffield United in the Championship next season.

City appeared to have one hand on the trophy and news then filtered through that Everton had taken the lead at Arsenal, leaving Mikel Arteta's men leaving an unlikely sequence of events to come out on top. But the title race came alive again. Kai Havertz sealed a 2-1 win in the 89th minute. Manchester United finished outside the European positions in eighth place and with a negative goal difference despite beating Brighton 2-0 away in their final game in the Premier League season. AFP



HERE WE GO AGAIN: Man City players with the trophy

Asian player rule maybe scrapped

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Panaji: Indian Super League (ISL) clubs have been told there will possibly be changes to the coach and player selection guidelines, with the Asian player signing now no longer a mandatory requirement.

ISL clubs, and even those in the I-League, Indian football's second-tier league, are allowed to sign five international players, besides one from a member association of the Asian Football Confederation (AFC), which includes Australia. A maximum of four of these foreign players are allowed to be on the field of play at any given point of time.

From next season, however, ISL is planning to do away with

the 'Asian quota,' following a change in the AFC club competition guidelines.

"There is no formal communication from ISL about the changes, but clubs have been informally informed about the 'tentative possible changes' for next season," a source who has been tracking the development told TOI on Sunday.

FOOTBALL

"From the 2024-25 season, AFC has allowed teams to register an unlimited number of foreign players who can play in the Champions League.

"There is no Asian quota anymore and several countries will announce changes." The possible change to the Asian

player rule will come as well-known news for Indian clubs who rue they are forced to sign players who do not offer value for money. "The Asian player change is fantastic and will make a lot of difference," said a senior club official.

Besides doing away with the Asian quota, ISL is also keen to increase the salary cap from Rs 16.5 crore to Rs to 18 crore, with two players — either domestic or international — from each club outside the salary cap.

Until last season, only a marquee player's salary was outside the cap. The new guidelines will allow clubs to spend freely on international players, without having to worry about the salary cap.

Anfield reminds Klopp he will never walk alone

Liverpool: In many ways, it was business as usual for Jurgen Klopp. He touched the "This is Anfield" sign in the tunnel on the way out to the pitch.

He patrolled the middle of the field with his hands behind his back during the warmups, watching his own team — and then, with that trademark glare, his opponents.

He waved to fans behind the Liverpool dugout and tapped his heart just before kickoff, before soaking in the pre-match rendition of "You'll Never Walk Alone."

"This morning I woke up," Klopp said Sunday before the final match of his transformational, nearly nine-year stint in charge of Liverpool, "and I was completely in game mode."

This, of course, was no normal day for Klopp.

The 2-0 win over Wolverhampton on a sunny day at Anfield doubled as a tribute to a coach who led Liverpool to seven major trophies and forged such a connection with the city that he has been compared to Bill Shankly — the club's legendary manager from 1959-74. No wonder he



looked emotional throughout an afternoon that Liverpool fans never wanted to come.

They lined the streets outside Anfield to welcome Klopp and his players, and then produced a paper mosaic of the word "JURGEN" in the stand opposite the dugouts.

"People are calling it The Last Dance. So let's dance," he told Sky Sports just off the field before the match began — and Liverpool obliged by strolling to one final victory for Klopp thanks to goals by Alexis Mac Allister and Jarell Quansah.

Fans' appreciation was on full display over the final few minutes of Sunday's game with supporters on their feet singing their version of the Beatles' "I Feel Fine" over and over. "I'm so glad that Jurgen is a Red, I'm so glad he delivered what he said!"

Klopp marked his farewell by chanting the name of Arne Slot, his likely successor; during a goodbye speech. Wearing a red hoodie with the words "I'll Never Walk Alone" on the back, Klopp regaled the fans with the song "Arne Slot, la la la la" — to the tune of "Live is Life" by Austrian band Opus. AP

Zverev wears Rome crown

Alexander Zverev won his second Rome Open title after beating Nicolas Jarry in straight sets 6-4, 7-5 in Sunday's final. World number five Zverev, also Foro Italico champion in 2017, comfortably won his sixth Masters 1000 title in the last major tournament before the



and semifinal heroics against Stefanos Tsitsipas and Tommy Paul, in one hour and 41 minutes. Zverev claimed his first title of the year and first since winning at Chengdu in September at the end of an unusual men's tournament in which a host of top names were either eliminated early or dropped out before the start of the event.

TENNIS

French Open, which gets underway next weekend.

The 27-year-old succeeded in his 11th Masters final which equalled Boris Becker's record for the most by a German since the series began in 1990. He comfortably beat Chile's Jarry, who could not repeat his quarterfinal

Six-time Rome champion

Novak Djokovic was dumped out in the third round by Zverev's semi-final opponent, journeyman Alejandro Tabilo. Last year's winner Daniil Medvedev was stopped at the last-16 stage while Italian world number two Jannik Sinner and third-ranked Carlos Alcaraz both missed the tournament with injury.

Earlier, Sara Errani and Jasmine Paolini gave Italian fans something to cheer after beating Coco Gauff and Erin Routliffe to women's doubles title. Errani and Paolini made the Foro Italico crown roar by beating reigning US Open singles champion Gauff and Routliffe 6-3, 4-6, 10-8. AGENCIES

EXTRAS

Muddappa bags fine treble



Drag racer **Hemant Muddappa**, a 12-time National champion, became the fastest quarter-mile in India as he broke the record at the 10th edition of the Vroom Drag meet, on his way to a grand treble in the Bikes Open event, held along with the Round 1 of the FMSCI Indian National 4w Drag Championship at the Taneja air strip, near Hosur on Sunday. Muddappa of Mantra Racing set a time of 9.264 seconds in the Super Sport 4stroke 1051 to 1650cc class to break the previous mark of 9.298sec set by Jordan's Fahim Zahrani in 2023.

Provisional results (Vroom Bikes Open): D2: 4s Super Sport 4-stroke 1051cc to 1650cc: 1. Hemant Muddappa (9.264 seconds); 2. Alimon Saidalvi (9.815); 3. Faraz Ahmed (9.879). **E3: Unrestricted 551cc and above:** 1. Hemant Muddappa (9.372); 2. Ataula Baij (9.647); 3. Aymaan Baij (9.734). **D1: Super Sport 4-stroke 851 to 1050cc:** 1. Hemant Muddappa (9.415); 2. Niranjan R Kumar (10.404); 3. Saurabh Parab (10.471).

DK, BU crowned champions

Dakshina Kannada (DK) and Bengaluru Urban (BU) clinched the 5th Senior state level Netball championships in the men's and women's categories respectively in Bengaluru on Sunday. While Dakshina Kannada beat Bengaluru Urban 20-15 in the men's section, Bengaluru Urban women edged past Dakshina Kannada 25-24.

Results: Men: Final: Dakshina Kannada bt Bengaluru Urban 20-15; **Semis:** Bengaluru Urban bt Chamrajnagara 23-22; Dakshina Kannada bt Hassan 27-23. **Best Shooter:** Nithin (DK); **Best Defender:** Abhi Nayaka (Chamrajnagara); **Best All-Rounder:** Varun (Bengaluru Urban). **Women: Final:** Bengaluru Urban bt Dakshina Kannada 25-24; **Semis:** Bengaluru Urban bt Ramanagara 24-21; Dakshina Kannada bt Mysore 19-15; **Best Shooter:** Nandini (Bengaluru Urban); **Best Defender:** Surabhi BR (Ramanagara); **Best All-Rounder:** Pratiksha (Dakshina Kannada).

SATWIK-CHIRAG PAIR TRIUMPHS

Indian Duo's Love Affair With Bangkok Continues, Gets Boost Ahead Of Oly

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty got a much-needed boost ahead of Olympics with a title triumph in Bangkok on Sunday. The top seeds did not drop a game in the tournament and defeated Chen Bo Yang and Liu Yi of China 21-15, 21-15 in the final of the Thailand Open BWF Super-500 tournament.

Satwik-Chirag had announced their arrival on the world stage with the Thailand Open Super-750 in March. "This is a lucky venue for us. Our journey started here in 2019 and we went on to win many tournaments. Hopefully, this victory will help us do well in big tournaments and also Olympics," Satwik said.

This is the ninth BWF Tour title for the duo and their fourth Super-500 crown. They have also won two Super-750 and one Super-1000 titles. They are the only Indians to win Asian Games gold and were also the Asian champions.

Despite being 26 rungs behind the world No. 3 Indians, the Chinese fought well in the first game. The Indians



CHAMPAGNE MOMENT: India's Satwiksairaj Rankireddy (left) and Chirag Shetty with the Thailand Open spoils in Bangkok on Sunday. This was the duo's ninth BWF Tour title

fell four points behind at one stage (6-10) before recovering to secure a 14-12 lead.

"We know that they play very fast and we couldn't relax. This is the best match we played throughout the tournament. The good thing is we were calm and in control," Satwik added.

The Indians were too good in the second game. They led 11-6 and 15-11, but the Chinese fought back and made it 15-16. Both teams played a fast-paced game and the Indians collected the next five points. The main advantage for the Satwik-Chi-

rag duo was their smashing prowess. Satwik won the 20th point with three straight smashes. Lu returned two but not the third. Chirag secured the winning point with another smash winner.

The duo will skip next week's Malaysia Super-500 but will compete in the Singapore Super-750 later this month. Their focus is to get in shape before the Olympics in July. Chirag hoped to do well in Olympics. "Not just us, all the athletes would want to win an Olympic medal. We want it too and hopefully we will play well there," Chirag said.

Lee Zii Jia of Malaysia and Supanida Katethong of Thailand won the men's and women's singles titles.

Other results (finals): Men's singles: 6-Lee Zii Jia (Mas) bt Ng Ka Long Angus (Hkg) 21-11, 21-10.

Doubles: 1-Jongkolphan Kitthitharukul/Rawinda Prajonnaj (Tha) bt 3-Fabriziana Dwi-puji Kusuma/Amalia Cahayu Pratwiwi (Ind) 21-14, 21-14.

Women's singles: 6-Supanida Katethong (Tha) bt Han Yue (Chn) 21-16, 25-23. **Mixed doubles:** 5-Guo Xin Wai/Chen Fang Hui (Chn) bt 1-Dechapol Puavaranukroh/Sapsiree Taerattanachai (Tha) 12-21, 21-12, 21-18.

SCHAUFFELE, MORIKAWA take one-shot lead

Xander Schauffele and Collin Morikawa shared the PGA Championship lead after the third round on Saturday in Louisville, Kentucky, while Shane Lowry made an epic charge up a jam-packed leaderboard and Scottie Scheffler lost ground.

Schauffele, who held the solo lead after the first two rounds, birdied the final two holes at Valhalla Golf Club en route to a three-under-par 68 that left him at 15-under on the week and level with twice major winner Morikawa (67).

PGA CHAMPIONSHIP

"I need to really just stay in my lane and do a lot of what I've been doing and just worry about myself," Olympic champion Schauffele, seeking his first major, said about his approach for Sunday's final round.

Seven players are within four strokes of the leaders, including Sahith Theegala (67), who made five back-nine birdies and sits alone in third place.

Former British Open winner Lowry, whose 62 matched the lowest score in major championship history, LIV Golf's Bryson DeChambeau (67), who eagled the final hole, and Viktor Hovland (66) were two shots off the lead.



FOCUSED: Collin Morikawa

Schauffele was fresh off draining a 29-foot birdie putt at the 14th to open a two-shot cushion before encountering trouble at the par-four 15th where his second shot found the long rough, leading to a double-bogey.

Moments later, playing partner Morikawa's birdie putt from five feet at the same hole circled around the cup then dropped in, giving him a one-shot lead.

But Schauffele refused to back down and went on to tap-in for birdie at the par-four 17th after his brilliant approach shot from 141 yards settled two feet from the

cup. He and Morikawa both birdied the last. Englishman Justin Rose, who has recorded five consecutive top-15 finishes at the PGA Championship, also moved into the mix with five front-nine birdies en route to a 64 that left him three shots back of the leaders and sharing seventh place with Robert MacIntyre (66).

Lowry, bolstered by a sublime putting display, became only the fifth player to card a 62 at a major and came just short of a record-setting day as his 11-foot birdie putt at the 18th rolled just left of the hole. DeChambeau capped his round in brilliant fashion when he chipped in for eagle from 32 yards at the par-five 18th, prompting a major fist-pump from the 2020 US Open champion and massive roar from the fans.

Rory McIlroy, eager to snap a 10-year major drought and who arrived at Valhalla among the favourites, used a string of four birdies around the turn to enter the fray before his putter cooled and he settled for a 68 that left him seven shots back. World No. 1 Scheffler, who began the day three shots off the lead, saw his streak of 42 consecutive rounds at par-or-better come to an end as he settled for a two-over 73 that left him eight shots adrift. AGENCIES

TOP SCORES

After 54 holes, US news mentioned: **198:** Xander Schauffele (62, 68, 68), Collin Morikawa (66, 65, 67); **199:** Sahith Theegala (65, 67, 67); **200:** Bryson DeChambeau (68, 65, 67); **201:** Viktor Hovland (Nor, 68, 66, 66); **202:** Justin Rose (Eng, 70, 67, 64); **203:** Robert MacIntyre (Sco, 66, 69, 66); **204:** Dean Burmeister (RSA, 69, 65, 68); **205:** Justin Thomas (69, 67, 67); **206:** Hideki Matsuyama (Jpn, 70, 65, 70); **207:** Jordan Spieth (69, 69, 67); **208:** Rory McIlroy (NIR, 66, 71, 68); **209:** Scottie Scheffler (67, 66, 73); **210:** Brooks Koepka (67, 68, 74); **211:** Rickie Fowler (72, 69, 69); **212:** Dustin Johnson (73, 68, 71). AGENCIES

Verstappen keeps Norris at bay

Ferrari's Leclerc Finishes 3rd

Imola: Max Verstappen held off a late charge by McLaren's Lando Norris to win the Emilia Romagna GP by less than a second on Sunday.

Red Bull's triple Formula One world champion took the chequered flag just 0.725 of a second ahead of the man who beat him at the previous round in Miami and sensed he might snatch another.

The win was Verstappen's fifth in seven races this season, the 59th of his career and the third edition in a row at Imola. Last year's race at the Italian circuit was cancelled due to heavy flooding.

"I had no grip anymore. I was sliding a lot. I saw Lando closing in. The last 10 laps were flat out," said a relieved Verstappen, who had appeared set for another easy win but had to sweat ultimately for the spoils.

FORMULA ONE

Ferrari's Charles Leclerc was third at the Italian team's atmospheric home track, 7.916 off the pace, for his fourth podium finish of the season and a home race to come in Monaco next weekend.

The victory extended Verstappen's championship lead to 48 points, with Leclerc now his closest rival after Red Bull's Sergio Perez started 11th and finished only eighth.

Verstappen has 161 points, Leclerc 113 and Perez 107. Red Bull has 268 in the constructors' standings with Ferrari on 212 and McLaren on 154.

McLaren's Oscar Piastri finished fourth, after starting fifth due to a three-place grid penalty for impeding in qualifying. Ferrari's Carlos Sainz was fifth and the Mercedes pair of Lewis Hamilton and

Results (Top 10)

1. Max Verstappen (Ned, Red Bull, 1:25:25.252);
2. Lando Norris (GBR, McLaren, +0.725);
3. Charles Leclerc (Mon, Ferrari, +7.916);
4. Oscar Piastri (Aus, McLaren, +14.132);
5. Carlos Sainz (Esp, Ferrari, +22.325);
6. Lewis Hamilton (GBR, Mercedes, +35.104);
7. George Russell (GBR, Mercedes, +47.54);
8. Sergio Perez (Mex, Red Bull, +54.776);
9. Lance Stroll (Can, Aston Martin, +1:19.556);
10. Yuki Tsunoda (Jpn, RB, +1:19.556);
11. Alex Albon (Tha, Williams, +1:20.000);
12. George Russell (GBR, Mercedes, +1:20.000).

George Russell sixth and seventh on another afternoon to forget for the once-dominant team. Lance Stroll was ninth for Aston Martin, whose other driver Fernando Alonso started in the pitlane and finished 19th, and Yuki Tsunoda took the final point for Red Bull's Faenza-based RB team in their home race.

Verstappen held off Norris at a start without incident, the top four then running in grid order on a sunny afternoon at a track where overtaking can be tricky.

What had looked like being one of the duller races so far this year came to life as Norris began eating into Verstappen's lead in the closing laps and the crowd, 200,000 over the weekend, sensed an upset.

Norris was 1.1 seconds adrift starting the final lap but just ran out of time.

"It hurts me to say but one or two more laps I think I would have had him," said the Briton. "We are at a point now where we can say we are in the position with Ferrari and Red Bull. We have to get used to it. We are fighting for first and second now." AGENCIES



CLOSE RACE: Winner Max Verstappen is flanked by McLaren's Lando Norris (left) and Charles Leclerc of Ferrari in Imola, Italy, on Sunday

Child among 3 passengers injured as pole falls on train

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Raipur: Three passengers, including a child, were injured when a trackside pole collapsed and struck the 18030 Shalimar-Lokmanya Tilak Express near Raipur on Sunday morning. The accident was caused by "unauthorised" drilling by Chhattisgarh State Electricity Board (CSEB) near the railway line, said officials. CSEB denied that the work was unauthorised.

The train was passing through Urkura station, around 10km from Raipur, when the pole fell on the train, smashing a window of an AC coach and injuring three passengers, one of them identified as Soumya Mondal. "First-aid was given to the passengers and they were taken to a private hospital in Raipur. All of them are out of danger," said an official. According to sources, a contractor of CSEB told labourers to drill underneath the railway line. As a result of the accident, Shalimar Express was held up at Raipur for about an hour.

RK Shukla, managing director of CSEB, said the work was being carried out by a CSEB contractor, and a "collaborative survey" was carried out before it started.

Wheat buy may miss target, but set to cross 2023 mark

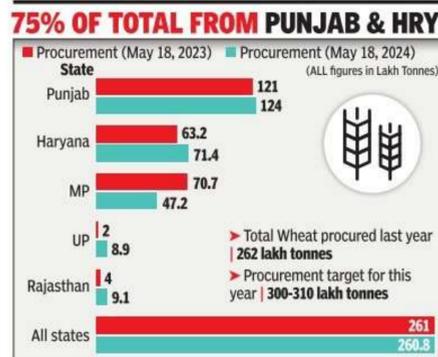
Punjab, Hry Recorded Higher Purchases, MP 33% Down

Dipak.Dash@timesgroup.com

New Delhi: Wheat procurement by govt agencies this year is set to cross last year's figure of 262 lakh tonnes in the next couple of days, but is likely to be much less than the estimate. As on Saturday, purchase of the foodgrain was around 261 lakh tonnes and daily arrival now is about 70,000-80,000 tonnes.

Madhya Pradesh, where govt purchase has been nearly 33% less than the procurement last year, has extended the procurement period to May 31. However, Punjab and Haryana recorded higher purchases than last year of 124 lakh tonnes and 71.4 lakh tonnes respectively.

Food Corporation of India (FCI) officials said they were confident of total procurement touching 270 lakh tonnes against earlier estimate of 300-310 lakh tonnes, which was arrived at after



consultation with states. "The current level of procurement and the stock that we have will be more than enough to meet the food security requirement of providing free foodgrain to 80 crore poor under the PM Garib Kalyan Yojna and other welfare schemes. We will also have good stock for

market intervention to check prices, if need arises," said a govt official. TOI has learnt that govt agencies are trying to figure out the reason behind less procurement in MP. The state won't be able to achieve the initial target of 80 lakh tonnes. Though there has been a

more than four-fold jump in wheat procurement in Uttar Pradesh and 2.5 times in Rajasthan, their contribution to the central pool is hardly 18 lakh tonnes. Govt had expected procurement of around 50 lakh tonnes of wheat from UP, Rajasthan and Bihar. Officials said the procurement period in UP is likely to be extended till June so that more farmers can get the benefit of MSP.

Sources said with the current level of procurement, there is hardly any scope for govt to lift the restriction on wheat export this year as well. It also remains to be seen whether the Centre will restore the wheat-rice ratio as it was before May 2022. Govt had changed the policy to allocate more rice instead of wheat following a drastic reduction in foodgrain procurement in 2022 due to lower production and record exports that year.

TMC govt is trying to alter West Bengal's demography: PM

Continued from page 1

They (Trinamool) are now resorting to blaming the women of Sandeshkhali in language that is unacceptable," he said, alluding to the backlash over two "survivors" retracting their rape allegations and the emergence of a video purportedly showing BJP's Sandeshkhali Block-II chief Gangadhar Koyal admitting the complainants had "done whatever they were told to do". Modi also attacked CM Mamata over her remarks about "a few monks", whom she accused of working for BJP.

"TMC govt has crossed all limits. The whole world recognises Iskon, Swami Vivekananda's Ramakrishna Mission and Bharat Sevashram Sangha for their work, but Bengal's CM openly threatens them, even taking names. TMC stoops so low just to please its vote bank, least bothered about the feelings of lakhs of people," he said.

Invoking Iskon founder Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, Swami Vivekananda and Bharat Se-

PM was silent on Sandeshkhali videos as he knew charges were not true: TMC

Trinamool Congress on Sunday alleged that PM Modi "stayed silent" on the Sandeshkhali videos all these days because he was aware that the allegations levelled by BJP that women were abused in Sandeshkhali were not true, report Dwaipayan Ghosh & Sujoy Khanra. Responding to PM's charge at his rallies earlier in the day that TMC was blaming Sandeshkhali women to save its goons, the party's leader in Rajya Sabha, Derek O'Brien, said: "The PM has stopped talking about the 'Modi 420' guarantee. In the last fortnight, he also zipped his lips on Sandeshkhali after the videos surfaced." Calling BJP seniors "migratory birds" who only visit Bengal at election time, O'Brien said: "Modi and his minions insult Bengal, degrade the dignity of women and choke the state of funds."

vashram's fountainhead Swami Pranavananda, the PM said this country wouldn't tolerate any insult hurled at philosophers and gurus of their stature.

He urged the Bengal electorate to "punish the TMC govt in such a manner that it never again dares to insult our monks and saints".

At a rally in Hooghly Saturday, Mamata had said, "Not all monks are the same. There is a maharaj in Behar, of whom I have been hearing for a long time... Kartik Maharaj. The per-

son who says he will not allow any Trinamool Congress agent in the polling booth."

In Kharagpur, Modi charged TMC with "playing a dangerous game" and trying to alter the state's demography. "Hindus have become a minority (in parts of the state). I won't allow them to do that. Time has come to give them a befitting reply," he said.

Modi promised "more stringent action" against the corrupt after June 4, when the election verdict will be declared.

BJP wants to loot democracy: Rahul

Continued from page 1

An FIR has been registered under sections 171-F and 419 (impersonation) of IPC, and 128 (violation of the secrecy of voting), 132 (misconduct) & 136 (fraud) of the Representation of People Act, 1951 at Nayagaon police station in Etah district," he said. Thakur told TOI that some polling agents took his son to a nearby booth before the start of voting "to participate in the EVM machine inspection/romdisation". "My son pressed the ballot unit several times, shot the video and later shared it." SP chief Akhilesh shared

the video at 4.05pm Sunday from his official X handle with a post, "If Election Commission feels this is wrong, then it must take some action, otherwise... BJP's booth committee is actually a loot committee."

Rahul wrote, "Seeing its defeat, BJP wants to loot democracy by pressuring the government machinery to deny the mandate. Congress expects from all the officers performing election duty that they should not forget their constitutional responsibility under the pressure of power. Otherwise, as soon as the Indian government is formed, such action will be taken that anyone will think 10 times before insulting the oath of the Constitution."

Most U-5 deaths in India now occur in early & post-neonatal periods: Study

DurgeshNandan.Jha @timesgroup.com

New Delhi: Majority of deaths among children under the age of five in India are now occurring during early neonatal period (first 7 days) and post-neonatal period (29 days to 11 months), a new study published in JAMA Network Open claimed. The study is based on analysis of over 2.3 lakh deaths of under-5 children documented in five rounds of National Family Health Survey

The study is based on analysis of over 2.3 lakh deaths of under-5 children documented in five rounds of National Family Health Survey

experienced the most substantial decrease between 1993 and 2021, from 33.5 to 6.9 deaths per 1,000, accompanied by a substantial reduction in inter-state inequalities.

post neonatal (29 days to 11 months), and child (12-59 months).

They found that while early neonatal (from 33.5 to 20.3 deaths per 1,000), late neonatal (from 14.1 to 4.1 deaths per 1,000), and post neonatal (from 31.0 to 10.8 deaths per 1,000) mortality decreased, inter-state inequalities remained notable. "Mortality burden shifted over time, and it is now concentrated during the early-neonatal (48.3% of total deaths in children younger than 5 years) and post-neonatal (25.6%) periods," the researchers point out. "A stagnation or worsening for certain states and UTs

GOREN BRIDGE

WEEKLY BRIDGE QUIZ

Q 1 - Neither vulnerable, as South, you hold:
♠ K Q 7 6 4 ♡ 9 4 6 3 ♣ A K 9 8 3

As dealer, what call would you make?

Q 2 - North-South vulnerable, as South, you hold:
♠ 10 9 7 5 ♡ 10 7 6 4 3 ♣ 8 4 K 10 7

WEST NORTH EAST SOUTH
10 INT 20 2
What call would you make?

Q 3 - East-West vulnerable, as South, you hold:
♠ K Q 6 ♡ A K 7 6 ♣ K 8 7 4 ♣ Q 8

SOUTH WEST NORTH EAST
INT Pass 20⁺ Pass
*Transfer to spades

Q 4 - Both vulnerable, as South, you hold:
♠ A J 7 ♡ A 10 9 7 ♣ 10 7 6 3 ♣ Q

Right-hand opponent opens 1S. What call would you make?

Q 5 - North-South vulnerable, as South, you hold:
♠ Q 6 ♡ 5 4 3 2 ♣ K 5 ♣ A J 8 5

WEST NORTH EAST SOUTH
1A Pass Pass 2
What call would you make?

Q 6 - East-West vulnerable, as South, you hold:
♠ A 10 7 3 ♣ K 9 7 ♣ A 7 3 ♣ A 8

SOUTH WEST NORTH EAST
INT Pass 20⁺ Pass
*Transfer to hearts

What call would you make?

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NO METEORITE DIAL THE SAME

The OMEGA Constellation collection has long been inspired by the precise movement of the stars. That stellar theme continues with a new range of models featuring distinctive dials created from meteorite. Thanks to the natural pattern found within this rare space material, every slice is unique, guaranteeing that no two dials will ever appear the same. This 28 mm stainless steel and 18K Sedna™ Gold version has been given a blue colour treatment, further enhancing the design with maximum impact.


OMEGA

THE TIMES

INCLUSIVE OF BANGALORE TIMES

23 States

would have concluded polling in the ongoing general elections for the 18th Lok Sabha after today

UP, Bihar & Bengal are big states where voting will continue after the fifth & smallest phase. National capital Delhi votes next



MAX CITY, MAHA YUDH

It's the grand finale of the Maharashtra grudge match as the subplot in the NDA vs INDIA contest becomes the main theme. In and around India's commercial capital, the two Senas square off in the most bitter & personal of fights in these Lok Sabha elections. The other big face-offs are in UP & Bengal

WHAT'S AT STAKE IN PHASE 5

NDA

TO DEFEND: 39 seats, including 13 out of 14 in UP, 11 out of 13 in Maharashtra (excluding 2 Sena candidates who are with Uddhav group), all 5 in Bihar, all 3 in Jharkhand, 3 out of 5 in Odisha, 3 out of 7 in West Bengal and lone seat in Ladakh.

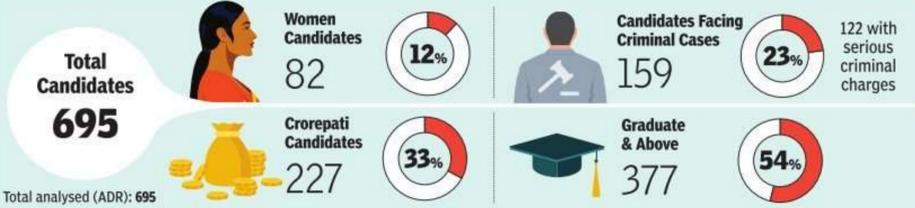
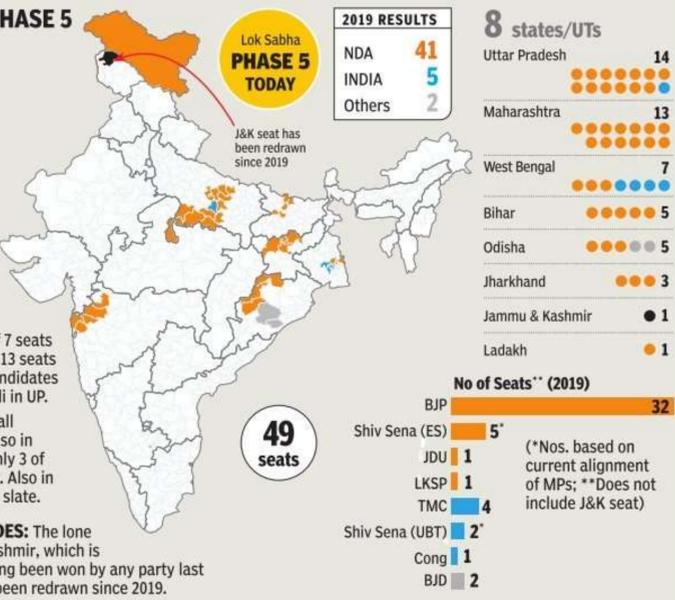
CAN LOOK FOR GAINS IN: Bengal, where it lost 4 of 7 seats polling today last time, and in Odisha.

INDIA

TO DEFEND: 7 seats, including 4 of 7 seats polling today in West Bengal, 2 of 13 seats in Maharashtra (adding 2 Sena candidates with Uddhav group) and Rae Bareilly in UP.

CAN LOOK FOR GAINS IN: Almost all the states in this round, but more so in Maharashtra, where it had won only 3 of the 13 seats that go to polls today. Also in Bihar, where it starts with a clean slate.

WHAT THIS BREAK-UP EXCLUDES: The lone seat polling today in Jammu & Kashmir, which is not possible to categorise as having been won by any party last time since seat boundaries have been redrawn since 2019.



HIGH-STAKES BATTLES TO WATCH TODAY

Maharashtra: This Lok Sabha election's most complex political arena sees its final act today with a high-voltage Sena vs Sena showdown, a fight that's as much about political relevance as it is about Balasaheb's legacy and prestige for the two protagonists — Uddhav Thackeray and the man who unseated him as CM, Eknath Shinde. Of the 13 remaining seats in the state polling today, six are in India's commercial capital, Mumbai, the Sena bastion where Uddhav is looking for voters' stamp of condemnation of the "betrayal" he accuses Shinde of leading to the party splitting in two. The Shinde group is part of Mahayuti (BJP) and Uddhav's Sena UBT with MVA (Sharad Pawar's NCP and Congress). Four of the seats are in the wider Mumbai Metropolitan Region, which includes Shinde's home turf Thane. Here, Shinde is seeking endorsement of his rebellion. BJP, which did very well here in 2019, will see an advantage, but with two Senas and two NCPs in the mix, it's a new playing field for all parties.



Uttar Pradesh: The state that votes in all seven phases moves into one of its biggest two rounds today — the next one in Phase 6 — as 14 seats in Awadh, including capital Lucknow, and the entire Bundelkhand (Jalaun, Jhansi, Hamirpur and Banda) go to polls today. In 2019, BJP swept these seats except Rae Bareilly. This time, with the Gandhi bastion at the centre, INDIA bloc (Cong & Samajwadi Party) is eyeing a revival here. Other high-profile seats are Faizabad, which includes Ayodhya, and controversial former wrestling federation chief Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh's stronghold Kaiserganj. Also keep an eye on Mohanlalganj and Fatehpur from where two Union ministers — Kaushal Kishore and Sadhvi Niranjani Jyoti, respectively — are contesting.



A LOOK AT UNION MINISTERS & OTHER HEAVYWEIGHTS IN THE FRAY

Lucknow
2019 WINNER: **BJP (Rajnath Singh)**
KEY CONTENDERS: **Rajnath Singh (BJP), Ravidas Mehrotra (SP)**
Defence minister Rajnath Singh inherited the legacy of Vajpayee in 2014 — after a brief interlude — and is looking for a hat-trick. Vajpayee won the seat on the trot between 1991 and 2004. His Man Friday in Lucknow, Lalji Tandon, won it in 2009, carrying the proverbial 'khadau' of Vajpayee. After making his LS debut from Ghaziabad in 2009, Rajnath shifted to the state capital to step into the giant shoes of his mentor. Even two decades after Vajpayee stepped out of active politics, Rajnath doesn't miss any opportunity to invoke his legacy. He has brought in a slew of projects to the city for sprucing up infrastructure and creating jobs. SP's Ravidas Mehrotra is an MLA and street fighter, a socialist who first became legislator in 1989. His challenge, however, seems feeble in front of Rajnath's heavy election machinery.



Rae Bareilly
2019 WINNER: **Cong (Sonia Gandhi)**
KEY CONTENDERS: **Rahul Gandhi (Cong), Dinesh Pratap Singh (BJP), Thakur Prasad Yadav (BSP)**
After a long wait, Rahul Gandhi chose his mother's seat as his second contest, alongside Wayanad. He narrowly lost from neighbouring Amethi — another family bastion — against BJP's Smriti Irani in 2019. Between the two, Rae Bareilly is considered the 'safer' seat. Rae Bareilly first elected Rahul's grandfather Feroze Gandhi to Lok Sabha in 1952. His grandmother Indira Gandhi represented it between 1967 and 1985, barring the 1977 loss to Raj Narayan, while his mother Sonia was MP from 2004 to 2019. SP chief Akhilesh Yadav and other INDIA bloc allies have campaigned for Rahul as Congress looks for an improved performance in UP, which is key to Parliament numbers. BJP's Dinesh Pratap Singh, Congress MLC between 2009 and 2018 and Sonia's pointsman, jumped ship after a dispute and instantly became BJP's candidate in 2019. He brought down Sonia's victory margin from 3 lakh to 1.7 lakh and is once again banking on BJP's machinery, welfare schemes and his local clout.



Mumbai North
2019 WINNER: **BJP (Gopal Shetty)**
KEY CONTENDERS: **Piyush Goyal (BJP), Bhushan Patil (Shiv Sena UBT)**
A Rajya Sabha member so far, Union commerce and industries minister Piyush Goyal is making his LS debut from Mumbai, the city he grew up in. With its significant Gujarati and middle-class Maharashtrian population, this seat is a BJP stronghold and was nurtured by the party for years before actor Govinda delivered a shock defeat to Ram Naik in 2004. In 2019, Urmila Matondkar contested from here for Congress but was comprehensively beaten by Gopal Shetty. This time, Congress has given the seat to Uddhav's Sena, which has fielded the relatively low-profile Bhushan Patil. Sena will be hoping to garner Marathi, Muslim and Christian votes, and is banking on the sympathy factor over the killing of its former corporator Abhishek Ghosalkar on FB Live earlier this year. However, this is one seat where the state's political middle does not cast a shadow like it does elsewhere because of BJP's grassroots strength.



Baramulla
2019 WINNER: **NC (Mohd Akbar Lone)**
KEY CONTENDERS: **Omar Abdullah (NC), Sajjad Lone (People's Conference)**
Omar Abdullah, who has shifted to this north Kashmir seat from the south (Srinagar), says he is taking on "BJP and the Centre", who are using all their resources here despite not fielding a candidate in the Valley. The former CM is battling for restoration of full statehood to J&K and has called the nullification of Article 370 an "existential challenge". He says opponent Lone is the "B-team of BJP" while the latter calls Omar a dynast, an "outsider" and a "tourist" in Baramulla. Into this mix comes Sheikh Abdul Rasheed aka Engineer Rashid of Awami Ittehad Party, who is contesting the polls from Tihar jail, where he has been incarcerated since Aug 2019 on terror funding charges. A former aide of Lone, Rashid is a worry for him and PDP candidate Fayaz Mir as he polled over 1 lakh votes in the last LS election and is expected to cut into their share.



Amethi
2019 WINNER: **BJP (Smriti Irani)**
KEY CONTENDERS: **Smriti Irani (BJP), KL Sharma (Cong)**
It's not quite the grudge match of 2019, but still seems to be going down to the last over. With Rahul Gandhi contesting from Rae Bareilly, Congress sprung a surprise by fielding KL Sharma, who has been the Gandhis' Man Friday in the twin constituencies for four decades, from Amethi. Sharma came to Amethi as a member of Rajiv Gandhi's youth brigade in 1983. Rajiv, who won a bypoll following the demise of his brother Sanjay Gandhi, held the seat till his death in 1991. Sonia Gandhi made her Lok Sabha debut from here in 1999. She shifted to Rae Bareilly in 2004, handing Amethi to Rahul, who won the seat thrice before the shock defeat to Smriti Irani in 2019. In the current campaign, Smriti has repeatedly called Rahul a "deserter" but the Congress narrative is that the family loyalist is more than capable of defeating her.



Hajipur
2019 WINNER: **LJP (Pashupati Kumar Paras)**
KEY CONTENDERS: **Chirag Paswan (LJP-Ram Vilas), Shiv Chandra Ram (RJD)**
Socialist bastion Hajipur is one of Bihar's six Lok Sabha constituencies reserved for SCs. Ram Vilas Paswan represented this seat eight times in his career and lost just twice — in 1984 and 2009. In recent years, the poll narrative in Hajipur has centred around who is the claimant to Paswan's legacy, son Chirag Paswan or brother Pashupati Kumar Paras, who won from here in 2019 after Paswan offered the seat to him. BJP has decided to fully back Chirag, allotting five seats in Bihar to Chirag's faction and none to the Paras camp. Paswan's party LJP split in 2021. For Chirag then, this is as deep a prestige battle as it gets. PM Modi has campaigned for him, but the battle is an uphill one, with RJD holding three of the six assembly segments and Congress one; ally BJP has the other two.



SEE FLAP INSIDE FOR OTHER BIG BOUTS

BIG BOUTS OF PHASE 5

MUMBAI SOUTH

2019 WINNER: **Shiv Sena** (Arvind Sawant)
KEY CONTENDERS: **Arvind Sawant** (Shiv Sena UBT), **Yamini Jadhav** (Shiv Sena)

Incumbent Arvind Sawant, who stayed with Uddhav Thackeray's Shiv Sena, is hoping for a third term from this constituency. After a delayed nomination from the ruling coalition, Byculla MLA Yamini Jadhav didn't get to hit the ground early, but she's banking on the Modi factor. This SoBo constituency has a mixed population — Malabar Hill social elite, Gujarati-Marwari business families, middle-class Maharashtrians, people of Mumbai's old mill district 'Girangaon' and minorities. Another challenge for Jadhav is money laundering allegations raised against her and her husband Yashwant, who is an ex-BMC standing committee chief, made not too long ago by BJP.



Sawant

MUMBAI NORTH CENTRAL

2019 WINNER: **BJP** (Poonam Mahajan)
KEY CONTENDERS: **Ujjwal Nikam** (BJP), **Varsha Gaikwad** (Cong)

The special public prosecutor for 26/11 trial, Ujjwal Nikam, has been nominated by BJP in place of sitting MP Poonam Mahajan. Nikam, who formally joined the saffron party in April, faces a tough battle in this constituency. His rival is four-time Congress MLA and the party's Mumbai chief Varsha Gaikwad, a legislator from neighbouring Dharavi assembly seat. North Central, which stretches from Bandra to Santacruz and Kurla, has a cosmopolitan mix that includes Maharashtrians, North Indians, East Indian Christians, Muslims and Parsis. There was a demand within the local Congress to field a minority candidate, but that wasn't met. Gaikwad has the advantage of experience in election campaigning as well as the support of Shiv Sena (UBT) whose leader Uddhav Thackeray has his residence here. Nikam, the man who prosecuted Pakistani terrorist Ajmal Kasab, also has BJP's ground network backing him.



Gaikwad

NASHIK

2019 WINNER: **Shiv Sena** (Hemant Godse)
KEY CONTENDERS: **Hemant Godse** (Shiv Sena), **Rajabhau Waje** (Shiv Sena UBT), **Shantigiri Maharaj** (Ind)

Hemant Godse, who has been winning from Nashik from 2014, is now locked in battle with his former party colleague and UBT Sena nominee Rajabhau Waje, former Sinnar MLA. Getting a nomination for this prestigious seat wasn't smooth sailing for Godse, who had to fend off Mahayuti partners, BJP and NCP, which were both keen to contest from here. A prominent face in the ring was NCP minister Chhagan Bhujbal, who claimed that BJP's central leadership had proposed his name. Godse now has to ensure that parties in the governing coalition act in cohesion. He will also hope that people in the onion growers' belt respond positively to the Centre's recent withdrawal of export ban. Waje will rely on Sena supporters backing Thackeray and discontent among farmers. Complicating matters for both is Shantigiri Maharaj, a seer who has a sizeable following in Nashik.



Godse

THANE

2019 WINNER: **Shiv Sena** (Rajan Vichare)
KEY CONTENDERS: **Naresh Mhaske** (Shiv Sena), **Rajan Vichare** (Shiv Sena UBT)

Mahayuti announced its candidate for this seat, which covers Thane city and parts of Navi Mumbai, late as Sena and BJP were both eyeing it. Angered after Sena was handed the nomination, Navi Mumbai strongman Ganesh Naik's supporters followed up with a spate of resignations. Though the rift was resolved in days, it's yet to be seen if there's any long-term impact of the tussle. The coalition's eventual pick, Naresh Mhaske, had to make up for lost time while Sena UBT's Rajan Vichare had a headstart as the constituency's sitting MP. What may still work for Mhaske — the former mayor of Thane — is that he's fighting from CM Eknath Shinde's home turf. In this direct Sena vs Sena fight, a win is a must for both parties who want to establish their claim that they are the real Shiv Sena.

HOOGHLY

2019 WINNER: **BJP** (Locket Chatterjee)
KEY CONTENDERS: **Locket Chatterjee** (BJP), **Rachana Banerjee** (TMC), **Manadip Ghosh** (CPI-M)

Two Tollywood faces square off here, among the handful in these Lok Sabha elections in which both contestants are women. In Trinamool colours is actor Rachana Banerjee while BJP has once again fielded incumbent Locket Chatterjee in a constituency that witnessed the rise of Mamata Banerjee as a force against three decades of CPM rule with the Singur agitation against Tata's Nano factory. After BJP's 2019 Lok Sabha win, Trinamool Congress clawed its way back in the 2021 state assembly polls and the 2023 panchayat polls, largely negating gains made by BJP. Though a debutante, Rachana is a household name in the state, courtesy her hugely successful TV show, 'Didi No. 1' and Trinamool has thrown its might behind her to wrest the constituency back.



Locket

SARAN

2019 WINNER: **BJP** (Rajiv Pratap Rudy)
KEY CONTENDERS: **Rohini Acharya Yadav** (RJD), **Rajiv Pratap Rudy** (BJP)

Famous as the birthplace of socialist leader Jayprakash Narayan, this constituency has been with BJP for the past decade. This time, though, the contest may not be a cakewalk for BJP's Rajiv Pratap Rudy, former Union MoS for skill development. He is up against Lalu Yadav's daughter Rohini Acharya, who first came into spotlight after donating her kidney to the RJD patriarch in Dec 2022. Lalu, who was elected from Chhapra (later Saran) in 1977 on a Janata Party ticket as the youngest parliamentarian at 29, represented this seat four times. After being disqualified from contesting elections following his conviction in the fodder scam, he fielded his wife Rabri Devi in 2014 and his *samdhi* Chandrika Rai in 2019, but both lost. Four assembly segments of the seat are currently represented by RJD and two by BJP.



Rohini

BONGAON

2019 WINNER: **BJP** (Shantanu Das)
KEY CONTENDERS: **Shantanu Thakur** (BJP), **Biswajit Das** (TMC)

In this Matua heartland, the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) promise set the agenda in 2019 LS polls, handing BJP a win. Two years later, in the 2021 assembly poll that TMC swept, Bongaon remained firmly with BJP, handing the party wins in six of the seven assembly segments. Five years on, CAA remains at the core of the campaign here. The difference — it was a promise in 2019 and is a reality now. And yet, there is anxiety about the test that every applicant must pass. TMC has pitted a BJP turncoat MLA, Biswajit Das against the incumbent Shantanu Thakur, junior Union minister and descendant of Matua guru Harichand Thakur. TMC, earlier this year, nominated Shantanu's aunt Mamata Bala Thakur as a Rajya Sabha MP.

FAIZABAD

2019 WINNER: **BJP** (Lallu Singh)
KEY CONTENDERS: **Lallu Singh** (BJP), **Awadhesh Prasad** (SP), **Sachidanand Pandey** (BSP)

In this constituency that includes Ayodhya, two-time BJP MP Lallu Singh is banking on the euphoria of Ram temple along with govt's 'vikas' theme, to score a hat-trick. A Thakur and an accused in the Babri demolition case, Singh was a five-time MLA from Ayodhya assembly seat between 1991 and 2007. He is pitted against Awadhesh Prasad of SP and Sachidanand Pandey of BSP. A Dalit and former minister in SP govt, Prasad is a nine-time MLA from erstwhile Sohawal and now Milkipur. SP has experimented by fielding a Dalit to cash in on the substantial presence of SC voters here. The entry of former IPS officer Arvind Sen, son of three-time Faizabad MP Mitrasen Yadav, as CPI candidate has made this contest interesting. Mitrasen had won the seat in 1989 for CPI, in 1998 (for SP) and 2004 (BSP).



Lallu

KAISERGANJ

2019 WINNER: **BJP** (Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh)
KEY CONTENDERS: **Karan Bhushan Singh** (BJP), **Ram Bhagat Mishra** (SP), **Narendra Pandey** (BSP)

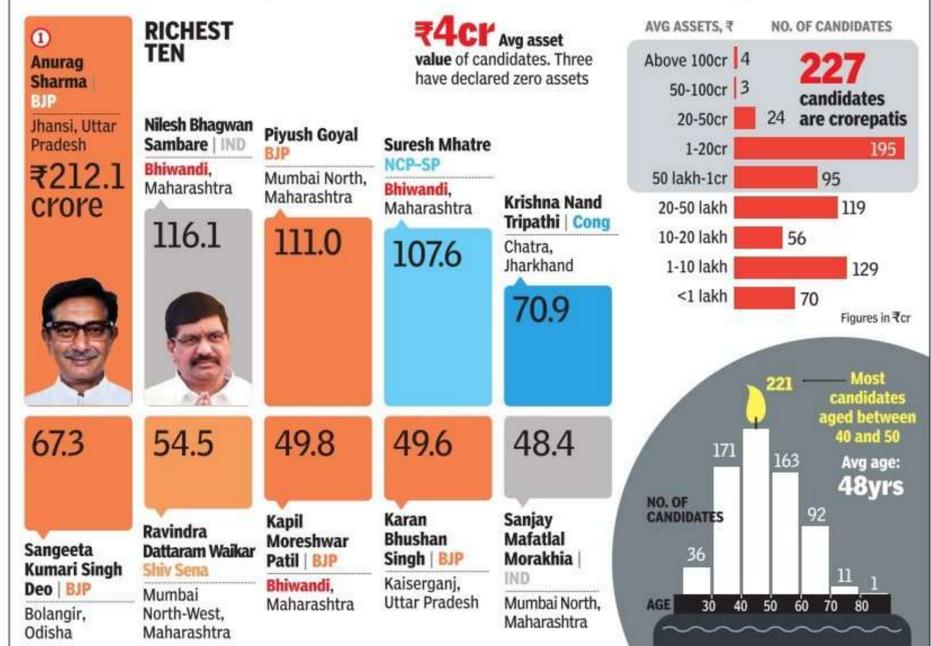
Carved out of five assembly seats of Bahraich and Gonda, this constituency was in the news till the last day of nomination due to its association with six-time MP and former wrestling federation president Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh, who was accused of sexual harassment by several women wrestlers. After days of suspense, BJP decided to go with his younger son Karan. Singh's elder son Prateek is already an MLA from Gonda. Singh, who won thrice from Kaiserganj (2009, 2014 and 2019), and from Gonda (1991, 1999) and Balrampur (2004), wields considerable influence. A law graduate, Karan is a national-level double trap shooter and was named president of UP Wrestling Association. He takes on SP candidate, lawyer Ram Bhagat Mishra, and BSP's Narendra Pandey, who hopes to cash in on the presence of Brahmin voters here.



Karan

3 OF 10 RICHEST NETAS IN PHASE-5 FRAY FIGHTING FOR ONE MAHA SEAT

Only 49 seats across eight states and UTs are set to vote on May 20, the fifth and smallest phase of 2024 LS elections. Of the 695 candidates whose affidavits were analysed by Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR), 227 were crorepatis. And three of the 10 richest candidates are contesting in Bhiwandi



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