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THIS IS MODI'S GUARANTEE

Jaipur tourist loses eye in J&K attack

Sunny Khan, the 38-year-old Rajasthan tourist who was attacked by terrorists near Pahalgam on Saturday, has lost vision in one eye and faces the risk of partial vision loss in the other. He is battling for life in ICU. His wife, Farah, is also critical. In Jaipur, their parents are preparing to fly to Kashmir. **P 8**

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

TPL 2024 league toppers KKR will play second-placed SRH in the first qualifier while RR and RCB will meet in the eliminator after the final league game between KKR and RR was washed out. **P 17**

B'desh pirates kill Sundarbans guard

Bangladeshi pirates hacked a 59-year-old forest guard to death in Sundarbans Tiger Reserve Saturday night, while three others escaped by jumping in the river. The accused are still believed to be in Indian waters. **P 8**

MUTUAL FUN

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BJP running Op Jhaadu to jail all AAP netas: CM

Kejriwal Leads Protest Against Aide's Arrest

Abhinav Rajput @timesgroup.com

New Delhi: Chief minister Arvind Kejriwal on Sunday alleged that BJP was running 'Operation Jhaadu', aiming to arrest all top functionaries of his party to eliminate AAP.

► Cops ready 50 questions for Bibhav Kumar, P 2
► Bharadwaj: Delhi Police leaking selective info, P 2

as it saw them as a challenge. Kejriwal was addressing party workers before leading a protest march to BJP head-



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

quarters following the arrest of his aide, Bibhav Kumar, in the Swati Maliwal assault case. Rajya Sabha MP Raghav Chadha, who had been missing in an action for months due to an eye surgery that even led to speculation over his affilia-

tion with the party, was also present. Addressing party workers, he said PM Modi could get all functionaries arrested in one go instead of taking them one by one.

► Plan to lock AAP offices, P 2

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

Andhra-born Gopi Thotakura made history on Sunday as he became the first Indian citizen to enter space as a tourist. He was part of the crew for Blue Origin's NS-25 mission, reports Surendra Singh. Gopi, an entrepreneur & a pilot, flew to space with Ed Dwight (90), now the oldest man to go to space, and four others. **P 12**

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

Lucknow: A viral video showing the 17-year-old son of a gram pradhan purportedly voting eight times at a polling station in UP's Farrukhabad constituency on May 13 led the authorities to file an FIR and detain him Sunday, initiate disciplinary proceedings against officials managing the booth, and recommend a repoll. SP chief Akhilesh Yadav, Wayanad MP Rahul Gandhi, and Congress's X handle were

CASE REGISTERED

- FIR registered under various sections, including those related to violation of secrecy of voting, says UP's chief election officer
- Boy's father says he was taken by polling agents 'to participate in EVM machine inspection/randomisation'

among those who shared the two-minute, 19-second video compilation.

► Son of pradhan, P 9

Iran Prez Raisi 'at risk' after copter crash

A helicopter carrying Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi and his foreign minister crashed Sunday as it was crossing mountain terrain in heavy fog, an Iranian official said. The official said lives of Raisi & foreign minister Hossein Amirabdollahian were "at risk following the helicopter crash". "We are still hopeful but information coming from the crash site is very concerning." Turkey is sending 32 rescue specialists to help Iran. On X, PM Modi said, "Deeply concerned by reports regarding President Raisi's helicopter flight today. We stand in solidarity with the Iranian people in this hour of distress, & pray for well being of the President and his entourage." **P 12**



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

'Insulting Saints To Please Vote Bank'

Rohit Khanna, Falguni Banerjee & Sujoy Khanra | TNN

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

TMC: PM 'silent' on Sandeshkhali videos

TMC alleged that PM Modi "stayed silent" on the Sandeshkhali videos all these days as he was aware that allegations levelled by BJP that women were abused were not true. TMC's Derek O'Brien, said: "In the last fortnight, he zipped his lips on Sandeshkhali after videos surfaced." **P 9**

Modi also attacked CM Mamata over her recent remarks about "a few monks", whom she accused of working for BJP. "TMC stoops so low just to please its vote bank," he said.

► 'Preying on Maa...', P 9

47.8°C: NAJAFGARH HOTTEST IN INDIA

Delhi's daytime temperature hits 44.4°C, this season's highest, at Safdarjung, the city's base station, Sunday

In other parts of Delhi, mercury soars above 47°C. At 47.8°C, Najafgarh hottest area in the country; neighbouring Gurgaon records 45.5°C while Ghaziabad sees 44.4°C

Weather office issues 'red alert' in view of heatwave



A young boy cools himself with water near Akshardham temple in Delhi on Sunday

conditions, urges 'extreme care for vulnerable people'

► Southwest monsoon makes its onset over Nicobar Islands, according to IMD **SEE P2**

Fire in new Noida hotel kills 1st guest

A 27-year-old physiotherapist suffocated to death while her friend is battling grievous injuries after a fire broke out at a hotel in Noida's Sector 104 Saturday evening, reports Avishek Kumar. The duo had checked in on Friday and were the first customers to stay at the hotel, which had opened only on May 10. **P 6**

Porsche runs over 2 techies, minor at wheel

Two young software engineers, both aged 24, died after a Porsche Taycan, driven by the 17-year-old son of a builder, hit their motorcycle near a pub in the upscale neighbourhood of Kalyaninagar in Pune at 2.30am Sunday. The driver was detained and Juvenile Justice Board freed him later with conditions. **P 8**

179 AI Exp flyers stranded for 13 hrs at B'luru

An engine of an Air India Express plane flying from Pune to Kochi caught fire 10 minutes after takeoff from Bengaluru following a scheduled stopover Saturday evening, forcing a return and emergency evacuation of 179 flyers, who were stranded in the Karnataka capital for nearly 13 hours. **P 8**



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NGT seeks fresh report within four weeks on floodplain encroachment | 3

TIMES CITY 243
 AQI IN DELHI ON SUNDAY (POOR CATEGORY)
 Higher intake of ultra-processed food can lead to shorter life span | 5

44.4° MAXIMUM | 28.2° MINIMUM
 FORECAST: Mainly clear sky. Heat wave conditions at many places. Strong surface winds during the day
 SUNSET 7.08 PM (MON) | MOONSET 3.45 AM (TUE)
 SUNRISE 5.28 AM (TUE) | MOONRISE 4.17 AM (MON)

Fatal road crashes, deaths dip by 6% in first five months | 6



Fatal road crashes, deaths dip by 6% in first five months | 6

243
 AQI IN DELHI ON SUNDAY (POOR CATEGORY)

Higher intake of ultra-processed food can lead to shorter life span | 5



Sunister: Caught In A Wave, Delhi Bristles

Avg Temp In City At 44.4°C, Najafgarh Hottest In Country At 47.8°C

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New Delhi: Najafgarh in southwest Delhi emerged as the hottest location in India on Sunday at 47.8 degrees Celsius, seven notches above normal, even as the national capital remained in the grip of an oppressive heatwave. Mungeshpur at 47.7 degrees was hot on Najafgarh's heels, grabbing the second spot in the country. At Safdarjung, the maximum temperature was recorded at 44.4 degrees Celsius, four notches above normal, against 43.6 degrees Celsius a day earlier — the highest and second highest of the year, respectively for the base station that is considered the average for the city. The minimum temperature was recorded at 28.2 degrees Celsius, two notches above normal, against 27.1 degrees Celsius a day earlier. Humidity oscillated between 57% and 15%.

The weather department, anticipating little respite in the near future, extended the heatwave and intense heatwave warnings until Thursday. Like Sunday, red alerts were issued for Monday and Tuesday too, while orange alerts were put in place for Wednesday and Thursday. Weather scientists cited heat island effect, due to high concretisation and the absence of green areas, as the reason behind such high temperatures. "Absence of green areas, waterbodies, more concrete structures, dense population, rapid urbanisation... all these factors lead to the heat island effect in many parts of the city like Najafgarh, Mungeshpur and Pitampura. In 2022, several areas of the city saw very high temperatures, some even touching 48 degrees in some parts. These areas have a tendency to record high temperatures because of the heat island effect," said RK Jenamani, senior weather scientist, India Meteorological Department.

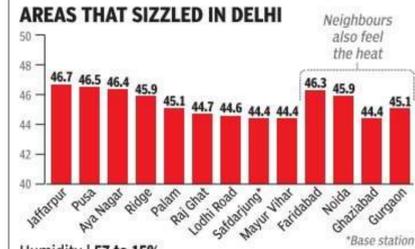
Other affected areas included Pitampura at 47 degrees, Jafarpur at 46, Pusa (west Delhi) at 46.5, Ayanagar at 46.4, Ridge at 45.9, Palam at 45.1, Raj Ghat at 44.7, Lodhi Road at 44.6, and Mayur Vihar at 44.5 degrees Celsius, respectively. IMD defines a heatwave day when the maximum temperature crosses the normal by 4.5 degrees or more and is at least 40 degrees Celsius. A heatwave is considered if the maximum temperature is 45 degrees Celsius or above. A 'severe' heatwave is declared when the maximum is 6.5 degrees or more above normal. Scientists, however, added that more than two centres of a geographical subdivision facing a heatwave for two or more days would also qualify the region for heatwaves. "Delhi has, for the past two days, been facing a heatwave in most areas and intense heatwaves in some areas. The heatwave and intense heatwave are likely to continue until at least Friday this week," said an official at IMD.

For Monday, the weather department expects the maximum and minimum temperatures to hover around 44 and 28 degrees Celsius, which by Tuesday may increase to 45 and 28 degrees Celsius, respectively. Meanwhile, the city's air quality continued to be poor. The air quality index (AQI), on a scale of 0 to 500, was 243 against 261 a day earlier, both poor.

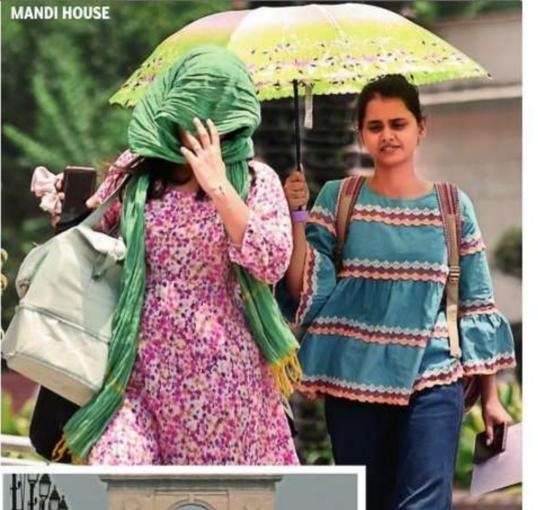


BLOWING HOT AND HOTTER

Heatwave to intense heatwave continues for third day in a row
 Heat Island effect reason for high temperature due to low green cover, rapid urbanisation in some areas



Humidity | 57 to 15%
 Minimum temp at Safdarjung | 28.2 degrees Celsius



INDIA GATE
 Piyal Bhattacharjee

FORECAST

- Heatwave at many places, intense heatwave in some areas
- Intense heatwave is when temperature is above 47 degrees Celsius
- Heatwaves to continue till Thursday
- Max temp to hover around 44-45 degrees Celsius
- Warm strong surface winds may impact health

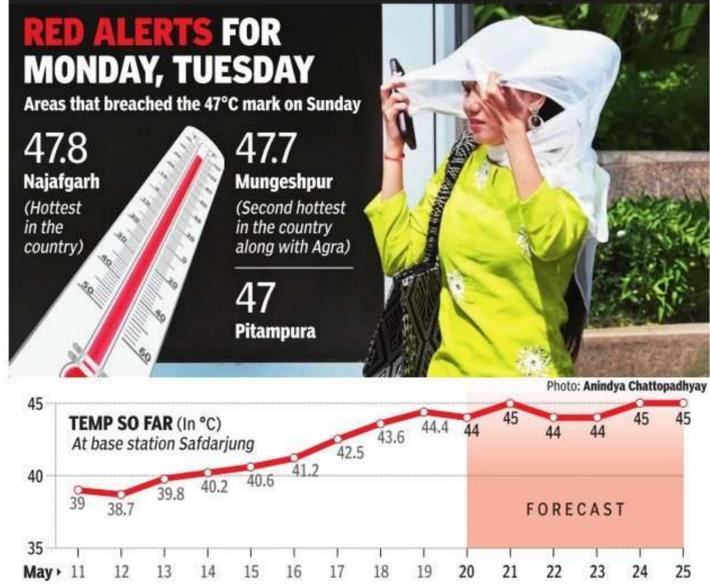
ON THE SAME DAY LAST YEAR

Min 21.9 | Max 41.1

Rainfall 9.6mm, towards late at night

DOS & DON'TS

- Use ORS, homemade drinks like lassi, rice water, lemon water, buttermilk, etc
- Avoid going out between noon and 3pm
- Wear lightweight, light-coloured, loose, cotton clothes
- Avoid strenuous activities
- Avoid alcohol, tea, coffee, carbonated soft drinks and high-protein food
- Use hat, umbrella



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

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: AAP minister Saurabh Bharadwaj on Sunday hit out at Delhi Police, accusing it of operating at the behest of BJP. He alleged that police were leaking "selective and incorrect" information to the media to tarnish the party's image before the elections. Addressing a press conference, Bharadwaj alleged: "As soon as Swati Maliwal called Delhi Police, not only was the information leaked by police, but the photo of the DD entry was also released. Why did Delhi Police do that? Because it has a vested interest in it; their political agenda is being served."

He added: "I have never seen the photo of a complaint being shared with the entire country, especially that of a woman. Who leaked it to the media? None other than BJP's Delhi Police. Maliwal did not file her complaint, which BJP did not take well." Maliwal had on Monday alleged in a PCR call that she was assaulted by Kejriwal's personal assistant, Bibhav Kumar, at CM's residence. This led to police arriving at the scene. Later, she went to Civil Lines police station to file an FIR. However, after receiving some phone calls, she left. After a couple of days, she filed an FIR, following which Kumar was arrested.

Bharadwaj said that everyone knew that Kumar was with CM in Lucknow and, yet, "Delhi Police spread the news that Kumar was absconding". He said: "He (Kumar) had a flight ticket in his name to go there." Bharadwaj added that Kumar had himself written an email to Delhi Police stating that he was ready to cooperate with the investigation. "Delhi Police requested Kumar to come to the police station for further investigation and discussion in the case. Five minutes after he reached the police station, another report emerged that police had arrested Kumar from CM's residence," he said. "Why is Delhi Police so hasty? The duty of the investigation agencies is to conduct a fair investigation, not to align with political interests," he added.

Bharadwaj said that rumours were being spread about missing CCTV footage. "The CCTV footage of CM's residence, along with the DVR machine, has already been taken away by Delhi Police." He alleged that this was a conspiracy to defame AAP before voting in Delhi. Bharadwaj noted that FIRs lodged under Section 354 were supposed to be confidential, but, in this case, it was shared publicly. "How did the copy of the complaint reach the media and (spread on) social media?" he asked. When asked if CCTV footage was available for the area where the incident allegedly took place, Bharadwaj said: "CCTV is generally installed at entrances or boundaries. No one installs CCTV in the drawing room."

Cops ready 50 questions for Kumar

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: Delhi Police is learnt to have questioned members of the security team stationed at chief minister Arvind Kejriwal's residence as part of its investigation into the alleged assault on AAP Rajya Sabha MP Swati Maliwal, sources said on Sunday. The officers confiscated additional CCTV footage and DVRs from CM's residence on Sunday to determine the sequence of events and identify individuals present at the time of the incident. Those identified will be questioned accordingly. The seized footage has been forwarded for forensic analysis. A special team has been assembled by police to interrogate Kejriwal's personal assistant, Bibhav Kumar, who is currently in custody. A questionnaire consisting of approximately 50 questions has been prepared for him.

Sources indicate that the team is attempting to understand why Maliwal, an aide to Kejriwal for 20 years, was denied a meeting with CM on the day of the incident. An investigator stated, "We asked him (Kumar) if Maliwal always sought an appointment before meeting CM and how she managed to reach the drawing room from the camp office without an appointment." The response to this inquiry was not disclosed. Police are also trying to obtain the complete mobile video of the incident, of which only 51 seconds were made public. Efforts are being made to contact members of AAP who shared the mobile footage to determine if they received only that clip or if they possess the entire footage. Should forensic experts detect any tampering with the footage, additional charges related to the destruction of evidence would be included in the FIR, sources said.

Kumar is expected to be transported to Mumbai, possibly on Monday night. Authorities are keen to discover where he had his iPhone formatted, as suggested by reports earlier. A senior officer claimed, "He is being evasive and is not cooperating with the investigation. He refused to share the passcode with us, and the face unlock feature has also been disabled." Police will also investigate whether the data was cloned and stored elsewhere. Moreover, police are interrogating Kumar regarding his movements since the FIR was registered. An analysis of Kumar's SIM card indicates that his location shifted from Lucknow to Kurukshetra and, then, to Punjab and Mumbai. On Saturday, the phone was activated again at CM's residence, prompting a team to rush there and detain him, according to police.

When the Nirbhaya incident happened, AAP hit the streets and said if anything wrong happened with a woman, the accused must prove his innocence," he told a news agency. "We had then said that such a law is not correct," Dikshit added, noting that fingers were pointed at the then CM, Sheila Dikshit, leading to the creation of the law. "So, such a law was made and, now, when a woman says that something wrong happened with her, action is taken assuming that she is right. Bibhav Kumar was arrested as per this rule...it is a rule made by AAP only," he stated.

BHARADWAJ'S ALLEGATIONS AGAINST POLICE AND BJP

1 Thousands of calls come on the 112 number, then how was Swati Maliwal's call leaked to the media? Never had a DD entry's photo been leaked. This is because the Delhi Police is an interested party

2 Kumar went to Lucknow, which everyone knows. His flight was booked, but the Delhi

3 Police planted the story that he was absconding
 Kumar wrote an email to police stating he was ready to cooperate in the investigation. Cops requested him to come to the police station. Five minutes after he reached, it was said that police arrested Kumar from the chief minister's residence

4 The police have taken the entire CCTV footage along with the

5 DVR, but false news was planted that it was tampered
 5 FIRs are kept confidential in cases under Section 354, but the police shared it with the whole world. Even AAP and the accused were not given the FIR, but Delhi Police and BJP have circulated it everywhere



6 No one installs a CCTV in the drawing room, then why is it being spread that footage is missing

Plan to lock AAP offices, freeze accounts: CM

Continued from P1

He told the cadre to be prepared to face bigger challenges ahead. "The top leaders of our party, all ministers, MLAs, MPs, councillors and office-bearers are present here. Why did we have to gather here today? Because the Prime Minister has made up his mind to completely destroy and crush Aam Aadmi Party, for which he has started an operation called 'Operation Jhaadu'," he said. The CM said that Modi feared AAP, as its work was being discussed all over the country, and it could be a challenge for BJP at the national level and in many states. Kejriwal said every senior functionary of AAP had gone through a trial by fire. "They arrested me, Sanjay Singh, Manish Sisodia and Satyendar Jain. Yesterday, they even arrested my PA. Raghav

Chadha has just come back; now they are saying that they will also be arrested. They are saying that Atishi, Saurabh Bharadwaj and Kailash Gahlot will also be arrested soon," he said. He said that in the coming days, the party office would be locked. "ED's lawyer has already given a statement in court that AAP's bank accounts will be frozen immediately after the elections," the CM said.

After the speech, Kejriwal led a march towards BJP's headquarters and sat on the road as police barricades prevented them from reaching the office. There was heavy police presence on Deen Dayal Upadhyay Marg. RSMP Sanjay Singh, ministers Gopal Rai and Kailash Gahlot, and other senior functionaries were present. After staging a protest for around half an hour, they left.

Singh said, "As per his promise, Kejriwal himself came with other functionaries of the party to get arrested, but they (BJP) left the ground and ran away." Gahlot said, "We waited for over half an hour; they could have arrested us. The public is with us, you can see how much love has been given to Kejriwal and AAP because of the good done by us. Let the investigation continue, and everything will be clear." Earlier in the day, Delhi Police had ramped up security around BJP's office. To manage the crowd, multilayer barricades were installed and over 1,000 personnel, besides cops in anti-riot gear, paramilitary forces were put in place alongside specialised anti-riot vehicles, apart from patrolling in central Delhi. As a precautionary measure, Delhi Metro closed entry and exit at ITO station.



Kumar's custody 'AAP taking to streets to save accused'

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: While allowing five-day custodial interrogation of Bibhav Kumar in the Swati Maliwal "assault case", a Delhi court noted that remand was a "necessity" in the matter. In the order passed at 12.45am Sunday metropolitan magistrate (MM) Gaurav Goyal partly allowed the plea in which police had sought seven-day custody. "Considering the submissions made on behalf of both parties, I find there is a necessity of police custody remand in the present case. Accordingly, the application moved by the investigating officer (IO) is partly allowed and the accused is remanded to police custody for five days," the court said. It noted the prosecution's submissions about the need to take Kumar to Mumbai and other parts of the national capital to collect evidence, which was not possible without the accused's custody. The MM further noted that he is "aware of the view of constitutional courts that the opportunity must be given to the investigating agency to complete the investigation in order to reach the truth of the matter but at the same time the rights of the accused are also to be protected."

"Maliwal is an AAP functionary. The incident occurred at Kejriwal's residence. She was beaten when she is privy to his 'wrongdoings and corruption'," Sachdeva alleged. Maliwal, an AAP Rajya Sabha member, was allegedly assaulted at Kejriwal's residence by his close aide Bibhav Kumar. "Maliwal is an AAP functionary. The incident occurred at Kejriwal's residence. She was beaten when she is privy to his 'wrongdoings and corruption'," Sachdeva alleged. Maliwal, an AAP Rajya Sabha member, has alleged that Kumar assaulted her on May

things wouldn't have been so bad for me," she added. Sisodia, former deputy CM, is in jail over corruption allegations in the now-shelved Delhi liquor policy. Meanwhile, commenting on the issue, Congress functionary Sandeep Dikshit said only a probe would reveal what exactly happened between Maliwal and Kumar. "When the Nirbhaya incident happened, AAP hit the streets and said if anything wrong happened with a woman, the accused must prove his innocence," he told a news agency. "We had then said that such a law is not correct," Dikshit added, noting that fingers were pointed at the then CM, Sheila Dikshit, leading to the creation of the law. "So, such a law was made and, now, when a woman says that something wrong happened with her, action is taken assuming that she is right. Bibhav Kumar was arrested as per this rule...it is a rule made by AAP only," he stated.

13 when she had gone to the chief minister's residence to meet him. Kumar was arrested on Saturday and produced in a court, which remanded him in five-day police custody. Sachdeva alleged that the Maliwal assault case has "exposed" Kejriwal. His claim that AAP is an ideology is "bogus", he added. His only ideology is "loot and corruption", he said. Kejriwal has said that despite BJP and the Prime Minister's efforts to crush AAP by arresting its functionaries, the party will not break apart because it is a thought that has influenced millions across the country. BJP functionary Shehzad Poonawala said: "Kejriwal should break his silence instead of drama and answer specific questions. Did he order attack on Swati Maliwal? Why is CCTV footage missing? Did Kejriwal help Bibhav to destroy or tamper evidence including CCTV footage? Why release small clips & not full CCTV footage?"

BJP accuses Kejriwal of 'political drama'

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: Delhi BJP chief Virendra Sachdeva slammed AAP chief Arvind Kejriwal on Sunday and alleged that the chief minister was enacting a "political drama" over Swati Maliwal's "assault" charge, while maintaining silence on the issue. Sachdeva asked how had AAP concluded that BJP was involved in the matter when Maliwal, an AAP Rajya Sabha member, was allegedly assaulted at Kejriwal's residence by his close aide Bibhav Kumar. "Maliwal is an AAP functionary. The incident occurred at Kejriwal's residence. She was beaten when she is privy to his 'wrongdoings and corruption'," Sachdeva alleged. Maliwal, an AAP Rajya Sabha member, has alleged that Kumar assaulted her on May

13 when she had gone to the chief minister's residence to meet him. Kumar was arrested on Saturday and produced in a court, which remanded him in five-day police custody. Sachdeva alleged that the Maliwal assault case has "exposed" Kejriwal. His claim that AAP is an ideology is "bogus", he added. His only ideology is "loot and corruption", he said. Kejriwal has said that despite BJP and the Prime Minister's efforts to crush AAP by arresting its functionaries, the party will not break apart because it is a thought that has influenced millions across the country. BJP functionary Shehzad Poonawala said: "Kejriwal should break his silence instead of drama and answer specific questions. Did he order attack on Swati Maliwal? Why is CCTV footage missing? Did Kejriwal help Bibhav to destroy or tamper evidence including CCTV footage? Why release small clips & not full CCTV footage?"

"Why did the party do a U-turn from what Sanjay Singh said earlier and why the victimising now by AAP," he said. "Did Kejriwal give patronage to Bibhav Kumar because he has dark secrets of Kejriwal?" he asked.

13 when she had gone to the chief minister's residence to meet him. Kumar was arrested on Saturday and produced in a court, which remanded him in five-day police custody. Sachdeva alleged that the Maliwal assault case has "exposed" Kejriwal. His claim that AAP is an ideology is "bogus", he added. His only ideology is "loot and corruption", he said. Kejriwal has said that despite BJP and the Prime Minister's efforts to crush AAP by arresting its functionaries, the party will not break apart because it is a thought that has influenced millions across the country. BJP functionary Shehzad Poonawala said: "Kejriwal should break his silence instead of drama and answer specific questions. Did he order attack on Swati Maliwal? Why is CCTV footage missing? Did Kejriwal help Bibhav to destroy or tamper evidence including CCTV footage? Why release small clips & not full CCTV footage?"

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Kulfi

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NGT Seeks New Report On Floodplain Encroachment

Unhappy With Original Submission, Asks DPCC For Reply

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: Expressing dissatisfaction with a Delhi Pollution Control Committee (DPCC) report, National Green Tribunal has requested a new one regarding the matter of encroachment in the O-zone or Yamuna floodplain within four weeks.

Earlier this year, the tribunal took suo moto cognizance of a **TOI** report titled "161 illegal colonies on O zone making river water toxic" and sought explanations from various departments, including DPCC.

The O-zone is one of approximately 15 zones designated by Delhi Development Authority (DDA), which includes areas along the Yamuna and the riverfront. It holds ecological significance, is prone to floods, and should be a no-construction zone, yet it is vastly encroached upon.

"No one is present on behalf of the respondents - Delhi Jal Board, district magistrate, north Delhi, district magistrate, north-west Delhi, and district magistrate north-east Delhi... Learned Counsel appearing for the DDA has submitted that since the officers are busy in forthcoming Parliamentary Elections, therefore, response could not be filed and has prayed for four weeks' time to file the reply... Response on behalf of DPCC dated May, 2024 has been filed but there is no reply on merit in that response and only



O-Zone holds ecological significance and should be a no-construction zone

plea is that the high level committee... has been asked to deal with the issue," stated the bench headed by NGT chairperson Justice Prakash Shrivastava in an order dated May 15.

On March 25, NGT had sought explanation from the DPCC and others regarding the matter.

The tribunal, considering the **TOI** report, had noted that over 2.3 lakh households in 161 colonies in O zone are unattached to any sewage network and continue to discharge untreated sewage into the river, contaminating the water.

It pointed out that these colonies

are yet to be provided with sewage related infrastructure and that DJB is unable to do their tasks of providing the sewage network. DJB had estimated 318 unauthorised colonies where the problem of installation of sewage connection exists.

While, the DPCC simply put onus on the high level committee, DJB stated that it is yet to obtain the NOC from concerned departments and only after obtaining clearances it will take another 18 months to connect the unauthorised colonies, which will control pollution in the stormwater drains and thus in the Yamuna.

MCD begins drive to boost road infra, drainage in villages

Vibha.Sharma@timesgroup.com

New Delhi: Municipal Corporation of Delhi has taken up various projects for development of roads, drainage systems and streetlights in villages across the city under 'Dilli Gramoday Abhiyan'. Work on 5% of the projects has already started.

Based on the visits of senior officials and feedback from villagers, the civic body had recommended schemes worth Rs 647.7 crore to Delhi Development Authority for providing funds and carrying out 381 projects in a phased manner. Majority of these works are recommended in villages of Najafgarh, Narela, south and west Delhi zones.

Thereafter, the authority sanctioned 349 projects costing Rs 407.1 crore, and until March 11, tenders were called for 344 projects costing Rs 389 crore. "Due to the model code of conduct being in force, except for eight works, the process for inviting agencies for implementing other projects was put on hold. After June 4, we will speed up exercise in all villages," said an MCD official.

So far, works have been awarded for eight projects, costing Rs 52.4 crore. "Of them, at five places, implementation has started. All these are civil projects (including the construction of roads and drains) in the Najafgarh zone and cost Rs 43 crore," stated the civic body.

In Dec 2023, lieutenant governor VK Saxena launched 'Dilli Gramoday Abhiyan' to redevelop both rural and urban villages in the capital. LG announced that DDA would allocate Rs 800 crore to rejuvenate nearly 200 urbanised villages.

The fund will be used for the creation and upgrade of basic infrastructure, livelihoods, scientific livestock management, healthcare, proper land use and water management, among others. To get feedback on the kinds of work to be taken up, on LG's direction, district magistrates stayed at villages overnight for two days and interacted with the villagers.

"Senior officials also interacted with panchayats and locals to take stock of the situation. All these works are targeted to complete in a time-bound manner," said an official.

Man jumps to death while fleeing cops

Gurgaon: A 45-year-old engineer — who had been declared a proclaimed offender (PO) by a Haryana court — jumped to death from his two-storey building in Sohna while escaping from police on Saturday.

The family has blamed policemen for his death. Nazar Mohammed, who lived in Sohna's Javed Colony, had been working at an automobile company in Manesar. Nazar suffered fatal injuries when he jumped from the terrace. Following the complaint of his son, police initiated a probe under Section 174 of the CrPC.

The body was handed over to the family on Sunday. Cops said Nazar was declared a proclaimed offender in a negotiable instruments case registered at Firozpur Jhirka police station in 2019 by a local court and on Saturday evening, a team from Nuh's Rozka Meo police station reached his house in Javed Colony to arrest. **TNN**

26-yr-old beaten to death by group of 7

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: A 26-year-old man was brutally beaten to death by a group of 6-7 people in Dwaraka's Uttam Nagar area. Three suspects, including a woman and a juvenile, have been arrested and raids are being conducted to apprehend others involved in the gruesome murder, police said on Sunday.

A PCR call was received on Saturday night about the incident. "A police team was

dispatched to the scene, where cops found Karan, a resident of Shiv Vihar, lying in a pool of blood. He was rushed to the hospital but succumbed to his injuries," a senior police officer said.

During the inquiry, it was revealed that Karan was at home when the group, accompanied by a woman, arrived and attacked him with sticks and knives. "They began assaulting Karan with such brutality that none of

the neighbours intervened. Before killing him, the assailants allegedly ran a two-wheeler over him and allegedly inflicted wounds into which they poured salt and pepper," said the officer.

Both the victim and the accused have a history of criminal activity. Karan had over ten criminal cases against him and had been released from jail last year, police said.

During the interrogation, it was revealed that se-

veral months prior, Karan had a confrontation with the arrested woman, also a resident of Shiv Vihar, over the alleged theft of a mobile phone and other items from her house. "After Karan's release from jail, the gang sought revenge," said the officer.

Following the incident, Karan's relatives blocked the Uttam Nagar Nala road on Sunday evening while demanding arrest of all the suspects, police added.

Woman hit by crane in Gurgaon, dies on spot

Gurgaon: A 42-year-old woman died after she was hit by a crane on the Garhi Hayatpur road in Sector 10 on Saturday. The crane driver fled the spot before the cops arrived.

Police said Maina was walking from Kilachand Nagar in Harsaru towards Hayatpur Chowk at 11.50am on Saturday with her daughters Diksha and Yashvi.

"While we were walking on the left side of the Garhi Hayatpur road, a yellow crane hit my mother from behind and she fell on the road. She came under the rear tyre of the crane," Diksha told the cops, adding that the driver tried to speed away after the accident, but hit a tree on the right side.

Maina died on the spot. **TNN**

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DTC electric bus catches fire in S Delhi

New Delhi: An electric bus of Delhi Transport Corporation (DTC) gutted in a fire at Hauz Khas on Sunday morning, officials of the Delhi Fire Services said.

No casualties were reported in the incident. "The driver and the bus conductor acted immediately and asked all the passengers to get down, which averted a major incident," an official of the DFS said. However, the reason behind the fire is yet to be ascertained. Bus number 502 was on route from Old Delhi towards Mehrauli. **TNN**

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Why Delhi's Health Sector Could Do With Fresh Dose Of Infra Push

City Boasts Of Some Of Biggest Hospitals In Country, But Services Still Inadequate

Anuja Jaiswal
@timesgroup.com

New Delhi: While Delhi boasts of some of the biggest hospitals in the country, including the government-run premier hospital AIIMS, as well as Safdarjung, RML, Lok Nayak, and Fortis and Max in the private sector, the truth is that health services are still far from adequate.

Delhi High Court recently observed that the medical infrastructure in the national capital is inadequate and the number of hospital beds insufficient.

Those who can afford treatment can approach the private sector; but for others it is an odious task. Recently, three incidents occurred in the city when govt hospitals, including AIIMS, the Centre's Safdarjung, Ram Manohar Lohia Hospital, and Delhi govt's Guru Teg Bahadur Hospital, Delhi State Cancer Institute, and Lok Nayak Hospital, allegedly refused to provide treatment to patients. They cited a lack of medicines, beds, ventilators or equipment, resulting in patient deaths, among them a cancer-stricken girl.

Following such incidents, Delhi High Court constituted a committee of experts to assess the medical infrastructure of state-run hospitals in the city and propose ways to optimise existing resources. A six-member expert committee identified shortage of staff and faculty as one of the main deficiencies in the hospitals.

Delhi has 39 state-run hospitals, eight run by autonomous bodies, 427 dispensaries, 546 mohalla clinics, 30 polyclinics and eight medical colleges.

At present, Delhi govt hospitals have 1,058 ICU beds

WHERE GOVT HOSPITALS STAND IN CAPITAL

Delhi has 39 state-run hospitals, eight run by autonomous bodies, 427 dispensaries, 546 mohalla clinics, 30 polyclinics and eight medical colleges

Hospitals run by central govt

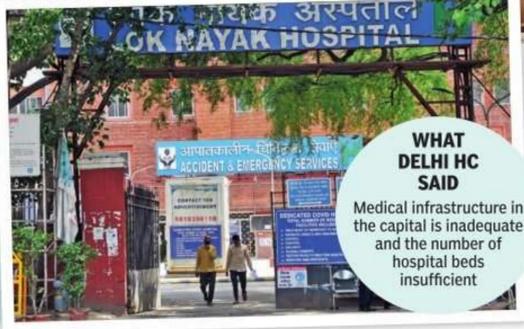
- > AIIMS (autonomous body)
- > Safdarjung
- > Ram Manohar Lohia Hospital
- > Lady Hardinge Medical College

Run by Delhi govt

- > Guru Teg Bahadur Hospital
- > Delhi State Cancer Institute
- > Lok Nayak Hospital

Major issues

- > Lack of medicines
- > Shortage of beds, ventilators and equipment
- > Inadequate number of quality operation theatres and pre- and post-operative facilities



WHAT DELHI HC SAID
Medical infrastructure in the capital is inadequate and the number of hospital beds insufficient

STATUS
Delhi govt hospitals have 1,058 ICU beds

HC-appointed panel says this should be enhanced to 2,028 to fulfil minimum basic norms

Court recently directed Centre-run hospitals to operate a control room for providing information about availability of beds with ventilator facilities

Construction of medical college building at Centre-run Atal Bihari Vajpayee Institute of Medical Sciences, Ram Manohar Lohia Hospital, may start soon and is likely take two years to complete

which, the committee says, should be enhanced immediately to 2,028 by adding 1,046 beds to fulfil the minimum basic norms.

The committee also pointed to an "inadequate" number of quality operation theatres and pre- and post-operative facilities, as well as non-availability of essential equipment, ultrasounds, CT/MRI scans, anaesthesia machines and a perpetual shortage of medicines.

Moreover, the experts said, no "structured referral system" exists in govt health sector for citizens. This leads to overcrowding in referral hospitals and sub-optimal care for patients. "There is no centralised and coordinated control room and helpline for appropriately directing patients to the nearest health-care facility and expertise to handle emergencies," the experts said in their report to the high court.

Earlier, the court had directed the Centre-run hospi-

tals to operate a control room for providing information about availability of beds with ventilator facilities.

Meanwhile, Delhi govt had informed the court that it plans to start four new hospitals at Siraspur, Madipur, Jwalapuri and Hatasal with a total of 3,237 beds and the same will be made operational in the next two to three years.

Even the construction of medical college building at the

Centre-run Atal Bihari Vajpayee Institute of Medical Sciences (ABVIMS) and Dr Ram Manohar Lohia Hospital will start soon as funds to the tune of Rs 470 crore have been approved and the master plan has been prepared. The project will take two years.

Besides, the institute has been allotted about 8.87 acres for construction of a new hospital block to be used for patients of specialities such as geriatric clinic, oncology, radiotherapy, palliative care and chronic illness.

Cong's Aggarwal releases vision for Chandni Chowk

Akshat Rajan | TNN

New Delhi: JP Aggarwal, the Congress candidate from Chandni Chowk, on Sunday released a vision document for the Lok Sabha constituency that talks about making a multi-level parking lot, simplifying the GST, organising a global food festival, and providing a platform to traders to interact with people from the community in India and abroad.

Aggarwal's document said that Chandni Chowk would be developed as a "heritage hub." Chandni Chowk

will see an influx of more tourists, he said.

The former MP plans to organise an annual global food festival that will allow tourists from all over the world to enjoy the food of Chandni Chowk and give recognition to the industries and businesses here. The document mentions that the basic amenities will be improved along with developing the old market and adding multi-level parking by 2029.

Aggarwal has promised changes in

the GST to help traders, including simplifying the GST portal to provide relief to small traders and reducing GST slab rates. To resolve the long unsolved issue of congestion on Rohtak Road from central to northwest Delhi, an elevated road will be built from Idgah to Zakhira Bridge. To provide relief from jams on Majnu Ka Tila, an overbridge will be built.

The document mentions a job fair to provide better employment opportunities to the youth.

Along with that, work would be done towards improving sports facilities for the youth.

A govt hospital will be built on the vacant hospital site near Lawrence Road. To woo the middle class, the document has provisions to exempt houses up to 100 yards from house tax in rural areas. The constituency, which has a large trader population, will see the contest between Aggarwal and BJP trade leader Praveen Khandelwal. Chandni Chowk is dominated by the Bania community, Punjabis and Muslims.

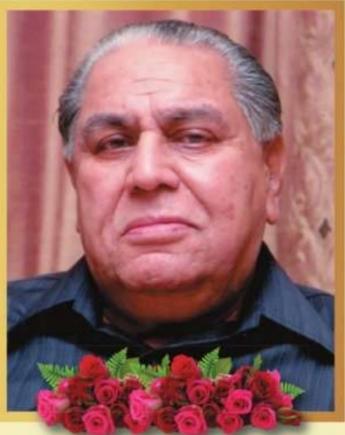
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Shree Spoke Zarathustra

BJP pitches Modi's 'work' against AAP's 'corruption'

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: Madhya Pradesh chief minister Mohan Yadav said on Sunday that under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, India is counted among the major powers of the world.

"Over the past decade, India has achieved a lot in terms of its economy as well as security and stability. This includes the construction of the grand Ram Temple in Ayodhya, the abrogation of Article 370, integrating Kashmir into the mainstream, bringing the CAA law, and strengthening India's unity and integrity," he said.

He was addressing a public meeting in Govindpuri in support of the BJP candidate from the South Delhi, Ramvir Singh Bidhuri. Yadav said Bidhuri was one of the most senior BJP functionaries in Delhi and his zeal for development of the region is extraordinary. "He rightly deserves your vote," he said. Bidhuri, when he took the stage, said: "The AAP government is mired in corruption, and the public is yearning for basic facilities of electricity, water, roads, education, health and the environment."

He said the people's disenchantment with AAP is evident, and BJP is poised to win all seven seats again.

He said that home mini-



Ramvir Singh Bidhuri with Mohan Yadav in Govindpuri on Sunday

ster Amit Shah would also address a large public meeting in Sangam Vihar on Monday. "There is also tremendous enthusiasm among the residents of South Delhi for the meeting."

Former BJP CM Shivraj Singh Chouhan also addressed public meetings in support of Manoj Tiwari in North East Delhi, Yogendra Chandoliya in North West Delhi, and Kamaljeet Sahrawat in West Delhi.

Chouhan said AAP has become "Arrogant Man's Party", and the arrogance is such that when a woman visits Kejriwal's home, he does not hesitate to behave rudely with her. He said that this is the same land of India where the insult of one Draupadi destroyed the entire Kauravas.

"There is a Prime Minister who is implementing various schemes to empower women, and on the other hand, there is a chief minister of Delhi who insults women. Instead of purifying the Yamuna, Kejriwal flooded the city with alcohol," he said.

Hitting back, AAP said, "After 10 years of failure of the Modi govt, BJP has no narrative or vision to offer to the people. Therefore, they have resorted to jailing all opposition leaders and making ridiculous allegations.... BJP should first answer why it made Prajwal Revanna escape India on a diplomatic passport? Why is BJP standing with Brijbhushan Singh and given a ticket to his son," it said.

Kejriwal hits out at Modi, says BJP will get less than 220 seats

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal launched a scathing attack at Prime Minister Narendra Modi, asserting that BJP was losing the election and will secure less than 220 seats.

On Sunday, he held six natak sabhas to work up support for INDIA bloc's South Delhi candidate Sahi Ram.

Addressing a large turnout from Badarpur Sabzi Mandi, Tughlakabad, Kalkaji, Sangam Vihar, Ambedkar Nagar and Chhatrapur, Kejriwal said that he was sent to jail and was surprised to be granted bail by Supreme Court.

"I came among you people directly from jail. The Prime Minister had sent me to jail. I used to miss you people a lot and I know that you people also missed me a lot. God listened to us and sent me among you. I



Kejriwal at a roadshow in support of INDIA bloc's candidate Sahi Ram

came to know that crores of women of Delhi and the country have prayed for my release. It is the miracle of your worship that I have come among you people to campaign," Kejriwal said. "Inqilab Zindabad", "Jai Bajrangbali" and "Bharat Mata Ki Jai" were heard in the background.

Urging Prime Minister Narendra Modi to "extend benefits like free bus service nationwide, especially amid the rising inflation", Kejriwal said that the Prime Minister was rather opposed to such free bus travel for women in Delhi in a TV interview.

"I am a Lord Bajrang Bali bhakt. With his blessings, I am among you people today. The court has given me 21 days to campaign.... When I went to a place for an election campaign the day before yesterday, a lady there told me, son, God has sent you here for 21 days to destroy the BJP," he said.

Daring the Prime Mini-

ster to deliver more like what he had delivered in Delhi, Kejriwal said: "I have built 500 schools in Delhi. If you get 50,000 schools built in the whole country, then it is your greatness.... I build 500 mohalla clinics. You are the head of the country; you build 5 lakh mohalla clinics. The people of the country will hail you..." he said.

"When you press the button, if you press the 'kamal' (lotus, BJP's electoral symbol), then I will have to go to jail. If you press the 'jhadu' (broom) button, then I will be free among you," he said.

"I have been roaming around the country for the last 7-8 days. I went to Punjab, Kurukshetra, Lucknow, Bhiwandi and Mumbai. People are angry with inflation and unemployment. BJP is not going to form a govt on June 4.... They also know they are getting less than 220 seats. That is why they are frustrated," he said.

Man sentenced to 13-yr RI for raping 11-yr-old

New Delhi: A Delhi court has sentenced a man to 13 years of rigorous imprisonment for raping an 11-year-old girl.

"In the present matter at the time of offence, convict was a person aged about 22 years and victim was a child of just 11 years & 11 months. This age difference in between the age of convict and victim makes the offence more heinous. Further, it is also considerable that convict continuously raped the victim for about four days and did not observe any humanity towards the victim. The fact that rape was committed with victim after kidnapping her on her way to school, makes the offence even more heinous," said additional sessions judge Amit Sahrawat in an order dated May 1.

The court was hearing the case against the man who was convicted in Feb this year of the offences of rape and kidnapping, and under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act. TNN

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Gut-Wrenching: Your Favourite Snack May Pack Harmful Punch

Higher Intake Of Ultra-Processed Food Can Lead To Shorter Life Span: Study

Anuja Jaiswal
@timesgroup.com

New Delhi: A higher intake of ultra-processed food is associated with a slightly higher mortality, driven by reasons other than cardiovascular diseases.

This was found in a 30-year study published in the British Medical Journal (BMJ) recently.

"We have reasons and empirical evidence to believe that indulging in a diet rich in such products may lead to a shortened lifespan," city-based doctors said.

Dr Pankaj Verma, senior consultant for internal medicine at Narayana Hospital, said: "While occasional indulgence in ultra-processed foods may not significantly impact overall health, habitual and excessive consumption can adversely affect it. It is difficult to specify a daily threshold for acceptable ultra-processed food consumption. However, as per ICMR dietary guidelines, we advise limiting their intake and prioritizing whole, unprocessed or minimally processed foods. We emphasise a diverse array of nutrient-rich foods such as fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean proteins and healthy fats while minimising the consumption of unhealthy fats, sugars and salt. Healthy dietary habits

BOTH VEG, NON-VEG ITEMS HARMFUL

Substituting ultra-processed items with whole, minimally processed foods can offer superior nutrition and mitigate the risk of adverse health effects

It should be restricted to maximum two servings per day

Heavily processed meat items like sausages, bacon and deli products are associated with an increased risk of certain diseases, including cancer

are paramount to disease prevention and well-being."

Ultra-processed foods include pre-prepared meals, sausages, nuggets, sweets, biscuits, pastries, buns, cakes and chips, among others. "As these foods are high in sugars and saturated fats, the intake will increase the incidence



48-53% higher risk of anxiety and common mental disorders and 12% more risk of type 2 diabetes

Higher ultra-processed food intake is associated with about a 50% increased risk of cardiovascular disease-related death

of heart disease, diabetes and obesity. One needs to minimise the intake of such foods and additionally include a lot of whole foods like who-

le grains, legumes, fruits, and vegetables," Dr Ritika Samaddar, chief dietician at Max Hospital Saket, said. She added that among ultra-processed foods, meat/poultry/seafood-based ready-to-eat products were identified as particularly concerning.

Discussing its harmful impact, Dr Ajay Agarwal, director of internal medicine at Fortis Hospital in Noida, stated: "There is convincing evidence that higher intake of ultra-processed food is associated with about a 50% increased risk of cardiovascular disease-related deaths, a 48-53% higher risk of anxiety and common mental disorders, and a 12% greater risk of Type 2 diabetes."

He added that a person needs to avoid ultra-processed foods as much as possible. "In day-to-day life, not all can be avoided, but their intake should be minimised," Dr Piyush Ranjan, senior consultant and vice-chairman in the department of gastroenterology at Sir Ganga Ram Hospital. Headed that overall, a balanced diet is important.

Echoing similar views, Neelima Bisht, chief of clinical nutrition and dietetics at Paras Health, said: "Eating a balanced diet rich in whole foods is more beneficial for long-term health than fixating solely on avoiding ultra-processed foods."



Poll body's plan to boost voter turnout gets 16L signed pledges

New Delhi: The Delhi poll body's initiative to boost electoral participation has witnessed nearly 16 lakh signed commitments pledging to vote in the general elections, it said on Sunday.

Launched recently, the 'Sankalp Patra' initiative has been spearheaded by the chief electoral officer's office and targeted schools under the Municipal Corporation of Delhi and the New Delhi Municipal Council.

"The Sankalp Patra, a pledge form, was distributed to students who, in turn, brought those to their parents to sign, committing to vote," the poll body said in a statement.

"As of now, nearly 16 lakh signed commitments have been collected, pledging participation in the upcoming elections on May 25," the poll body said.

Praising the initiative, Delhi CEO P. Krishnamurthy highlighted the pivotal role of academic institutions in nurturing a culture of democratic participation from a young age.

As Delhi prepares for the elections, the initiative aims to boost voter turnout and instil civic duty in students by involving them in the democratic process, the statement added. The national capital's seven Lok Sabha seats go to the polls on May 25. PTI

Increased checks in Aravalis: 180 forest watchers soon to curb illegal activities

Gurgaon: The forest department is planning to recruit 180 forest watchers in Faridabad to curb encroachments in the Aravalis and monitor the eco-sensitive forest areas. The areas of focus will be Alipur Sikhar, Surajkund and Pali, which have been witnessing a surge in illegal construction, tree felling, and land grabbing.

The department has sent a request for approval to the higher authorities in Chandigarh. The proposal outlines the need for additional manpower to safeguard the region's natural resources and biodiversity. The department believes that the deployment of forest watchers will act as a strong deterrent against encroachers and help in the conservation of the fragile ecosystem. The total budget for this initiative is estimated to be Rs 20 lakh, which will cover the recruitment process, training, and necessary equipment for the forest watchers. TNN

for additional manpower to safeguard the region's natural resources and biodiversity.

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In Tiwari's rally, BJP trains guns at Cong, AAP

Vibha Sharma
@timesgroup.com

New Delhi: Comparing the Congress symbol to demon Bhasmasura's hand, Kompeella Madhavi Latha, BJP's firebrand candidate from Hyderabad, said Congress had a "past of burning up anyone wherever it goes".

She was campaigning for BJP MP and candidate Manoj Tiwari in Burari's Kamal Vihar on Sunday, which falls under North East Delhi Lok Sabha constituency.

"Congress will drown anyone with whom it collaborates, and in Delhi, it has no future. In fact, AAP is a step ahead and it doesn't mind insulting and assaulting its own woman MP," she added.

Expressing disappointment over broken roads and major drains being flooded with garbage in Kamal Vihar, the BJP member asked locals



BJP MP Manoj Tiwari addresses a jansabha at Burari

if they wanted the same future for their children. "I was unable to find a road amidst potholes. With so much garbage scattered all over the place, it was difficult to reach this place. It doesn't look like

a part of the capital. AAP MLA seems to have done nothing to improve the standard of living for locals. CM should be asked to live here for a few days," she said. Latha is contesting the

election against the sitting MP for Hyderabad seat, Asaduddin Owaisi of AIMIM.

"When Tiwari bhैया tries to do something, AAP does not let his work proceed. The party that can't provide better health and infrastructure despite being in power for so many years has no right to ask for votes from the public," she said. "It is high time to bring not just the MP but even the MLA from BJP in the next assembly elections," she added.

At another event in Burari, Union minister Giriraj Singh said, "I am a soldier of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, and when people say that we talk about Hindu-Muslim issues, I want to ask, has our Manoj Tiwari ever set fire anywhere in Jahangirpuri? Those who have settled are people of a particular mindset. There is a force working within the country to

break it. It is my duty that if anyone conspires to break the country, I will have to answer them too," he said.

Tiwari told the public that so many schemes launched by the Centre have not yet reached the people of the national capital because of the state govt.

"Delhi govt has a budget of Rs 73,000 crore for the national capital, and each assembly constituency gets around Rs 1,000 crore. If a small amount of this were spent in the area, the situation wouldn't be like this," he said.

Its vote share down to 1% in 2019, BSP eyes political revival in Delhi

Atul Mathur@timesgroup.com

New Delhi: A big challenger to the two established political players in Delhi in the first decade of the 21st century, Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) lost its support base and vote share to AAP 2013 onwards, but its spirit remained undiminished.

The Mayawati-led party, like previous elections, has fielded its candidates on all seven Lok Sabha seats and is hoping to put up a much improved performance. BSP's Delhi state chief Laxman Singh said the party was resolute in its belief that its vote share would increase and all constituencies would see a triangular contest.

"It is not a bipolar contest in Delhi anymore. Our candidates are faring really well," Singh said.

"Unlike other parties, our

campaigns are not big. But our candidates and workers are going door to door and establishing a connection with the electorate," the BSP Delhi president added.

The party has this time given a ticket to former Delhi minister Raaj Kumar Anand, who resigned from govt and AAP in April, from New Delhi Lok Sabha constituency. In East Delhi, it has fielded Md Waqar Choudhary who earlier claimed to have campaigned for AAP. BSP has given tickets to Muslim candidates on two more seats—Abul Kalam Azad, a lawyer, in Chandni Chowk and Abdul Basit in South Delhi. The other candidates include Vishakha, the lone woman in the BSP's line up, from West Delhi, Vijay Baudh from the reserved constituency of North West Delhi and Ashok Kumar in North East Delhi.

"We have fielded three Muslim candidates this time. No other major party ever gives tickets to Muslim candidates despite their decent numbers across the capital," said another BSP functionary. BSP made its poll debut in 1989 by fielding candidates on 245 seats in the country and four of them scored a victory. The party contested five seats in Delhi that year but barely managed 3.6% vote share. BSP founder Kanshi Ram contested from East Delhi parliamentary constituency and got 11.2% votes. BSP's best performance came in 2008 Delhi legislative assembly polls when it secured 14% votes, won two seats and was second on six. However, its performance started sliding since then. In 2014 Lok Sabha elections, BSP bagged 1.2% votes, which dropped to 1% in 2019 elections.

The party sent 17 councillors to MCD in 2007, 15 in 2012 and three in 2017. It, however, failed to open the account in 2022.

The 2009 Lok Sabha polls also saw some candidates with deep pockets contesting on BSP tickets and even getting a decent number of votes.

"Our candidates are well enough to contest elections on their own. Those with huge money go to other political parties. We ensure that no one with any kind of criminal cases is fielded," said Singh. "You will see our candidates giving a tough fight. The entry of Raaj Kumar Anand into our party will have a positive impact in not only New Delhi, where he is contesting, but on all seats," he added.

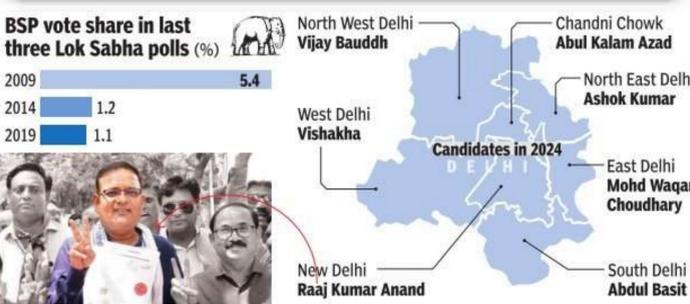
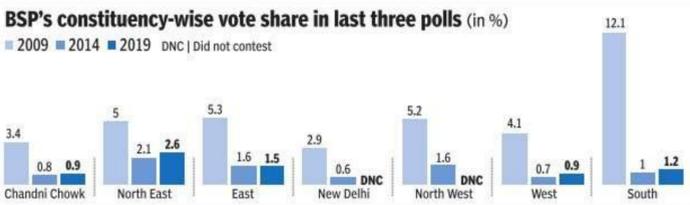
While BSP is hopeful of turning it into a triangular contest, the rival parties are dismissive about them. "BSP is not relevant anymore. Some of the independents may get more votes than BSP's candidates," said an AAP functionary, requesting anonymity. "Anand won the assembly election only because he was contesting on the AAP symbol," he added.

Delhi Congress' communications in-charge and former MLA Anil Bharadwaj also believes that BSP candidates will not make much impact this time. "Dalit voters have been supporting Congress and they will vote for the alliance this time," he said.

A Delhi BJP functionary, however, said BSP would definitely cut the Cong-AAP alliance's votes in New Delhi, North East Delhi, East Delhi and North West Delhi.

"BSP is a cadre-based party and has a good support base in some areas. Those voters would have voted for the alliance if BSP was not contesting," said the Delhi BJP functionary.

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On Road To Safety? Fatalities Down 6% In First Five Months

Cops Cite Innovative Traffic Management, Better Rule Enforcement

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: Fatal accidents on Delhi's roads have reduced by 6% from Jan to May 15 this year compared to the same period last year, according to data shared by Delhi Traffic Police on Sunday.

The number of fatalities in these accidents has also seen a decline of over 6% in 2024 compared to 2023. Last year, 544 fatal accidents resulted in 552 deaths, while this year, the numbers have decreased to 511 accidents

and 518 fatalities. Officers from the Delhi Traffic Police attribute this improvement to rigorous enforcement of traffic rules, robust awareness campaigns, and innovative traffic management strategies.

A senior traffic police officer explained that the reduction is due to stringent deployment and vehicle checks, particularly at critical junctions at night to catch cases of drunk driving, which is a common cause of accidents.

The data also highlighted

the top ten roads in Delhi with the highest number of fatal crashes this year. Ring Road recorded the most fatalities with 33 deaths, followed by the Outer Ring Road with 31 deaths, and Grand Trunk Road with 27 deaths.

According to the Delhi Crash Report 2022, which identified 117 crash-prone zones, the Ring Road (25 accidents), GT Karnal Road (17), and Outer Ring Road (15) had the most crashes.

Specific high-risk locations include Mukarba

Chowk, Majnu Ka Tila-Outer Ring Road Stretch, and Azadpur Chowk. Pedestrians are particularly vulnerable at spots like Britannia Chowk, the vicinity of GB Pant Hospital, Peeragarhi, and Madipur metro stations, data showed.

A senior official noted, "With this information, we can implement targeted enforcement measures to enhance road safety and ensure compliance with traffic regulations, ultimately aiming to reduce fatalities on these roads."

In addition, officers of the Delhi Traffic Police said, "We are prioritising community engagement and collaboration to foster a culture of road safety. Educational programs conducted in partnership with schools, colleges, and various stakeholders have been instrumental in raising awareness about the importance of adhering to traffic regulations and adopting safe driving practices," they said.

Various initiatives, including prosecution for reckless and drunken driving, robust enforcement policies, real-time data analysis, and driver education and training programs, have also contributed to the decrease in fatalities. Regular meetings are also being held with stakeholders to ensure that issues are addressed promptly and effectively, officers said.

The Self-Help Question

CITY CITY BANG BANG

SANTOSH DESAI



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

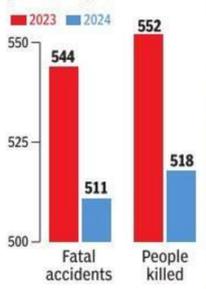
Often, the need for self-help prescriptions is a function of time. At critical moments of our lives, for instance, when we lose a loved one, we find that what comforts us most is the cliched, but heartfelt support expressed by those close to us. We don't look for brilliance in condolence messages; we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

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

santosh365@gmail.com

RING ROAD DEADLIEST

This year (January to May 15), there was a 6% dip in fatal accidents and no. of people killed in comparison with the corresponding period last year



10 stretches that saw maximum fatal crashes in 2024



AI generated

Chowk, Majnu Ka Tila-Outer Ring Road Stretch, and Azadpur Chowk. Pedestrians are particularly vulnerable at spots like Britannia Chowk, the vicinity of GB Pant Hospital, Peeragarhi, and Madipur metro stations, data showed.

Manual scavenging: Kin of 3 who died in 2017 to get ₹30L

New Delhi: Delhi High Court has directed the city authorities to pay Rs 30 lakh compensation each to the families of three sanitation workers who died during manual scavenging in 2017.

The high court allowed the petition by the family members seeking higher ex gratia in accordance with the Supreme Court order in 2023 which increased the compensation payable to the dependents of the victims who lost their lives in manual scavenging to Rs 30 lakh from the existing Rs 10 lakh.

The family members said in the petition that the three sanitation workers died in Aug 2017 while cleaning a drain in Lajpat Nagar. The plea said the deca-

sed were engaged by Delhi Jal Board sub-contractor.

"It can be seen that the directions issued by the Supreme Court were expressly made applicable to all the statutory bodies including corporations, railways, cantonments as well as the agencies under its control.

"Moreover, the central and state govts were directed to ensure that the rehabilitation measures were taken with respect to sewage workers, including the family of those who have lost their lives. Specifically, it was directed that the compensation of Rs 10 lakh that was given to the family members of the deceased workers be enhanced to Rs 30 lakh," Justice Sachin Datta said.

The high court said ne-

cessarily, the ameliorative directions, strictures and the embargo imposed by the Supreme Court are applicable to the Delhi Jal Board (DJB) as also to any agency that may be engaged by the board within any part of Delhi in connection with the work relating to the collection of sewage or carrying out connected works.

"Any disregard or violation thereto would invite strict consequences" as envisaged in the apex court verdict, it said.

Considering the reasoning given by the apex court, it would be a travesty if the entitlement of the family members of the deceased scavenging workers is confined to Rs 10 lakh, the high court said.

Fire in week-old hotel chokes 1 to death

Avishek Kumar
@timesgroup.com

Noida: A 27-year-old woman suffocated to death while her friend is battling grievous injuries after a fire broke out in a hotel in Sector 104 on Saturday evening.

A physiotherapist by profession, Palak, and her engineer friend Tarun Kumar of Delhi's Mayur Vihar phase I were the first customers of Hotel Moon, which opened on Akshay Tritiya on May 10. They had taken a room on the top floor of the six-storey building.

Chief fire officer Pradeep Pal said the hotel staff wasted some 30 minutes trying to do use the flames on their own and called up the fire department only when the blaze went out of control.



The fire broke out in the hotel located in Sector 104 of Noida

"We got a call at 5.35pm. Ten fire tenders were sent to the spot from various fire stations. The blaze was brought under control in 25 minutes. The flames would not have spread to other floors had the hotel staff informed us in time," he added.

The fire, Pal said, broke out on the fourth floor while the smoke barrelled up the AC duct to the sixth-floor room of Palak and Tarun.

"We formed a team of rescuers who went to the terrace of the adjacent building and brought out the two per-

sons. Both of them were unconscious and sent to a nearby hospital, where the woman was declared dead on arrival," he added.

The hotel was inaugurated on May 10. "Vimlesh Jha, who owns the building, had leased it out for three years to Akash Sharma, a resident of Shanti in UP. We have come to know that the hotel staff did not even try to call the two customers and inform them about the fire. There were only two guests at the hotel then," Pal said.

Preliminary investigation revealed a short circuit might have caused the fire when ACs were being installed on the fourth floor.

"No, the hotel did not have any no objection certificate from the fire department," Pal added.

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125 missing people reunited with kin

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: As many as 125 people who went missing in the capital, including 23 children, have been traced and reunited with their families by Shahdara district police in the past six months. The missing people were recovered from across the country, police said on Sunday.

These recoveries followed reports of missing persons filed at various police stations and entries recorded in daily logs. Most of the missing people were found at bus stands, railway stations, and other crowded areas in the city.

Police teams traced individuals from across ten states, with the highest number of recoveries from Uttar Pradesh.

"In one case, a 10-year-old girl went missing from Gandhi Nagar in the city. She had failed to return home from school. A case of kidnaping was registered. After reviewing CCTV footage from the school, the team observed the girl heading toward the Gandhi Nagar bus stand. By analyzing footage from 65 cameras, the girl was eventually located in the Narela Industrial area and reunited with her family," said a senior police official.

Similarly, four children who went missing from Krishna Nagar were found at Old Delhi Railway Station.

Among those recovered, 15 individuals had rewards of Rs 20,000.

4 held for stabbing 20-yr-old to death

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: Four people, including two minors, have been held for allegedly brutally stabbing to death a 20-year-old man with knives and ice-picks in northeast Delhi's Seelampur.

The incident occurred after a verbal altercation between them over a petty issue, police said on Sunday.

According to Joy Tirkey, DCP (north-east), the incident took place around 10.30 pm on Friday in gali number 5 of the Gautam Puri area.

"The victim was identified as Iqbal (20), a native of Bihar. He was a daily wage labourer in a jeans manufacturing company. Iqbal sustained six stab wounds on his left and right thighs. Upon being notified by the public, he was immediately rushed to a hospital. He succumbed to his injuries during treatment," said the senior police official.

Cops said that a case was registered under the relevant sections of murder under the IPC.

"The prime accused in the case are Mohd Adil Ansari (19) and Faisal (18)," police added.

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93.8% Class X

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Kapurthala, Punjab



Manveer
90% Class X



Harman Kumar
81% Class XII

Karkardooma, Delhi



Sarah Sharma
97.2% Class X



Disha Kothari
96.4% Class XII

Kashipur, Uttarakhand



Nitin Chaudhary
95.6% Class X



Ayan Mansoori
94.2% Class XII

Morena, MP



Dev Dandotiya
92.3% Class X



Kushagra Goyal
96.6% Class X

Muzaffarnagar, UP



Moksh Ahuja
97.6% Class XII

Nainital, Uttarakhand



Shreya Agarwal
95% Class X



Garv Gupta
91% Class XII

Noida Extension, UP



Arshia Saroha
97.8% Class X



Hitesh Kumar
82.06% Class XII

Panipat, Haryana



Advay Singla
95.6% Class X



Aditi Singh
90.2% Class XII

Paschim Vihar, Delhi



Parmarth Kumar
93.8% Class X



Zaina Ahmed
96.4% Class XII

Patna, Bihar



Aryan
96.6% Class X



Prerna Singh
95.8% Class XII

Purnea, Bihar



Ayushi Ranjan
90.17 Class XII

Raipur, Chhattisgarh



Ananya Joshi
95.4% Class X



Manthan Makhija
90% Class XII

Rewari, Haryana





DON'T LET THOSE PLANNING TO REPEAL CAA, LOCK RAM TEMPLE FORM GOVT: SHAH | 13

AFTER ADHIR ROW, KHARGE POSTER DEFACED OUTSIDE CONGRESS OFFICE IN KOLKATA | 13



'B'deshi pirates' hack forest guard to death in Sundarbans

Krishnendu Mukherjee & Monotosh Chakraborty | TNN

Kolkata: A 59-year-old forest guard, on the verge of retirement, was hacked to death while three other forest workers escaped by jumping in the river inside Sundarbans Tiger Reserve (STR) on Saturday night after an alleged attack by Bangladeshi pirates.

A murder case has been initiated under IPC 302. Victim Amalendu Halder, a resident of Raidighi, was posted at Netidhopani camp. Sources said such a heinous incident has not occurred in the tiger reserve area in recent times. In 2019, a group of foresters was assaulted by villagers in South 24 Parganas division while probing a tiger poaching case. Last Dec, forest dept arrested six Bangladeshi fishermen who had entered Indian waters.

This incident has also highlighted acute staff shortage in STR, where the current strength of forest guards is 36 in contrast to the sanctioned strength of 110.

Chief wildlife warden Debal Roy said the incident took place around 10pm when four forest personnel from Netidhopani were patrolling Gosaba 1 compartment on a small boat. The team encountered 10-15 robbers, believed to be from Bangladesh. "The intruders attacked the forest staffs, forcing them to jump into the water. While three survived, Halder lost his life. His body was found in Morabani khal, with injuries on his head," Roy added.

An FIR has been registered and a massive mobilisation of staff is under way to apprehend the perpetrators, who are believed to be in Indian waters, according to Roy.

2 students feared drowned in Ganga

Agra: Two students were swept away and were feared drowned while they were taking a dip in the Ganga canal in UP's Muzaffarnagar, police said Sunday, adding that rescue teams were searching for them, reports **Mohammad Dilshad**.

Inspector Lokendra Singh said the students, from Meerut and Kargil, were likely swept away by the swift current.

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

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

Priyanka Kakodkar @timesgroup.com

In the 2019 Lok Sabha elections which followed the Pulwama attack, Mumbai's turnout was 55.4%, the highest in three decades. This was a departure from the electoral apathy typically seen in India's financial capital. Polling in the city had sunk to an all-time low of 41.2% in the 1991 polls which followed the

Dance of Democracy P10, 13

Mandir-Mandal agitation and has crossed the half-way mark only three times since.

How will Mumbai score on Monday, with the poll being held in the peak of summer and in the last leg of this drawn out 5-phase election in Maharashtra? In 2019, Mumbai had voted on April 29. This year, voting day is almost a month later, coinciding with school vacation.

Amid concerns about the nationwide turnout so far, Maharashtra has recorded 62.9% overall in the four phas-



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

es of the poll, a marginal increase of 0.4% from 2019. And Mumbai is ground zero of the turmoil which followed the BJP-backed split of Shiv Sena and NCP. It is the birthplace of Shiv Sena and now the backdrop of the prestige battle between its two factions for control over the city.

The campaign has been dominated by emotive issues including the "traitor-loyalist" narrative that followed the Sena split and the Marathi-Gujarati divide which flared up in Ghatkopar. PM Modi made the

"nakli Sena" jibe at Uddhav Thackeray's party.

Slum redevelopment, price rise, transport and infrastructure were among other issues that were raised during poll campaigns.

In 2004 and 2009, the Congress-NCP alliance dominated Mumbai by winning all six seats and the UPA ruled the Centre. BJP and undivided Sena won all six seats in 2014 and 2019 even as PM Modi ruled at the Centre.

Mumbai's history shows the city recorded turnouts of

over 60% until 1977, the election after the Emergency in which Indira Gandhi was defeated. That year, turnout was 61.2%. In the 1967 Lok Sabha polls, it was as high as 68.2%.

However, the decline was sharp in 1991 when the country faced an election just two years after the 1989 polls. Besides the Mandal-Mandir agitation, the 1991 polls also took place after Rajiv Gandhi's assassination.

The turnout crossed the half-way mark in 1998, at 50.3% when the BJP came to power. The next time it surged was in 2014, PM Modi's first term, when the turnout climbed to 51.6% and finally in 2019, it reached a high of 55.4%.

This time, BJP has pulled out all the stops in the hope of making gains in the city and the wider Mumbai Metropolitan region, including changing candidates on all three seats it is contesting in Mumbai. In addition to the six seats in Mumbai, four in the MMR and three in North Maharashtra will also go to polls on Monday.

Tourist hurt in J&K terror hit loses eye, wife battles for life

Ashish Mehta @timesgroup.com

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

The couple, along with 50 members of their extended family, had gone on a holiday to Kashmir on May 10, intending to return on May 20. But their vacation took a tragic turn when terrorists attacked them Saturday evening while they were heading to a resort in Pahalgam for dinner.

"Some people removed their blankets and started shooting. A bullet pierced my brother's eye. My sister-in-law has a shoulder wound," Sunny's elder brother Parvez Khan, 39, recounted Sunday the horror that unfolded before his



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

eyes the previous night. "Oh, we're so happy coming to Kashmir!" he exclaimed with grief and sarcasm from Anantnag.

His brother is in ventilator support. "My brother's one eye has been removed, and the other is being operated upon," said Parvez. He and his wife are taking care of Sunny and Farah's two

children. Since the attack, Parvez has been inundated with phone calls. "Just pray," he implored. "What has my brother done, or our family? Why was he targeted?"

In Jaipur, their parents are preparing to fly to Kashmir — first flight Monday. Aslam Khan and Mazidn Begam, consoled by many at their home, are holding onto hope. "Allah zindagi dega (Allah will give life), that's what we are praying for," Aslam said.

The attack is seen as an attempt to sabotage Lok Sabha elections in J&K, where Anantnag-Rajouri constituency votes on May 25. This was the third terrorist attack on non-natives in J&K this election season. On April 17, a 35-year-old roadside food vendor from Bihar was shot dead in Anantnag, and on April 8, a tourist taxi driver from New Delhi suffered bullet wounds in Shopian district when he stopped at a restaurant while transporting tourists.

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

Gitesh Shelke @timesgroup.com

Pune: Two young software engineers died after a Porsche Taycan, driven by the 17-year-old son of a prominent builder, hit their motorcycle near a pub in the upscale neighbourhood of Kalyaninagar in Pune around 2.30am Sunday. The driver was detained and Juvenile Justice Board (JJB) released him later with conditions.

Police identified the deceased as Aneesh Awadhia, 24, and Ashwini Koshta, 24, both from Madhya Pradesh. They had studied at a Pune engineering college before joining a software company.

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



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

The vehicle also hit a parked car and a two-wheeler before coming to a stop.

Aneesh's friend Agib Ramzan Mulla, 23, witnessed the accident and filed a complaint. Mulla, along with passersby, chased the Porsche, which had its airbags deployed, hindering the driver's visibility. People pulled the driver and his two friends — classmates from a

prominent Pune school — out, thrashed them, and wrecked the car before police detained the trio.

DCP Vijay Magar said: "Preliminary investigation revealed that the driver and his friends were returning home from a pub in Mundhwa. We have collected the driver's blood samples to check for alcohol." DCP (crime) Amol Zende said the FIR includes a charge against the driver's father for allowing his underage son to drive. A case was also registered against the pub for serving liquor to minors.

Lawyers representing the minor said: "JJB ordered our client's release on bail with conditions, including working with a traffic constable, attending counseling, writing an essay on accidents, and painting traffic awareness boards."

Cops raze illegal constructions of 4 accused of cow slaughter

Indore: Police Sunday razed illegal constructions belonging to four men accused of cow slaughter in MP's Dewas.

Early Sunday, a farmer in Khetakhedi village found his cows missing. He saw people packing something into sacks nearby. When he approached them, some fled and a few threatened him. He saw remains of his two cows in sacks and alerted villagers," ASP Jayveer Singh Bhadoria said.

Man assaulted for 'cattle smuggling'

One person was arrested on charge of thrashing a 60-year-old man on suspicion of cattle smuggling in Jharkhand on Sunday, police said, reports **Sanjay Sahay**. It is alleged that the victim, Saraswati Ram, was also stripped and dragged from a motorcycle. Raids are under way to nab two other accused.

Villagers, along with right-wing activists, caught a 'suspect', Aamin, and thrashed him. They then blocked roads for over two hours. They dispersed after district administration assured them of action.

"Illegal constructions of Aamin, Aman alias Shetty, Shahrukh, and Wasim have been demolished. The first three were implicated in cow slaughter on Saturday night. Wasim was involved in a similar case on May 12," ASP added.

Close shave for 179 on board as AI Exp aircraft catches fire

Joy Sengupta & Nithya Mandyam | TNN

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

This was Air India's second fire scare within days. On May 17, one of its Bengaluru-bound planes had returned to Delhi after a fire warning from its auxiliary power unit. That flight had around 175 passengers.

Speaking about Saturday's events, an Air India Express spokesperson told TOI that "the crew accomplished the evacuation with no injuries to any guests". "A thorough investigation with the regulator shall be accomplished to establish the (fire) cause," the official said.

A spokesperson for Bangalore International Airport Ltd (BIAL) said "a full-scale emergency was declared and the fire promptly extinguished upon landing". Sources said that apart from the airline's investigation, the Directorate-General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) would conduct a probe.

"We took off (from Bengaluru) at 10.50pm. Around



The flight to Kochi returned to Bengaluru for an emergency landing after a fire was noticed in an engine after take-off

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

Piyano's husband Jose recalled that after the aircraft stopped, the cabin crew opened the doors, including emergency exits. "Evacuation slides were deployed. We were asked to exit immediately and run towards the field near the runway. It was a scary situation, and our hand baggage was left back in the plane. As we ran, fire tenders and airport officials rushed towards the aircraft. We were in the field for around 15 minutes before being taken to the terminal in a bus. The ground and cabin crew did a commendable job," Jose said.

According to Jose, officials initially assured them of an alternative flight. "However later, they just backed out, saying there won't be any flight. This angered the flyers. Finally, the airline agreed and issued us fresh boarding passes."

Wrong implant inserted during arm surgery, says Kerala man

Kozhikode: Another allegation of medical negligence surfaced at Govt Medical College in Kerala's Kozhikode after the relatives of a youth alleged a wrong implant was inserted during a surgery of his fractured arm on Saturday. On May 16, a four-year-old girl scheduled to undergo surgery for removal of an additional finger in her hand was instead operated on her tongue.

The Kochi youth who had the surgery Saturday fractured his forearm and dislocated a joint in an accident on May 12. His mother said one end of an inserted wire was protruding from his arm, arousing suspicion.

Medical college authorities refuted the allegation of a wrong implant and negligence. "A plate was fixed on the broken forearm and a K-wire was inserted to the dislocated joint. The cut end of K-wire was left protruding and will be removed after four weeks," said Dr Jacob Mathew, head of the orthopaedic department.

Police have, however, registered a case and said further action would be taken if a medical board finds negligence. TNN

MP Dalit couple thrashed after row over son

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

Karan Singh (46) and wife Betibai (40) returned to Kilara in Mungaoli region after three months on Friday. They had been away fearing harassment by a strongman in the village. The dispute started after the couple's son was accused of molesting a woman from the influential family. The couple had repeatedly requested police protection but got no assistance. TNN

3 pilgrims die, Char Dham toll 29 in 9 days

Tanmayee Tyagi & Abhyudaya Kotnala | TNN

Dehradun: At least 29 people died, mainly due to heart-related complications, at high-altitude shrines in the past nine days since the Char Dham yatra began on May 10.

The toll surged after three pilgrims lost their lives in the yatra on Saturday, including one in Badrinath and two in Yamunotri. Among the vic-



Devotees at Badrinath temple in Chamoli district on Sunday

tims is Shashi Kant, a 49-year-old pilgrim from Surat, who died due to cardiac arrest

during his visit to Badrinath, bringing the total deaths at the shrine to four.

Two more devotees lost their lives while visiting the Yamunotri shrine. Police said 53-year-old Kamlesh Bhai Patel from Gujarat fell ill on his way to Yamunotri and was declared dead at the nearest health centre. Another pilgrim, 54-year-old Rohini Dalvi from Pune passed away in hospital after falling sick in

her hotel in Kharadi village in Uttarkashi. With this, the toll at the shrine has reached 11.

According to Dr B S Rawat, chief medical officer, Uttarkashi, 11 people have died in Yamunotri and 2 in Gangotri shrine. Sources within Rudrapuray administration revealed that the death count at Kedarnath shrine has reached 12, with six deaths occurring on Saturday alone, mostly due to heart-related issues.

School Buzz

The 56th Gowardhan Dasa Declamation was held at **Springdales School, Pusa Road**. The contest was instituted in 1967 in memory of Gowardhan Dasa, founder chairman of Springdales Education Society. School principal Dr Mala Gupta welcomed the gathering and the event opened with a piano presentation and band performance. Sixteen teams from the leading schools of Delhi NCR participated in the event. Prominent academics, Prof Nidhi Gulati and Debjani Sengupta of DU, and independent journalist, Bhumika Saraswati, judged the contest. It was



Springdales School, Pusa Road

presided over by CV Srikanth, Old Springdalian, batch of 1985. The declamation covered a range of topics, from gender and society, language and art, to the effects of poverty, hunger, and violence in the world. The rolling trophy for the best team was awarded to Springdales School, Dhauila Kuan. The Anil Das Trophy for the second-best team was secured by DPS Mathura Road. The KC Khanna special award for the best speaker was awarded to the host school and Bluebells International School. The host school did not compete for the Gowardhan Das and Anil Das trophies.

Shaheed Bishan Singh Memorial Sr Sec School, Mansarovar Garden hosted the 22nd Satguru Ram Singh inter-school Gurbani Kirtan competition. Around



Shaheed Bishan Singh Memorial Sr Sec School

200 students from thirteen schools from all over Delhi participated in the junior & senior categories. School chairman H S Hanspal and Suba Balwinder Singh, along with judges, Sharanjeet Bhalra, Hajoori Ragi Basant Singh, Astinder Kaur, and Anjali Sudan, were captivated by melodious renditions. The event, meticulously organised under school principal Puja Singhal and director Satwant Kaur. The winning teams from both categories received trophies, certificates, and cash prizes.

St Cecilia's School, Vikaspuri organised an inter-school competition 'Odyssey 2024'. Around 900 students from 56 schools from across Delhi and NCR witnessed the exquisite experiential learning, social skills and donned the spirit of competing and winning. Students of classes I to XII enrolled in different categories of 12 well designed, caricatured and age-appropriate events. The day commenced with the welcome of school director, principal, pre-primary headmistress, coordina-



St Cecilia's School, Vikaspuri

tors, academic advisor (Primary). The onset witnessed exuberant cultural presentation by host school students. Vandana stuti, music choir melodious presentation, energetic French dance and Yoga dance presentation won the appreciation of all guests and dignitaries. The school director praised and appreciated the enthusiasm of all participants. The day concluded with prize distribution ceremony. The winners were awarded certificates and trophies.

Maharaja Agarsain Public School, Ashok Vihar recently celebrated its investiture ceremony. The criteria for selecting the council included academic performance, sports involvement and engagement in co-curricular activities. Digital voting was utilised to ensure transparency and equity, providing students from classes III to XII with the opportunity to participate in the electoral process. Candidates showcased their visions for enhancing various facets of our school, from academic programs to extracurricular offerings and student welfare. School principal Alka Sahni conferred



Maharaja Agarsain Public School, Ashok Vihar

the badges upon newly appointed senior head boy Etant Rustagi, and senior head girl Khyati Kapoor. Other council members, including senior and junior vice heads, received their badges from coordinators. The head boy and head girl expressed gratitude for the entrusted responsibility. The outgoing head boy and head girl passed the baton of responsibility and the school flag to the newly elected school heads.

30 प्रो लोक सेवा आयोग

क्र०	विज्ञापन संख्या	विभाग	विभाग सं०	पद का नाम	साक्षात्कार की तिथि व समय	पदों की संख्या
1.	D-4/E-1/2023	उपरो आर्युष (होम्योपैथी)	S-11	प्रोफेसर-प्रीक्टिस ऑफ अर्राह 02:00 बजे	28 मई, 2024 को पूर्वाह्न 10:00 बजे एवं अपराह्न 02:00 बजे	02
2.	D-4/E-1/2023	उपरो आर्युष (होम्योपैथी)	S-11	प्रोफेसर-आर्गेनन ऑफ मेडिसिन	29 मई, 2024 को पूर्वाह्न 10:00 बजे	04

साक्षात्कार कार्यक्रम का विस्तृत सूचना आयोग की वेबसाइट <https://uppsc.up.nic.in> पर उपलब्ध है।
संख्या: 233/09/डीओआर/एन-11/2018-19 टीओसी-8 (रखन लाल शिवहरे) संयुक्त सचिव।
दिनांक: प्रयागराज, 18 मई, 2024

KARNATAKA STATE MEDICAL SUPPLIES CORPORATION LIMITED
No. 1, Dr. Siddaiah Puranik Road, KHB Colony, Magadi Road, Bengaluru - 560079, Phone: +91-80-29619801
Email: md.ksmscl@gmail.com

No: KSMSCL/DRUGS/RETND/SBC/SCD/POC-1/01/2023-24 Dated: 18.05.2024

TENDER NOTIFICATION

Ref: 1. Tender Notification No: KSMSCL/ DRUGS/ RETND/ SBC/SCD/POC-1/01/2023-24, Dated: 18.05.2024. (IND-0114)

Nationwide Tender is invited through e-Tendering system under KTPP Act 1999 and Rules 2000 for the following tender:

1. Retender for the supply of Point of Care Kits Under State Blood Cell Programme (IND-0114).

Details regarding EMD, Terms and Conditions and other information are available in the Tender Document, which can be downloaded from the website <https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in> from 18.05.2024. The eligible tenderers shall submit their e-tenders under e-procurement platform for above mentioned tenders. Further information if any may be obtained from this office.

Sd/- Managing Director
KSMSCL, Bengaluru.

DIPR/CP/RO7SI/AAPL/2024-25

CHITTARANJAN LOCOMOTIVE WORKS

CORRIGENDUM

No. PCMM/CLW/HWH/E-Procurement/24/10 Dated: 17.05.2024. The following Corrigendum of E-Tender is for supply of materials for manufacture of Electric Locomotive. The Prospective likely suppliers are requested to look up the website www.reps.gov.in for detailed instructions. These are E-Tenders only electronic offer bids shall be accepted. Sl. No.; Tender Notice no.; Tender No; Tender Opening Date are as follows: [01]; Sl. No. 119 of PCMM/CLW/HWH/E-Procurement/24/25 Dated: 24/04/2024; 25245073; Tender Opening Date is to be read as "30/05/2024" instead of existing entry; [02]; Sl. No. 112 of PCMM/CLW/HWH/E-Procurement/24/24 Dated: 19/04/2024; 25245054; Tender Opening Date is to be read as "27/05/2024" instead of existing entry; [03]; Sl. No. 111 of PCMM/CLW/HWH/E-Procurement/24/25 Dated: 24/04/2024; 29245027; Tender Opening Date is to be read as "23/05/2024" instead of existing entry; [04]; Sl. No. 110 of PCMM/CLW/HWH/E-Procurement/24/24 Dated: 19/04/2024; 29245028; Tender Opening Date is to be read as "29/05/2024" instead of existing entry; [05]; Sl. No. 106 of PCMM/CLW/HWH/E-Procurement/24/24 Dated: 19/04/2024; 29245023; Tender Opening Date is to be read as "28/05/2024" instead of existing entry; [06]; Sl. No. 48 of PCMM/CLW/HWH/E-Procurement/24/15 Dated: 08/03/2024; 29245019; Tender Opening Date is to be read as "23/05/2024" instead of existing entry; [07]; Sl. No. 105 of PCMM/CLW/HWH/E-Procurement/24/23 Dated: 16/04/2024; 29245030; Tender Opening Date is to be read as "23/05/2024" instead of existing entry; PRR/424 PCMM/CLW/HWH

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Labourers from Jharkhand killed, injured in Imphal shooting

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

The body of the deceased, identified as Ram Hangsada, is kept at the morgue of Regional Institute of Medical Sciences in Imphal. Bittu Murmu, 22, and Mitalan Soren, 50, are recuperating at Raj Medicity in Imphal East, police said Sunday.

"The trio came from Godda district in Jharkhand. The wounded men's condition is stable," an officer said. Real estate developers and construction companies had hired them for a project. No group has claimed responsibility for the attack, said the officer.

"The shooting occurred outside their rented accommodation. Locals rushed to the area immediately after hearing gunshots and found a body and the two men on the ground," the officer said. According to sources, the assailants dragged the labourers out before shooting them at close range. Police have registered a suo motu case.

CBI inspector held for graft in MP nursing college probe

Bhopal: CBI has arrested one of its own inspectors for allegedly accepting bribe during the probe into irregularities in Madhya Pradesh's nursing colleges. Four persons, including the inspector stationed at Bhopal's Anti-Corruption Branch, have been arrested on charges of bribery.

This arrest comes as a setback to investigation into widespread irregularities in MP's nursing colleges, say officials. Sources said there could have been as many as 13 arrests across the state, including the four in Bhopal, but it couldn't be confirmed immediately.

A special team from Delhi apprehended the inspector along with the director of a nursing college, his wife, and a middleman allegedly involved in facilitating the bribe. Sources say the CBI inspector was caught red-handed accepting the bribe money. Authorities conducted follow-up searches at the inspector's residence, seizing additional cash and valuables for further investigation. **rw**

Wheat buy may miss target, but set to cross 2023 mark

Punjab, Haryana Recorded Higher Purchases, MP 33% Down

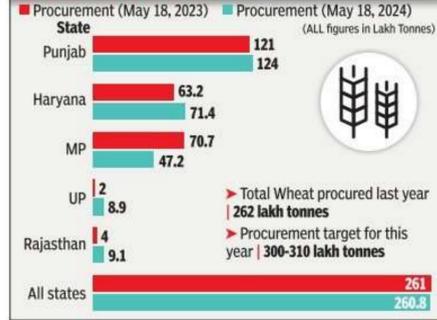
Dipak.Dash@timesgroup.com

New Delhi: Wheat procurement by govt agencies this year is set to cross last year's figure of 262 lakh tonnes in the next couple of days, but is likely to be much less than the estimate. As on Saturday, purchase of the foodgrain was around 261 lakh tonnes and daily arrival now is about 70,000-80,000 tonnes.

Madhya Pradesh, where govt purchase has been nearly 33% less than the procurement last year, has extended the procurement period to May 31. However, Punjab and Haryana recorded higher purchases than last year of 124 lakh tonnes and 71.4 lakh tonnes respectively.

Food Corporation of India (FCI) officials said they were confident of total procurement touching 270 lakh tonnes against earlier estimate of 300-310 lakh tonnes, which was arrived at after consultation with states.

75% OF TOTAL FROM PUNJAB & HRY



"The current level of procurement and the stock that we have will be more than enough to meet the food security requirement of providing free foodgrain to 80 crore poor under the PM Garib Kalyan Yojna and other welfare schemes. We will also have good stock for

market intervention to check prices, if need arises," said a govt official. TOI has learnt that govt agencies are trying to figure out the reason behind less procurement in MP. The state won't be able to achieve the initial target of 80 lakh tonnes.

Though there has been a more than four-fold jump in wheat procurement in UP and 2.5 times in Rajasthan, their contribution to the central pool is hardly 18 lakh tonnes. Govt had expected procurement of around 50 lakh tonnes of wheat from UP, Rajasthan and Bihar. Officials said the procurement period in UP is likely to be extended till June so that more farmers can get the benefit of MSP.

Sources said with the current level of procurement, there is hardly any scope for govt to lift the restriction on wheat export this year. It also remains to be seen whether the Centre will restore the wheat-rice ratio as it was before May 2022. Govt had changed the policy to allocate more rice instead of wheat following a drastic reduction in foodgrain procurement in 2022 due to lower production and record exports that year.

WB Raj Bhavan staffers defy summons, get police notice

Kolkata: The 3 Raj Bhavan employees summoned at Kolkata's Hare Street police station on Sunday did not turn up, prompting police to issue a notice asking them to present themselves on Tuesday, reports **Dwaipayan Ghosh**.

Police said they didn't get any communication from them. Though reports indicated that at least one of them had left Kolkata, police refused to confirm it.

On Thursday, Raj Bhavan special secretary S S Rajput and contractual employees Kusum Chetri and Sant Lal were booked for allegedly restraining a contractual employee who accused governor C V Ananda Bose of molesting her.

A CCTV grab showing an accused woman carrying a bag belonging to the complainant has helped firm up the evidence, said police.

For your motherland!



TMC now preying on maa, maati, manush: PM on Sandeshkhali

Continued from P1

TM.C came to politics with a promise to safeguard 'maa, mati, manush'. Today, TMC is preying on maa, mati, manush. Bengal's women no longer trust TMC after the sins that were committed in Sandeshkhali... As for our sisters from SC-ST families, TMC does not even think of them as humans," Modi said in Purulia.

"They (TMC) are now resorting to blaming the women of Sandeshkhali in language that is unacceptable," he said, alluding to the backlash over two "survivors" retracting their rape allegations and the emergence of a video purportedly showing BJP's Sandeshkhali Block-II chief Gangadhar Koyal admitting the complainants had "done whatever they were told to do". Modi also attacked CM Mamata over her remarks about "a few monks", whom she accused of working for BJP.

"TMC govt has crossed all limits. The whole world recognises Iskcon, Swami Vivekananda's Ramakrishna Mission and Bharat Sevashram Sangha for their work, but Bengal's CM openly threatens them, even taking names. TMC stoops so low just to please its vote bank, least bothered about the feelings of lakhs of people," he said.

At a rally in Hooghly on Saturday, Mamata had said, "Not all monks are the same. There is a maharaj in Behrampur, of whom I have been hearing for a long time... Kar-

PM was silent as he knew charges were not true, says TMC

Trinamool Congress on Sunday alleged that PM Modi "stayed silent" on the Sandeshkhali videos all these days because he was aware that the allegations levelled by BJP that women were abused in Sandeshkhali were not true, report **Dwaipayan Ghosh & Sujoy Khanra**. Responding to PM's charge that TMC was blaming Sandeshkhali women to save its goons, the party's leader in Rajya Sabha, Derek O'Brien, said: "The PM has stopped talking about the 'Modi 420' guarantee. In the last fortnight, he also zipped his lips on Sandeshkhali after the videos surfaced." Calling BJP seniors "migratory birds" who only visit Bengal at election time, he said: "Modi and his minions insult Bengal, degrade the dignity of women and choke the state of funds."

tik Maharaj. The person who says he will not allow any TMC agent in the polling booth."

In Kharagpur, Modi charged TMC with "playing a dangerous game" and trying to alter the state's demography. "Hindus have become a minority (in parts of the state). I won't allow them to do that. Time has come to give them a befitting reply," he said.

Modi, who addressed two rallies in Jangalmahal area, alleged "sub-human treatment" of tribals and Dalits in Bengal.

Tourists heading for cooler climes in HP run into heatwave

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Shimla: Tourists heading to the hill state of Himachal Pradesh to escape the scorching heat of the plains are disappointed to find a heatwave prevailing in parts of the state.

These conditions are likely to continue in isolated pockets of Una, Bilaspur, Hamirpur, Solan, Sirmaur, Kangra, and Shimla districts for the next 4-5 days. There is also a possibility of severe heatwave in these districts.

According to Indian Meteorological Centre, Shimla, the average maximum temperature in the state is likely to increase by 2-3 degrees in this period.

The average minimum temperature for mid hills, low hills, and plains of the state is likely to go up by 2-3 degrees and will remain above normal, whereas the minimum temperature for high hill areas is likely to decrease by 1-2 degrees.

Tourist spots like Shimla, Manali, Dharamshala, Narkanda, and Kufri, which are witnessing a tourist influx, are reeling under sizzling heat these days.

On Sunday, Shimla recorded a maximum tem-



The conditions are likely to continue for the next 4-5 days

perature of 29.5 degrees celsius, which is 4.5 degrees above normal, while Dharamshala logged a maximum temperature of 35.1 degrees celsius — 3.9 degrees above normal.

According to HP state disaster management authority action plan on heatwaves, the state has shown a significant trend of rising temperatures — 0.06 degree celsius per year on annual mean maximum temperature and 0.02 degree celsius per year on annual mean temperature between 1951 and 2010.

The annual mean minimum temperature has shown a decreasing trend of 0.01 degree celsius per year for the same period.

Minor voter son of Etah village gram pradhan, says official

Continued from P1

The video shows the offender flashing different ID cards at intervals and appearing to press the EVM button in front of BJP candidate Mukesh Rajput's photo and the lotus symbol.

UP's chief election officer Navdeep Rinwa said the underage voter is the son of a gram pradhan of a village in Etah district. "An FIR has been registered under sections 171-F and 419 of IPC, and 128, 132 & 136 of the Representation of People Act, 1951 at Nayagaon police station in Etah district," he said.

The village official told TOI that some polling agents took his son to a nearby booth before the start of voting "to participate in the EVM machine inspection/randomisation". "My son pressed the ballot unit several times, shot the video and later shared it."

SP chief Akhilesh shared the video Sunday on X saying, "If Election Commission feels this is wrong, then it must take some action, otherwise... BJP's booth committee is actually a loot committee."

Rahul wrote, "Congress expects from all the officers performing election duty that they should not forget their constitutional responsibility under the pressure of power."

Pole collapses, falls on running train; 3 passengers injured

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Raipur: Three passengers, including a child, were injured when a trackside pole collapsed and struck the 18030 Shalimar-Lokmanya Tilak Express near Raipur on Sunday morning.

The accident was caused by "unauthorized" drilling by Chhattisgarh State Electricity Board (CSEB) near the railway line, said officials.

CSEB denied that the work was unauthorized. The train was passing through Urkura station, around 10km from Raipur, when the pole fell on the train, smashing a window of an AC coach and injuring three passengers, one of them identified as Soumya Mondal.

Railway officials sent an ambulance with doctors to the accident site within five minutes, said officials.

"First-aid was given to the passengers and they were taken to a private hospital in Raipur. All of them are out of danger,"



The pole that fell on the Shalimar-Lokmanya Tilak Express near Raipur

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

Bengaluru: The Centre has pulled up the Karnataka govt for issuing a notification that seeks the return or surrender of wildlife articles by people under the amended Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972. Calling the decision "bad in law", Centre directed state to roll it back immediately, reports **Sandeep Moudgal**.

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

Within days, the Centre wrote a note to the state govt asking for an immediate withdrawal of the notification. The letter issued by Rakesh Kumar Jagenia, deputy inspector general of forests (wildlife) on Jan 24, stated: "The notification is bad in law." Karnataka govt can chalk out its stand after the model code of conduct ends and the Lok Sabha results are announced in June.

No legal bar on second divorce plea on cruelty grounds, says K'taka HC

Bengaluru: There is no legal bar on filing a second petition seeking dissolution of marriage on grounds of cruelty if the earlier petition has been dismissed, Karnataka HC observed, granting divorce to a man, reports **Vasantha Kumar**.

"Even if it is assumed that the husband has failed to discharge his obligation towards the son, the same cannot be a ground to deny divorce if he is able to establish the ground of cruelty against his wife," a division bench comprising Justices Anu Sivaraman and Anant Ramanath Hegde said, setting aside the judgment of a family court in Mysuru.

The couple working in Mysuru married on Jan 28, 2007, and welcomed a son on Jan 26, 2010.

The woman registered a police complaint against her husband, accusing him of demanding Rs 3 lakh from her father. The wife alleged the husband had an illicit relationship with a colleague. The husband, who had earlier filed a divorce plea and withdrew the same in 2018, filed a fresh petition in 2019. On Jan 22, 2021, the family court rejected the plea filed by the husband.

TOI

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BATTLEGROUND INDIA | APRIL 19-JUNE 4, 2024

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

Shalvee.Sharda@timesgroup.com

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

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



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

an interaction," said a Congress spokesperson.

Most palpably, her taking charge of the campaign energised Congress workers in the twin constituencies. In her maiden address to party workers, Priyanka said they had to pull up their socks and be ready to work 20 hours a day. Those working with Priyanka said 'Didi' (as she is affectionately called) led by example. "She began her day with a quick strategy meet and hit the road by 10.30am, returning as late as 11pm," a

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

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

hain. Hum sab ko mil ke inki jeet sunishchit karni hai (All these years, brother Kishori has acted as a bridge between you and the party leadership. He is the candidate this time and we have to ensure his victory)," Priyanka said during a public meeting. Often in her speeches, Priyanka has swiftly changed gears to aggressively attack BJP, PM Modi and the party's candidates before softening her tone again to explain to the people the importance of their vote. In a public meeting, she called Amethi

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

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

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

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

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

Manoj Badgeri | TNN

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

"Deep inside, Sainiks know what is right and wrong for them and will express it through their vote on June 4," says an old-timer.

Whether to stick with Uddhav Thackeray or shift allegiance to CM Eknath Shinde is a dilemma that is central to these LS polls in Maharashtra. In all, there are 13 seats where the two Senas are pitted against each other. And, as the polls in Maharashtra enter the final leg, Thane — a citadel of the undivided Shiv Sena and a rapidly growing urban cluster — is likely to see a close fight on May 20.

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

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



IT'S ALL ABOUT MAKING THE RIGHT MOVES

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

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

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

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

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

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

but there is simmering discontent.

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

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

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

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

Ranjan.Dasgupta@timesgroup.com

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

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

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

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

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

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

BJP hopes onions won't leave it weepy in Dindori

CONSTITUENCY WATCH



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Zeeshan Jawed & Falguni Banerjee | TNN

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

SEAN DIDDY APOLOGISES AFTER '16 CCTV CLIP OF HIM ATTACKING FORMER GF GOES VIRAL, SAYS 'MY BEHAVIOUR IS INEXCUSABLE'



Helicopter carrying Iran prez crashes, search is under way

Raisi Onboard Chopper With Foreign Minister, Says Official; Iranian State Media Says Bad Weather Cause Of Accident & It Is Complicating Rescue Bid

Dubai: A helicopter carrying Iranian Prez Ebrahim Raisi and his foreign minister crashed on Sunday as it was crossing mountain terrain in heavy fog, an Iranian official told Reuters, and rescuers were struggling to reach the site of the incident.

The official said the lives of Raisi and foreign minister Hossein Amirabdollahian were "at risk following the helicopter crash", which happened on the way back from a visit to the border with Azerbaijan in Iran's northwest. "We are still hopeful but information coming from the crash site is very concerning," said the official, speaking on condition of anonymity.

Raisi had met with Azerbaijan Prez Ilham Aliyev earlier on Sunday. At the time of the crash, a delegation of ministers was travelling with him in a convoy of three helicopters, state media reported, adding that the two other aircraft had reached their destinations. Raisi had been at the Azerbaijani border to inaugurate the Qiz-Qalasi Dam, a joint project. Aliyev, who said he had bid a "friendly farewell" to Raisi earlier in the day, offered assistance in the rescue.

Iranian supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who holds ultimate power in the Islamic Republic, sought to reassure Iranians, saying there would



Rescue team reaches Iran's East Azerbaijan province. 'It is dark and it has started raining, but the search continues. Rescue teams have reached the area ... however, the rain has created mud, making the search difficult,' a local reporter told state TV

be no disruption to state affairs.

Iranian state media said bad weather was the cause of the crash and was complicating rescue efforts. The chief of staff of Iran's army ordered all the resources of the army and the elite Revolutionary Guard to be put to use in search and rescue operations.

State TV had earlier stopped all its regular programming to show prayers being held for Raisi across the country and, in a corner of the screen, live coverage of rescue teams deployed on foot in the mountainous area in heavy fog. The prez's official website also posted a message request-

ing prayers, and clerics at two of Iran's major Shia shrines in Qum and Mashhad led public services. Videos posted to Instagram by the Iranian Red Crescent Society showed rescue teams trekking through fog and difficult terrain in search of the crash site.

Neighbouring countries expressed concern and offered assistance in any rescue. The White House said US Prez Joe Biden had been briefed on reports about the crash. The EU offered emergency satellite mapping technology to help Iran with the search.

The crash comes at a time of growing dissent within Iran over an array of political, social and economic crises. Iran's clerical rulers face international pressure over Tehran's disputed nuclear programme and its deepening military ties with Russia during the war in Ukraine. Since Iran's ally Hamas attacked Israel on Oct 7, provoking Israel's assault on Gaza, conflagrations involving Iran-aligned groups have erupted throughout West Asia.

Raisi, 63, was elected prez in 2021. Iran's law stipulates that if the president dies, power is transferred to the first vice president and an election must be called within six months. The first vice president is Mohammad Mokhber, a conservative politician. REUTERS/ANNT

Modi expresses concern, says stand in solidarity with Iranians

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

PM Narendra Modi expressed solidarity with the people of Iran as he said he was deeply concerned by reports regarding Iranian Prez Ebrahim Raisi's helicopter flight that crashed in Iran's East Azerbaijan province. "We stand in solidarity with the Iranian people in this hour of distress, and pray for the well-being of the president and his entourage," he said in a post on X late on Sunday, amid fears that Raisi may not have survived the crash.



Modi had last met Raisi on the margins of the Brics summit in Johannesburg in Aug 2023

Modi had last met Raisi on the margins of the Brics summit in Johannesburg in Aug 2023. The two leaders had discussed ways to strengthen bilateral cooperation in various fields, including trade and investment, connectivity, energy and counter-terrorism. Iran, along with five other countries, had joined the group in that summit. Raisi had congratulated Modi on the success of Chandrayaan mission and thanked him for India's support for Iran's Brics membership.

In line with the ongoing high-level exchanges, which aided India's delicately balanced approach to the Israel-Hamas conflict, foreign minister S Jaishankar had travelled to Iran in Jan for talks with his counterpart Amir Abdollahian, who too was in the same chopper as Raisi.

Raisi had also been looking to intensify engagement with India on the Chabahar port. He and Modi wanted to strengthen cooperation to realise the full potential of Chabahar port as a connectivity hub. Apart from the focus on connectivity initiatives, India and Iran have also worked in the recent past to ramp up political cooperation and strong people-to-people ties.

In their meeting in Aug, they had decided to fast-track infrastructure cooperation, including the Chabahar project. The two also exchanged views on regional developments, including Afghanistan where both countries are working to ensure the Taliban don't allow terrorist groups to target any country. Raisi spoke again on phone with Modi in Nov to emphasise the need for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza.

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

Surendra.Singh @timesgroup.com

India-born Gopi Thotakura made history on Sunday evening as he became the first Indian to venture into space as a tourist. He was part of the elite crew for Blue Origin's New Shepard-25 (NS-25) mission, which took off from the company's West Texas launch site in the US around 8:05 pm (IST), an hour late from its scheduled launch time of 9:35 am (local US time).

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

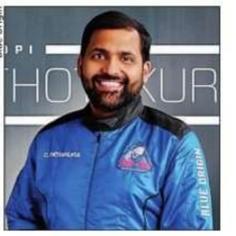
TOI had earlier reported on Gopi's probable entry to the elite astronaut club.

Following takeoff, the NS-25 vehicle reached beyond the boundary of space smoothly. The rocket and capsule then returned to Earth, with the rocket landing upright a few minutes after takeoff. The capsule successfully touched down, using two of its three parachutes, roughly 15 minutes after takeoff.

Introducing the Indian space tourist, a Blue Origin statement said, "Gopi Thotakura is a lifelong pilot and aviator who learned how to fly before he could drive. He flies jets commercially, in addition to piloting



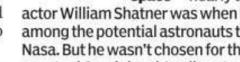
A screen grab shows the Mission NS-25, with the New Shepard 4 rocket & crew capsule, taking off from Texas's Van Horn on Sunday



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

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

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



Ed Dwight

bush, aerobatic, and seaplanes. Gopi is a co-founder of Preserve Life Corp, a global center for holistic wellness and applied health." He studied for a BSc in aeronautical science at Embury-Riddle Aeronautical University, US. Gopi has worked in medical air evacuation services in India in the past.

This flight is Blue Origin's first tourist mission on New Shepard since Aug 2022. The company was forced to halt flights of the rocket after a New Shepard vehicle suffered an engine failure mid-flight during an uncrewed mission in Sep 2022. This mission was the seventh human flight for the New Shepard programme and the 25th in its history. In all, New Shepard has flown 31 humans, the company said.

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

Khamenei protege, hardline prez, sanctioned by US

Dubai: Hard-line Prez Ebrahim Raisi has long been seen as a protege to Iran's supreme leader and a potential successor for his position within the country's Shia theocracy.

News of his helicopter making what state media described as a "hard landing" on Sunday immediately brought new attention to the leader, who already faces sanctions from the US and other nations over his involvement in the mass execution of prisoners in 1988.

Raisi, 63, previously ran Iran's judiciary. He ran unsuccessfully for presidency in 2017 against Hassan Rouhani, the moderate cleric who as prez reached Tehran's 2015 nuclear deal with world powers.

In 2021, Raisi ran again in an election that saw all of his potentially prominent opponents barred for running under Iran's vetting system. He swept nearly 62% of the 28.9 million

votes, the lowest turnout by percentage in the Islamic Republic's history. Millions stayed home and others voided ballots.

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



Ebrahim Raisi

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

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

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

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

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

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

US & Iran held indirect talks in Oman: Report

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

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

The goal was to try to get Iran, which supplies weapons and training to militias across West Asia, to move to rein in its partners. Since the Israel-Hamas war broke out, several Iran-backed militias in Iraq and Syria have stepped up attacks on US troops, raising fears of a wider war. The most powerful of the regional militias, Lebanon-based Hezbollah, has been exchanging fire with the Israeli military in northern Israel and southern Le-



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

banon. However, US intelligence officials assess that neither Hezbollah nor Iran wants to engage in a wider war.

The US has had no diplomatic relations with Iran since 1979, and discussions are often conducted through intermediaries and back channels.

The format of the talks in Oman was similar to ones held in Jan: The Americans sat in one room while their Iranian counterparts sat in another, and Omani officials shuttled between the rooms. NYT

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

Benny Gantz, facing the cameras with gravity on Saturday told PM Benjamin Netanyahu to shift course on the Gaza war or he'd quit the three-man war cabinet. Israel, he said, needs "a govt that will win the people's trust."

Coming days after the other war cabinet member, defence minister Yoav Gallant, bitterly accused Netanyahu of failing to have a postwar plan, it seemed that Netanyahu was being isolated by his two senior generals, both former top generals, and Israel was headed toward political crisis.

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

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



Netanyahu

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

At a graduation event, Biden faces silent anti-war protest

Atlanta: US Prez Joe Biden renewed his call for a temporary ceasefire in Gaza in a speech at Morehouse College's graduation ceremony, where some participants donned Palestinian colours in protest at Israel's mi-



Taura Taylor, an assistant professor, stood with her fist raised and backed turned to Biden during his speech. She also wore a keffiyeh scarf

itary incursion. Biden's address at the historically black school in Atlanta brought him face to face with some of the campus unrest set off by the Israel-Hamas war. "What's happening in Gaza and Israel is he-

art-breaking," Biden said Sunday, referring to the Oct. 7 attack on Israel by Hamas militants and the plight of "innocent Palestinians" caught up in Israel's military response.

Several students and faculty members at the commencement wore keffiyeh scarves, which have become a symbol of protest against the war. At least one student draped a Palestinian flag over his graduation gown and a faculty member wore a stole with the Palestinian colours while receiving an award on the podium. Leading up to Biden, class valedictorian DeAngelo Fletcher called for "an immediate and permanent ceasefire" in Gaza during a passionate speech that evoked the late civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr, a Morehouse alumnus. Biden didn't acknowledge the silent protests and told the ceremony it's his job to tackle "one of the hardest, most complicated problems in the world." BLOOMBERG

How 2020 election deniers claimed the upside-down American flag

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

In 2020, the upside-down

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

AROUND THE WORLD



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

Spain recalls envoy from Argentina after Prez Milei calls PM's wife 'corrupt'

Spain recalled its ambassador to Buenos Aires for consultations on Sunday after Argentina's Prez Javier Milei made derogatory comments about Spanish PM Pedro Sanchez's wife during a far-right rally in Madrid. Milei had called Sanchez's wife Begona Gomez "corrupt" during the rally organised by the far-right Vox party and attended by many of its international allies. Spanish foreign minister Jose Manuel Albares said he expected an apology from Milei. Other ministers also condemned Milei's speech, in which he described socialism as "cursed and carcinogenic". Sanchez leads Spain's Socialist Party. "Milei has brought the relationship between Spain and Argentina to its most serious state in recent history," Albares said. Milei's visit broke with diplomatic protocol as he refused to meet Spain's King Felipe and Sanchez, instead preferring to promote his book with Vox

politician Santiago Abascal.

France gov't issues scratch-and-sniff baguette stamps



Joining the ranks of screen goddess Brigitte Bardot and the Eiffel Tower, another French treasure is being celebrated with its own postage stamp: the baguette. And this one is scratch-and-sniff. It is the latest showcasing of French cultural heritage as Paris prepares to host Olympics. Priced €1.96 each, the stamp is intended to be used for international letters of up to 20 grams. The baguette is one of the most talked-about breads in the world and the most popular in France: 6 billion baguettes are made every year, the postal service said.

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

Says Legal Advice Sought To Thrash Out Process

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

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

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

The PM questioned whether INDIA bloc parties



PM Modi during an election rally in Jamshedpur on Sunday

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

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

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

pur from six hours to three.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

What will be your priorities?

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

PM Modi is frequently ad-



TOI INTERVIEW

dressing election rallies in Maharashtra...

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Later on Sunday evening,



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

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

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

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

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

Hour before PM rally, Bengal BJP MP joins TMC

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

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

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

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

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

Kharge poster defaced at Cong office in Kolkata day after spat with Adhir

Rohit Khanna @timesgroup.com

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

Party workers washed the ink off with milk. Chowdhury was in Behrampur and asked Congress functionaries to file an FIR about the defacement outside the headquarters, Bidhan Bhavan. This was done soon after.

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

EC transfers SP of Purulia, 3 others

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

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

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

Prasad Joshi @timesgroup.com

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Dipak Dash@timesgroup.com

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

Prajatantra Foundation's study has revealed that 'financial status' and 'dynastic background' as the two most prevalent "gatekeeping" factors when it comes to selecting candidates. Beyond dynastic politics, the most common pathways for candidates are party organisational politics (54.4%), local politics (12.2%), and student politics (9.5%).

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Vishwa Mohan@timesgroup.com

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

Though the Centre has approved the Ken-Betwa river

APPEAL FOR IDENTIFICATION

General public is hereby informed that a unidentified dead body of a male namely **Unknown, S/o: Unknown, R/o: Unknown found dead on 14.05.2024 at 06:00 AM at DDA Complex Nangal Raya**. In this regard DD No. 08 A, dated **14.05.2024**, has been lodged at Police Station, Mayapuri, Delhi. Identification of unidentified dead body of male is as under:

Name: Unknown, Age: 60 Years, Height: 5'2", Complexion: Shallow, Wearing: Grey Colour Pant, Blue Colour Check Shirt and Brown Colour Chappal in Feet.

If anyone have any information or clue about this male deceased may kindly be inform undersigned.

SHO
Police Station, Mayapuri, Delhi
Ph.: 011-28116097, 8750871121

DP/5928WD/2024

NORTH CENTRAL RAILWAY

Tender Notice No. 49-ElectG/PRYJ/24-25 Date: 16.05.2024

TENDER NOTICE

Senior Divl. Electrical Engineer/Gen/N. C. Rly/Prayagraj, for and on behalf of the President of India, invite the following e-Tenders on prescribed form for the following works up to 15.00 hrs. on 13.06.2024 The details of the tenders are as under:-

SN:- 01 TN:- ELG-226-2425
Name of work: PRYJ: Rewiring of service buildings/office buildings over Prayagraj division. Provision of Prepaid meter for vendors stall/shops over the Prayagraj division.
Cost of work (in Rs.): 17833220.84 | Bid Security (in Rs.): 239200.00
Duration of completion:- 06 Month

SN:- 02 TN:- ELG-227-2425
Name of work: Electrical work in connection with "Fatehpur- Installation, commissioning & testing of Effluent treatment plant 50 KLD & associated work along with sewer line for proper disposal of sewage to maintain hygiene, at Fatehpur". Electrical work in connection with "Tundia Setting up of quick watering arrangement systems at TDL station." Electrical work in connection with "Dadri- Replacement of old FOB by providing 6 meter wide FOB with ramp at Dadri." Electrical work in connection with "Hathras: Provision of Public FOB at Hathras station." Electrical work in connection with "Jalesar road: Provision of new FOB at Jalesar road station." Electrical work in connection with "Govindpur: Setting up of quick watering arrangement systems at GOY station." Electrical work in connection with Tundia: Improvement NCR college by replacement of roof & other work at Tundia." Electrical work in connection with "Rura: Augmentation of RPF posts at Rura Station."
Cost of work (in Rs.): 9415734.24 | Bid Security (in Rs.): 188300.00
Duration of completion:- 06 Month

SN:- 03 TN:- ELG-228-2425
Name of work: Electrical work in connection with "Kanpur Central: Construction of 100 bedded New Guard Running Room at CNB station." Electrical work in connection with "Kanpur Central Construction of 3 Nos. TYPE-V New quarters for officers in Kanpur. Electrical work in connection with "Kanpur Anwanagar CPA-Provision of 12m wide FOB at Kanpur Anwanagar station under Amrit Bharat Scheme under Prayagraj Division." Electrical work in connection with "Knowledge Development Center which is being proposed at GMC yard along with other facilities."
Cost of work (in Rs.): 19566438.09 | Bid Security (in Rs.): 247800.00
Duration of completion:- 06 Month

SN:- 04 TN:- ELG-229-2425
Name of work: Electrical work in connection with "Provision of Gym hall, renovation of badminton hall, provision of shed for safety of mechanical equipment & other associated works at Railgon". Electrical work in connection with "Naini Development of concourse, waiting hall, circulating area, parking, horticulture etc. for passengers & divyangjan". Electrical work in connection with "Provision of substitution building adjacent to PF-2 near goods shed at NYN and 33 KV substation open access building for improvement in divyangjan facilities."
Cost of work (in Rs.): 4481766.30 | Bid Security (in Rs.): 89600.00
Duration of completion:- 06 Month

SN:- 05 TN:- ELG-230-2425
Name of work: Provision of centralized control room for online control and monitoring of electrical assets in view of implementation of IR-NIYANTRAC for Prayagraj. Electrical work in connection with "Improvement of Control Room DRM office Prayagraj".
Cost of work (in Rs.): 4849560.97 | Bid Security (in Rs.): 97000.00
Duration of completion:- 06 Month

SN:- 06 TN:- ELG-231-2425
Name of work: Electrical work in connection with "CPC- Proposals for Existing Goods Sheds for improvement/upgradation work". Electrical work in connection with "PNKD-Proposals for Existing Goods Sheds for improvement/upgradation work".
Cost of work (in Rs.): 23856996.92 | Bid Security (in Rs.): 269300.00
Duration of completion:- 06 Month

SN:- 07 TN:- ELG-232-2425
Name of work: Electrical work in connection with "ETAH- Proposals for Existing Goods Sheds for improvement/upgradation work". Electrical work in connection with "Prayagraj Chheteoi PCOI Improvement / upgradation work in existing goods shed". Electrical work in connection with "Upgradation of Goods Shed at Nibkarori station over Prayagraj division."
Cost of work (in Rs.): 12618086.26 | Bid Security (in Rs.): 213100.00
Duration of completion:- 06 Month

SN:- 08 TN:- ELG-233-2425
Name of work: Improvement of emergency supply at station premises, passengers shed, FOB, PFs shed and approach road at PRYJ, NYN, PCOI, SFG & BDL stations in view of Kumbh Mela-2024-25.
Cost of work (in Rs.): 28517786.50 | Bid Security (in Rs.): 292600.00
Duration of completion:- 03 Month

Tender Opening Date: 13.06.2024, 15.00 Hrs., Note: -1. The complete information along with tender document of above e-Tender is available on Website www.ireps.gov.in upto 15:00 hrs. on the due date of tender opening. 892/24 (ADM)

#CPNCR #NorthCentralRailways @cpnrcr @northcentralrailways www.nrc.indianrailways.gov.in

CONTRAPUNTO

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

-EMMELINE PANKHURST

Don't Play This Game

Poll rhetoric that weaponises women victims is a new low

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

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

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

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

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

UNCUET

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

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

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

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

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

Ebony in India

On foreign spouses, desi parents and rough relations

Bikram Vohra



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

VOCAL DALITS, SILENT MUSLIMS

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

Anand.Soodas@timesgroup.com



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

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

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

POLLITICS
Special Series on Elections

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

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

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

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

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

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

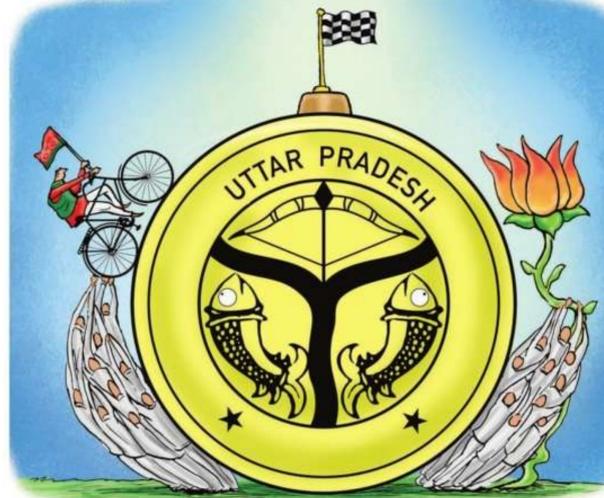
India shining | The new Ram Mandir in Ayodhya has filled many Hindu hearts with pride and joy. As have reports of the "disappearance of stone-pelters" in Kashmir. UCC and CAA were hardly mentioned at *chaupals* and street corner addas during exchanges and altercations, but India's "growing stature" in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

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

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

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

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



Chait Crowe

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

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

Flying For Democracy: IAF & Voting

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

Manmohan Bahadur



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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

• And these requirements change if the law and

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Air Vice Marshal Bahadur (retd) served as Assistant Chief of Air Staff

Calvin & Hobbes



Sacredspace



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

Henry D Thoreau

Romancing Honeybees That Give Us Life

Narayani Ganesh

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

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

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

When Shiva was in deep meditation, the young, handsome Kama was sent to distract him. When he shot his love arrow, a disturbed Shiva opened his third eye, reducing Kama to ashes. The story goes that Kama was reborn on earth as the eldest son of Krishna and Rukmini, as Pradyumna. Kama, which means erotic desire in Sanskrit, is the reason why life comes into being. The Rig Veda describes creation of the universe as arising out of divine desire, intense heat, resulting

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

Bees are pollinators; they feed on honey in flowers, and when they rub their legs together, the pollen sticks to them and is carried forth to other places, enabling propagation of species. The Smithsonian describes the process thus: "Pollination is an essential part of plant reproduction. Pollen from a flower's anthers, that is, the male part of the plant, rubs or drops onto a pollinator who carries this to another flower, where the pollen sticks to the stigma, the female part. The fertilised flower later yields fruits and seeds."

Not only do bees act as pollinators,

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

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

ganeshnarayani@yahoo.com



THE SPEAKING TREE

US Inflation Momentum Slows But Housing, Services Stay Hot

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

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

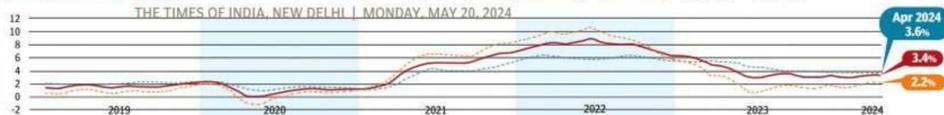
► Food prices stayed the same in April, but groceries at home got slightly cheaper by 0.2%

CPI for urban consumers in the US (YoY change)



TIMES BUSINESS

THE TIMES OF INDIA, NEW DELHI | MONDAY, MAY 20, 2024



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

Source: US Bureau of Labor Statistics, Statista

MUTUAL FUN by HSBC Mutual Fund



An Investor Education & Awareness Initiative by HSBC Mutual Fund



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

Visit <https://grp.hsbc/KYC> w.r.t. one-time Know Your Customer (KYC) process, complaints redressal process including SEBI SCORES (<https://www.scores.gov.in>). Investors should only deal with Registered Mutual Funds, to be verified on SEBI website under Intermediaries/Market Infrastructure Institutions (<https://www.sebi.gov.in/intermediaries.html>). Investors may refer to the section on Investor Education on the website of HSBC Mutual Fund for the details on all Investor Education and Awareness Initiatives undertaken by HSBC Mutual Fund.

CL 1364

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

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

Mayur.Shetty@timesgroup.com

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

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

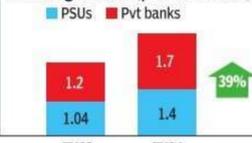
To put things in perspective, ₹3 lakh crore is approximately the total quarterly profits of all listed companies in the first three

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

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

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

Banking sector (profit in ₹L cr)



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

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

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

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

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

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

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

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

In a statement on Sunday, the troubled edtech firm said that company and advisory board members Kumar and Pai have mutually decided not to renew the contractual agreement scheduled to end on June 30, 2024.



Rajnish Kumar (L) and Mohandas Pai (R)

Byju's had constituted the council last year to assuage investor concerns following a series of financial and corporate governance lapses at the firm. The council was tasked with advising and mentoring Byju's board and CEO Byju Raveendran.

"Our engagement with the company as advisors was always on a fixed term basis for a year. Based on our discussions with the founders, it was mutually decided that the tenure of the advisory council should not be extended. Though the formal engagement concludes, the founders and the company can always approach us for any advice," Kumar and Pai said in a joint statement.

Govt concerned over telcos' service quality

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

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

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

Govt wants to "revisit parameters" that are assigned towards service quality, amid complaints that consumers are not getting promised services, despite India leaping into 5G, supposedly one of the world's most advanced mobile technologies.

As telecom ecosystem matures with abundant supply of spectrum and data adoption shooting up, quality of services continues to remain a nagging issue, often vitiating customer experience.

There have been complaints by customers and consumer groups about deteriorating services, even as telcos such as Reliance Jio, Airtel and Vodafone Idea argue that current quality parameters

are sufficient and should not be "burdened" by new norms. Trai has the mandate on quality of services and its new chairman Anil Kumar Lahoti has listed it among his priority areas. Expressing concerns over frequency of call drops and slow internet speeds, Lahoti has said that

networks, the stringent performance benchmarks should be earmarked for them.

Telecom companies, however, argue that excessive regulations might not work. Jio said that introducing "overregulation and unnecessary stringent benchmarks and financial disin-

TRAI WANTS BETTER QUALITY

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

regulation and better implementation of standards to ensure better customer quality



► Excessive regulations may not work, say telecom companies

he wants "stringent regulation" and better implementation of standards to ensure better customer quality.

Trai had last year issued a consultation paper for review of quality of services standards where it acknowledged serious issues on network quality. Currently, Trai measures quality of services on a quarterly basis, giving average reports spread over large licensed service areas (LSAs). This, officers feel, fails to factor in dark spots with poor network coverage as overall results are an average of network throughout LSA.

Sources said as 4G and 5G networks provide much wider coverage across the country compared to 2G and 3G

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

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

Some cos did not comply with FAME II norms: Report

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: A committee appointed by the ministry of heavy industries investigating violation of localisation norms under FAME II schemes for electric two-, three- and four-wheelers has said that testing agencies have followed uniform and consistent process, while concluding that certain companies did not comply with norms, which were finalised after consultation with industry players.

Hero Electric Vehicles, Okinawa Autotech, Aro Mobility Solutions, Greaves Electric Mobility, Revolt Intelligence and Benling India Energy and Technology were found to be wanting in complying with the prescribed localisation norms. Govt has recovered incentives from most companies.

Last year, a panel had been set up to look into the role of officials in the irregularities, but the report was found to be "vague, incomplete and suffering from numerous shortcomings and contradictions", prompting the constitution of a second committee under an additional secretary-rank officer.

In its first report, the committee has concluded that the scheme and the guidelines were clear and well understood by all stakeholders, including test agencies, OEMs and the ministry. The committee had also pointed to gaps in the earlier report, sources said.

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

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

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

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

What are futures and options? Futures are derivative contracts that give the buyer the right to buy a specific asset on a specific date at a specific price from a seller, unless that contract is sold off to someone else or closed. On the other hand, an options contract gives the buyer the right to buy or sell a specific asset at a specific price on or before the last date of the contract (called date of expiry). In options contracts, the buyer has the right but not an obligation to buy or sell the specific asset. An options seller has the obligation to deliver the assets to

the buyer but no right to deny selling that.

When you buy an airline ticket...

A train or a flight ticket gives the passenger (the buyer) the right to travel on a specific date but no obligation to do the same. At the last moment, the passenger could cancel the ticket or abandon the travel plan. On the other hand, the railways or the airline (the seller) has an obligation to provide the passenger the service on the specific day and the time for which the ticket was bought. The seller has an obligation to provide the service

TOI Explains

ce but has no right to cancel the ticket unless under extreme circumstances. So we use options in our lives, but some options are not traded on an exchange.

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

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

are rising at a pace that surprises market veterans.

How has F&O trading turnover grown in recent years?

According to NSE, between March 2020 (i.e. just before the pandemic started) and March 2024, its monthly derivatives turnover has grown 30 times: From Rs 247.5 lakh crore to Rs 7,218 lakh crore. On the BSE, from a turnover of about Rs 1 lakh crore in March 2020, the total turnover in the segment reached a high of Rs 1,519 lakh crore — a jump of over 1,500 times. Compared to turnover in the cash segment of the market, F&O turnover is hundreds of times more.

Is increase in turnover the only concern?

No. The huge spurt in volumes has also brought in a large number of fake and fraud operators in the market. Using various social media platforms, they induce people into F&O trading by showing and promising very high and unreasonable profits. They often use pictures and videos of celebrities and top business leaders to induce investors to fall into their net. At times, they also use screenshots of huge profits (called fake profit & loss or P&L screenshots) to prove their expertise to attract retail investors to trade according to their recommendations.

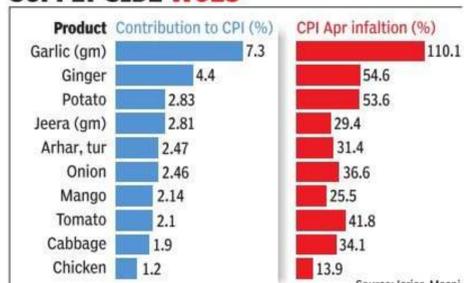
Veggies, pulses face heatwave price pressures

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New Delhi: The heatwave sweeping some parts of the country is expected to add to the price pressures for vegetables and pulses, which have been on the boil for some time now.

Rising demand and tight supplies have seen prices of vegetables soar in recent months, with potato, tomato, onions, ginger and garlic rising sharply and making food costlier for households. Several states in the east, north and southern parts of the country have witnessed heatwave conditions, with temperatures in some places hovering above 45 degrees centigrade. Vegetable inflation has

SUPPLY-SIDE WOES



emerged as the most volatile component, thanks to erratic weather conditions such as

heatwaves, patchy and uneven rains, and pest attacks which have hurt supplies and

pushed up prices.

While overall retail inflation slowed to an 11-month low of 4.8% in April, prices of vegetables and pulses remained stubborn. For example, garlic and ginger prices inflation have ruled in triple digits in March and in April, garlic inflation was at an annual 110.1%, while ginger was at 54.6%. Potato inflation was at 53.6%, onion at 36.6% and tomato at 41.8%.

Turning to pulses, inflation for arhar and tur was at 31.4%, urad at 14.3%, gram split at 13.6% and gram whole at 14.6%, data for April showed. Even chicken inflation in April was in double digits at nearly 14%.

"The demand for dal and

vegetables is continuously rising while supplies are sluggish. Prices of veggies are particularly impacted due to adverse weather that shrinks supplies. The heatwave will hit it further," said Ashok Gulati, Infosys chair professor at economic think tank Icrier.

"The solution for days is to invest in R&D to augment their productivity and reward them for being more nutritious and benign to the environment (soil, water, greenhouse gas emissions). Liberalise their imports in the short run," said Gulati.

RBI has said a record rabi wheat production would help temper price pressure and replenish the buffer stocks.

Borrow Against MF Units For Short-Term Fund Requirements

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

How Can One Get A Loan Against MF Units?

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

Invesco Mutual Fund

An investor education and awareness initiative

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

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

What's The Pro Of Borrowing Against MFs?

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

How Does One Apply For A Loan?

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

How To Remove The Lien On MFs?

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

What Happens In Case Of Default?

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

—PRASHANT MAHESH

Rohit lashes out at Star for breaching players' privacy

New Delhi: India skipper Rohit Sharma on Sunday lashed out at the IPL broadcasters for "breaching" cricketers' privacy by recording their conversations with friends and colleagues at training and on match days and then telecasting the contents.

Rohit expressed his disappointment after a video involving him and Kolkata Knight Riders assistant coach Abhishek Nayar, in which the former is seen contemplating his future at the Mumbai Indians, went viral. "The lives of cricketers have become so intrusive that cameras are now recording every step and conversation we are having in privacy with our friends and colleagues, at training or on match days," Rohit posted on X.

He added, "Despite asking Star Sports to not record my conversation, it was and was also then played on air, which is a breach of privacy."

"The need to get exclusive content and focused only on views and engagement will one day break the trust between the fans, cricketers and cricket. Let better sense prevail." PTI

DHONI SWANSONG PUSHED BACK IN PLAYLIST?

Legend Has Told CSK He Will Need Some Time Before Taking Final Call

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Chennai: It hardly happens that a 110-metre six that goes out of the ground becomes counterproductive for the batting side. But that's exactly what happened for MS Dhoni and Chennai Super Kings at Bengaluru's Chinnaswamy Stadium on Saturday when the legend hit left-arm pacer Yash Dayal for a massive six in the first ball of the last over.

"The ball was lost and had to be replaced. Dayal got a drier ball and suddenly hitting became difficult," a senior CSK official told TOI. What it meant was that Dhoni couldn't connect the all-important second six of the over and fulfil his promise to his fans of playing his last IPL match at Chepauk.

The 42-year-old was devastated after the loss and was one of the first to leave the city for Ranchi on Sunday morning. But there lingers a belief in the CSK camp that Saturday's loss against Royal Challengers Bengaluru might not have been Dhoni's last. "Dhoni has not told anybody in CSK that he is quitting. He has told the management that he will wait for a

couple of months before taking a final call," a source close to the developments said.

What is giving CSK management hope is that Dhoni will keep his promise of playing his last game at Chepauk, is his batting and wicketkeeping form. Even on Saturday, he scored 25 at a strike-rate of close to 200 which was better than the likes of Ravindra Jadeja or Shivam Dube -- the designated hitters of the team. Dhoni also batted for four overs and was comfortable in his running between the wickets -- the torn calf that he was playing with gradually healing along the course of the tournament. "He did not feel any discomfort in his running between the wickets and that is a plus," the source said.

There is a big auction coming up next year and teams may be allowed to retain a maximum of five players. There are four CSK players -- Ruturaj Gaikwad, Jadeja, Dube and Matheesha Pathirana -- who are sure-fire retentions. In that case, Dhoni may well opt for the lowest retention slot without blocking too much money for new players to be bought from the auction table.



MS DHONI

'Impact sub' rule may play a role

In addition, Dhoni may wait to see if the 'impact sub' rule is abolished by the BCCI for the next IPL. This rule allows Dhoni the flexibility of playing the extra batter while keeping himself for the last two overs, when he doesn't have to do too much running. If BCCI

does away with the rule, it may not be too viable for a team to have a batter exclusively for only 12 balls. His franchise appears to have left the decision to him. "We will wait for Dhoni's communication. He always has the best interests of the team in mind, let's see what happens," the CSK official said.

BACK FROM THE BRINK

How Bengaluru Turned Their Fortunes Around

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

This season, RCB changed Bangalore in their name to Bengaluru and the catchline changed to 'Hosa adhyaya' (A new beginning). But with one win in eight matches at one stage, it seemed pretty

much like the RCB of old. Then that famous turnaround happened with Faf du Plessis and his men notching up win after win to make the playoffs. TOI looks at the six factors that worked for RCB...

PATIDAR PACKS A PUNCH

Handed a clear role and a consistent slot, Rajat Patidar has come into his own. With five half-centuries and a strike rate touching 180, Patidar has filled the vacuum for an Indian batter other than Kohli. He has accelerated consistently, and the standout feature has been his six-hitting abilities.

VIRAT KOHLI'S FORM

Virat Kohli has struck a purple patch and has

donned the Orange Cap for the better part of the season. Yet, when the team's chips were down, his strike rate and not his performance was the talking point. Kohli has amassed 708 runs this season with a century and five half-centuries at a strike rate of 155.60.

THE FOREIGN FLOUR

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

FAF FACTOR

Du Plessis is among a few in the RCB dugout who knows what it feels like to lift the IPL trophy. He has done that twice with Chennai Super Kings. The 38-year-old can hand a lesson or two in soaking up the pressure and delivering when it matters. After Kohli's exit on Saturday night, on a

wicket made tricky by the dampness, the South African brought all his experience to the fore and his 54 proved to be a clincher.

BOWLERS COME TO THE PARTY

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

CATCHES WIN MATCHES

Fielding at mid-off, Du Plessis plucked a one-hand stunner to dismiss CSK's Mitchell Santner off Siraj's bowling on Saturday night. This was one of the instances of RCB's sharp fielding in a season where dropped catches have been the norm. The likes of Du Plessis, Maxwell and Kohli have made up for the shortcomings of a few others.

ELECTRIC CITY: LIGHTNING STRIKES 4 TIMES

Pep's Army Wins Record

Fourth Consecutive Premier League

Title As Arsenal Dreams Dashed

Manchester: Manchester City created English football history on Sunday, overcoming West Ham 3-1 to win their fourth straight Premier League title and break Arsenal's hearts.

Phil Foden scored two early goals at an expectant Etihad to put his side on the brink of the title before Mohammed Kudus pulled one back with a spectacular overhead kick.

But Rodri struck just before the hour to restore City's two-goal cushion and the home side rarely looked troubled as they coasted to the win. Arsenal started the day two points behind their rivals and praying for a miracle to deny City their coronation.

The Gunners, without a Premier League title since 2004, came from a goal down to beat Everton 2-1 but had to content themselves with second in the table for a second straight season. City stand alone as the only English team to have won four straight top-flight titles.

Elsewhere on the final day of the Premier League season, Luton's relegation was confirmed with a 4-2 loss at home to Fulham. They will join Burnley and Sheffield United in the Championship next season.

City appeared to have one hand on the trophy and news then filtered through that Everton had taken the lead at Arsenal, leaving Mikel Arteta's men leaving an unlikely sequence of events to come out on top. But the title race came alive again. Kai Havertz sealed a 2-1 win in the 89th minute. Manchester United finished outside the European positions in eighth place and with a negative goal difference despite beating Brighton 2-0 away in their final game in the Premier League season. AFP



HERE WE GO AGAIN: Man City players with the trophy

6 Manchester City win sixth English Premier League title in seven seasons.

17 A 17th trophy for City manager Pep Guardiola in eight years at the club -- and that could rise to 18 if City beats United in the FA Cup final.

2018 Except for Liverpool in 2020, there has been no time in England's top flight to touch City since Guardiola began his remarkable run by winning the title in 2018.

65 No team has ever done it (won four in a row). You see what it means to the fans and to us players working all year for this moment." -- Phil Foden, MAN CITY

EPL: TOP EIGHT

Team	P	W	D	L	GD	Pts
1. Man City	38	28	7	3	62	91
2. Arsenal	38	28	5	5	62	89
3. Liverpool	38	24	10	4	45	82
4. Villa	38	20	8	10	15	68
5. Spurs	38	20	6	12	13	66
6. Chelsea	38	18	9	11	14	63
7. Newcastle	38	18	6	14	23	60
8. *Man Utd	38	18	6	14	-1	60

Note: Top four qualify for Champions League; Nos. 5-6 qualify for Europa League; 7 qualify for Europa Conference League; *If United win FA Cup, they will qualify for Europa League along with No. 5; No. 6 will qualify for Conference

65 I think we're all a little bit disappointed. We've been fighting so long for the big dream." -- Martin Odegaard, ARSENAL

Anfield reminds Klopp he will never walk alone



Liverpool: In many ways, it was business as usual for Jurgen Klopp. He touched the "This is Anfield" sign in the tunnel on the way out to the pitch.

He patrolled the middle of the field with his hands behind his back during the warmups, watching his own team -- and then, with that trademark glare, his opponents.

He waved to fans behind the Liverpool dugout and tapped his heart just before kickoff, before soaking in the pre-match rendition of "You'll Never Walk Alone."

"This morning I woke up," Klopp said Sunday before the final match of his transformational, nearly nine-year stint in charge of Liverpool, "and I was completely in game mode."

This, of course, was no normal day for Klopp.

The 2-0 win over Wolverhampton on a sunny day at Anfield doubled as a tribute to a coach who led Liverpool to seven major trophies and forged such a connection with the city that he has been compared to Bill Shankly -- the club's legendary manager from 1959-74. No wonder he

looked emotional throughout an afternoon that Liverpool fans never wanted to come.

They lined the streets outside Anfield to welcome Klopp and his players, and then produced a paper mosaic of the word "JURGEN" in the stand opposite the dugouts.

"People are calling it The Last Dance. So let's dance," he told Sky Sports just off the field before the match began -- and Liverpool obliged by strolling to one final victory for Klopp thanks to goals by Alexis Mac Allister and Jarell Quansah.

Fans' appreciation was on full display over the final few minutes of Sunday's game with supporters on their feet singing their version of the Beatles' "I Feel Fine" over and over. "I'm so glad that Jurgen is a Red, I'm so glad he delivered what he said!"

Klopp marked his farewell by chanting the name of Arne Slot, his likely successor, during a goodbye speech. Wearing a red hoodie with the words "I'll Never Walk Alone" on the back, Klopp regaled the fans with the song "Arne Slot, la la la la" -- to the tune of "Live is Life" by Austrian band Opus. AP

ISL likely to scrap Asian player rule, increase salary cap

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Panaji: Indian Super League (ISL) clubs have been told there will possibly be changes to the coach and player selection guidelines, with the Asian player signing now no longer a mandatory requirement.

ISL clubs, and even those in the I-League, Indian football's second-tier league, are allowed to sign five international players, besides one from a member association of the Asian Football Confederation (AFC), which includes Australia. A maximum of four of these foreign players are allowed to be on the field of play at any given point of time.

From next season, however, ISL is planning to do away with the 'Asian quota,' following a change in the AFC club competition guidelines.

"There is no formal communication from ISL about the changes, but clubs have been informally informed about the 'tentative possible changes' for next season," a source who has been tracking the development told TOI on Sunday. "From the 2024-25 season, AFC has allowed teams to register an unlimited number of foreign players who can play in the Champions League. There is no Asian quota anymore and several countries will announce changes."

Besides doing away with the Asian quota, ISL is also keen to increase the salary cap from Rs 16.5 crore to Rs 18 crore, with two players -- either domestic or international -- from each club outside the salary cap. ntil last season, only a marquee player's salary was outside the cap. The new guidelines will allow clubs to spend freely on international players, without having to worry about the salary cap.

Schauffele, Morikawa set for final-round showdown

Louisville (USA): Xander Schauffele and Collin Morikawa share the PGA Championship lead entering the final round on Sunday at Valhalla Golf Club in Louisville, Kentucky where a wild finish awaits with seven players within four strokes of the leaders.

Schauffele and Morikawa are both 15 under on the week and one shot clear of Sahithi Theegala, who is seeking his second PGA Tour win in his 90th start.

Former British Open champion Shane Lowry, whose electric 62 on Saturday matched the lowest round in major history, is a further shot back in a share of fourth place with LIV Golf's Bryson DeChambeau and Norway's Viktor Hovland.

GOLF According to Elias Sports Bureau, 12 of the last 13 PGA Championships were won by a player who was leading or within two shots of the 54-hole lead, the lone exception coming in 2022 when Justin Thomas came back from seven shots.

Englishman Justin Rose, who has recorded five consecutive top-15 finishes at the PGA Championship, is three shots back of the leaders and sharing seventh place with Robert MacIntyre.

South Africa's Dean Burmester was alone in ninth place and four back of the co-leaders. Olympic champion Schauffele, who held the solo lead after the first two rounds, is seeking his first major triumph while fellow American Morikawa is seeking a third after winning the 2020 PGA Championship and 2021 British Open.

Rory McIlroy, who has been stuck at four majors since his 2014 PGA Championship triumph at Valhalla, will do all he can to snap his drought when he sets out seven shots back of the co-leaders. Jordan Spieth will be a further group behind.

DIGEST

Manu Bhaker emerges best in Olympic Trials

Bhopal: Olympian shooter Manu Bhaker emerged as the most successful athlete in the Olympic Selection Trials (OST) Rifle/Pistol, winning the women's 10m air pistol OST T4 match on the concluding day of the exercise here on Sunday. Manu shot 240.8 in the OST T4 10m air pistol final at the MP State Shooting Academy ranges, leaving Hangzhou Asian Games champion Palak a huge 4.4 points behind in second. Rhythm Sangwan took the third spot.

Raducanu pulls out of French Open qualifying: Former US Open winner Emma Raducanu is likely to miss the French Open at Roland Garros after withdrawing from this week's qualifying tournament. AGENCIES

Usyk glory hailed as 'Ukrainian victory'

Riyadh: Oleksandr Usyk beat Tyson Fury by split decision to win the world's first undisputed heavyweight championship in 25 years on Sunday, an unprecedented feat in boxing's four-belt era.

Britain's Fury, who was undecided after the fight about triggering the rematch clause, was the early aggressor but Usyk gradually took charge and the "Gypsy King" was saved by the bell in the ninth round before slumping to his first career defeat.

Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelensky led the tributes to Oleksandr Usyk whose victory over British fighter Tyson Fury in Riyadh made him the first undisputed world heavyweight boxing champion in a quarter of a century.

The 37-year-old, who briefly served as a soldier in the Ukrainian army after the Russian invasion of February 2022, spoke of a "great moment" "for me, for my family, for my country" after his



Oleksandr Usyk launches an attack on Britain's Tyson Fury in Riyadh on Sunday

points victory over Fury in Riyadh the early hours of Sunday morning. The mayor of Kiev, Vitali Klitschko, a former world heavyweight champion boxer, stressed that Usyk "showed the world that Ukrainians are capable of defeating a strong opponent in a difficult fight".

BEATS TYSON FURY TO BECOME UNDISPUTED WORLD HEAVYWEIGHT BOXING CHAMPION

"This victory is very important victory for Ukraine today," said Klitschko, who held the WBO and WBC titles albeit not simultaneously. His younger brother Wladimir Klitschko - another heavyweight world champion - was ringside in Saudi Arabia but echoed his sibling's words. AGENCIES

Verstappen holds off Norris challenge to win, extend lead

Imola (Italy): Redthree-time world champion and series leader Max Verstappen returned to winning ways on Sunday when he resisted a late charge by Lando Norris to take a dramatic victory for Red Bull at the Emilia Romagna Grand Prix.

After being beaten in Miami, where friend and rival Norris claimed his maiden victory for McLaren, the Dutchman resisted him to come home 0.725 seconds ahead of the Briton who mounted a rousing final attack in vain. Charles Leclerc finished third for Ferrari ahead of Oscar Piastri in the second McLaren. Carlos Sainz in the second Ferrari and seven-time champion Lewis Hamilton and his Mercedes team-mate George Russell.

Sergio Perez was eighth in the second Red Bull ahead of Aston Martin's Lance Stroll and RB's Yuki Tsunoda, in his Faenza-based team's home event. Verstappen's hard-earned win, after a difficult two days of practice, was his third at Imola, his fifth of the season and the 59th of his career, lifting him 48 points clear of Leclerc in the drivers' title race. AGENCIES

FORMULA ONE

Zverev beats Jarry to claim second Rome Open title: Alexander Zverev won his second Rome Open on Sunday by beating Nicolas Jarry in straight sets 6-4, 7-5 and claiming his biggest title since his horror injury at the French Open two years ago. World No. five Zverev, comfortably won his sixth Masters 1000 title in the last major tournament before Roland Garros, which starts next weekend.

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HOW THEY STAND

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

SUNRISERS RISE TO NO. 2

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

Shiva.Gundra@timesgroup.com



MAKING A POINT: Abhishek Sharma on Sunday

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Rilee Rossouw and Prabhsimran hit Nitish for 20 runs in the 12th over before the latter departed after adding 54 runs for the second wicket. Rossouw then smashed Nitish for a six and a four before a mixup with Shashank Singh resulted in the latter's run out. Cummins then removed Rossouw (49) and Natarajan got rid of Ashutosh Sharma in the next.

BEST OF THE LEAGUE

ORANGE CAP



RUNS **708**

VIRAT KOHLI (RCB)

R Gaikwad (CSK) **583**

T Head (SRH) **533**

R Parag (RR) **531**

S Sudharsan (GT) **527**

PURPLE CAP



WICKETS **24**

HARSHAL PATEL (PBKS)

J Bumrah (MI) **20**

Arshdeep (PBKS) **19**

V Chakravarthy (KKR) **18**

T Deshpande (CSK) **17**

Rain washes out RR-KKR match

Guwahati: Persistent rain on Sunday forced the last IPL league match between Rajasthan Royals and Kolkata Knight Riders to be abandoned. The match was reduced to a seven-over contest but it started raining again after the toss. The result meant Rajasthan Royals finished third.

A ball sails out of the stadium, takes with it a million ghosts

After Nightmare A Year Ago, Yash Dayal Holds Nerve In Final Over To Deny Dhoni, Jadeja

Manuja.Veerappa@timesgroup.com



REDEMPTION: Yash Dayal on Saturday

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

Dayal watched the ball disappear and one could not help but think about the last over bowled by the pacer for Gujarat Titans against Kolkata Knight Riders last season. KKR's Rinku Singh had hammered Dayal in the last over, smashing five consecutive match-winning maximums. Face buried in a towel, Dayal was a picture of despair: That infamous over haunted Dayal for a long time. The UP bowler wouldn't play a game in the season after that, with GT eventually releasing him. It got so bad that mother, Radha even took ill seeing her son's demotivated state.

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

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

was confident of executing well," Dayal would say later.

A ball lost, a ball replaced, Dayal knew he had a new weapon to counter Dhoni with. The new ball stuck on the wicket and the slower deliveries gripped. Dhoni then top-edged a slower one for Swapnil Singh to pouch at deep backward square, sending the packed stadium into a tizzy.

For Dayal, it was personal redemption unfolding as he bowled slower deliveries and gave away just one run in the next four to seal RCB's win.

"God's plan baby," an ecstatic, and somewhat relieved, Rinku would post on social media. The young Dayal himself would worry about his mother: "Kaisa feel kar rahi ho (How are you feeling mom?)," would be his first words to his mother on a video call. After what happened to me last time, there was nervousness," he would say "Since coming to this RCB setup, I have practised a lot and have delivered in matches. All that was going through my mind was to deliver two balls well. Even if I didn't execute it well, there were seniors right behind me. That helped me a lot."

Dayal revealed that it was Dinesh Karthik and Du Plessis who took the call for him to bowl the last over.




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The OMEGA Constellation collection has long been inspired by the precise movement of the stars. That stellar theme continues with a new range of models featuring distinctive dials created from meteorite. Thanks to the natural pattern found within this rare space material, every slice is unique, guaranteeing that no two dials will ever appear the same. This 28 mm stainless steel and 18K Sedna™ Gold version has been given a blue colour treatment, further enhancing the design with maximum impact.


OMEGA

THE TIMES

INCLUSIVE OF DELHI TIMES (CIRCULATED ONLY IN DELHI NCR) |

23 States

would have concluded polling in the ongoing general elections for the 18th Lok Sabha after today

UP, Bihar & Bengal are big states where voting will continue after the fifth & smallest phase. National capital Delhi votes next



79% seats would've voted after today



MAX CITY, MAHA YUDH

It's the grand finale of the Maharashtra grudge match as the subplot in the NDA vs INDIA contest becomes the main theme. In and around India's commercial capital, the two Senas square off in the most bitter & personal of fights in these Lok Sabha elections. The other big face-offs are in UP & Bengal

WHAT'S AT STAKE IN PHASE 5

NDA

TO DEFEND: 39 seats, including 13 out of 14 in UP, 11 out of 13 in Maharashtra (excluding 2 Sena candidates who are with Uddhav group), all 5 in Bihar, all 3 in Jharkhand, 3 out of 5 in Odisha, 3 out of 7 in West Bengal and lone seat in Ladakh.

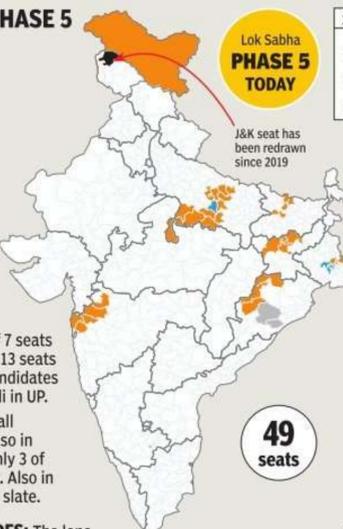
CAN LOOK FOR GAINS IN: Bengal, where it lost 4 of 7 seats polling today last time, and in Odisha.

INDIA

TO DEFEND: 7 seats, including 4 of 7 seats polling today in West Bengal, 2 of 13 seats in Maharashtra (adding 2 Sena candidates with Uddhav group) and Rae Bareilly in UP.

CAN LOOK FOR GAINS IN: Almost all the states in this round, but more so in Maharashtra, where it had won only 3 of the 13 seats that go to polls today. Also in Bihar, where it starts with a clean slate.

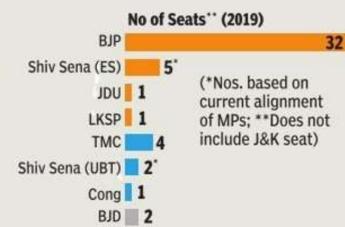
WHAT THIS BREAK-UP EXCLUDES: The lone seat polling today in Jammu & Kashmir, which is not possible to categorise as having been won by any party last time since seat boundaries have been redrawn since 2019.



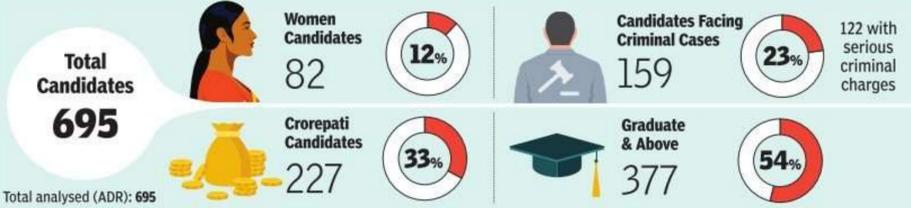
2019 RESULTS

NDA	41
INDIA	5
Others	2

8 states/UTs



49 seats



HIGH-STAKES BATTLES TO WATCH TODAY

Maharashtra: This Lok Sabha election's most complex political arena sees its final act today with a high-voltage Sena vs Sena showdown, a fight that's as much about political relevance as it is about Balasaheb's legacy and prestige for the two protagonists — Uddhav Thackeray and the man who unseated him as CM, Eknath Shinde. Of the 13 remaining seats in the state polling today, six are in India's commercial capital, Mumbai, the Sena bastion where Uddhav is looking for voters' stamp of condemnation of the "betrayal" he accuses Shinde of leading to the party splitting in two. The Shinde group is part of Mahayuti (BJP) and Uddhav's Sena UBT with MVA (Sharad Pawar's NCP and Congress). Four of the seats are in the wider Mumbai Metropolitan Region, which includes Shinde's home turf Thane. Here, Shinde is seeking endorsement of his rebellion. BJP, which did very well here in 2019, will see an advantage, but with two Senas and two NCPs in the mix, it's a new playing field for all parties.



Uttar Pradesh: The state that votes in all seven phases moves into one of its biggest two rounds today — the next one in Phase 6 — as 14 seats in Awadh, including capital Lucknow, and the entire Bundelkhand (Jalaun, Jhansi, Hamirpur and Banda) go to polls today. In 2019, BJP swept these seats except Rae Bareilly. This time, with the Gandhi bastion at the centre, INDIA bloc (Cong & Samajwadi Party) is eyeing a revival here. Other high-profile seats are Faizabad, which includes Ayodhya, and controversial former wrestling federation chief Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh's stronghold Kaiserganj. Also keep an eye on Mohanlalganj and Fatehpur from where two Union ministers — Kaushal Kishore and Sadhvi Niranjani Jyoti, respectively — are contesting.



A LOOK AT UNION MINISTERS & OTHER HEAVYWEIGHTS IN THE FRAY

Lucknow
 2019 WINNER: **BJP (Rajnath Singh)**
 KEY CONTENDERS: **Rajnath Singh (BJP), Ravidas Mehrotra (SP)**
 Defence minister Rajnath Singh inherited the legacy of Vajpayee in 2014 — after a brief interlude — and is looking for a hat-trick. Vajpayee won the seat on the trot between 1991 and 2004. His Man Friday in Lucknow, Lalji Tandon, won it in 2009, carrying the proverbial 'khadau' of Vajpayee. After making his LS debut from Ghaziabad in 2009, Rajnath shifted to the state capital to step into the giant shoes of his mentor. Even two decades after Vajpayee stepped out of active politics, Rajnath doesn't miss any opportunity to invoke his legacy. He has brought in a slew of projects to the city for sprucing up infrastructure and creating jobs. SP's Ravidas Mehrotra is an MLA and street fighter, a socialist who first became legislator in 1989. His challenge, however, seems feeble in front of Rajnath's heavy election machinery.



Rae Bareilly
 2019 WINNER: **Cong (Sonia Gandhi)**
 KEY CONTENDERS: **Rahul Gandhi (Cong), Dinesh Pratap Singh (BJP), Thakur Prasad Yadav (BSP)**
 After a long wait, Rahul Gandhi chose his mother's seat as his second contest, alongside Wayanad. He narrowly lost from neighbouring Amethi — another family bastion — against BJP's Smriti Irani in 2019. Between the two, Rae Bareilly is considered the 'safer' seat. Rae Bareilly first elected Rahul's grandfather Feroze Gandhi to Lok Sabha in 1952. His grandmother Indira Gandhi represented it between 1967 and 1985, barring the 1977 loss to Raj Narayan, while his mother Sonia was MP from 2004 to 2019. SP chief Akhilesh Yadav and other INDIA bloc allies have campaigned for Rahul as Congress looks for an improved performance in UP, which is key to Parliament numbers. BJP's Dinesh Pratap Singh, Congress MLC between 2009 and 2018 and Sonia's pointsman, jumped ship after a dispute and instantly became BJP's candidate in 2019. He brought down Sonia's victory margin from 3 lakh to 1.7 lakh and is once again banking on BJP's machinery, welfare schemes and his local clout.



Mumbai North
 2019 WINNER: **BJP (Gopal Shetty)**
 KEY CONTENDERS: **Piyush Goyal (BJP), Bhushan Patil (Shiv Sena UBT)**
 A Rajya Sabha member so far, Union commerce and industries minister Piyush Goyal is making his LS debut from Mumbai, the city he grew up in. With its significant Gujarati and middle-class Maharashtrian population, this seat is a BJP stronghold and was nurtured by the party for years before actor Govinda delivered a shock defeat to Ram Naik in 2004. In 2019, Urmila Matondkar contested from here for Congress but was comprehensively beaten by Gopal Shetty. This time, Congress has given the seat to Uddhav's Sena, which has fielded the relatively low-profile Bhushan Patil. Sena will be hoping to garner Marathi, Muslim and Christian votes, and is banking on the sympathy factor over the killing of its former corporator Abhishek Ghosalkar on FB Live earlier this year. However, this is one seat where the state's political middle does not cast a shadow like it does elsewhere because of BJP's grassroots strength.



Baramulla
 2019 WINNER: **NC (Mohd Akbar Lone)**
 KEY CONTENDERS: **Omar Abdullah (NC), Sajjad Lone (People's Conference)**
 Omar Abdullah, who has shifted to this north Kashmir seat from the south (Srinagar), says he is taking on "BJP and the Centre", who are using all their resources here despite not fielding a candidate in the Valley. The former CM is battling for restoration of full statehood to J&K and has called the nullification of Article 370 an "existential challenge". He says opponent Lone is the "B-team of BJP" while the latter calls Omar a dynast, an "outsider" and a "tourist" in Baramulla. Into this mix comes Sheikh Abdul Rasheed aka Engineer Rashid of Awami Ittehad Party, who is contesting the polls from Tihar jail, where he has been incarcerated since Aug 2019 on terror funding charges. A former aide of Lone, Rashid is a worry for him and PDP candidate Fayaz Mir as he polled over 1 lakh votes in the last LS election and is expected to cut into their share.



Amethi
 2019 WINNER: **BJP (Smriti Irani)**
 KEY CONTENDERS: **Smriti Irani (BJP), KL Sharma (Cong)**
 It's not quite the grudge match of 2019, but still seems to be going down to the last over. With Rahul Gandhi contesting from Rae Bareilly, Congress sprung a surprise by fielding KL Sharma, who has been the Gandhis' Man Friday in the twin constituencies for four decades, from Amethi. Sharma came to Amethi as a member of Rajiv Gandhi's youth brigade in 1983. Rajiv, who won a bypoll following the demise of his brother Sanjay Gandhi, held the seat till his death in 1991. Sonia Gandhi made her Lok Sabha debut from here in 1999. She shifted to Rae Bareilly in 2004, handing Amethi to Rahul, who won the seat thrice before the shock defeat to Smriti Irani in 2019. In the current campaign, Smriti has repeatedly called Rahul a "deserter" but the Congress narrative is that the family loyalist is more than capable of defeating her.



Hajipur
 2019 WINNER: **LJP (Pashupati Kumar Paras)**
 KEY CONTENDERS: **Chirag Paswan (LJP-Ram Vilas), Shiv Chandra Ram (RJD)**
 Socialist bastion Hajipur is one of Bihar's six Lok Sabha constituencies reserved for SCs. Ram Vilas Paswan represented this seat eight times in his career and lost just twice — in 1984 and 2009. In recent years, the poll narrative in Hajipur has centred around who is the claimant to Paswan's legacy, son Chirag Paswan or brother Pashupati Kumar Paras, who won from here in 2019 after Paswan offered the seat to him. BJP has decided to fully back Chirag, allotting five seats in Bihar to Chirag's faction and none to the Paras camp. Paswan's party LJP split in 2021. For Chirag then, this is as deep a prestige battle as it gets. PM Modi has campaigned for him, but the battle is an uphill one, with RJD holding three of the six assembly segments and Congress one; ally BJP has the other two.



SEE FLAP INSIDE FOR OTHER BIG BOUTS

BIG BOUTS OF PHASE 5

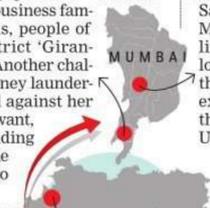
MUMBAI SOUTH

2019 WINNER: **Shiv Sena** (Arvind Sawant)
KEY CONTENDERS: **Arvind Sawant** (Shiv Sena UBT), **Yamini Jadhav** (Shiv Sena)

Incumbent Arvind Sawant, who stayed with Uddhav Thackeray's Shiv Sena, is hoping for a third term from this constituency. After a delayed nomination from the ruling coalition, Byculla MLA Yamini Jadhav didn't get to hit the ground early, but she's banking on the Modi factor. This SoBo constituency has a mixed population — Malabar Hill social elite, Gujarati-Marwari business families, middle-class Maharashtrians, people of Mumbai's old mill district 'Girangaon' and minorities. Another challenge for Jadhav is money laundering allegations raised against her and her husband Yashwant, who is an ex-BMC standing committee chief, made not too long ago by BJP.



Sawant



MUMBAI NORTH CENTRAL

2019 WINNER: **BJP** (Poonam Mahajan)
KEY CONTENDERS: **Ujjwal Nikam** (BJP), **Varsha Gaikwad** (Cong)

The special public prosecutor for 26/11 trial, Ujjwal Nikam, has been nominated by BJP in place of sitting MP Poonam Mahajan. Nikam, who formally joined the saffron party in April, faces a tough battle in this constituency. His rival is four-time Congress MLA and the party's Mumbai chief Varsha Gaikwad, a legislator from neighbouring Dharavi assembly seat. North Central, which stretches from Bandra to Santacruz and Kurla, has a cosmopolitan mix that includes Maharashtrians, North Indians, East Indian Christians, Muslims and Parsis. There was a demand within the local Congress to field a minority candidate, but that wasn't met. Gaikwad has the advantage of experience in election campaigning as well as the support of Shiv Sena (UBT) whose leader Uddhav Thackeray has his residence here. Nikam, the man who prosecuted Pakistani terrorist Ajmal Kasab, also has BJP's ground network backing him.



Gaikwad

NASHIK

2019 WINNER: **Shiv Sena** (Hemant Godse)
KEY CONTENDERS: **Hemant Godse** (Shiv Sena), **Rajabhau Waje** (Shiv Sena UBT), **Shantigiri Maharaj** (Ind)

Hemant Godse, who has been winning from Nashik from 2014, is now locked in battle with his former party colleague and UBT Sena nominee Rajabhau Waje, former Sinnar MLA. Getting a nomination for this prestigious seat wasn't smooth sailing for Godse, who had to fend off Mahayuti partners, BJP and NCP, which were both keen to contest from here. A prominent face in the ring was NCP minister Chhagan Bhujbal, who claimed that BJP's central leadership had proposed his name. Godse now has to ensure that parties in the governing coalition act in cohesion. He will also hope that people in the onion growers' belt respond positively to the Centre's recent withdrawal of export ban. Waje will rely on Sena supporters backing Thackeray and discontent among farmers. Complicating matters for both is Shantigiri Maharaj, a seer who has a sizeable following in Nashik.



Godse

THANE

2019 WINNER: **Shiv Sena** (Rajan Vichare)
KEY CONTENDERS: **Naresh Mhaske** (Shiv Sena), **Rajan Vichare** (Shiv Sena UBT)

Mahayuti announced its candidate for this seat, which covers Thane city and parts of Navi Mumbai, late as Sena and BJP were both eyeing it. Angered after Sena was handed the nomination, Navi Mumbai strongman Ganesh Naik's supporters followed up with a spate of resignations. Though the rift was resolved in days, it's yet to be seen if there's any long-term impact of the tussle. The coalition's eventual pick, Naresh Mhaske, had to make up for lost time while Sena UBT's Rajan Vichare had a headstart as the constituency's sitting MP. What may still work from Mhaske — the former mayor of Thane — is that he's fighting from CM Eknath Shinde's home turf. In this direct Sena vs Sena fight, a win is a must for both parties who want to establish their claim that they are the real Shiv Sena.

HOOGHLY

2019 WINNER: **BJP** (Locket Chatterjee)
KEY CONTENDERS: **Locket Chatterjee** (BJP), **Rachana Banerjee** (TMC), **Manadip Ghosh** (CPI-M)

Two Tollywood faces square off here, among the handful in these Lok Sabha elections in which both contestants are women. In Trinamool colours is actor Rachana Banerjee while BJP has once again fielded incumbent Locket Chatterjee in a constituency that witnessed the rise of Mamata Banerjee as a force against three decades of CPM rule with the Singur agitation against Tata's Nano factory. After BJP's 2019 Lok Sabha win, Trinamool Congress clawed its way back in the 2021 state assembly polls and the 2023 panchayat polls, largely negating gains made by BJP. Though a debutante, Rachana is a household name in the state, courtesy her hugely successful TV show, 'Didi No. 1' and Trinamool has thrown its might behind her to wrest the constituency back.



Locket

SARAN

2019 WINNER: **BJP** (Rajiv Pratap Rudy)
KEY CONTENDERS: **Rohini Acharya Yadav** (RJD), **Rajiv Pratap Rudy** (BJP)

Famous as the birthplace of socialist leader Jayprakash Narayan, this constituency has been with BJP for the past decade. This time, though, the contest may not be a cakewalk for BJP's Rajiv Pratap Rudy, former Union MoS for skill development. He is up against Lalu Yadav's daughter Rohini Acharya, who first came into spotlight after donating her kidney to the RJD patriarch in Dec 2022. Lalu, who was elected from Chhapra (later Saran) in 1977 on a Janata Party ticket as the youngest parliamentarian at 29, represented this seat four times. After being disqualified from contesting elections following his conviction in the fodder scam, he fielded his wife Rabri Devi in 2014 and his *samdhi* Chandrika Rai in 2019, but both lost. Four assembly segments of the seat are currently represented by RJD and two by BJP.



Rohini

BONGAON

2019 WINNER: **BJP** (Shantanu Das)
KEY CONTENDERS: **Shantanu Thakur** (BJP), **Biswajit Das** (TMC)

In this Matua heartland, the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) promise set the agenda in 2019 LS polls, handing BJP a win. Two years later, in the 2021 assembly poll that TMC swept, Bongaon remained firmly with BJP, handing the party wins in six of the seven assembly segments. Five years on, CAA remains at the core of the campaign here. The difference — it was a promise in 2019 and is a reality now. And yet, there is anxiety about the test that every applicant must pass. TMC has pitted a BJP turncoat MLA, Biswajit Das against the incumbent Shantanu Thakur, junior Union minister and descendant of Matua guru Harichand Thakur. TMC, earlier this year, nominated Shantanu's aunt Mamata Bala Thakur as a Rajya Sabha MP.



Lallu

KAISERGANJ

2019 WINNER: **BJP** (Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh)
KEY CONTENDERS: **Karan Bhushan Singh** (BJP), **Ram Bhagat Mishra** (SP), **Narendra Pandey** (BSP)

Carved out of five assembly seats of Bahraich and Gonda, this constituency was in the news till the last day of nomination due to its association with six-time MP and former wrestling federation president Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh, who was accused of sexual harassment by several women wrestlers. After days of suspense, BJP decided to go with his younger son Karan. Singh's elder son Prateek is already an MLA from Gonda. Singh, who won thrice from Kaiserganj (2009, 2014 and 2019), and from Gonda (1991, 1999) and Balrampur (2004), wields considerable influence. A law graduate, Karan is a national-level double trap shooter and was named president of UP Wrestling Association. He takes on SP candidate, lawyer Ram Bhagat Mishra, and BSP's Narendra Pandey, who hopes to cash in on the presence of Brahmin voters here.



Karan

FAIZABAD

2019 WINNER: **BJP** (Lallu Singh)
KEY CONTENDERS: **Lallu Singh** (BJP), **Awadhesh Prasad** (SP), **Sachidanand Pandey** (BSP)

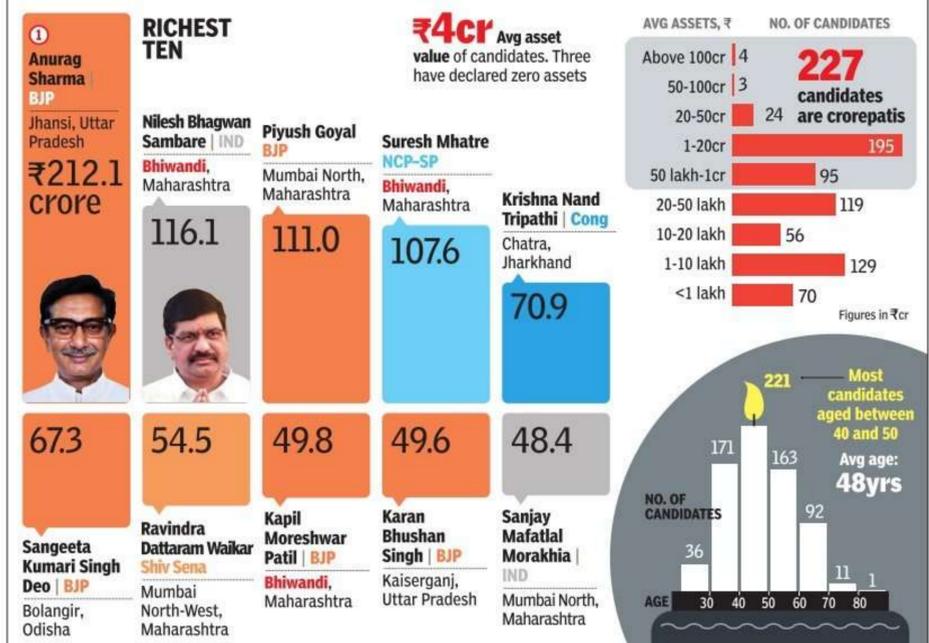
In this constituency that includes Ayodhya, two-time BJP MP Lallu Singh is banking on the euphoria of Ram temple along with govt's 'vikas' theme, to score a hat-trick. A Thakur and an accused in the Babri demolition case, Singh was a five-time MLA from Ayodhya assembly seat between 1991 and 2007. He is pitted against Awadhesh Prasad of SP and Sachidanand Pandey of BSP. A Dalit and former minister in SP govt, Prasad is a nine-time MLA from erstwhile Sohawal and now Milkipur. SP has experimented by fielding a Dalit to cash in on the substantial presence of SC voters here. The entry of former IPS officer Arvind Sen, son of three-time Faizabad MP Mitrasen Yadav, as CPI candidate has made this contest interesting. Mitrasen had won the seat in 1989 for CPI, in 1998 (for SP) and 2004 (BSP).



Lallu

3 OF 10 RICHEST NETAS IN PHASE-5 FRAY FIGHTING FOR ONE MAHA SEAT

Only 49 seats across eight states and UTs are set to vote on May 20, the fifth and smallest phase of 2024 LS elections. Of the 695 candidates whose affidavits were analysed by Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR), 227 were crorepatis. And three of the 10 richest candidates are contesting in Bhiwandi



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