

# THE ASIAN AGE

NEW DELHI SATURDAY 18 MAY 2024



## NATION | 3

Modi govt is planning to drive out Adivasis from their land, says Mamata



## WORLD | 6

Donald Trump lawyers vie to discredit key witness Cohen at hush-money trial

## DELHI AGE | 16

Kartik Aaryan likely to unveil Chandu Champion trailer in his hometown Gwalior today



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### WINDOWS



US actor Eva Longoria arrives for the screening of the film *Kinds Of Kindness* at the 77th edition of the Cannes Film Festival on Friday.

### EC showcase to BJP's ex-judge for Mamata remarks

New Delhi: The Election Commission on Friday issued a showcase notice to former high court judge and BJP Lok Sabha candidate Abhijit Gangopadhyay for his "improper, injudicious and undignified" remarks against Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee.

### UN raises India's growth projection to nearly 7%

United Nations: The United Nations has revised upwards India's growth projections for 2024, with the country's economy now forecast to expand by close to 7 per cent this year.

### Najafgarh in Delhi, at 47°C, hottest in India

New Delhi: A brutal heat wave swept swathes of northwest India on Friday, with the maximum temperature soaring to a scorching 47.4°C in southwest Delhi's Najafgarh.

### COUNTERPOINT



This is the height of publicity... candidate's image on liquor bottles!

### WEATHER

Max: 44°C, Min: 31°C, RH: 16%, Rain: 0%

### ASTROGUIDE

Krodhi: Uttarayana Tithi: Vaishakha Shukla Dasami till 11.22 am. Star: Uttara Phalguni till 12.21 am.

## New ED chargesheet names AAP, Kejriwal as accused in excise case

AMRESH SRIVASTAVA NEW DELHI, MAY 17

In a major setback to Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal and his party, the Enforcement Directorate on Friday filed a fresh chargesheet in the Delhi excise policy case, naming him and his Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) as accused.

This is the first time that a sitting chief minister and a political party has ever been named as an accused under the money-laundering charges.

Official sources said a voluminous prosecution complaint (equal to the chargesheet) has been filed before a special court here and special judge Kaveri Baweja is likely to take up the chargesheet, spanning 200 pages apart from the annexure, for cognisance in the coming days.

The accused are sought to be charged under the provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), they said.

The Central financial agency had arrested Mr Kejriwal, also the AAP's national convenor, from his official residence here on March 21. He is currently out of jail on interim bail.

This is the eighth chargesheet filed by the ED in this case in which it has arrested 18 people so far. Last week, a similar complaint was filed by the

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AAP MP Swati Maliwal arrives at Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal's residence at Civil Lines in New Delhi on Friday.

## Cops visit CM house to gather evidence on Maliwal's 'assault'

Bibhav files complaint ■ Lies: AAP ■ Apologise: BJP

BHASKAR HARI SHARMA NEW DELHI, MAY 17

The Delhi police on Friday took AAP MP Swati Maliwal to the Delhi chief minister's residence as the probe into the alleged assault of the party leader by AAP chief Arvind Kejriwal's aide Bibhav Kumar gathered steam.

Kumar lodged a counter complaint against the party's Rajya Sabha MP at the Civil Lines police station. Earlier in the day, Ms Maliwal recorded her statement before a magistrate at the Tis Hazari court. However, Mr Kumar, who was summoned by NCW to appear before it, skipped the hearing, following which the woman body summoned him again on Saturday.

Meanwhile, on Friday, a Delhi police team, accompanied by forensic experts, visited the Delhi

chief minister's residence and collected evidence. The Delhi police officials said they have collected footage from eight CCTV cameras at the CM's house to corroborate the sequence of the incident. They have also recorded the statements of a few security personnel who were present during the time of the incident. The Delhi police officials, along with the NCW team, also visited the home of Mr Kumar, but he was not present. The NCW, in a post, said, "Officers of the

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## PM blames Cong for India's slow development, Opp. backs 'vote jihad', wants instability: Modi

AGE CORRESPONDENTS with agency inputs NEW DELHI/LUCKNOW/MUMBAI, MAY 17

Pressing ahead with his Uttar Pradesh blitz for the second consecutive day, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday addressed election rallies in Barabanki, Fatehpur and Hamirpur. He invoked "vote jihad", corruption and nepotism to hit out at the Opposition and asserted that the "INDIA alliance aims to create instability".

Later in the evening, at Mumbai's Shivaji Park ground rally, the Prime Minister attacked the Opposition for its "negative mindset". He alleged that the Congress slowed India's development and listed his government's achievements, which he claimed the Opposition thought were impossible.

Tearing into the Congress and the Samajwadi Party at his Uttar Pradesh rallies, Mr Modi claimed that they will run a bulldozer over the Ram temple in Ayodhya if elected to power and asked both parties to take "tuition" from Uttar Pradesh chief minister Yogi Adityanath on where to run bulldozers.

Addressing a public meeting in Barabanki, the Prime Minister said that the INDIA bloc is in the



Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Maharashtra chief minister Eknath Shinde, his deputy Devendra Fadnis and MNS chief Raj Thackeray during a rally in Mumbai on Friday.

## Rae Bareli not a 'family seat', but that of people, says Shah

Rae Bareli, May 17: Union home minister Amit Shah on Friday attacked Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi for calling Rae Bareli a "family seat", and said it's not a seat of any family but that of the people. Mr Shah made a scathing attack at the Congress for turning down invitations for Ram Mandir's

pratishta" in Ayodhya, and said if the Congress came to power, they would put the "Ayodhya lock" in the temple again. Mr Shah held a public meeting in Daultapur of Unchahar Assembly constituency. During the rally, rebel SP MLA from Unchahar, Manoj Kumar Pandey joined the BJP and sat beside Mr Shah.

electoral fray to create "instability" and is collapsing like a pack of cards as the ongoing Lok Sabha polls progress. The Prime Minister asserted that his government is going to score a

hat-trick. He said that in the new government, he has to take many big decisions for the poor, youth, women and farmers and for that, he is seeking the blessings of the people of

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## Mizo tribals warn of armed stir over Myanmar fencing

Tell Centre: Don't scrap free movement

MANOJ ANAND GUWAHATI, MAY 17

The Zo Reunification Organisation (ZoRO) has registered its strong opposition to the proposed fencing of the international border with Myanmar in Mizoram and scrapping of the Free Movement Regime (FMR) between the two countries.

THE CENTRE has announced fencing of the Indo-Myanmar border and cancellation of the FMR to address the issue of illegal immigration from the other side of the border

native but to take up arms again."

ZoRO is an Aizawl-based group which seeks the reunification of all Chin-Kuki-Mizo-Zomi tribes of India, Bangladesh and Myanmar by bringing them under one administration. The Centre has announced fencing of the Indo-Myanmar border and cancellation of the FMR to address the issue of illegal immigration from the other side of the border.

ZoRO president R. Sangkawia alleged that some forces are out to destroy the unity of the

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## Sonia to Rae Bareli: Giving you my son

With Priyanka, Akhilesh present, says 'Rahul won't disappoint you'

AGE CORRESPONDENT With agency inputs NEW DELHI/RAE BARELI, MAY 17



Congress parliamentary party leader Sonia Gandhi on Friday addressed a rally in Rae Bareli, her former parliamentary constituency. The rally was also attended by Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, along with their Uttar Pradesh ally and SP chief Akhilesh Yadav.

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, party leaders Sonia Gandhi, Priyanka Gandhi Vadra and Pramod Tiwari, SP chief Akhilesh Yadav, former Chhattisgarh CM Bhupesh Baghel and others during a rally in Rae Bareli on Friday.

Sticking an emotional cord, Mrs Gandhi said

that she is giving her son to the people of Rae Bareli and that "Rahul will not

disappoint you". She also thanked the people for giving her the opportuni-

## 'Ram, Krishna, Shiva images in Bhojshala'

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY BHOPAL, MAY 17

Images of Hindu deities have been found in a pillar in the complex of Bhojshala temple — Kamal Maula mosque in Dhar district in Madhya Pradesh during excavation of the site by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI).

festival committee Gopal Sharma, who accompanied the ASI team during the excavation of the site.

"On the 55th day of the excavation and exploration of the site by the ASI team on Tuesday, images of Lord Krishna holding 'Sudarshan Chakra' in his hand, Lord Ram carrying a bow, Lord Parashuram and Shiva were found in one of the pillars of the sanctum Sanctorum of Vagdevi

THE SURVEY of the site, conducted by the ASI following a directive by the Indore bench of the Madhya Pradesh high court on March 11 this year, continued for the 58th day on Friday

(Goddess Saraswati) shrine built inside the Bhojshala temple complex," Mr Sharma claimed. The pillar is located in

of the presiding deity of the Vagdevi temple, according to Mr Sharma, who claimed that over 1,000 remains of historical importance were recovered during the excavation.

The survey of the site, conducted by the ASI following a directive by the Indore bench of the Madhya Pradesh high court on March 11 this year, continued for the 58th day on Friday.

## Vatican revamps norms to evaluate Virgin Mary 'visions' in Internet age

Vatican City, May 17: The Vatican on Friday radically reformed its process for evaluating alleged visions of the Virgin Mary, weeping statues and other seemingly supernatural phenomena, putting the brakes on making definitive declarations unless the event is obviously fabricated.

THE NEW norms reframe the Catholic Church's evaluation process by essentially taking off the table whether church authorities will declare a particular vision, stigmata

The Vatican's doctrine office overhauled norms first issued in 1978, arguing that they were no longer useful or viable in the Internet age. Nowadays, word about apparitions or weeping

Madonnas travels quickly and can actually harm the faithful if hoaxers are trying to make money off people's beliefs or manipulate them, the Vatican said.

The new norms make clear that such an abuse of people's faith can be punishable canonically,

saying, "The use of purported supernatural experiences or recognised mystical elements as a means of or a pretext for exerting control over people or carrying out abuses is to be considered of particular moral gravity".

The new norms reframe the Catholic Church's evaluation process by essentially taking off the table whether church authorities will declare a particular vision, stigmata or other seemingly divinely inspired event supernatural.



Displaced Palestinians queue to buy water from a water truck next to their temporary camp in Rafah on Friday amid the ongoing conflict between Israel and the militant group Hamas.



## Jaishankar in veiled attack on China for flouting rules

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, MAY 17

External affairs minister S. Jaishankar on Friday launched a veiled attack on China, saying that "in Asia, new tensions have emerged in land and sea as agreements are dishonoured and the rule of law disregarded".

Mr Jaishankar's assertion at an event in the national capital comes amid China's continuing military posturing along the Line of Actual Control in eastern Ladakh and its bullying tactics in the South China Sea. In his address, the external affairs minister also criticised Pakistan by saying that "terrorism and extremism has started to consume those who have long practiced it". Referring to the global conflicts, the foreign minister said that, in many ways, "we are actually going through the perfect storm".

"For India, the task is to mitigate its impact on itself and contribute to stabilising the world to the extent possible. It is this judicious combination of 'Bharat first' and 'Vasudaiva Kutumbakam' that defines our image as 'Vishwa Bandhu' (friend of the world)..."

Referring to India's long-standing friendship with Russia, he said, "For long, we have looked at Russia from a political or security perspective. As that country turns eastward, fresh economic opportunities are presenting themselves."

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IN BRIEF

**Pollution will be Opp. priority in city**

**New Delhi:** Congress leader Jairam Ramesh on Friday said that the India bloc is going to form government and its priority would be working on five environmental issues, including pollution in air and Yamuna river, in the national capital. During a press conference at Delhi Congress office, Mr Ramesh said that if you look at the metropolitan cities across the world, Delhi would be among the most polluted city. "India alliance is going to form the government, and it will give priority to the five issues related to environment, including air pollution, afforestation of Aravalli, reviving Yamuna Action Plan," he said. In a statement, the party blamed the Central government for failing to address the environmental issues in the city, saying it is mostly the Central government that can ensure control on pollution since the issues are related to multiple states. However, when he was asked about the questions regarding AAP Rajya Sabha MP Swati Maliwal's alleged assault at the CM resident, Mr Ramesh refused to comment on it.



Jairam Ramesh

**Delhi power demand crosses 6,800 MW**

**New Delhi:** The rising temperature in the national capital pushed the power demand to 6,800 MW, highest this summer, discom officials said. The state load dispatch centre (SLDC) Delhi realtime data showed the peak power demand in the city shot up to 6834 MW around 23.10 PM on Thursday. It was 6,780 MW at 3.26 PM on Thursday. The peak power demand was 6,703 MW around 3.29 PM on Friday, showed SLDC data. Tata Power Delhi Distribution Limited (TPDDL) successfully met peak power demand of 2,035 MW on Friday which is highest for this season in its area of operations, which include localities in the north Delhi, said a spokesperson of the discom. It is expecting the peak power demand to touch a high of 2,351 MW this summer.

**AAP WITHDRAWS PLEA FROM SC FOR OFFICE LAND**

**AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, MAY 17**

The Aam Aadmi Party on Friday withdrew its petition from the Supreme Court that sought allotment of land in the national capital for construction of its offices. AAP's lawyer Abhishek Singhvi told a bench of Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud and Justices J.B. Pardiwala and Manoj Misra that a single judge bench of the Delhi high court has been routinely hearing the matter. "I wish to withdraw it," Mr Singhvi said and sought liberty to approach the apex court after the high court pronounces its verdict. In its order, the top court said, "We permit the withdrawal of the SLP and in terms of the request made before this Court, we grant liberty to the petitioner to adopt appropriate proceedings in accordance with law, in the event the petitioner is aggrieved by the ultimate outcome of the proceedings before the High Court." In its plea before the high court, the AAP has sought a direction to the Centre to take necessary steps according to law to allot it suitable land in New Delhi.

**Maliwal case: Cops at CM house**

**Continued From Page 1**

er complaint through email, alleging that Ms Maliwal had "forcefully and unauthorisedly" entered the CM's residence and breached the security, created a ruckus and assaulted him when he tried to stop her. Mr Kumar, in his complaint, has said that Ms Maliwal is now trying to falsely implicate him to create undue pressure on him. Amid fast-paced developments during the day, a mobile phone video surfaced online in which Ms Maliwal is seen sitting on a sofa at the CM's house and guards are trying to convince her to leave. She can be heard insisting on calling the police. When contacted, the sources in the Delhi police said they are working on

**AAP taking U-turn after accepting Bibhav misbehaved: Maliwal**

**Maliwal is face of conspiracy hatched by BJP, alleges AAP**

**AVINASH PRABHAKAR NEW DELHI, MAY 17**

Coming down heavily on Rajya Sabha MP Swati Maliwal for raising allegations of assault against chief minister Arvind Kejriwal's aide Bibhav Kumar, the Aam Aadmi Party on Friday accused her of being the face of "a conspiracy hatched by the BJP" to frame the party supreme. Hitting back at AAP, Ms Maliwal said that the party has taken a "U-turn" two days after it accepted that Mr Kumar had "misbehaved" with her. The Delhi BJP said the way the rights of a woman were violated in the presence of the chief minister exposes the character of the party. Addressing a press conference, Delhi minister Atishi said the former DCW chief had reached the CM's residence without an appointment and her intention was to level allegations against Mr Kejriwal. "Today a video has surfaced which has exposed the lie of Maliwal. In her FIR, she said she was brutally assaulted, and she was in



Security personnel stand guard as forensic officials arrive at Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal's residence at Civil Lines in New Delhi on Friday.

Referring to the video, Ms Atishi said it shows Ms Maliwal "comfortably sitting in the drawing room" and "threatening the security staff," and that "her clothes were not torn." "The video shows her threatening Kumar. The charges levelled by Maliwal are baseless. Maliwal insisted on meeting Kejriwal. She is Rajya Sabha MP and she should know that the CM has a busy schedule. "Kumar told her that the chief minister is busy and unable to meet her. She shouted at him, pushed him, and tried to enter the residential portion of the CM House," she claimed.

She added that the whole incident proves that it was a BJP conspiracy and Ms Maliwal was made its face to frame the chief minister. On being asked about AAP senior leader Sanjay Singh who had said on Tuesday that the incident with Ms Maliwal was "highly condemnable" and had claimed that Mr Kumar had "misbehaved" with her, Ms Atishi said, "AAP MP Sanjay Singh met Maliwal and he had only her version. But now this video has brought out the truth." Attacking the party for dismissing the allegation of assault as "baseless," Ms Maliwal said that the AAP has given in under a "goon's pressure" and is now "questioning her character." Without naming Mr Kumar, she said, "This goon is threatening the party (AAP) saying that 'if I get arrested, I will reveal all the secrets.' That is why he is roaming around in Lucknow and everywhere seeking shelter." Meanwhile, Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva said Ms Atishi's statement is only one of confusion and disappointment.

**Top court reserves verdict on Kejriwal's plea against arrest**

**AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, MAY 17**

The Supreme Court on Friday reserved its verdict on Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal's challenge to his arrest by the Enforcement Directorate in a money laundering case linked to the excise policy "scam". In its order, a bench of Justices Sanjiv Khanna and Dipankar Datta said, "Arguments heard. Judgement reserved. Notwithstanding the same, and without prejudice to rights and contentions, the appellant can move the trial court for grant of bail in accordance with law." Before reserving the verdict, the top court perused the case files and statements of the witnesses and accused



Arvind Kejriwal

recorded after October 30, 2023, the day senior AAP leader Manish Sisodia's bail plea was rejected. Mr Sisodia is an accused in both the corruption and money laundering case linked to the alleged scam. During the hearing, additional solicitor-general S.V. Raju, appearing for the ED, told the bench the probe agency has unearthed some personal chat messages between Mr Kejriwal and some

hawala operators. Solicitor-general Tushar Mehta, who also appeared for the ED, said the alleged hawala operators have been arrested now and the chat messages have been recovered from them. Contesting the claim, Mr Kejriwal's lawyer Abhishek Singhvi said, "Is this submission for the court or the media? Why was he suppressing this fact till now? The arguments are being made to create a doubt in the court's mind at the last minute." The ASG submitted that the probe agency has got evidence about money having been sent from Andhra Pradesh to Goa through hawala channels to help with the Aam Aadmi Party's 2022 assembly poll campaign.

**Kanhaiya assaulted in N-DE Delhi outside AAP's office**

**AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, MAY 17**

Congress candidate from Northeast Delhi Kanhaiya Kumar was allegedly attacked with ink on Friday by some people in the constituency. The incident happened outside the AAP office in the New Usmanpur area as Kanhaiya was coming out after a party meeting with local councillor Chhaya Sharma. According to a complaint by Sharma, "Some persons came and put garland around Sh. Kanhaiya Kumar. After garlanding him, some persons threw ink on Sh. Kanhaiya Kumar and tried to assault him. When Smt. Chhaya Sharma tried to intervene, they misbehaved and threatened her."



Kanhaiya Kumar

Kanhaiya in a statement said the attack was ordered by rival contender from the constituency Manoj Tiwari. He said Mr Tiwari, the sitting MP, is frustrated with his rising popularity and that is why he sent "goons" to attack him. He said the public will give its answer to the violence with the vote on May 25. Polling in the national capital will take place on May 25 in the sixth phase of election.

**Who is Bibhav? Kejriwal's close aide in eye of storm**

**AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, MAY 17**



Bibhav Kumar

Much before the India Against Corruption movement, Mr Kumar became a coordinator between it and Mr Kejriwal's NGO Public Cause Research Foundation, where Ms Maliwal worked. Mr Kumar and Ms Maliwal are said to have known each other for around two decades and also worked on "several joint projects" related to various civil society causes. Of late, Mr Kumar has been facing the ED's scrutiny in the excise policy-linked money laundering probe as well as alleged irregularities in the Delhi Jal Board (DJB). Terming his appointment illegal and void ab initio, the Directorate of Vigilance had terminated his services as the private secretary to the Delhi CM. The move came days after he was questioned by the ED in the Delhi excise policy case. An order issued by spe-

cial secretary (Vigilance) Y.V.V.J. Rajasekhar stated that Mr Kumar's services were terminated with immediate effect as he was appointed in violation of Central Civil Service Rules related to temporary appointment. The termination order cited a 2007 case pending against Mr Kumar, wherein he was accused of obstructing government work. The order stated that the charges against Mr Kumar are grave in nature, including charges of assault or criminal force to deter a public servant from discharging his duty. Mr Kumar had challenged the termination order before the Central Administrative Tribunal (CAT). Refusing to stay the termination order, the tribunal had stated that granting such relief would be premature. The CAT said, "It is observed that charges against Bibhav Kumar are grave in nature, including charges of assault or criminal force to deter public servant from discharge of his duty" (Section 353 of the IPC), for which the trial against Bibhav Kumar is at the stage of evidence, and therefore Bibhav Kumar is not clear from vigilance angle."

**Shooter involved in car showroom firing killed in encounter**

**BHASKAR HARI SHARMA NEW DELHI, MAY 17**

A 24-year-old shooter allegedly involved in firing at a car showroom in West Delhi was killed in an encounter with the Delhi police special cell near the Shahbad Dairy area. "We got information that Ajay alias Goli, a sharpshooter of Portugal-based gangster Himanshu Bhatt, will come to Khera Khurd village in Outer Delhi. A team was formed and a trap was laid," a senior police officer said. The officer further said that at around 11.30 pm on Thursday, Ajay was intercepted by the team in a Honda City car. "He was signalled to stop when the accused opened fire indiscriminately at the police team," the officer said, adding that he received bullet injuries during retaliation firing and

was rushed to a hospital. A native of Haryana's Rohtak, Ajay was involved in a dozen cases of murder, attempt to murder, and those registered under the Arms Act in the state and Delhi. He was also involved in a businessman's murder in Murthal in Sonapat on March 10. "He had dragged a businessman out of his car, chased him and shot him dead in Murthal," the officer said.

**For voters in Northeast Delhi, harmony, development in focus**

**New Delhi, May 17:** Four years after communal violence jolted Northeast Delhi, residents hope the new government would focus on promoting harmony and ensuring development in the area. "The memories of the riots haunted us. My parents would often breakdown remembering my brother and when we stepped out, people would talk to us about my brother. "It was difficult and we

(B) officer Ankit Sharma who was killed in the riots, said whichever political party is voted to power should focus on maintaining law and order and strengthening the law and order and maintaining harmony among people," Mr Sharma said. Mohammad Wasim, whose house was burned down by rioters in 2020, echoed similar sentiments. — PTI

moved to Ghaziabad but on May 25 we will cast our vote in Delhi. Whichever party forms the government, be it the BJP or the Congress, it should work towards strengthening the law and order and maintaining harmony among people," Mr Sharma said. Mohammad Wasim, whose house was burned down by rioters in 2020, echoed similar sentiments. — PTI

**NORTHERN RAILWAY TENDER NOTICE (Through e-tendering)**

Name of work and its location	Provision of Telecom facilities in connection with Extension of TN Bajpai hall and other allied work into the campus of 12 no. central NRMU office, New Delhi in the section of SSE/WPG Under ADENE-1
Approximate Cost of work (₹)	₹13,12,060.16 only
Earnest Money Deposit (₹)	₹26,300/- only
Address of the office	Senior Divisional Signal & Telecom Engineer-C, Northern Railway, 3rd Floor, Annex-1, DRM Office, New Delhi-110055
Date and Time for upload the tender/closing of tender	Tender uploading/ closing date & time 12.06.2024 upto 15:00 hrs.
Website particular & notice board location where complete details of the tender can be seen etc.	See the Northern Railway website www.irps.gov.in & Notice board at S&T branch, 3rd Floor, DRM office, State Entry Road, New Delhi-110055

Tender No.: 558-Sig-16-Tele-OT-995 Dated: 16.05.2024 1480/2024  
SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

**NORTHERN RAILWAY TENDER NOTICE (Through e-tendering)**

Tender No. 558-Sig-16-M-TENDER-1424	Dated: 17.05.2024
Name of work with its location	Brakevan Reversal siding at Asthal Bohar (ABO) Station of Delhi Division.
App. Cost of the work (₹)	₹ 1637977.39/- only
Bid Security (₹)	₹ 32,600.00/- only
Address of the office	Senior Divisional Signal & Telecom Engineer-C, Northern Railway, 3rd Floor, Annex-1, DRM office, New Delhi-110055.
Date & Time for upload the tender / closing of tender	Tender uploading / closing date & time 11.06.2024 up to 15:00 hrs.
Website particular & notice board location where complete details of the tender can be seen etc.	See the Northern Railway website www.irps.gov.in & Notice board at S&T branch, 3rd Floor, DRM office, State Entry Road, New Delhi-110055

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE 1504/24

**NORTHERN RAILWAY OPEN E-TENDER NOTICE**

The Sr. Divisional Engineer-II, Northern Railway, Delhi Division invites E-Tender for the following work.	
1. Name of Work	Annual P-way zone for maintenance of track in the section of SSE/P-Way/GZB-II under ADEN/GZB jurisdiction of Sr. DEN-II for the year 2024-25 PE. 30.06.2025
2. Approx. Cost of work	As per NIT on IREPS
3. Earnest Money to be Deposited	As per NIT on IREPS
4. Cost of tender document	Rs. 0.00/-
5. Date & Time of submission of tender bid and opening of tender.	11.06.2024 at 15:00 Hrs.
6. Website particulars where complete details of tender documents can be seen	www.irps.gov.in

\* The tenderer's must be registered on the Indian Railway E-Procurement system (IREPS) site i.e. www.irps.gov.in for participating in the e-tender system. \* For all terms and conditions please refer tender document. \* No manual offers are acceptable. \* Cost of tender document and Earnest money will be acceptable through net banking or payment gateway only.  
No. 128-W/280/e Tender Notice/NIT-25-2024-25/W-2 Dated: 16.05.2024  
SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE 1493/24

**NORTHERN RAILWAY Applications are invited under scheme of 'One Station One Product' for setting up:**

A. Stall at: Sonapat & Delhi Shahdara stations.  
B. Trolley at: Anand Vihar Terminal, Palam, Delhi Safdarjung, Shivaji Bridge, Tilak Bridge, Deoband, Jind, Jakkhal, Mansa, Tohana, Tapri, Narwana, Julana, Sharnli, Badli, Partapur, Muradnagar, Modinagar & Khatauli stations.

- The period for setting up of stall at Sonapat station per spell will be 90 days.
- The period for setting up of Trolley at stations mentioned in (B) above will be 30 days per spell.
- Registration fee for NSG 1, 2 & 3 stations will be charged @rate of Rs. 2000 for each spell of thirty days and for NSG 4 (Palam & Modinagar) NSG 5 (Shivaji Bridge, Tilak Bridge, Jind, Jakkhal, Mansa, Tohana, Narwana, Deoband, Tapri, Julana, Sharnli, Badli, Muradnagar, Khatauli & Delhi safdarjung) & NSG 6 (Partapur) registration fee will be charged @ rate of Rs. 1000 for each spell thirty days.
- The following are the eligibility criteria for participant viz.
  - a) Holder of Artisans/Weaver ID card issued by Development Commissioner Handicraft, Development Commissioner Handloom, or by the requisite state/Central Government Authority.
  - b) Individual artisans/weavers/craftsmen enrolled/registered with Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India Limited (TRIFED)/National Handloom Development Corporation (NHDC)/Khadi/Village Industries Commission (KVIC)/associated with Social Organizations, State Govt. bodies and associated with registered micro enterprises on the Udyam Portal of the Ministry of MSME and NGOs etc.
  - c) Self Help Groups registered with PMEGP (Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme).
  - d) Marginalized or weaker sections of society.
  - e) No separate logo shall be allowed.
- The applicant will have to submit an undertaking to the Station Superintendent indicating that no activity would be undertaken to adversely affect the train operations, passenger safety and image of the Railways.
- Applications should be addressed and can be submitted to Station Superintendent at station by the applicant till 15:00 hrs of 27.05.2024, which will be opened on same day.
- Station Superintendent will make priority roster of all approved participants and priority will be established through a draw of lots conducted at the station in the presence of all approved applicants by the Station Manager/Sectional CMI and nominated Finance representative.
- The One Station One Product scheme shall be governed by Railway Board's Commercial Circular No. 12 of 2022 and 09 of 2023 respectively available at website: www.indianrailways.gov.in & URL: https://indianrailways.gov.in/railwayboard/uploads/directorate/traffic\_comm/Comm\_Cir\_2022/OSOP%20Policy.pdf & https://indianrailways.gov.in/railwayboard/uploads/directorate/traffic\_comm/Comm\_Cir\_2023/CC%20%2009%20of%202023.pdf
- For any queries applicant may contact Station Superintendent or CMI of the respective stations. 1495/2024

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

SHORT TAKES

JMM expels Sita Soren for 6 years

Ranchi: The Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) on Friday expelled Sita Soren — sister-in-law of jailed former Jharkhand chief minister Hemant Soren — from the primary membership of the party for six years. She was expelled for “anti-party activities”, the JMM said in a release. Ms Soren, a three-term MLA, had joined the BJP in New Delhi on March 20, citing “isolation” and “neglect” by the JMM since the death of her husband Durga Soren in 2009. The BJP has fielded her from the Dumka Lok Sabha seat, replacing sitting MP Sunil Soren, who had defeated JMM president Shibu Soren in the 2019 polls by a margin of 47,590 votes. Dumka will go to polls on June 1. — PTI

Poster appears with death threat to Didi

Kolkata: A poster with death threats to West Bengal chief minister and the TMC supremo Mamata Banerjee and her nephew and party’s general secretary Abhishek Banerjee, appeared in Uluberia in West Bengal’s Howrah district on Friday, police said. The poster, handwritten in green ink on a piece of white cloth, was recovered from a construction site in Fuleswar area of Uluberia where Lok Sabha elections will be held on May 20. The poster written in Bengali read: “I will kill chief minister Mamata Banerjee and Abhishek by hitting them with a car. Everyone will light the lamps after that. I have a secret letter.” The poster was found hanging on a stack of bricks. “It is not yet clear what the secret letter meant. It could be a prank. We have to find out whether a single person or a group was involved in it,” the police officer said. The police have started an investigation into the matter, he said. — PTI

CBI sets up camp in WB’s Sandeshkhali

New Delhi: The CBI has set up a camp in Sandeshkhali as part of its measures to build confidence among the locals who were allegedly being harassed for speaking out to the Central agency about sexual assault on them, officials said Friday. The camp that will be guarded by CRPF personnel will also give opportunity to the investigation officers to work from “ground zero” and collect information, they said. The moves come against the backdrop of Calcutta high court’s direction to the agency to take confidence-building measures in cases where the complainants seek adequate protection. Petitioner-lawyer Priyanka Tibrewal had told the court that despite filing affidavits detailing the horrifying incidents, some victims of sexual assault were hesitant to speak out due to fear. She had previously submitted several complaints. — PTI

HEMA: BJD GOVT DOING NOTHING ON DEVELOPMENT

AGE CORRESPONDENT BHUBANESWAR, MAY 17

Bollywood star and the BJP leader Hema Malini on Friday turned the heat on ruling Biju Janata Dal (BJD) by accusing it of doing nothing for the development of Odisha in the last 25 years. While attending party’s “Ashirwad Samavesh” in Bhubaneswar’s Salia Sahi slum, she stated the BJD government in other states had exhibited how they changed the lives of slum-dwellers through progressive initiatives, and urged the people to elect her party to see similar transformations in the state. “I have been frequently visiting Odisha. Here, the Congress ruled for 50 years and the BJD for 25 years. Despite being a cultural hub and blessed with natural resources, the state has not developed much, as the BJD neglected the state,” alleged Hema Malini. At a time when PM Modi is working hard and ensuring development in the country, nothing much has been done in Odisha by the BJD government, she alleged. “The benefits of several Central schemes have not reached the poor in Odisha,” the actress said.



Hema Malini

Rae Bareli not a ‘family seat’, but that of people, says Shah

‘INDIA bloc family-based alliance, will put Babri lock in Ram temple’

AGE CORRESPONDENT with agency inputs NEW DELHI/RAE BARELI/RANCHI, MAY 17



Union home minister Amit Shah with BJP candidate Sanjay Seth and others during a roadshow in Ranchi on Friday. — PTI

Union home minister Amit Shah at a rally on Friday attacked Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra for calling Rae Bareli a “family seat”, and said it is not a seat of family but that of the people. Launching a scathing attack at the Congress for turning down invitations for the Ram temple’s “pran pratishtha” in Ayodhya, he said if the Congress came to power, they would put the “Babri lock” in the temple again. “The Congress says that the Ram temple has not been consecrated properly. If the INDIA bloc comes, they will put the ‘Babri lock’ on the temple again,” he said.

Describing the INDIA bloc a family-based alliance, the home minister said, “Lalu (Prasad Yadav) wants to make his son the chief minister, Mamata (Banerjee) wants her nephew to be the chief minister and Sonia Gandhi wants to make her son Prime Minister.” “She (Priyanka) says that Rae Bareli and Amethi are the seats of my family. I say that this seat does not belong to any

family. This is the seat of poor youths of both the districts. Whoever the people of Rae Bareli and Amethi want will go to Parliament. This is democracy, family has no seat,” Mr Shah said. With Smriti Irani winning in Amethi and Dinesh Pratap Singh in Rae Bareli, both the seats are going to go to the BJP, he asserted. “The Congress was sitting on Article 370. (Prime Minister) Modi ended it. The Congress says that we will bring back Article 370. Modiji has ended terrorism from the country,” he said. “On one hand, there is Narendra Modi, who is not accused of (scam) of four annas despite being the chief minister and Prime Minister for 23 years,” Mr Shah said.

Patnaik calls Union ministers’ speeches ‘derogatory & abusive’

‘Political tourists will have no impact’

Bhubaneswar, May 17: Odisha chief minister Naveen Patnaik on Friday denounced the campaign speeches by his counterparts from other states and Union ministers terming them as “derogatory and abusive”, and claimed that those “political tourists” have no impact on people of his state. In the last few days, a number of BJP CMs and Union ministers campaigned in the state, and altogether 14 rallies were addressed by them on



Naveen Patnaik

Friday at various places across the state. “Some chief ministers and Union ministers come as political tourists only at the time of elections and then they disappear,” Mr Patnaik said. The ruling Biju Janata Dal (BJD) chief claimed that the speeches of those political leaders and min-

isters have no effect on the people of Odisha at all. “And it’s most unfortunate that many of them use derogatory and abusive language. I never believe in doing that and the people in our state don’t appreciate such language,” Mr Patnaik asserted. During the last few days, Assam chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, Chhattisgarh CM Vishnu Deo Sai, Rajasthan chief minister Bhajan Lal Sharma, former Tripura

CM Biplab Kumar Deb and at least eight Union ministers along with several senior BJP leaders have campaigned in Odisha, where the Assembly and the Lok Sabha polls are taking place together. On Friday, four rallies are being addressed by Mr Sarma, three each by Mr Sai and Mr Sharma, two by Union minister Ashwini Vaishnaw and one each by Union home minister Amit Shah and his Cabinet colleague Bhupender Yadav. — PTI

Kejriwal likens situation in India to that in Russia

Amritsar, May 17: Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal on Friday likened the situation in the country to that in Russia, claiming there is a “dictatorship”, and Opposition leaders are being put in jail. Mr Kejriwal was addressing Punjab Aam Aadmi Party workers and leaders, including MLAs and MPs, asking them to put in their best to ensure the party’s victory in all 13 Lok Sabha seats in the state. He slammed the BJP, accusing it of putting all rival party leaders in jail. “The dictatorship that is going on in our country is not acceptable. India has never seen such a period in the past 75 years — putting Opposition leaders in jail,” the AAP chief said. “Like in Russia, (Vladimir) Putin had either sent all rival leaders in jail or got them killed and then conducted the elections and got 87 per cent votes. When there is no Opposition, you will be the only one to get the votes,” he said. Mr Kejriwal was granted bail by the Supreme Court in the Delhi excise policy case on May 10 to allow him to campaign in the Lok Sabha elections.

▶ AAP NATIONAL convener alleged that two CCTV cameras were installed in his cell in Tihar Jail, and he was being monitored round the clock as to what he was doing when in the prison

He will be back in jail on June 2. “They put me in jail, (former Delhi deputy CM) Manish Sisodia was put in jail, Congress’ bank account was attached, (they) are troubling TMC, (Tamil Nadu CM MK) Stalin’s ministers have been put in jail. “Put everyone in jail. Then only one party and one leader will remain but democracy will not survive. We do not have to let this happen,” said Mr Kejriwal. The AAP national convener alleged that two CCTV cameras were installed in his cell in Tihar Jail, and he was monitored round the clock as to what he was doing in the prison. “When I got up, how much time I spent in the bathroom, when I got out, how much time I am in the toilet,” he added on his allegation of being monitored. — PTI

Modi govt is planning to drive out Adivasis from their land: Mamata

Gopiballavpur (West Bengal), May 16: West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee on Friday accused the Narendra Modi government of orchestrating a plan to take away the rights of tribals and sow discord among different backward communities. Speaking at an election rally in support of the TMC’s Jhargram Lok Sabha candidate Kalipada Soren, Ms Banerjee asserted that the BJP was aiming to uproot tribals by implementing the NRC, ultimately depriving them of their land rights. Accusing the BJP of fomenting tension between Adivasis and Kurmis, the CM empha-



Mamata Banerjee

sised her administration’s dedication to safeguarding tribal land rights. “We have already passed a legislation to ensure that tribals can reside on their ancestral lands,” she added. “The BJP want to drive out Adivasis, Kurmis and other backward castes through the NRC and engineer fights among them by introducing the Uniform Civil Code. But I vow to protect them till my last breath,” she added. Accusing a section of media for publishing

advertisements with photographs of the PM boasting about the achievements of the BJP government at the Centre without proper attribution, she said, “The BJP is publishing advertisements with false information. One such advertisement says that migrant Hindu and Sikh communities can apply for citizenship under the CAA. Please don’t believe them, you (the electorate) all already bona fide citizens. If you apply you will be driven out.” “I have nothing against journalists, but how come the authorities of those publications allow such advertisements to be carried without any check,” she said. — PTI

EC: 45 crore have voted till now; Ph-4 saw highest 69.16% turnout

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, MAY 17

The Election Commission on Friday released the final voter turnout of phase four Lok Sabha polling on May 13, saying 69.16 per cent votes have been recorded for 96 parliamentary constituencies in the ongoing general election. This phase has also seen the highest voter turnout compared to the first three phases where it was 66.14%, 66.71%, and 65.68%, respectively. The total poll percentage is now 66.95% and so far about 45 crore people have voted in the Lok Sabha elections in the first four phases.

“The fifth phase of voting will take place on May 20. The EC has also provided state-wise and constituency-wise voter turnout data. It said a copy of “Form 17C” is also provided for every polling station in a constituency to candidates through their polling agents. “Actual data of ‘Form 17C’ shall prevail, which is already shared with candidates. The final turnout will only be available post-counting with counting of postal ballots and its addition to total vote count. Postal ballots include ballots given to service voters, absentee voters (85+, PwD, essential services etc.) and voters on election duty. Daily accounts of such postal ballots received, as per statutory provisions, are given to all candidates,” the EC said. As per data, Andhra Pradesh had the highest polling of 80.66% followed by West Bengal 80.22% and Odisha 75.68%. Jammu Kashmir had the poorest polling of 28.49%.

Previous Cong govts delayed growth: PM

PRASAD PATIL MUMBAI, MAY 17

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday blamed the earlier Congress governments for India’s slow development till 2014. Addressing a huge rally, which was attended by Bharatiya Janata Party, Shiv Sena, Nationalist Congress Party, Maharashtra Navnirman Sena and Republican Party of India at Mumbai’s Shivaji Park ground, the PM said India would have been five decades ahead today if

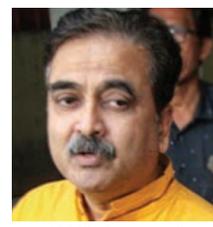
Congress was dissolved as per Mahatma Gandhi’s advice. Mr Modi claimed that 50 years were lost in “Congressisation” of systems in the country. Several countries that got independence around the same time as India progressed more. “This happened because the country’s leaders did not trust the ability of Indians. Please go through the speeches made by former Prime Ministers from the Red Fort. Some of them from a family (Gandhi family) called Indians lazy. They didn’t trust abilities of their countrymen,” he said. “When the country became independent, India was the world’s sixth-largest economy. In 2014, Congress handed over an 11th-ranked economy. Today, we are the fifth-largest economic power,” the PM added. Praising Mumbai as the city that fulfills dreams, the PM said, “Mumbai doesn’t just dream, the city fulfills dreams. The city has never disappointed those who set out to achieve something,



Bihar chief minister Nitish Kumar pays tribute to the former Bihar deputy CM Sushil Kumar Modi during a condolence meeting in Patna on Friday. — PTI

‘Improper’ remark against Didi: EC notice to BJP pick

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, MAY 17



Abhijit Gangopadhyay

Taking cognisance of his utterances against West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee, the Election Commission (EC) on Friday pulled up former high court judge and the BJP Lok Sabha candidate Mr Abhijit Gangopadhyay for his “improper, injudicious and undignified” remarks against Ms Banerjee. The EC has issued a show cause notice to Mr Gangopadhyay, asking him to explain, by May 20 evening, as to why action for violating model code of conduct (MCC) should not be taken against him. The poll panel acted on a complaint by the Trinamul Congress against Mr Gangopadhyay for his remarks against Ms Banerjee while addressing a public meeting on

May 15 in Haldia. Mr Gangopadhyay had reportedly said, “Mamata Banerjee, how much are you being sold for? Your rate is 10 lakh, why?” The EC in its notice noted that on careful examination, Mr Gangopadhyay’s comment has been found to be “improper, injudicious, beyond dignity in every sense of term and in bad taste”, and prima facie violative of the provisions of the model code of conduct and the commission’s advisory to political parties. It also reminded him of a court ruling. The EC has sought a response by 5 PM of May 20. Issuing a show cause notice to Mr Gangopadhyay, the EC quoted a Supreme Court judgement in the case of Subramaniam Swamy vs Union of India (2016) that ruled, “If freedom of speech and expression is protected under Article 19 (1) (a) of the Constitution, the right to reputation is also considered to be an inextricable part of the right to life protected by Article 21 and balancing these two rights is a constitutional necessity.” On EC show cause notice, Mr Gangopadhyay said, “I will reply to the notice. I have not said anything wrong for Mamata Banerjee.”

ED attaches fresh assets in case against Shajahan

New Delhi, May 17: The ED on Friday said it has issued a fresh attachment order for seizing assets worth more than ₹14 crore of suspended West Bengal TMC leader Shajahan Sheikh and those allegedly linked to him as part of a money laundering case investigation. Seventeen bank accounts holding ₹3.78 crores and 55 immovable properties measuring 38.90 bighas worth ₹10.50 crores in the name of Mr Sheikh, his brother Sk Alomgir, Sekh Sumaia Hafizia Trust (represented by Sk Alomgir), Mr Sheikh’s “accomplices” Abdul Alim Molla and

Shib Prasad Hazra apart from some others have been attached. A provisional order has been issued under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), the central agency said in a statement. In March, the ED had issued the first order for attaching assets worth ₹12.78 crores in this case. Shajahan Sheikh, the ED said, created a “criminal empire” in the area revolving around land grabbing, illegal fish farming and trading, grabbing brick fields, cartilisation of contracts, collection of illegal taxes/levies and commission on land deals. — PTI

SC gives time to EC, to hear May 24 petition over voters’ info ‘Reply on turnout plea within a week’

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, MAY 17

Holding an urgent hearing on Friday evening, the Supreme Court sought a response within a week from the Election Commission on a plea by an NGO seeking a direction to upload polling station-wise voter turnout data on its website within 48 hours of conclusion of polling for each phase of the Lok Sabha elections. The SC, which was urged by senior advocate Prashant Bhusan that the plea be heard today itself, assembled in the evening after the conclusion of an SCBA function to bid farewell to Justice AS Bopanna. Chief Justice of India

D.Y. Chandrachud termed the request of the EC seeking time to respond to the plea as “fair”. The bench said the EC should be given some reasonable time to respond to the plea and listed it for hearing before an appropriate bench during the summer vacation on May 24, a day before the sixth phase of the seven-phase Lok Sabha polls. Senior advocate Maninder Singh, appearing for the poll panel, said the NGO “Association for Democratic Reforms” has levelled “absolutely false allegations” in the plea and, moreover, a recent judgment of another bench of the SC headed by Justice Sanjiv Khanna has dealt with the issues

▶ PLEA BY AN NGO sought a direction to upload polling station-wise voter turnout data on its website within 48 hours of conclusion of polling for each phase of the Lok Sabha elections which are also part of the present case. Justice Khanna-led bench had on April 26 rejected the pleas for reviving paper ballots and also 100 per cent cross-verification of votes cast on electronic voting machines with voter verifiable paper audit trail. Mr Bhusan opposed the submission, saying that the issue relating to voter turnout data was not part of the earlier petition.

Earlier in the day, the CJI asked the counsel appearing for the EC to take instructions and said it will hear the matter at the end of the board. The ADR had last week filed an interim application in its 2019 PIL seeking directions to the EC that “scanned legible copies of Form 17C Part-I (Account of Votes Recorded)” of all polling stations be uploaded immediately after the polls. “Direct the Election Commission to provide tabulated polling station-wise data in absolute figures of the number of votes polled as recorded in Form 17C Part-I after each phase of polling in the ongoing 2024 Lok Sabha elections,” the NGO said.

## SHORT TAKES

### NIA charges 1 more in Pak spying case

**New Delhi:** The NIA on Thursday chargesheeted one more person named Amaan Salim Shaikh in the Indian Navy spying case involving Pakistani intelligence operatives. Shaikh is a key accused in the case involving a conspiracy by Pak agents to honey trap Navy personnel to gather secret information regarding the defence establishments. The anti-terror agency, which filed a supplementary chargesheet in Visakhapatnam, NIA special court in Andhra, has charged Amaan, a resident of Mumbai, under various sections of IPC and UA(P) Act.

### India targets Pak over PoK protests

**New Delhi:** India on Friday slammed Pakistan for the recent widespread protests by civilians in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK). MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said, "We have seen reports on protests in several areas of Pakistan occupied Jammu & Kashmir. We believe that it is a natural consequence of Pakistan's continued policy of systemic plundering of resources from these territories which remain under its forcible and illegal occupation. Such exploitative policies deny the local people, rights over their own resources and the benefits thereof. We reiterate that entire Union territories of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh have been, and shall always remain integral parts of India."

### Sonia bats for Rahul at rally in Rae Bareilly

**Continued from Page 1**  
To respect all, protect the weak and fight against injustice for the rights of people. Don't be afraid, because your roots of struggle and traditions are very deep," she said at a joint election rally in Rae Bareilly. Mrs Gandhi was first elected as an MP from Rae Bareilly in 2004 and represented the seat till earlier this year, when she vacated it after getting elected as a member of the Rajya Sabha. Mr Gandhi is in the fray from the Rae Bareilly constituency this time.  
The SP chief and ex-UP CM also addressed the rally. Mr Yadav said that the BJP has been defeated in the first four phases of the ongoing LS polls and the people of UP have trapped the BJP in state.  
The SP chief recalled the farm bills and asked voters to refrain from choosing the BJP. He asked people to remember the BJP as one that was imposing black laws on farmers.  
Mr Yadav attacked the BJP, accusing them of making "false promises". He also accused the BJP of deliberately leaking the question papers so that they do not have to give jobs. Raising concern, he said that the paper for every exam was leaked. "Not one, but more than 10 exams' papers were leaked," said the SP chief.

### Mizo tribals warn of armed stir over Myanmar fencing

**Continued from Page 1**  
ernment's decision to cancel the Free Movement Regime (FMR) with Myanmar and fencing of the international border with the neighbouring country.  
The tribal group opposing the fencing also says that Article 36(1) recognises the right of indigenous peoples to maintain relationships across borders, including activities for spiritual, cultural, political, economic, and social, and Article 36(2) provides that states have an obligation to ensure implementation of the right.  
The theme of the rally was "Unau kan ni, inthen thei kan ni lo" (United by blood and cannot be parted) and a number of people who did not enter Zokhawthar village also joined the rally at Khawmawi in Chin state of Myanmar, on the other side of the border.  
It is significant that altogether 34,141 people from Myanmar are taking shelter in different parts of Mizoram at present. They fled their homes following a military coup in the neighbouring country in February 2021.  
Security sources said that thousands of people from both sides of the border, including refugees taking shelter in Zokhawthar and surrounding villages, as well as people from other districts like Aizawl and Champhai, participated in the rally.  
Mizoram shares a 404-km border with Myanmar's Chin state as Mizos share ethnic ties, ancestry with people belonging to the Chin community.  
The Kukli Zo tribal community organised a similar rally in Manipur denouncing the gov-

## Tensions in Asia in land, sea as pacts dishonoured: Jaishankar

Terror has started to consume those who long practised it, says EAM

AGE CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, MAY 17

External affairs minister (EAM) S. Jaishankar on Friday launched a veiled attack on China by saying that "in Asia, new tensions have emerged in land and sea as agreements are dishonoured and rule of law disregarded". He also criticised Pakistan in the same way by saying that "terrorism and extremism have started to consume those who have long practised it". Referring to the global conflicts raging including the Ukraine and Gaza wars, the EAM said that in many ways, "we are actually going through the perfect storm".

Delivering an address at an annual business summit of a trade body, Mr Jaishankar said, "The anxieties that stem from the

The anxieties that stem from the Covid experience have been further magnified by the conflicts, tensions and divides of our era.

— S. Jaishankar, External affairs minister



Covid experience have been further magnified by the conflicts, tensions and divides of our era. ... Today, what is the reality we are starting at? An Ukraine conflict now in its third year. A huge escalation of violence in West Asia/the Middle East that could spread beyond. The disruption of logistics due to war, due to sanctions, drone attacks and climate events. The world is experiencing a 3F crisis of fuel, food and fertilisers. In Asia, new tensions have

emerged in land and sea as agreements are dishonoured and rule of law disregarded. Terrorism and extremism have started to consume those who have long practised it. In many ways, we are actually going through the perfect storm. "For India, the task is to mitigate its impact on itself and contribute to stabilising the world to the extent possible. It is this judicious combination of 'Bharat First' and 'Vasudaiva Kutumbakam' that defines our image as

'Vishwa Bandhu' (friend of the world)".

Referring to India's friendship with Russia, he said, "An economy with India's prospects also has to look at accessing global resources more seriously if we are to fuel our growth. For long, we have looked at Russia from a political or security perspective. As that country turns eastwards, fresh economic opportunities are presenting themselves."

"The spike in our trade and the new areas of cooperation should not be regarded as a temporary phenomenon. Many other recent partnerships also offer such possibilities, such as those with Australia and with Latin America, in addition to established ones like Indonesia, Africa and West Asia."

### US has shown understanding of Chabahar port ops: India

AGE CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, MAY 17

Putting forth a conciliatory stand, India on Friday said the United States "has shown an understanding of the importance of the Chabahar port operations for continued humanitarian supplies to Afghanistan".

It may be noted that in the wake of the 10-year pact between India and Iran for the development of the Chabahar port that was inked earlier this week on Monday, the United States had just hours later appeared to hand out a warning to India and Indian companies by saying that any entity or anyone considering business deals with Iran "needs to be aware of the potential risk that they are opening themselves up to and the potential risk of sanctions".

Sending what appears to be a firm message to the Americans, New Delhi on Friday also reiterated the recent statement of external affairs minister (EAM) S. Jaishankar that a "narrow view" should not be taken on the matter. Describing the Chabahar pact with Iran as a "great achievement", MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said, "India's commitment towards the Chabahar port is to realize its potential as a connectivity hub for Afghanistan, and Central Asian countries, which are landlocked.



Devotees in Yamunotri during the Char Dham Yatra in Uttarakhand's Uttarkashi district on Friday.

### Project underway to conserve species Noorjahan mango trees in MP nearing extinction, only 10 left

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY  
BHOPAL, MAY 17

Noorjahan mango tree species, the yield of which weighs up to 4.5 kg each, is on the verge of extinction, a scientist of Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK) has indicated.

R.K. Yadav, scientist and head of the local KVK, on Friday disclosed to this newspaper that only 10 Noorjahan mango trees survive in Alirajpur district in Madhya Pradesh now. "Only 10 Noorjahan mango trees are surviving in the Katthiwada block of Alirajpur district now. The KVK of Alirajpur has undertaken a project to conserve and revive the tree species," Mr Yadav said.

According to him, of the

while royal family of Alirajpur. According to him, the KVK, Alirajpur, last year initiated an effort to create two mother trees of the variety by adopting the grafting method.

10 surviving Noorjahan mango variety trees, seven are found in the farms of two brothers of Katthiwada, Shivraj Singh and Bharat Singh. Similarly, while one tree is found in the village of Kali Khetra under Jobat, grown by the local farmer Pradip Singh in his agricultural field, another tree is grown by a farmer, Yuvraj Singh, in Chhota Undan village near the district headquarters of Alirajpur.

The other tree is grown in the palace of the erst-

while royal family of Alirajpur.

According to him, the KVK, Alirajpur, last year initiated an effort to create two mother trees of the variety by adopting the grafting method. But, both the trees were electrocuted after coming in contact with transmission wires.

The tree variety yields mangoes weighing up to 4.5 kg each. "Last year, a Noorjahan mango weighing 3.5 kg was auctioned at ₹5,000 in the market," Mr Yadav said. The mango variety grows in tropical climates on sandy soil.

"We have a plan to grow around 200 mango trees of the variety in coming four years by adopting tissue culture technology," he added.

## Mercury breaches 45°C at 19 places in Rajasthan; Brutal heat across N-W India; scorching 47.4°C in Najafgarh

**New Delhi, May 17:** A brutal heat wave swept swathes of northwest India on Friday, with maximum temperatures soaring to a scorching 47.4°C in west Delhi's Najafgarh, making it the warmest place in the country.

The mercury breached 45°C at 19 places in Rajasthan, 18 in Haryana, eight in Delhi and two in Punjab.

Conditions are expected to turn worse with the severe heat wave over the northwest Indian plains predicted to continue during the next five days.

The threshold for a heat wave is met when the maximum temperature of a weather station reaches at least 40°C in the plains, 37 degrees in the coastal areas, and 30 degrees in the hilly regions, and the departure from normal is

at least 4.5 notches. A severe heat wave is declared if the departure from normal exceeds 6.4 notches. On Friday, the maximum temperature surged to 47.4°C in Najafgarh and 47.1°C in Haryana's Sirsa.

As per IMD data till 7.30 pm, Najafgarh was the warmest place in the country. In Delhi, the mercury settled at 46.5°C in Mungeshpur, 46.2°C in Aya Nagar, 45.9°C in Pusa and Jafarpur, 45.8°C in Pitampura and 45.1°C in Palam.

Severe heatwave conditions are very likely in

some parts of Rajasthan, Punjab, Haryana and Delhi during May 18-21, the IMD warned.

A fresh heatwave spell will commence over east and central India from Saturday.

The Met office issued a red alert for west Rajasthan, stressing the need for "extreme care for vulnerable people".

It issued an orange alert for Haryana, Punjab, east Rajasthan, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Gujarat and emphasised "high health concern" for vulnerable people, including infants, the elderly and those with chronic diseases.

It warned of an increased likelihood of heat-related illnesses in people exposed to the sun for prolonged periods or engaging in heavy work.

### SC refuses to grant bail to ex-CM Soren

AGE CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, MAY 17

The Supreme Court on Friday refused to grant interim bail to former Jharkhand chief minister Hemant Soren in a money laundering case linked to a land "scam" for campaigning in the Lok Sabha polls and listed the plea before a vacation bench that will hear the matter on Tuesday.

The apex court told Mr Soren that it needs to prima facie satisfy itself before granting interim bail to him.

A bench of Justices Sanjiv Khanna and Dipankar Datta asked the Enforcement Directorate to file its reply by Monday on the question of granting interim bail to Mr Soren and a short response to his plea challenging his arrest in the

case.

The top court said, "Before granting interim bail, we need to satisfy ourselves. Let the ED file its reply on the question of interim bail. We will take up the matter next week. This is the shortest time we can give."

Mr Soren's lawyer Kapil Sibal said if granted interim bail, the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha leader will surrender on June 2.

"There is no material against me in the case. The elections will be over, if not granted interim bail," Mr Sibal said.

Mr Sibal and senior advocate Arunabh Chowdhury, also appearing for Mr Soren in the matter, said the JMM leader is not in possession of the land in question in the case and has nothing to do with it.

### Remains of ex-Armyman killed in Gaza reach India

AGE CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, MAY 17

New Delhi on Friday said the mortal remains of United Nations Staffer and former Indian Army officer Col. (ret.) Waibhav Anil Kale — who was killed in Gaza earlier this week — has reached India. New Delhi said it is "deeply saddened" by the death of the former Indian Army officer in Gaza that took place earlier this week on Monday. Col. (ret.) Kale was working as security coordination officer in the UN department of safety and

security (DSS). New Delhi had earlier also said its missions at the UN Headquarters New York, the Israeli capital Tel Aviv and the (Palestinian) West Bank town of Ramallah are "extending all assistance in the repatriation of mortal remains to India and continue to be in touch with relevant authorities regarding the probe into the incident".

As per to earlier news agency and other media reports citing UN officials, an Israeli tank may have fired at the UN vehicle in which the ex-Indian Army officer was travelling, resulting in his death.

### ED's new chargesheet names AAP & Kejriwal

Continued from Page 1

agency against BRS leader and former Telangana chief minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao's daughter K. Kavitha and four others. A detailed prosecution complaint (orchargesheet) has been filed based on irrefutable evidence showing that Mr Kejriwal is the key conspirator who used his position as Delhi CM to facilitate the offence of money-laundering punishable under Section 4 of PMLA by the "company", that is the AAP. The CM was earlier described as "kingpin and key conspirator" of the Delhi excise "scam" by the ED. It was alleged that he acted in collusion with Delhi government ministers, AAP leaders and others.

On Thursday, additional solicitor-general S.V. Raju told the Supreme Court that the Delhi chief minister played a key role in the formulation of the now-scrapped excise policy.

"We have direct evidence that Kejriwal stayed in a seven-star hotel, whose bills were partly paid by an accused in the case," he said, adding that Mr Kejriwal, as the national convener of the AAP, was vicariously responsible for the alleged scam. The ED earlier claimed that the AAP, being a political party, is defined as an association or a body of individual citizens of India under the Representation of the People Act, and hence it can be categorised as a "company" as contemplated under Section 70 of the PMLA.

As Arvind Kejriwal was "in-charge of and responsible" for the said company — that is AAP — during the time of offence, he and his party "shall be deemed guilty" of offences mentioned under the anti-money laundering law and liable to be prosecuted and punished, it had said.

The excise case pertains to alleged corruption and money-laundering in formulating and executing the Delhi government's excise policy for 2021-22, which was later scrapped. Delhi lieutenant-governor V.K. Saxena had recommended a CBI probe into the alleged irregularities. Subsequently, the ED registered a case under the PMLA.

### Opp. backs 'vote jihad', wants instability: Modi

Continued from Page 1

Barabanki and Mohan-laganj. "June 4 is not far. Today, the whole country and the world know that the Modi government is going to score a hat-trick," he asserted.

Mr Modi noted that on one side there is the BJP-NDA alliance dedicated to national interest and on the other side, the INDIA bloc is in the field to create instability in the country. He claimed that as the elections progress, these INDIA bloc parties have started collapsing like a pack of cards.

"You need MPs who will work and do good for you. We need MPs who will develop the area, not those who will abuse Modi for five years. For this, you have only one option — lotus (the BJP's poll symbol). Can you achieve a speed of 1,000 cc with a 100 cc engine? If you want rapid development, only a strong government can provide it. Only the BJP government can give it," he said.

Raising the Ram temple issue to hit out at the SP and the Congress, Mr Modi said, "A senior SP leader had said on the day of Ram Navami that Ram temple is useless. At the same time, the Congress is preparing to overturn the Supreme Court's decision on Ram temple. For them, only their family and power matter. If the SP and

the Congress come to power, they will send Ram Lalla back to the tent and bulldoze the temple."

He asked the Congress-SP to take "tuition" from Mr Adityanath over where bulldozers should be used.

Alleging that nothing is bigger than their "votebank" for the SP and the Congress, Mr Modi said, "But, when I expose them, they become restless and lose sleep. They start saying anything and start hurling abuses. The SP and the Congress have surrendered to appeasement. And when Modi is telling their truth to the country, they say Modi is creating Hindu-Muslim divide. The votebank these people run after has also started understanding their truth now. Our mothers and sisters are happy with the law on triple talaq and are continuously blessing the BJP."

Mocking former Chhattisgarh CM Bhupesh Baghel for his remarks that the people of Rae Bareilly are now going to elect the PM of the country, saying, "Look at the extent of their dreams." "A Congress leader said the people of Rae Bareilly will elect the Prime Minister. Hearing this, the heart of the Samajwadi prince broke (referring to Akhilesh Yadav). No tears came out, but all his heart's desires were washed away," he said. In Fatehpur, the Prime

Minister claimed that the INDIA bloc has already been defeated in just the first four phases of the LS elections and its "disappointed" workers have now stopped leaving their homes for poll-related activities.

Mr Modi said he had predicted that Congress leader Rahul Gandhi will not dare contest from Amethi and this has turned out to be true. "The new news is that, to save its honour, the Congress has now launched Mission 50. The target of the Congress is to get 50 seats in the entire country by any means," he said.

Taking a swipe at the SP and the Congress at the rallies, Mr Modi said, "The dreams of the 'panja' (the Congress' poll symbol) and the 'cycle' (the SP's poll symbol) have shattered khata-khat, khata-khat. Now they are planning for post-June 4 as to who should be blamed for the defeat khata-khat, khata-khat. And someone was telling me that tickets for foreign trips have also been booked khata-khat, khata-khat."

Mr Modi used the phrase "khata-khat, khata-khat" to mock Mr Gandhi, who used the phrase to claim that a fixed stipend will flow into the accounts of poor women if his party comes to power. "All the qualities of the Congress and the SP match each other. They both are

dedicated to 'parivarvaad' (dynastic politics). Both are in politics for corruption. They can do anything to please their votebank. Both (of them) promote criminals and mafia, and both, the SP-Congress, are equally sympathetic to terrorists," he said. Addressing a rally in Hamirpur, Mr Modi cautioned people against the intentions of the two Opposition (the Congress and the SP) allies in UP.

Addressing a huge rally at Mumbai's Shivaji Park ground, which was attended by the BJP, the Shiv Sena, the NCP, the MNS and the Republican Party of India, the PM said India would have been five decades ahead today if Congress was dissolved as per Mahatma Gandhi's advice.

Mr Modi claimed that 50 years were lost in the "Congressisation" of systems in the country. As a result, several countries that got Independence around the same time as India, progressed more. "This happened because the country's leaders did not trust the ability of Indians. Please go through the speeches made by former PMs from Red Fort. Some of them from a family (the Gandhi family) called Indians lazy. You will not believe it. They did not trust the abilities of their countrymen," he said.

THE ASIAN AGE

18 MAY 2024

Resources, religion, quotas: PM's poll talk rattles Opp.

Typically, students learn about the fascinating phenomenon of the dual nature of light in their school, around Classes 9 or 10. It is apt because they are of an age when most of them do contemplate on the paradox of it, not just in the context of physics, but also metaphysics, human nature and relationships. It is hard to comprehend the dual nature of light — how it can exist and travel both as a particle, and as a wave, simultaneously. But if one has to fight darkness and make it possible for human eyes to see, clearly, one has to possess both qualities.

Like light, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, too, exhibits a phantasmagoria of dual properties, drawing from diverse resources, be it ancient Indian culture and philosophy, with its wisdom and kindness of "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam" (all of the world is my family), or the mother of democracy or Bharat, which he exemplifies at work by upholding constitutional values like secularism and universal humanitarianism, or even a strong, masculine Hindutva, modelled after heroes like Rana Pratap or Shivaji who did not brook unfair discrimination and fought for justice, that he embodies.

**Asked directly if Muslims would vote for him, Mr Modi has always maintained that the people of this country would vote for him based on his track record and the trust he evokes**

Both misunderstanding and overestimating the virtue of consistency in political narrative setting ahead of an election, the Opposition stands bewildered by the range of arguments presented by him on the issues of secularism, democracy, the Constitution and the equality of Hindus and Muslims, and people from other religions, in a vibrant democracy like India.

When Mr Modi questioned the issue of allocating resources first to minorities, it was not a statement against the Muslims, or people of any other religion, but the issue of discrimination, even if positive, based on the criterion of religion. The Indian Constitution does not make room for any positive discrimination on the

basis of anyone's chosen faith, especially given that one can change it voluntarily. On the other hand, Mr Modi and the BJP strongly support the Dr B.R. Ambedkar's line of reservations for the uplift of people who have suffered caste discrimination for centuries.

Similarly, while Mr Modi says that he would lose his right to be in public life if he ever tried to bring in Hindu-Muslim communal polarisation to an election, he has spoken up against the Congress' wish to allocate resources to Muslims first, based on the proportion of the population that is made up by them. He was speaking against pseudo-secularism and the lack of equality and fairness in proposed policy making, not making a communal hate speech, in the latter instance.

Asked directly if Muslims would vote for him during his various media interactions, Mr Modi has always maintained that the people of this country would vote for him based on his track record and the trust he evokes. It is the stance of a statesman who does not look upon his fellow citizens as persons belonging to any particular faith but as Indians and Indians alone. India will always stand in awe of one of its most courageous, confident and bold leaders of the present time.

Probe assault on Swati Maliwal

Now that the Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal's personal assistant Bibhav Kumar has been named as an accused in an FIR, the police should proceed post-haste with his interrogation regarding the reported assault on AAP MP Swati Maliwal and the law should take its course, and quickly at that.

The inglorious events of an assault on a national legislator, who is a member of the upper house, at the residence of the chief minister of Delhi only adds to a dossier of insouciance with which miseries are inflicted thanks to the patriarchy and misogyny that rule in the upper echelons of India's political class, commonly classified as *netas* or leaders and their plenipotentiaries.

Offences against women need to be acted upon without fear or favour lest quite the wrong message be sent to half the population of the country. Such acts of cruelty against women, common enough at home in cases of domestic violence, are intensified when committed by the high and mighty who may believe they are privileged and so can get away with it.

Swati may have waxed and waned regarding filing an official complaint for allegedly being kicked and assaulted by such an influential personage as a PA to a powerful CM. The political pressures on her regarding filing a police complaint can be imagined.

Now that she has decided to come out with it, after having suffered all the trauma, it is time to make an example out of a petty political aide. Let the case begin first by the Delhi CM home releasing relevant CCTV footage to the investigating authorities.

The kind of leeway extended to the politically connected people sends the worst signals to the common man who feels powerless when up against the power people in authority cloak themselves with.

A reported serial offender — a sitting member of Parliament — against women is on the loose after leaving the country. A common pattern to all this is the brazenness with which the politically powerful behave until whistleblowers use social media to out those who think nothing of criminal misconduct against women, be it sexual assault or just plain physical beating.

THE ASIAN AGE

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Subhani



The murky political 'Mandi' minus 'Heeras' is in trouble



Shobhaa's Take

The word in the film bazaar is that SLB, the auteur of *Heeramandi* — *The Diamond Bazaar* (touted as Netflix India's most expensive offering), got his numbers wrong. Matlab, he expected his eight-part period series to break all records and deliver a thumping superhit. Alas, *Heeramandi* was written off as one man's vanity project that failed to connect with the audience. SLB, known as an eccentric genius (a euphemism for megalomaniac) in his rarefied world of fantasy cinema, fell flat on his face trying to pull off an opulent extravaganza set in Lahore. It was a lazy and confused take on several disparate themes — *azaadi* and *barbaadi* — with a tyrannical "Huzoor" running the show at a grand haveli, patronised by decadent nawabs in search of pleasure. What could have been a powerful tale about debauchery and power, treachery and exploitation was reduced to a shabby, shallow story that went nowhere. An unwittingly satirical take on the "nabobs and kebabs" culture of a pre-Independence Lahore, in which cardboard revolutionaries shout "Inqilab Zindabad" periodically while the "nauch girls" swirl and twirl like dervishes in richly embroidered shararas and ghararas. *Sharaab* and *ittar*, *surma* and *mogras* do not compensate for the lack of soul in this ode to SLB's conceit.

*Khair!* The timing was perfect.

The last phase of the elections had drawn to a close with no clear victory in sight. Just weeks before the grand finale of what was described as "the biggest election on earth", India's political mandi was also teeming with desperate "courtesans" of both

sexes, vying for the attention of patrons with pouches of money. Enticing promising candidates with allurements galore, India's nouveau nawabs, clad not in silken *jamias* but organic cotton designer kurtas, strutted around the political arena, boasting and bragging about 400 seats, if not more. Like the women in *Heeramandi*, seats were up for grabs to the highest bidder. Political "nath uthama" ceremonies were happening across the country, as avaricious *netas* shopped around for potential stars who could win a seat for the party. Somehow, the numbers in this mandi too, didn't add up.

Will the NaMo show go the way of the SLB debacle?

Has the BJP mega-show failed to connect with the electorate?

For a lot of canny political analysts, the writing was already on the wall. There were ominous but unspoken signals and signs that the BJP's glory days were slipping away rapidly. Nobody spoke about this openly out of fear. And everybody nodded on autopilot when BJP supporters boasted about a clean sweep. It was only when the markets started to slide that the panic buttons were pressed at the headquarters. Something was not right! Why was the Sensex responding like this? Foreign investments should have been pouring in! All the *purana* calculations and certainties seemed to be on a downward spiral. The optimists snorted: "Nonsense! There has been a minor market correction. Everything's on track. Just watch what happens on June 4."

Yes, Sir! Our eyes are peeled.

There is a powerful Hindi word — "*Sachai*" — which is too deep to be translated as mere "truth". *Sachai* is

The debate generated by Jairam Ramesh's foolish comment, rightly dubbed 'racist', is now a full-blown racism vs communalism issue. As if one is better than the other.

*sachai!* People get it. Feel it. Sense it. Jaspreet Singh, the 10-year-old kid from Tilak Nagar in Delhi, who became an overnight star after his video making rolls from a food cart went viral, is a great example of *sachai* at play. Here was a hardworking little boy who had not let tragedy keep him down after his father died and his mother disappeared, leaving him and a young sister to fend for themselves. Jaspreet took charge of the situation and started selling rolls from his cousin Gurmukh's food cart. A stray video shot by a food blogger caught the imagination of people, garnering over 10 million views. None of this was planned or manipulated. Jaspreet's obvious *sachai* touched enough hearts for people like Anand Mahindra and Sonu Sood to come forward and offer to sponsor Jaspreet's and his sister's interrupted education. Thanks to the attention on the social media, Gurmukh proudly says: "We have gone from earning ₹400 a day to around ₹8,000." *Sachai* hit a home run!

Citizens who have suffered in silence over the past ten years are rediscovering their own *sachai* and dreaming of an India where they won't be crushed because they aren't toeing the line of their masters. That word "masters" should jar in a democracy where we are all supposed to be equal in the eyes of the law. But are we equal? How different is the political *maidan* from the Shahi Haveli of *Heeramandi*, where one single tyrannical person controls the destiny of so many. Where nobody dares to challenge the

"Huzoor" or speak up. Where treachery, murder, betrayal, malice and backstabbing are everyday events. And oppression is the name of the game.

The debate generated by Jairam Ramesh's foolish comment, rightly dubbed "racist", has become a full-blown racism vs communalism issue. As if one is better than the other. The mess in Maharashtra is on another level. Who would have thought that major political players would end up fighting over Sharad Pawar? Or that it would be reduced to a "goonda vs goonda" battle about *Dadagiri!*

Suddenly, there is a glimmer of hope as citizens had the beginning of a new, more peaceful era. Perhaps all of us are delusional and speaking too soon. But the upbeat mood of the public is hard to miss, and people are breathing more easily these days, and talking more freely than they have in a decade. Does this spell the end of the fear psychosis? Will we stop looking over our shoulders to see who's following us? Tapping our phones? Monitoring every critical social media post? Too early to paint such a rosy picture, especially since an attractive alternative does not exist. Besides, ten years is a long time, and the first-generation voters now entering their twenties have grown up taking restrictions for granted during their formative years. To them, it is "normal" to hear abusive discourses and blatant misrepresentation of 200 million co-citizens who are Muslims. It's normal to grow up with hate and divisiveness as dominant themes. It's going to take time to break through narratives that have been drilled into their impressionable minds. And what of the altered textbooks with made-up history? Who will change those and when? Somehow, I am not at all worried. If anything, I'm pretty confident. You know why? Because, at the end of the day, *sachai* always wins.

Instagram handle @ShobhaaDe; Twitter handle @DeShobhaa

LETTERS GET FAMILY VAXXED

The latest report from *Lancet* about 150 million children having been saved globally due to vaccinations over the last 50 years is promising and underlines the importance of immunisation, which has been protecting humans for long against some of the most deadly diseases in the world, not excluding Covid-19. Immunisation saves lives, reduces infant mortality, and prevents outbreaks of infectious diseases, ensuring healthier communities and securing a better future for children. If we want to continue to see lives saved, we need to keep investing in vaccination. It is a civic duty to ensure immunisation of yourself and your family.

R. Sivakumar  
Chennai

CAST YOUR VOTE

A FIRE broke out in a house. But Hardy did not try to douse it. Rather, he kept watching it spread, sitting on a chair outside the house. Laurel, on the other hand, went to a hand pump, pumped water in a bucket and threw the water into the fire. Laurel understood that he must act quickly. But what could he do when he did not find sufficient water nearby? Since Laurel saw a tin full of petrol, he promptly poured it into the fire! When democracy fails to deliver, some people boycott votes, just like Hardy who kept looking at the fire. But some others do more damage to the edifice of democracy by taking recourse to hate and violence in their conversations and actions, as well as their thoughts.

Sujit De  
Kolkata

CASE OVERLOAD

TWO FUNDAMENTAL principles of jurisprudence — "bail not jail" and "innocent until proven guilty" — are diluted in cases brought under laws like the PMLA. In essence, such law shifts the burden of proof on the accused. NCRB data showed a 450 per cent rise in the PMLA cases in the first three years of the current government's second term, compared to the same period in its first term. The SC has rightly curbed the ED's powers of arrest under Section 19 of PMLA.

Sankar Paul  
Chakdaha, West Bengal

Farrukh Dhondy  
Cabbages & Kings



"This tree bears no fruit  
But we shelter in its shade  
Your heartbreak is acute  
Now you know that love was made  
To bring you joy and trials  
To give your life fresh hope —  
The donkey thinks all miles  
Are the compass of his rope..."

— From *Holyboi*, by Bachchoo

Can Trump stand for President even if jailed? Sunak's troubles growing

The attentive of the world look forward to the US, UK, and soon the results of the Indian elections on June 4... We hold our breaths! The elections in... err... democratic Russia, before all the rest, had the world on tenterhooks. Who could have predicted this startling result? So close!!! All those popular plausible challengers — the ones who leapt out of tenth floor windows as part of their campaign; the ones who blew up the planes they were flying in; the ones who poisoned themselves in Siberian gulags in the belief that it would lead them to the throne of the czars in the Kremlin; the ones who swallowed nuclear poisons and Novichok as part of their illusory belief that it would bring the Russian voters to applaud them....

The "winner" of the Russian "election", apart from committing the mass murder of Ukrainians and ignoring the severe casualties the conscripts in his own forces have suffered, has now taken

charge of the "Wagner" mercenary army whose leader, Yevgeny Prigozhin, he had murdered, and has deployed them in Niger, Burkina Faso and Mali to wipe out the Muslim opponents of these dictatorships. He labels these Muslim opposition elements "jihadists" and "terrorists". In return, Vladimir Putin has profitable access to the gold and uranium which are plentiful in sub-Saharan Western Africa.

And now, the coming US elections with Donald Trump in court through the weeks becomes international news. And yet, at this stage of the contest, it's stopped being a clash of policies, intentions and promises. One would expect an American election to feature debates about immigration, abortion, inflation, health schemes, unemployment, LGBT+ rights, foreign policy, arms for Israel or the Ukraine, etc. But no! All I read about concerning the coming American election is the indictment of the self-trumping Donald Trump on 34 charges of falsifying his financial tax records after paying off hush money to two women with whom he had sex.

In strictly legal terms, the 34 counts are "alleged" crimes, but the persistence of the detailed news coverage on all media compels me to imagine myself as a member of the jury, and when asked if Wigwam is guilty as charged, though the trial is yet to be concluded, I'd reply: "Is the Pope a Catholic?"

And yet, and yet, the opinion polls in the United

States seem to say that Wiggy's firm support ignores his criminality, his magnificent stupidity in advocating fatal injections of bleach for Covid-19, his misogyny, racism, corruption, corrupt relationship with Russia, his assault on democracy on January 6 and twenty other factors which should put him behind bars or sent to Rwanda. Instead, his "base" (both senses?) wants to put him in the White House, Making America Gullible Again!

The polls say the election in the US is too close to call. It's an intriguing scenario. Suppose Wiggy is found guilty and sent to jail. Can he still stand for President? And if he does and wins, then will a federal jail serve as his office instead of the White House? We anxiously watch that space.

And so, gentle reader, to the UK elections, which by law have to be called by January 2025. Poor Hedgehog Soongone has suffered tsunamiic defeats in recent weeks. In the local elections in May, his party lost half its seats on local councils — the municipality panchayats in charge of local affairs.

They were defeated in crucial House of Commons byelections on the same day and lost the very prestigious mayoralty of the West Midlands. The Tories retained only one mayoral position — that of Lord Ben Houchen in Teeside. He campaigned without mentioning the Tory Party, maintaining a distance from the governing party at Westminster. When he retained his may-

orality, campaigning on local improvements he boasted he had achieved, Hedgehog turned up to cash in on the only win the Tory Party could boast about. In the TV footage, Houchen's body-language diagnoses Hedgehog's political leprosy.

Even more suffering for Hedgehog-baba in recent weeks. Every leadership replacement candidate has backtracked now as they don't want to lead the Tories into a defeat and have to follow Hedgehog into the interstellar spaces. And now two prominent Tory MPs have crossed the floor and joined the Labour Party.

One of them, Tom Poulter, a doctor, said he was disillusioned with the way the Tories had run down the National Health Service. Fair enough. The other defector, Natalie Elphicke, has a firm reputation as a dedicated right-wing Tory.

She crossed the floor and was welcomed by Labour's leader Sir Keir Starmer. The welcome, though a kick in the crotch for Hedgehog, was not universally supported in the Labour Party, one senior member saying that Ms Elphicke was to the right of Genghis Khan and what was she doing joining their party?

Not that Labour hasn't suffered in a very particular way. The shadow cabinet's stance on Gaza, abstaining in a vote demanding a ceasefire, has alienated Muslim MPs and councillors and the Muslim voting population of cities such as Oldham. But, of course, those voters won't go over to the Tories. *Allah hoo Akbar!*

SHORT TAKES

**MICROSOFT TOLD TO SUBMIT RISK DATA ON BING AI**

Brussels, May 17: The EU on Friday told Microsoft to hand over internal documents or face fines as it examines generative AI risks on the company's search engine Bing ahead of elections.

The EU has identified generative artificial intelligence as one of the main threats to elections being held across the 27-country bloc June 6-9.

Brussels in March pressed Bing, alongside several big digital platforms including Google Search, TikTok and YouTube, about action taken to mitigate AI risks.

**LANKA STEPS UP SECURITY FOR WAR MEMORIAL**

Colombo, May 17: Sri Lanka has stepped up security for a contentious weekend ceremony marking 15 years since the end of the nation's long civil war and thousands of civilians were killed in the conflict's final offensive.

Public events celebrating the Tamil Tigers separatist group — which fought a no-holds-barred battle to establish an ethnic minority homeland — are illegal and authorities have prevented the staging of past memorials. Sri Lanka's Tamils say the events are held to remember all victims of the decades-long war.

**SUNAK, WIFE FORTUNES RISE IN 2024 RICH LIST**

London, May 17: British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak and wife Akshata Murty, who made their debut in the annual Sunday Times Rich List two years ago, have moved up the ranks in the 2024 edition released on Friday thanks to the Murty's lucrative Infosys shareholding.

The couple, both 44, have risen from 275th last year to 245th with an estimated wealth of GBP 651 million, making them the wealthiest people to call 10 Downing Street home.

**N. KOREA TEST FIRED MISSILES, ALLEGES S. KOREA**

Seoul, May 17: North Korea fired suspected short-range ballistic missiles off its east coast on Friday, South Korea's military said, a day after South Korea and the US flew powerful fighter jets in a joint drill that the North views as a major security threat.

South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said the weapons launched from the North's east coast Wonsan region traveled about 300 kilometers (185 miles) before landing in the waters between the Korean Peninsula and Japan. Japan's Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshimasa Hayashi said a North Korean missile landed outside Japan's exclusive economic zone.

**4 DIE IN HOUSTON STORM, 8L HOMES WITHOUT POWER**

Houston, May 17: A severe storm in Houston, the fourth-largest city in the US, has killed at least four people and left over 800,000 homes and businesses without power.

The Houston school district closed all public schools on Friday and said they would reopen on Monday. Flights were grounded at the city's two major airports because of the weather. Sustained winds topping 60 mph were recorded at Bush Intercontinental Airport. At least four people were killed due to the storm, said Mayor John Whitmire.

**ABU DHABI EASES ALCOHOL LAWS, SEES 1ST BREWERY**

Abu Dhabi, May 17: In 2018, Chad McGehee opened Side Hustle Brews and Spirits, an Abu Dhabi-branded brewery and distillery with funky camels on its cans and playful names familiar to anyone living in the UAE. The only problem was it was illegal to produce alcohol in the country.

That's all changed as Abu Dhabi has overhauled its laws to allow for the micro and craft breweries that have taken the rest of the world by storm, part of a wider reconsideration of alcohol policies in the Islamic nation increasingly drawing tourists.

**Gaza fight intensifies with Israel air strikes**

Helicopters carry out strikes around Jabalia refugee camp

Rafah, Palestinian Territories, May 17: Fighting raged on Friday in Gaza after Israel vowed to intensify its ground offensive in Rafah despite international concerns for the hundreds of thousands of displaced Palestinians in the southern city.

Witnesses reported fierce battles overnight in and around the Jabalia refugee camp in the north of the war-ravaged Gaza Strip.

Israeli helicopters carried out heavy strikes around Jabalia while army artillery hit homes near Kamal Adwan hospital in the camp, they said.

The bodies of six people were retrieved and several wounded people were evacuated after an air strike targeted a house in Jabalia, Gaza's civil defence agency said.

Rescue teams were trying to recover people from under the rubble of the Shaaban family home on Al-Faluja Street in the camp, it added.

Witnesses said Israeli warships launched strikes on Rafah, on the border with Egypt, where more than 1.4 million Palestinian civilians have been sheltering.

Hamas' armed wing, the Ezzedine Al-Qassam Brigades, said in a statement that it "targeted enemy forces stationed inside the Rafah border crossing... with mortar shells".

The war broke out after the October 7 attack on southern Israel which resulted in the deaths of more than 1,170 people, mostly civilians, according to an AFP tally of Israeli official figures.

Out of 252 people taken hostage that day, 128 are still being held inside Gaza, including 38 who the army says are dead.

Israel vowed in response to crush Hamas and launched a military offensive on Gaza, where at least 35,303 people have been killed since the war erupted.



This handout picture courtesy of the US Central Command shows humanitarian aid is lifted by a crane operated by Soldiers assigned to the 7th Transportation Brigade (Expeditionary) from a Navy causeway at the Port of Ashdod, Israel.

**ATTACK CONTINUES**

**GENOCIDE CASE 'TOTALLY DIVORCED' FROM FACTS**

Israel lashed out at South Africa's case before the UN's top court, describing it as "totally divorced" from reality, as Pretoria urges judges to order a ceasefire in Gaza.

**STRIKES ON LEBANON KILL THREE**

Israeli air strikes on Friday hit an area of southern Lebanon far from the border, Lebanese official media said, with a source close to Hezbollah reporting three dead including two Syrian nationals.

**FIRST AID ENTERS GAZA THROUGH U.S.-BUILT PIER**

Rafah, Palestinian Territories, May 17: The first trucks began supplying aid to the war-ravaged Gaza Strip via a temporary pier on Friday, the United States military said, as fighting raged in the Palestinian territory.

US Central Command said "trucks carrying humanitarian assistance began moving ashore" via the long-awaited pier, a day after it was anchored to a Gaza beach.

"This is an ongoing, multinational effort to deliver additional aid to Palestinian civilians in Gaza via a maritime corridor that is entirely humanitarian in nature," it said.

The US military issued pictures showing aid being lifted onto a barge in the nearby Israeli port of Ashdod, adding on social media platform X that no American troops went ashore.



Palestinian children carry an empty US ammunition container in Khan Yunis in the southern Gaza Strip, amid ongoing conflict between Israel and militant group Hamas.

**HOUSHI REBELS CLAIM SHOOTING DOWN ANOTHER US MQ-9 REAPER DRONE**

Yemen's Houthi rebels claimed to have shot down a US drone, hours after footage circulated online of what appeared to be the wreckage of an MQ-9 Reaper drone. The U.S. military did not immediately acknowledge the incident.

**CIVILIANS TORCH AID TRUCK IN WEST BANK**

Israel's military said that 'dozens of Israeli civilians' set fire the previous evening to an aid truck in the occupied West Bank headed for war-torn Gaza. Media reported that Israeli settlers were behind the attack, which the army said injured the driver.

**Now, Nepal bans Indian spice brands over safety**

**PM PRACHANDA TO SEEK FOURTH VOTE OF CONFIDENCE ON MONDAY**

Kathmandu, May 17: Nepal has become the latest jurisdiction to ban the import and sale of two popular Indian spice brands after reports that some of their products contained a cancer-causing pesticide, officials said Friday.

Hong Kong and Singapore last month banned products from Everest and MDH — two brands popular in India and exported worldwide — after tests detected the presence of ethylene oxide, according to media reports.

Besides its use as a pesticide, ethylene oxide is used to sterilise medical equipment and as a sterilising agent in spices to prevent illnesses caused by salmonella and E. Coli bacteria.

Regular exposure to the colourless and odourless compound increases the

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Kathmandu, May 17: Nepal Prime Minister Pushpakamal Dahal 'Prachanda' will seek a vote of confidence in Parliament on May 20, the fourth within 18 months of taking office, days after a coalition partner withdrew its support for his government. Prachanda, a former guerrilla leader, belongs to the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist

Centre), the third largest party in the House of Representatives (HoR).

The decision to seek a vote of confidence came after the Upendra Yadav-led Janata Samajbadi Party on May 13 withdrew its support for the government following a split in the party. Yadav resigned as deputy prime minister and his party pulled out of the government.

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**Man found with iron bar on synagogue roof**  
**French cops kill Algerian for attack on Synagogue**

Rouen, France, May 17: French police shot dead a knife-wielding Algerian man who set fire to a synagogue and threatened police in the city of Rouen on Friday in the latest antisemitic attack, officials said.

"An armed man somehow climbed up the synagogue and threw an object, a sort of Molotov cocktail, into the main praying room," said mayor Nicolas Mayer-Rossignol, adding that nobody else was harmed in the shocked city in the northwestern Normandy region.

Police found the man on the synagogue roof with an iron bar and kitchen knife, shooting him when he defied orders to stop.

France, like many countries across Europe, has seen a huge spike in anti-Jewish acts since Hamas' Oct. 7 attack on Israel and Israel's military response in Gaza.

Interior minister Gerald Darmanin said the attacker's bid for a residency permit had been recently rejected. He was otherwise not on the radar of police or intelligence services.

"This antisemitic act affects us all deeply," Darmanin said after visiting the synagogue, adding that France was doing all it could to protect its Jewish community.

The synagogue's rabbi Chmouel Lubecki said his wife was there at the time of the attack.



French soldiers of the 8th Marine Infantry Regiment (8e RIMA) secure the Magenta airport in Noumea, Frances Pacific territory of New Caledonia, on Friday.

**Malaysia: Man with IS link kills two cops**

**Kuala Lumpur, May 17: A machete-wielding attacker suspected of ties to an Al-Qaeda linked group stormed a police station in Malaysia in a dawn raid Friday and killed two officers, police said.**

The attacker, who police said had links to Jemaah Islamiyah (JI), slashed one officer before grabbing a gun and shooting another, police inspector-general Razarudin Husain said. A third policeman was also wounded, before he shot dead the attacker.

"Two of our men were killed in the attack," Razarudin told reporters

at the site of the attack in Johor state.

"Another policeman was wounded in the shootout and is in stable condition in the hospital," he said in a broadcast on national news agency Bernama.

Police raided the suspect's home and arrested five people, including his 62-year-old father, who the police chief said was a member of the JI.

Ji has been blamed for a series of deadly bomb attacks in the region including the 2002 bombings in the Indonesian resort island of Bali that killed 202 people, including 88 Australians.

**TRUMP LAWYERS VIE TO DISCREDIT KEY WITNESS COHEN AT TRIAL**

New York, May 17: Donald Trump's lawyers accused the prosecution's star witness in his hush money trial of lying to jurors, portraying Trump fixer-turned-foe Michael Cohen on Thursday as a serial fabulist who is bent on seeing the presumptive Republican presidential nominee behind bars.

As Trump looked on, defence attorney Todd Blanche pressed Cohen for hours with questions that focused as much on his misdeeds as on the case's specific allegations and tried to sow doubt in jurors' minds about Cohen's crucial testimony implicating the former president.

Blanche's voice rose as he interrogated Cohen with phone records and text messages over Cohen's claim that he spoke by phone to Trump about the hush money payment to porn actor Stormy Daniels that is at the heart of the case, days before wiring her lawyer \$130,000.

Over the course of the trial's fourth week of testimony, Cohen described meetings and conversations he said he had with Trump.



Donald Trump



A woman walks past advertising billboards which show Russian soldiers, participants of military operation in Ukraine with words in Russian 'Pride of Russia!', in St. Petersburg, Russia.

**Putin: Russia has no plans to occupy Kharkiv**

**Kyiv, Ukraine, May 17: Russian forces pressed ahead Friday with an offensive into northeast Ukraine but President Vladimir Putin said there were no current plans to occupy the key city of Kharkiv.**

On a trip to China, Putin said the latest assault was direct retaliation for Ukraine's shelling of Russia's border regions and his country was trying to create a "security zone".

"This is their fault because they have shelled and continue to shell residential neighbourhoods in border areas," Putin told reporters.

He added there was no intention, at this stage, to take Kharkiv, Ukraine's second city, about 30 kilometres (18 miles) from the border. More than one million people still live there.

Russia launched the surprise offensive into Ukraine's northeast on May 10, sending thousands of troops across the border and unleashing artillery fire on several settlements. Both countries said Russian troops were still advancing, but Ukraine warned heavy fighting lay ahead.

**UKRAINE DRONES TARGET CRIMEA**

Moscow: Ukraine launched a wave of drones at Russia and the annexed Crimea overnight, killing two people including a child and setting an oil refinery ablaze, officials said Friday. The attack was Ukraine's largest aerial offensive in weeks and comes as Russian forces advance along the front-line, making their biggest territorial gains.

**PUTIN PUSHES FOR TRADE WITH CHINA**

Beijing: Russian leader Vladimir Putin was in the northeastern city of Harbin on Friday, the final day of a visit aiming to promote crucial trade with China and win greater support for his war effort in Ukraine. Putin arrived Thursday on his first trip abroad since his March re-election, meeting President Xi Jinping for talks in which the leaders framed their nations' ties as a stabilising force in a chaotic world.

**CHINA, RUSSIA SUPPORTING EACH OTHER'S 'EXPANSIONISM': TAIWAN**

Taipei, Taiwan, May 17: Russia and China are helping each other expand their territorial reach, and democracies must push back against authoritarian states that threaten their rights and sovereignty, Taiwan's outgoing foreign minister, Joseph Wu, said.

His comments came as Russian President Vladimir Putin and Chinese leader Xi Jinping reaffirmed their no-limits partnership as both countries face rising tensions with the West.

Wu called on democracies to align in countering Russia and China's military assertiveness in Europe, the South China Sea and beyond.

China threatens to invade Taiwan, a self-ruled democracy that it claims as its own territory.

**MARIAN | FAITH Rules first issued in 1978 found not viable during Internet age**

**Vatican revises norms to evaluate 'visions'**

Vatican City, May 17: The Vatican on Friday reformed its process for evaluating alleged visions of the Virgin Mary, weeping statues and other seemingly supernatural phenomena, putting the brakes on making definitive declarations unless the event is obviously fabricated.

The Vatican's doctrine office overhauled norms first issued in 1978, arguing that they were no longer useful or viable in the internet age. Nowadays, word about apparitions or weeping Madonnas travels quickly and can actually harm the faithful if hoaxers are trying to make money off people's beliefs or manipulate them, the Vatican said.



A file photo of faithful lighting candles while visiting the Virgin of Guadalupe's Sanctuary to celebrate her day in Guatemala City.

The new norms make clear that such an abuse of people's faith can be punishable canonically, saying, the use of purported supernatural experiences or recognised mystical elements as a means of or a pretext for exerting control over people or carrying out abuses is to be considered

of particular moral gravity.

The new norms reframe the Catholic Church's evaluation process by essentially taking off the table whether church authorities will declare a particular vision, stigmata or other seemingly divinely inspired event supernatural.

Instead, the new criteria envisages six main outcomes, with the most favorable being that the church issues a noncommittal doctrinal green light, a so-called nihil obstat.

Such a declaration means there is nothing about the event that is contrary to the faith, and therefore Catholics can express devotion to it.

## quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	72,404.17	-1.45
Nifty 50	21,957.50	-1.55
S&P 500*	5,201.84	0.27
Dollar (₹)	83.51	0.01
Pound Sterling (₹)	104.27	0.05
Euro (₹)	89.61	0.20
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	71,390*263	0.37
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	83.91	0.39
IN 10-Yr bond yield	7.133	-0.005
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	4.481	-0.002

\* As of 8:30 PM IST

## BEML gets order from NCL for supply of trucks

BEML has secured an order worth ₹250 crore from Northern Coal Fields Limited (NCL) for the supply of 28 units of BH100 rear dump trucks, the company said on Friday. The BH100 rear dump truck is engineered to transport payloads of up to 100 tonne. "Our BH100 rear dump truck has the capability to assist NCL in their coal extraction efforts in a significant way," Shantanu Roy, CMD, BEML said.



## GSK Pharma Q4 net profit rises 46% to ₹194 cr

GlaxoSmithKline Pharmaceuticals (GSK Pharma) on Friday reported a 46 per cent increase in consolidated net profit at ₹194.4 crore in the fourth quarter ended March 31, on the back of higher sales. The company had posted a net profit of ₹133.4 crore in the same quarter of previous fiscal, it said. Consolidated revenue in the quarter under review stood at ₹929.8 cr as against ₹787.4 cr in year-ago period, it added.

## Kia ties up with Orix auto to lease vehicles

Kia India on Friday said it has tied up with Orix auto infrastructure services to introduce a new ownership experience programme. The company has inked a memorandum of understanding with Orix "Kia Lease". "The leasing model is a global megatrend and gaining in India too. This model resonates particularly well with new-age consumers seeking flexible mobility solutions," Kia India CSO Myung-sik Sohn said.

## Vikram Solar bags new orders from NTPC arm

Vikram Solar on Friday said it has bagged a 397.7 MW solar module supply order for NTPC's Khavda project in Gujarat. Vikram Solar has secured a 397.7 MW solar module supply order from NTPC Renewable Energy Ltd, a company said, adding that the modules will power a significant portion of the 1,255 MW Khavda Solar Project. The project aligns perfectly with the Domestic Content Requirement, it said.

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## UN revises India's growth projection to 7% for this year

MADHUSUDAN SAHOO  
NEW DELHI, MAY 17

The United Nations has revised India's growth projections for 2024 and projected the economy to grow close to 7 per cent this year. This is an increase from the earlier projection of 6.2 per cent made in January this year.

The agency's World Economic Situation and Prospects (WESP) report as of mid-2024, released on Thursday late evening, stated that India's economy is forecast to expand by 6.9 per cent in 2024 and 6.6 per cent in 2025.

In line with the report, many international rating agencies have projected the upward growth for the current fiscal year in India.

For instance, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) also projected a growth of 7 per cent in the current fiscal, while S&P Global Ratings and Morgan Stanley projected a growth rate of 6.8 per cent. Asian Development Bank (ADB) and Fitch Ratings each also estimated growth at 7 per cent.

The WESP report, however, said that although subdued external demand will continue to weigh on merchandise export growth, pharmaceuticals and chemicals exports are expected to expand strongly.

Meanwhile, labour market indicators have improved too amid a robust growth and higher labour force participation.

The government is also



● **CONSUMER PRICE inflation in India is projected to decrease from 5.6 per cent in 2023 to 4.5 per cent in 2024, staying within the central bank's medium-term target range of 2-6 per cent.**

committed to gradually reduce fiscal deficit, and increase capital investment.

The UN projection comes after Moody's ratings pegged the growth of the Indian economy at 6.6 per cent in the current fiscal year, which is lower than the RBI and other agencies', but at par with Deloitte's, which also projected a growth of 6.6 per cent.

The report also noted that consumer price inflation in India is projected to decrease from 5.6 per cent in 2023 to 4.5 per cent in 2024, staying within the central bank's medium-term target range of 2-6 per cent.

This signifies India's fiscal position is less constrained compared to other countries, with robust support from both monetary and the fiscal policies to stimulate growth.

## DGFT TO EVALUATE GLOBAL NORMS IN TRADE FINANCE FOR INDIA'S NEEDS

New Delhi, May 17: The directorate general of foreign trade (DGFT) is evaluating best global practices in trade finance and identifying regulatory reforms to align India's future needs to propose comprehensive solutions, Joint DGFT Tirumala Venkatesh said on Friday.

Over 2.5 lakh bank realisation certificates (BRCs) have been self-generated under the revamped eBRC system, which was soft launched last Nov., enhancing the ease of doing business, he said.

"We are conducting a trade finance study at DGFT. The objective is to identify global best practices and benchmark, identify latest trends and technologies and future trends, identify institutional policy and regulatory reforms related to aligning the future needs of the country in the area of trade finance and propose comprehensive solutions with a road map for implementation," Venkatesh said.

He said a framework to capture flow of data for export credit needs to be created to provide policy makers with adequate data.

Addressing an Assocham Summit on trade finance, Sanjeet Singh, senior adviser, Niti Aayog, said, "The mandate for development is not only about rapid development, it is about inclusive development, and we are reaching out to every corner of the country." —PTI

## India has immense growth opportunities in all segments, says FM Industry to get more pie in July Budget: Nirmala

FC CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, MAY 17

Exuding confidence that Prime Minister Narendra Modi is coming back to power with a good majority in the Lok Sabha for third time, Union finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Friday said that the new government will look forward to a more pointed engagement with the industry to see what best can be done in the July budget, which will be the full year's budget.

"If the BJP wins a majority in the ongoing Lok Sabha elections, Modi will become the Prime Minister for the third term in a row. Soon after the government is formed, we look forward to a more pointed engagement with the CII to see what best can be done in the July



● **INDIAN CONSUMER market, expected to double by 2031, on account of a rise in consumption spending would ensure that the country will continue to remain the fastest-growing economy in the future.**

budget, which will be the full year's budget," she said while addressing industry captains at the CII annual business meeting here.

Emphasising that India's story is a compelling growth story, Sitharaman also said the country presents immense growth opportunities, which extend to all segments of the economy. "The country has the potential to contribute significantly to global growth, which has

been recognised by global agencies, such as the IMF and S&P," the finance minister said.

She further said that the large Indian consumer market, expected to double by 2031, on account of a rise in consumption spending would ensure that the country will continue to remain the fastest-growing economy in the future. Elaborating further on the subject, she said that according to the RBI and Economic Survey,

India has graduated from the twin balance sheet problem of the past to the twin balance sheet advantage, which has led to vibrancy in the market, thereby, propelling investment expansion by corporates on one hand and willingness and capacity of banks to lend on the other.

"Secondly, the demographic dividend would be with the country for the next 30 years. When complemented with skill development through public-private partnerships, inclusive of areas like artificial intelligence, big data etc, this is a sure-shot measure to bring prosperity and raise consumer demand. Thirdly, India's transition towards green energy and a sustainable future will generate new markets and demand," she noted.

## India should sign more FTAs: Niti Aayog chief

New Delhi, May 17: India needs to sign many more free trade agreements (FTAs) with other countries and reduce tariffs to compete with the rest of the world, Niti Aayog chief executive officer BVR Subrahmanyam said on Friday.

Addressing the captains of the Indian industry at a CII annual business summit, Subrahmanyam said the government should not protect any sector from competition. "I think we should be very, very confident about

our capabilities and about India actually being able to be competitive with the rest of the world," he said.

India has just one insurance company among the world's top 50, while there are only two banks in the list of global top 100, Subrahmanyam said.

"I think we should go for very low tariffs. India should sign many more FTAs," he said.

Asserting that Indian companies can be on a par with their counterparts of the rest of the world, Subrahmanyam said, "We

● **PRIVATE INVESTMENT in infrastructure is not there and need to come up with new models and arrangements in which private capital is enthused into investing in infrastructure.**

should not try to protect anybody. Sectors that have protected themselves end up getting more ambassador cars."

He noted that the Indian industry and services will grow and will live up to

the potential only if we trade more.

He also cautioned against protectionism and highlighted the need for India to get into global value chains to boost exports and secure supply chains.

The Niti Aayog CEO also called for greater private capital into the sector. "I think private investment in infrastructure is not there and need to come up with new models and arrangements in which private capital is enthused into investing in infrastructure," he said. —PTI

## BSNL, VI pick up on govt aid: Trai head

FC CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, MAY 17

State-owned Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) and private telecom operator Vodafone Idea (Vi) have started showing "positive signs" on the back of support from the government and the industry, said a top official of the telecom regulatory authority of India (Trai) in an industry event here on Friday.

● **REVIVAL COURSE of VI and BSNL augur well for India, given that continued presence of four players in Indian telecom market will ensure competition and benefit consumers.**

Besides, the official further said that the telecom watchdog would also proceed with open house discussions on regulatory mechanisms for over-the-

top (OTT) communication services, and plans to also initiate consultation to tighten norms for pesky calls and messages soon.

Speaking at a symposium in the national capital, Trai chief Anil Kumar Lahoti said that revival course of VI and BSNL augur well for India, given that continued presence of four players in Indian telecom market will ensure competition and, benefit consumers and health of

the industry.

On Vi, which has completed equity fundraise with FPO, he noted that the company's recent statement that it was on path to recovery following capital raise is a good sign.

On the fate of its consultation paper on OTT communication in the wake of the advent of Telecom Act, he said Trai will proceed with the process of holding open house discussions in 3 months or so.



## REDDIT PACT WITH OPENAI FOR CHATGPT CONTENT

San Francisco, May 17: Reddit Inc. forged a partnership with OpenAI that will bring its content to the chatbot ChatGPT and other products, while also helping the social media company add new artificial intelligence (AI) features to its forums.

The agreement "will enable OpenAI's AI tools to better understand and showcase Reddit content, especially on recent topics," the companies said in a joint statement. The deal allows OpenAI to display Reddit's content and train AI systems on its partner's data.

Reddit will also offer its users new AI-based tools built on models created by OpenAI, which will place ads on its partner's site. Reddit content has long been a popular source of training data for making AI models.

Last week, the company released new policies governing the use of its data, part of an effort to increase revenue through licensing agreements with AI developers and other companies. The companies noted that their partnership was led by OpenAI chief operating officer Brad Lightcap and was approved by its independent directors. —Bloomberg

## Markets rise on FPI buying

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD  
MUMBAI, MAY 17

Sensex and Nifty-50 rose further as foreign investors turned net buyers and market sentiments turned positive as volatility index India VIX eased below 20 level on Friday.

BSE's market capitalisation for the first time crossed ₹410 lakh crore mark and stood at over ₹410.24 lakh crore or \$4.94 trillion at market close.

Buying in index heavy weights Reliance, HDFC Bank among others led to Sensex gaining 253 points or 0.34 per cent to a close at 73,917. Nifty-50 closed at 22,466 up 0.28 per cent



gaining 62.25 points.

"India is going through the latter phase of elections, and till the results are declared, there will be some edginess even though the market expects continued political stability," said a report by Motilal Oswal Private Wealth.

Foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) turned net buy-

ers by ₹1,616.7 crore. Domestic institutions too were net buyers by ₹1,556.25 crore on Friday.

"A confluence of factors are leading to higher volatility in both fixed income and equity markets over the last month. The US macroeconomic data suggests that interest rates are likely to remain higher for longer with uncertainty over the timing of the first rate cut," the report said.

Market will be open on Saturday, May 18 for special live trading in two short sessions to evaluate their disaster preparedness in the event of major disruptions.

## Microsoft to offer AMD's AI chips to cloud users

San Francisco, May 17: Microsoft said it plans to offer its cloud computing customers a platform of AMD artificial intelligence (AI) chips that will compete with components made by Nvidia, with details to be given at its Build developer conference next week.

It will also launch a preview of new Cobalt 100 custom processors at the conference. Microsoft's clusters of Advanced Micro Devices' M3000 AI chips will be sold through its Azure cloud computing service. They will give its customers an alternative to Nvidia's H100 family of powerful graphics pro-

cessing units (GPUs) which dominate the data centre chip market for AI but can be hard to obtain due to high demand.

To build AI models or run applications, companies typically must string together or cluster multiple GPUs because the data and computation will not fit on a single processor. AMD, which expects \$4 billion in AI chip revenue this year, has said the chips are powerful enough to train and run large AI models.

As well as Nvidia's top-shelf artificial intelligence chips, Microsoft's cloud computing unit sells access to its own in-house AI chips Maia. —Reuters

## BIG TREND AI skills are priority for firms to hiring, says report

## Indians top global AI user survey

New Delhi, May 17: AI is increasingly influencing the way people work as well as hire and India has one of the highest AI adoption rates among knowledge workers, says a report by Microsoft and LinkedIn.

According to the India findings of the 2024 Annual Work Trend Index from Microsoft and LinkedIn, 92 per cent of knowledge workers in India use AI at work, as compared to the global figure of 75 per cent.

However, a large majority, 91 per cent of leaders in India, also believe their companies need to adopt AI to stay competitive and 54 per cent worry their organisation lacks a plan



● **AI OPTIMISM presents a tremendous opportunity for organisations to invest in the right tools and training, to unlock efficiencies for employees and ultimately drive long-term business impact.**

and vision for implementation.

The findings are based on a survey of 31,000 people in 31 countries, labour and hiring trends on LinkedIn, trillions of Microsoft 365 productivity signals and research with Fortune 500 customers.

As per the report, AI skills are now a top priority

when it comes to hiring, with 75 per cent stating they wouldn't hire someone lacking in AI skills, outpacing the global average of 66 per cent.

"AI skills outweigh experience, with 80 per cent of leaders in India preferring to hire a less experienced candidate with AI skills, over a more experi-

enced candidate without them," the report said.

Moreover, organisations that empower employees with AI tools and training will attract the best talent, and professionals who skill up in AI will have edge.

"This AI optimism presents a tremendous opportunity for organisations to invest in the right tools and training, to unlock efficiencies for employees and ultimately drive long-term business impact," said Irina Ghose, managing director, Microsoft India and South Asia.

As of late last year, there has been a multi-fold increase globally in LinkedIn members adding AI skills like Copilot and ChatGPT to their profiles. —PTI

# BLITZCRICK



- Chennai Super Kings
- Delhi Capitals
- Gujarat Titans
- Kolkata Knight Riders
- Lucknow Super Giants
- Mumbai Indians
- Punjab Kings
- Rajasthan Royals
- Royal Challengers Bengaluru
- Sunrisers Hyderabad

ORANGE	
Virat Kohli, RCB	661
Ruturaj Gaikwad, CSK	583
Travis Head, SRH	533
PURPLE	
Harshal Patel, PBKS	22
Jaspit Bumrah, MI	20
Varun Chakravarthy, KKR	18

## MUMBAI IN A SPOT

### Rahul, Pooran half-centuries help LSG past 200

Mumbai, May 17: The Mumbai Indians, playing their last league match, were in a tight spot at their home of Wankhede Stadium on Friday.

The Hardik Pandya-led side were 119 for 4 in 14 overs while chasing the Lucknow Super Giants' 214 for 6 when this edition went to bed.

Ishan Kishan was batting on 6 and Nehal Wadhwa on 1 as the team needed 96 runs from 36 balls.

Earlier, Nicholas Pooran's whirlwind 75 covered for skipper K. L. Rahul's sedate 55, providing a much-needed impetus to Lucknow Super Giants' impressive total.

Struggling for momentum on what appeared to be a two-paced wicket at the start, LSG could only manage 69 for 3 at the halfway stage but Pooran's stunning knock made up for another shoddy Powerplay effort by Rahul, who is unable to change his game in the Powerplay.

On their part, Mumbai Indians' bowling woes persisted with skipper Hardik Pandya using as many as eight different bowling options but none, barring seasoned Piyush Chawla (3/29) and novice Naman Dhir (2/13) could impose themselves.

With Trinidad & Tobago PM Dr Keith Rowley in attendance at the Wankhede Stadium, Pooran took it upon himself to entertain his country's premier by smashing the MI bowlers to all parts of the ground.

His lofted hits to clear the covers as well as powerful pulls on the leg side were equally compelling until Pooran found Suryakumar Yadav grabbing the ball out of thin air at long on in the 17th over.

By then, the free-flowing West Indian had already notched up his highest score of the season, hammering eight sixes and five fours for 75 off a mere 29 balls.

Pooran's dismissal followed Rahul's exit after their 44-ball stand for 109 runs for the fourth wicket, which gave LSG the platform to push for a total exceeding 200.

Pooran's onslaught also debunked the slowness of the pitch — if there was



Lucknow Super Giants captain K. L. Rahul plays a shot on way to his half-century against Mumbai Indians at the Wankhede Stadium in Mumbai on Friday. — DEBASISH DEY

any as made evident by LSG's top order — and Rahul's solidity in tough phases ensured that the visitors did not stumble at any stage in their innings.

The LSG skipper did well to not rush into imposing himself on the game despite his side not able to find their feet for a large part of their innings.

Rahul forged two crucial partnerships, including 48 runs for second wicket with Marcus Stoinis, and put on 55 off 41 balls with three fours and as many sixes.

Ayush Badoni also chipped in a 10-ball 22.

LSG were off to a rocky start with Devdutt Padikkal dismissed for a first-ball duck. Nuwan Thushara (3/28) swung the ball back into the left-hander who was pinned in

front of the wickets and burned a review.

But there was no such mistake committed by Stoinis, trapped leg-before at the end of the powerplay by Chawla after the Australian stroked his way to 28 off 22 balls with five fours.

Stoinis also used the DRS to perfection when the on-field umpire obliged a passionate appeal for leg-before by Arjun Tendulkar, with the replays confirming that the ball would have passed over the stumps.

Tendulkar however was clobbered mercilessly by Pooran and after being hit for back-to-back sixes, the young left-arm seamer was forced to leave the field as he suddenly started suffering from cramps. — PTI

SCOREBOARD	
<b>Lucknow Super Giants:</b> K. L. Rahul c N Thushara b Chawla 55, Devdutt Padikkal lbw b N Thushara 0, Marcus Stoinis lbw b Chawla 28, Deepak Hooda c Nehal Wadhwa b Chawla 11, Nicholas Pooran c Suryakumar Yadav b N Thushara 75, Arshad Khan c Nehal Wadhwa b N. Thushara 0, Ayush Badoni not out 22, Krunal Pandya not out 12. Extras (w-11) 11. <b>Total (for 6 wickets in 20 overs) 214.</b>	
<b>Fall of wickets:</b> 1-1, 2-49, 3-69, 4-178, 5-178, 6-178.	
<b>Bowling:</b> Nuwan Thushara 4-0-28-3, Arjun Tendulkar 2-0-22-0, Anshul Kamboj 3-0-48-0, Piyush Chawla 4-0-29-3, Nehal Wadhwa 2-0-13-0, Hardik Pandya 2-0-27-0, Naman Dhir 0.4-0-17-0, Romario Shepherd 2-0-30-0.	
<b>Mumbai Indians:</b> Rohit Sharma c Mohsin Khan b Ravi Bishnoi 68, Dewald Brevis c Pandya b Naveen-ul-Haq 23, Suryakumar Yadav c Ravi Bishnoi b Pandya 0, Ishan Kishan batting 6, Hardik Pandya c Naveen-ul-Haq b Mohsin Khan 16, Nehal Wadhwa batting 1. Extras (w-5) 5. <b>Total (for 4 wickets in 14 overs) 119.</b>	
<b>Fall of wickets:</b> 1-88, 2-89, 3-97, 4-116.	
<b>Bowling:</b> Arshad Khan 2-0-11-0, Matt Henry 1-0-14-0, Krunal Pandya 3-0-15-1, Mohsin Khan 3-0-27-1, Naveen-ul-Haq 2-0-21-1, Ravi Bishnoi 3-0-31-1.	
(scoreboard incomplete)	

### Short takes

#### CSK has sorted out RCB: Coach Bravo

Chennai Super Kings bowling coach Dwayne Bravo has bowling plans in place for Royal Challengers Bengaluru in their winner-takes-it-all final league encounter, and if Virat Kohli and company fail to counter, they are welcome to try "next season".

"You should respect the opposition and RCB rightly so, we respect them. We prepare well as a bowling group, we have very good plans. RCB will have to try to beat us off our plans. And if they do that, well played to them. But if they don't, then... next season for them," the cocky Bravo said at pre-match press conference.

"Death bowling in T20 cricket is very important and most times it defines the result and outcome of the game," he said.

#### India to play Bangla in T20 WC warm-up

India will take on Bangladesh in their T20 World Cup warm-up fixture in the USA on June 1, the International Cricket Council announced on Friday.

The venue and time of India's fixture is yet to be announced.

Seventeen of the 20 teams will play warm-up games slated from May 27 till June 1 across the USA and Trinidad and Tobago, the ICC stated.

South Africa will be playing an intra-squad match on May 29 in Florida.

Defending champions England and last edition's runner-up side Pakistan and semifinalists New Zealand are not playing any warm-up matches.

England are hosting Pakistan in a four-match bilateral series beginning May 22.

## BOXER PARVEEN BARRED, INDIA LOSE PARIS SPOT

New Delhi, May 17: In an unprecedented embarrassment for Indian boxing, the country will fight afresh for qualification in the women's 57kg category after being forced to surrender the quota owing to holder Parveen Hooda's international suspension for three whereabouts failures in 12 months.

Hooda was handed a 22-month suspension by the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA). The 2022 world championship bronze medalist boxer, who fetched the Olympic quota with an Asian Games bronze last year, failed to file her whereabouts in the period from April 2022 to March 2023 as per WADA rules.

"Parveen Hooda has been suspended for 22 months by the International Testing Agency (ITA) for Whereabouts Failures," the Boxing Federation of India said in a media release. However, after discussion with the concerned agencies, Parveen's sanction has been backdated and she has to now serve a 14-month suspension starting Friday.

"Pursuant to multiple discussions and representations, the ITA has proposed a sanction on Parveen, entailing the imposition of an ineligibility period of 22-months, which has been now backdated by eight months as compared to initial suspension period of 24 months backdated by six months. — PTI

## Barca ride on Lopez double

Barcelona, May 17: Young Barcelona midfielder Fermin Lopez struck twice to secure his team a hard-fought 2-0 win at Almeria on Thursday in the Spanish league.

The 21-year-old reached 10 goals for the season in his breakthrough campaign on a night Barcelona struggled but eventually overcame their already-relegated opponents.

In the hours before the game Spanish media reported Barcelona president Joan Laporta did not travel to the match in Almeria because he was unhappy with coach Xavi Hernandez's pre-match comments.

Xavi had highlighted the club's financial difficulties in comparison to the strength of new Spanish champions Real Madrid.

"They haven't told me anything personally... we travelled with the sporting vice-president, more directors, all normally," Xavi told reporters.

"I said what I think is real, that we will fight for all the trophies, with a lot of hope, with ambition, but that the situation is not easy. We are working very well, the club most of all, to change this situation," he added.

In January, with the team struggling badly, the coach said he would leave at the end of the season. He changed his mind in April after the team had



Almeria's Mozambican defender Bruno Langa (left) vies for the ball with Barcelona's Spanish midfielder Fermin Lopez during their Spanish league match at the Municipal Stadium of the Mediterranean Games in Almeria on Thursday. — AFP

gone on a strong run, despite being knocked out of the Champions League in the quarterfinals.

Los Blancos took the title back out of Barcelona's hands without breaking a sweat, suffering just one defeat and winning with four games to spare, while reaching the Champions League final.

For Barcelona it is a trophyless season but the Catalans are close to securing second place,

ahead of upstarts Girona, third and now four points behind.

Lopez's goals did the job in the south-east of Spain but it was far from a vintage performance from Barcelona against their relegated, rock-bottom opponents. They took the lead after 14 minutes, with Lopez showing his knack for arriving in the area with perfect timing to reach Hector Fort's cross and nod home.

## ARJUN LOSES TO NIKOLAS IN SHARJAH

Sharjah, May 17: Indian Grandmaster Arjun Erigaisi was stumped by Nikolas Theodorou of Greece in the second round of Sharjah Masters chess tournament here.

Erigaisi, however, bounced back to register a victory over Nikoloz Kacharava of Switzerland in the third round that puts back his status as world number eight in live ratings.

It was not an easy day for the Indian contingent. Aravindh Chithambaram was the pick of the lot as he carved out an exceptional victory with white pieces.

**Selected results after second round:** Nikolas Theodorou (GRE, 2) beat Arjun Erigaisi (I); Vasily Ivanchuk (UKR, 1) lost to Arjun Tabatabaei (IRI, 2); Muradli Mahammad (AZE, 1) lost to Aravindh Chithambaram (2); Marcin Krzyzanowski (POL, 2) beat Abhimanyu Mishra (USA, 1); Salem A. R. Saleh (UAE, 2) beat Shreyas Royal (ENG, 1); Denis Kadric (MNE, 1) drew with S. L. Narayanan (I); Nihal Sarin (I) drew with Mikheil Mechedlishvili (GEO, 1); B. Adhiban (I) drew with Raunak Sadhwani (I); Shant Sargysan (ATM, 0.5) lost to Sankalp Gupta (1.5); David Gavrilescu (ROU, 0.5) lost to Abhimanyu Puranik (1.5); Maurizzi Marcandria (FRA, 1) drew with D. Harika (I); Bibisara Assaubayeva (KAZ, 0.5) lost to Aditya Mittal (1.5); Madaminov Mukhididdin (UZB, 1) drew with Abhijeet Gupta (1); Yilmaz Mustafa (TUR, 0.5) drew with Pranav Anand (0.5); Raja Rithvik (0.5) drew with Leon Luke Mendonca (0.5); Eltaj Safari (AZE, 1) beat Aditya Samant (0); V. Pranav beat Alisher Suleymenov (UZB).

## BRIEF BYTES

### Four boxers bring home bronzes

In what turned out to be a disastrous day for Indian boxers, all four male pugilists lost their respective semifinals to sign off with bronze medals at the Elorda Cup in Astana, Kazakhstan, on Friday.

Yaiphaba Singh Soibam (48kg) and Abhishek Yadav (67kg) suffered close 3-4 defeats against Kazakhstan's Zhussupov Askhat and Mursal Nurbek respectively after their bouts were reviewed. Meanwhile, Vishal (86kg) ended his campaign with a 0-5 loss to reigning world champion Oralbay Nurbek of Kazakhstan.

Gaurav Chauhan also lost by a similar 0-5 margin to another Kazakh boxer, Tokyo Olympics bronze medalist Kamshybek Kunkabayev, in the 92+kg semifinals. — PTI

### Bhaker dominates Selection Trials

Olympian Manu Bhaker displayed complete dominance in 10m air pistol Olympic Selection Trials (OST), shooting a superb score to overcome the challenge of Asian Games medalist Esha Singh in Bhopal on Friday.

Bhaker shot a superb 241.0 in the third OST to push back the challenge of Esha (240.2) and Rhythm Sangwan (220.3) at the MP State Shooting Academy ranges. Surbhi Rao (199.3) and Palka (179.1) were fourth and fifth respectively. Manu's performance is all the more creditable as she came into the 10m air pistol trials on the back of a superb showing in the 25m sports pistol trials. — PTI

### Chhetri told Kohli about retirement

As Sunil Chhetri sat contemplating how he would break his retirement plans to the world, he knew there was one man who would understand what exactly he was going through and Virat Kohli did not disappoint the iconic Indian football captain. "I did talk to Virat Kohli before my retirement decision, he is very close to me. I discussed with him because we both understand that we would know this thing exactly the way it is," Chhetri said in an online media interaction from Bhubaneswar where he is currently part of a national camp for the World Cup qualifiers.

"The ups and downs of sports, this part of retirement, we do understand that the other person would understand," he added. — PTI