

THE TIMES OF INDIA

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CITY TURNOUT
IN 2019: 55.4%
HIGHEST
68.2
1967
Lowest
41.2
1991

HIGHEST TURNOUTS
In 6 Mumbai Seats (in %)

North	North West	North East	North Central	South Central	South
64.8 (1957)	65.5 (1967)	68.6 (1967)	68.7 (1967)	70.9 (1967)	67.4 (1967)
2019: 60	2019: 54.4	2019: 57.2	2019: 53.7	2019: 55.4	2019: 51.6

EC has conducted special campaigns...
We hope this will help in increasing voting percentage
Kiran Kulkarni | State addl CEO

Polling Time:
7am-6pm
Helpline:
1950/1800-22-1950
Website:
voters.eci.gov.in



Pune minor rams Porsche into bike, kills two techies

Two 24-year-old techies hailing from MP, Aneesh Awadhia and Ashwini Koshita, were killed after a Porsche Taycan driven by the 17-year-old son of a builder hit their bike in Pune at 2.30am on Sunday. The minor driver, who was detained but later released by the juvenile justice board, was on his way home with friends after a pub party when he rammed into the bike and a few other vehicles. While the boy's blood samples have been sent for alcohol test, a criminal offence against his father has been added to the FIR. The pub has also been booked for serving liquor to minors. **P7**

Engine fire leaves 179 flyers stranded

An engine of a Kochi-bound AI Express plane from Pune caught fire minutes after takeoff from Bengaluru after a stopover Saturday, forcing a return and emergency evacuation of 179 flyers, leaving them stranded for nearly 13 hours. **P7**

* PLUS 4 PAGES BOMBAY TIMES + 4 PAGES EDUCATION TIMES
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Times Interact | P 8 & 10

MUTUAL FUN

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What's On Your Mind, Mumbai?

Since 1991, City's Voter Turnout Has Crossed 50% Only Three Times

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

► Forecast for 34-36 deg C, light showers in city, **P5**
► Rohit posts 'proof' of booth capturing in Beed, **P4**

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 phases of the poll, a marginal increase of 0.4% from 2019. And Mumbai is ground zero of the turmoil that 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 infras-

MAHA'S FINAL PHASE: 13 SEATS VOTE TODAY

10 in MMR, 3 in North Maha (Dhule, Dindori & Nashik). They saw avg 55.6% turnout in 2019

Who won these 13 seats last time



WHO WON HOW MANY SEATS IN MAHA IN 2019

BJP 23 | Sena-Undivided 18 | NCP 4 | Cong 1 | AIMIM 1 | Independent 1



An all-women managed booth at a school on Yari Road

DOs & DON'Ts

- Verify your name on electoral list and polling booth by calling 1950 (add STD code) or by visiting the EC website electoralsearch.eci.gov.in
- Or text ECI space EPIC (Voter ID) to 1950. If EPIC is 12345678 then sms ECI 12345678 to 1950
- For easier access, download Voter Helpline App (Android) or Voter Helpline App (iOS)
- Carry voter ID card or ID proof docs like passport, driving licence, PAN/Aadhaar
- Voter slip, electricity bill, ration card not accepted as ID proof at polling station
- Mobiles, cameras not allowed inside polling booth; no facilities at the polling station to deposit them
- Police may confiscate gadgets if found inside booth
- If name not found on list, check with the presiding officer at the polling booth whether it's on the list of absentees, shifted or dead voters
- For help, you can contact the electoral registration officer at the polling station

CONTESTS IN 10 MUMBAI REGION SEATS

Mumbai North Piyush Goyal (BJP) vs Bhushan Patil (Cong) 2019 winner: Gopal Shetty (BJP). Victory margin: 1.3 lakh votes	Gaikwad (Congress) 2019 winner: Poonam Mahajan (BJP). 1.3 lakh votes	(Sena-Undivided). 4.1 lakh votes
Mumbai North West Ravindra Waikar (Shiv Sena) vs Amol Kirtikar (Sena-UBT) 2019 winner: Gajanan Kirtikar (Sena-Undivided). 2.6 lakh votes	Mumbai South Central Rahul Shewale (Sena) vs Anil Desai (Sena-UBT) 2019 winner: Rahul Shewale (Sena-Undivided). 1.52 lakh votes	Kalyan Shrikant Shinde (Sena) vs Vaishali Darekar-Rane (Sena-UBT) 2019 winner: Shrikant Shinde (Sena-Undivided). 3.44 lakh votes
Mumbai North East Mihir Kotecha (BJP) vs Sanjay Dina Patil (Sena-UBT) 2019 winner: Manoj Kotak (BJP). 2.26 lakh votes	Mumbai South Yamini Jadhav (Sena) vs Arvind Sawant (Sena-UBT) 2019 winner: Arvind Sawant (Sena-Undivided). 1 lakh votes	Bhiwandi Kapil Patil (BJP) vs S Mhatre (NCP-SP) vs N Sambare (Ind) 2019 winner: Kapil Moreswar Patil (BJP). 1.56 lakh votes
Mumbai North Central Ujjwal Nikam (BJP) vs Varsha	Thane Naresh Mhaske (Sena) vs Rajan Vichare (Sena-UBT) 2019 winner: Rajan Vichare	Palghar H Savara (BJP) vs Bharti Kamdi (Sena-UBT) vs Rajesh Patil (BVA) 2019 winner: Rajendra Gavit (Sena-Undivided). 88,000 votes

First battle after splits, parties focus on Marathi, minority votes

As Mumbai prepares for first electoral battle after the splits in Shiv Sena and NCP, parties will be looking closely at assembly-wise voting to gauge any change in turnout in areas where they have a base. In 2019 LS polls, assembly segments with high Gujarati and Marathi populations saw high polling, while Muslim dominated constituencies had low polling. **P2**

structure were among other issues that were raised during poll campaigns. Mumbai often serves as a barometer for the mood of the nation. Since 1991, the party that controlled

Some city offices give the day off, others opt for flexible work hours

Will Mumbai, known for its apathy, turnout in force to vote? Sec 135 B of RP Act mandates establishments declare a paid holiday. While some offices have given their staff compensatory off, others, including essential services such as hospitals, will have flexible schedules. There's a fear that it being the first day of the week, work pressure could prove a dampener. **P5**

Mumbai has gone on to form the govt at the Centre. In 2004 and 2009, the Congress-NCP alliance dominated Mumbai by winning all six seats and the UPA ruled at the

Centre. BJP and undivided Sena won all six seats in 2014 and 2019 even as PM Modi took charge in Delhi.

► Tug of war, **P4**

UP teen seen voting for BJP 8 times in clip

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 on Sunday, initiate disciplinary proceedings against officials managing the polling booth, and recommend a repoll. **P8**

Pawar: Oppn will win at least half the seats in Maha, dislodge NDA govt

Prafulla Marpakwar

Mumbai: With the Lok Sabha elections in Maharashtra set to reach its final phase Monday, NCP (SP) chief Sharad Pawar told TOI in an exclusive interview that he was confident the INDIA bloc would dislodge the Narendra Modi-led NDA govt. When asked who the Prime Minister would be if his prediction comes true, Pawar said it would be decided in the meeting of the newly elected MPs.

In Maharashtra, he said, "the performance of Maha Vikas Aghadi will be impressive, it will win at least 50% of the seats." He said it was a sign of Modi's loss of confidence that he spent so much time on "extensive campaigning" in Maharashtra, "referring to the fact that the PM attended 18 election rallies

"I think Modi's opinion is wrong; it is not a crime to follow in your parents' footsteps... All will depend on his/her professional competence"

Sharad Pawar

FULL INTERVIEW: P 4

across the state.

On PM Modi's claim that BJP will get a historic mandate in the polls, Pawar said: "Ever since Lok Sabha elections were declared, he has given a slogan, 'Abki baar, 400 paar' (This time, 400 and more). Modi's opinion appears to be unrealistic... I am doubtful if BJP will reach the majority mark in view of severe discontent against the NDA across the country."

Chopper with Iran Prez Raisi crashes on Azerbaijan border

A helicopter carrying Iran President Ebrahim Raisi and his foreign minister crashed on Sunday as it was crossing mountain terrain near Jolfa, on the Iran-Azerbaijan border, in heavy fog. An Iranian official said the lives of Raisi and minister Hossein Amirabdollahian were "at risk", adding, "We are still hopeful, but information from the crash site is very concerning." Raisi was in Azerbaijan to inaugurate a dam. Turkey is sending 32 rescue specialists to help Iran.



The chopper with Raisi takes off after the inauguration of a dam on the Iran-Azerbaijan border

Supreme leader Ayatollah Khamenei held a meeting with

the National Security Council. On X, PM Modi said, "Deeply concerned by reports regarding President Raisi's helicopter flight today. We stand in solidarity with Iranian people in this hour of distress, and pray for well being of the President and his entourage." AGENCIES **Inside Jacket**



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MUMBAI NORTH

PIYUSH GOYAL | 59 | BJP

Union minister is a 2nd-generation BJP politician from Mumbai. A 3-time Rajya Sabha MP, this is the first LS poll for him. Has promised to make the constituency "slum free" with in-situ rehab. Can bank on committed BJP voter base, which includes north Indians, Gujaratis. Low turnout may create problems



BHUSHAN PATIL | 55 | INC

Odds are stacked against the Mumbai Congress vice-president. Anti-incumbency for BJP is his biggest strength, plus a sizeable chunk of minority votes which make up more than 20% of electors. The split in the original Shiv Sena makes him appealing to a broader cross-section of voters including Maharashtrians aligned to Uddhav Thackeray

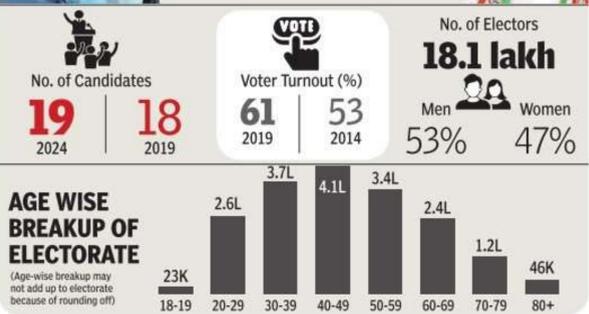


Mumbai's Voting Preferences Have Often Been A Bellwether For The Nation's Mood. The Turnout In The Metropolis, However, Varies Depending On Area And Other Factors Such As Class, Caste And Community

TOO BUSY? TOO HOT? JUST GO OUT AND VOTE

Chittaranjan.Tembhekar @timesgroup.com

With the electoral competition in Mumbai fierce this time owing to splits in Shiv Sena and NCP, political parties will be looking closely at assembly-wise voting percentages to gauge whether voting has increased or decreased in areas where they have a base. Each of Mumbai's 6 LS seats has 6 assembly constituencies, making it a total of 36 assembly seats. In the last two LS polls, assembly segments of Borivli, Dahisar, Charkop, Jogeshwari East, Vile Parle, Ghatkopar East, Bhandup West, Mulund, Wadala and Mahim—areas with more middle-class population—saw a turnout of 55-60% or above. At the other end, segments such as Colaba, Mumbadevi, Dharavi, Bandra East, Kurla, Chandivli, Mankhurd, Andheri West, Versova and Sion-Koliwada—most have large chunks of low-income, minority, Dalit populations—failed to cross the 50-52% mark. The Mahayuti will be banking on a rise in turnout in assembly segments where Prime Minister Modi's appeal and the split in Marathi votes will carry weight. The MVA will hope for a higher turnout in assembly constituencies with Marathi, minority and Dalit voters. "In the 2019 elections, there was very high polling in the Gujarati dominated suburbs like Borivli, Jogeshwari and Vile Parle and areas with higher Marathi population," said a senior Congress leader. "The Muslim dominated constituencies like Mumbadevi, Mankhurd and Kurla showed low polling. The result was clearly in favour of the NDA from the turnout," he added. "It has to be seen how the traditional Marathi, Gujarati and minority pockets will vote, given the changed political dynamics. It will matter a lot in deciding the fate of candidates," said Shiv Sena spokesperson Krishna Hegde. Parties will also assess whether their alliances have resulted in a vote transfer to the candidate in areas where the allies have a base. Expressing hope of higher turnout, Dr Kiran Kulkarni, additional chief electoral officer, said Maharashtra's first four phases have seen a slight increase in turnout from 2019, indicating more enthusiasm and awareness. "EC has conducted special campaigns in slums, village and other pockets, besides the entire western suburban Mumbai... We hope this will help in increasing voting percentage," he said. Congress spokesperson Anant Gadgil said EC should set up separate booths for areas dominated by the higher middle class, middle class and lower income groups. "Those in the higher and middle class are opinion-makers but are not always enthusiastic about voting due to crowding, confusion in electoral rolls and changing booth setups." He added, "Areas with economically weaker sections such as Dharavi, Mankhurd, Versova and Kurla have a lower voting population than their actual population. A sizeable floating population migrates during elections, affecting turnout."



MUMBAI NORTH-WEST

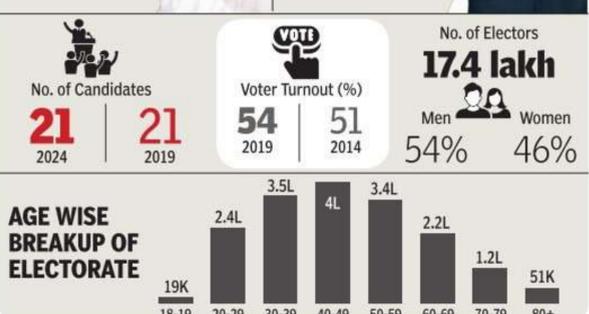
AMOL KIRTIKAR | 52 | SHIV SENA (UBT)

Son of two-time Sena MP Gajanan Kirtikar, contesting father's seat. He is backed by Thackeray, but not BJP. Facing a probe for irregularities into a Rs 6-crore BMC contract, Kirtikar will rely on the party's shakhas to rally support. He fought assembly polls in 2019 from Goregaon but was unsuccessful



RAVINDRA WAIKAR | 65 | SHIV SENA

Ex-corporator and MLA, veteran of many poll battles. Switched loyalties to Shinde, and tried to portray himself as a victim of conspiracies, one who had no options but to leave Thackeray due to pressure from central agencies in a money laundering case. Needs to convince Sena's traditional vote bank



MUMBAI NORTH-EAST

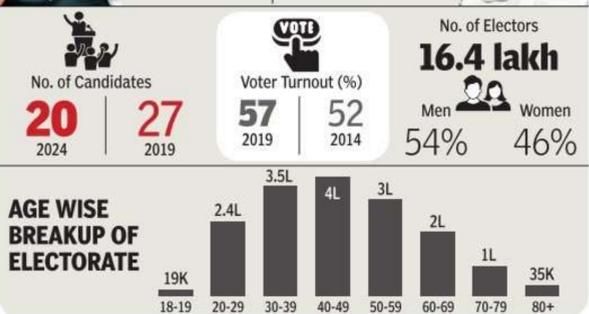
MIHIR KOTECHA | 49 | BJP

A loyal party worker for three decades. In 2014, he lost assembly polls from Wadala; in 2019 won from Mulund. Has tried to expand his base beyond fellow Gujaratis by trying to stall transfer of project evacuees from Dharavi and other areas to Mulund on the grounds that this will unduly burden existing infrastructure



SANJAY DINA PATIL | 55 | SHIV SENA (UBT)

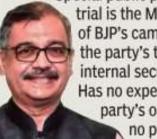
A former NCP MP who lost in 2014 to Kirit Somaiya of BJP. Contested again in 2019 for NCP and lost to Manoj Kotak (BJP). Has a following among the Marathi voters and is eyeing Muslim and dalit votes from Mankhurd, Vikhroli, on account of the alliance between Thackeray and Congress



MUMBAI NORTH-CENTRAL

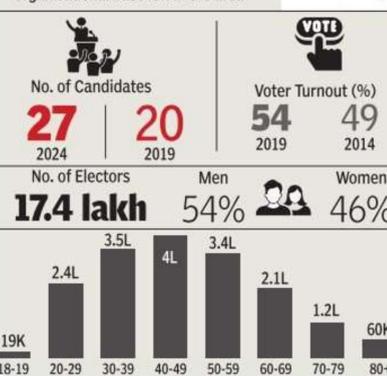
UJJWAL NIKAM | 69 | BJP

Special public prosecutor in 26/11 trial is the Marathi manoos face of BJP's campaign in Mumbai. Symbolises the party's tough stand on law and order and internal security. High profile and articulate. Has no experience of poll campaigns, but has party's organisational support, and carries no political baggage



VARSHA GAIKWAD | 49 | INC

A four-term MLA from Dharavi and former minister, she is Congress's most experienced legislator in the city. Gaikwad will be backed by Shiv Sena (UBT). A significant minority population boosts her prospects. But Congress does not have much of an organisational base left in the area



MUMBAI SOUTH-CENTRAL

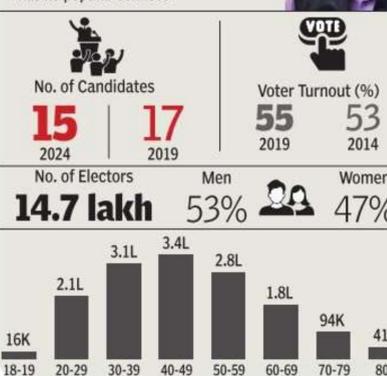
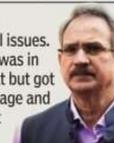
RAHUL SHEWALE | 51 | SHIV SENA

Two-time MP who switched to Eknath Shinde camp. Considered a strong contender. Shewale began as BMC corporator at 29, was BMC standing committee chairman, switched to Lok Sabha in 2014. He is a familiar face in Dharavi and Trombay, but there is anti-incumbency against the Shinde-led Sena



ANIL DESAI | 66 | SHIV SENA (UBT)

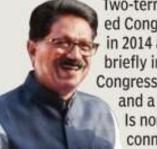
Rajya Sabha MP for two terms, close to Uddhav Thackeray. Handles party's legal issues. A sober, English-speaking politician, he was in the reckoning for the South Mumbai seat but got South Central instead. Enjoys a clean image and sympathy as Thackeray's candidate, but has no popular connect



MUMBAI SOUTH

ANIL SAWANT | 72 | SHIV SENA (UBT)

Two-term MP, had defeated Congress's Milind Deora in 2014 and 2019. Was a Union minister briefly in 2019 before Sena aligned with Congress and NCP. Active in worker unions and a prominent Sena face in Lok Sabha. Is non-controversial. This time, he can connect with pro-Congress voters too



YAMINI JADHAV | 56 | SHIV SENA

MLA from Byculla and former corporator, husband is also an ex-corporator. Has been picked as a Marathi face to take on Sawant because the working class base of Sena may prove decisive. Jadhavs left Thackeray and joined Shinde group in 2022. They were investigated in a money laundering case



THANE

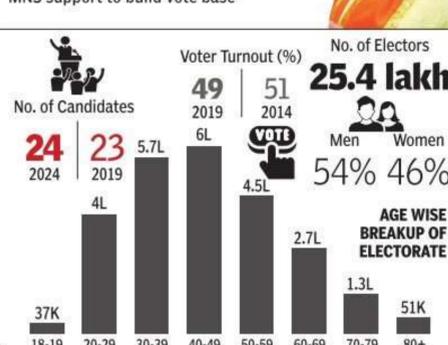
RAJAN VICHARE | 62 | SHIV SENA (UBT)

Two-time MP, his mentor was late Anand Dighe. Has held positions in Thane civic corporation and been MLA too. Not an enviable record for parliamentary attendance or participation but has reputation for tracking transport and infra issues. Shinde nominee's high-decibel campaign may be a challenge



NARESH MHASKE | 55 | SHIV SENA

Four-time corporator. Is close to chief minister Shinde and son Dr Shrikant. Has served as mayor in Thane civic body and is party spokesperson. Dubbed 'Chanakya of Thane politics,' Mhaske is known for his networking skills and political acumen. Can harness BJP, MNS support to build vote base



KALYAN

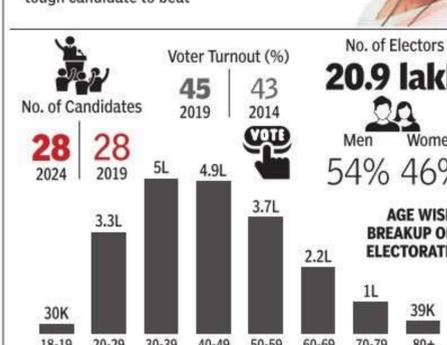
SHRIKANT SHINDE | 37 | SHIV SENA

Two-time MP. Is son of CM Eknath Shinde. Doctor by training, he did M S Orthopaedics from DY Patil College. Has reputation for spearheading development work. Received Sansad Ratna for Lok Sabha performance. Projects begun in last few years should earn goodwill; has to keep BJP on his side



VAISHALI DAREKAR | 49 | SHIV SENA (UBT)

Won Kalyan-Dombivli municipal polls thrice. Known for aggressive stand against Shinde. Was Raj Thackeray's nominee in 2010 civic polls, held opposition leader post in KDMC. In 2009 LS polls, bagged over 1 lakh votes on MNS symbol against Shiv Sena's Anand Paranjape. But CM's son is a tough candidate to beat



BHIWANDI

KAPIL PATIL | 63 | BJP

Two-time MP and Union minister. Is from Agri community which has big numbers in Thane and Bhiwandi. Was chairman of Thane Dist Coop bank. Has Shinde-led Sena's support, but is up against NCP, Cong and Sena (UBT) in a town with sizeable minority votes



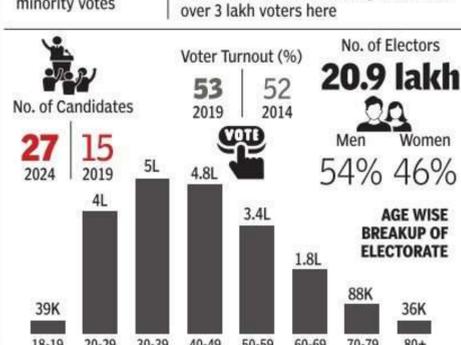
SURESH MHATRE | 54 | NCP (SP)

Is in the warehousing business. Has changed parties at least 8 times. Left Shinde's Sena a few months back and joined NCP. There could be trust issues; support can add to his kitty



NILESH SAMBARE | 48 | IND

Nilesh Sambare who runs an NGO is a road contractor by profession. Has received support from Vanchit Bahujan Aghadi. Runs schools and hospitals through his NGO. Hails from Kunbi community which has over 3 lakh voters here



PALGHAR

HEMANT SAVARA | 47 | BJP

Surgeon and ex-minister Vishnu Savara's son, lost 2019 Vikramgad assembly poll to NCP MLA by significant margin. Lacking a strong connect with voters, he will rely on party organisation. BJP is sending biggies like Amit Shah to campaign



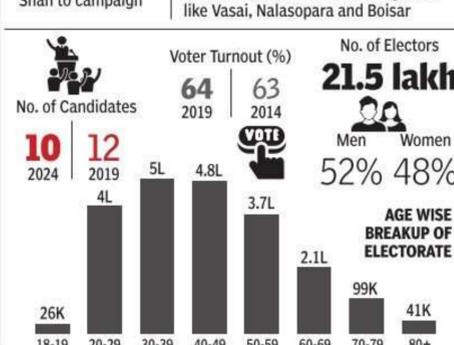
BHARTI KAMDI | 50 | SHIV SENA (UBT)

Newcomer to state and central level politics. Was president of Palghar zilla parishad. Engagement with masses is limited. Has struggled to hold attention of crowds at rallies. Deep ties with local community is her best asset



RAJESH PATIL | 49 | BVA

Vasai resident and builder, emerged victorious in his first attempt at MLA elections in 2019 from Boisar. Patil defeated undivided Shiv Sena's Vilas Tare by 2,700 votes. Patil relies on votes from BVA strongholds like Vasai, Nalasopara and Boisar



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Kandivli couple's death: Elderly man hanged self

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Mumbai: Three days after the bodies of an elderly couple were found at their Kandivli (E) home, the police said that the man died by suicide but the cause of death of the wife is still unclear.

Pramod Chonkar, 61, was found hanging from the ceiling fan while his wife, Arpita, 57, was found lying on the bed next to him. Both bodies were decomposed when the police found them Thursday.

According to the police, the couple resided at Arya Chanakya Nagar in Kandivli East. They were childless. Pramod, the police claimed, left behind a suicide note. Based on the contents of the note, police said the couple was facing a financial crunch.

"We received a call from local residents about a foul odour emanating from the Chonkars' house on Thursday. After breaking open the door, we found their bodies and immediately moved them to a hospital. The bodies were decomposed. Pramod has left behind a suicide note dated May 14 in which he mentioned that he was dying by suicide," a police officer said.

Autopsy examinations were carried out on the couple. While it was established that Pramod had died by suicide, the cause of Arpita's death is inconclusive. "The viscera have been sent for forensic analysis to the state FSL. For now, an accidental death entry has been recorded," said the officer.

Need expert advice? Call helpline numbers: MPower Mental Health Helpline 1800-120-820050 Vandrewala Foundation | 9999666555

5 yrs on, 2 Japanese held for gold smuggling acquitted

Ahmed.Ali
@timesgroup.com

Mumbai: Nearly five years after two Japan nationals had been accused of trying to smuggle US dollars worth Rs 1.2 crore, a court acquitted them because of a "shoddy investigation" and the customs department's failure to prove the case. The forex was allegedly part of the proceeds of gold smuggling.

The two had been caught on July 24, 2019. Marin Kataigi was intercepted at the city's international airport while she was to board a flight to Bangkok.

Her baggage allegedly contained the US dollars hidden in her belongings. She admitted to carrying forex beyond the admissible limit without valid documents, officials had alleged.

A day later, she claimed that the currency belonged to Japan national

Kobayashi Hikawa. She said they intended to invest in Bangkok. The second accused allegedly admitted to having handed over the currency to Kataigi which he had allegedly obtained by selling smuggled gold in Mumbai.

Officials had said that Hikawa identified the jeweller to whom he had sold the smuggled gold, and they alleged that he had confessed to previously having smuggled 10 kg of gold.

The prosecution, however, failed to examine the jeweller to prove the gold sale charge.

Advocates for the accused, Anand Sachwani and Vijay Advani, said, "There were many discrepancies in the investigation like inconsistency in eyewitness statements."

The magistrate observed that the prosecution had failed to prove beyond reasonable doubt by co-gent, corroborative and

reliable evidence that accused number 1 (Kataigi) was carrying seized foreign currency which was the sale proceeds of gold smuggled into India by accused number 2 (Hikawa), sold it... and committed offences as alleged.

"During adjudication proceedings the seized currency was confiscated. But there is no order regarding seized mobile, passport and boarding pass," the magistrate observed.

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AN INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITY IN RENEWABLE ENERGY (WIND) PROJECT.

A Private Hybrid Energy Company based in Bangalore is setting up a 100MW Green-Field Wind Energy Project (Rs 880Cr) in Northern Karnataka by early 2026. The Project will be financed by equity-debt (30:70). The land acquisition has started and statutory permissions in place. The company now invites interested genuine parties to participate in any of the following manner:

1. By partnering in equity capital (49%); and/or
2. As a Financial Institution for debt funding; and/or
3. As a client purchasing the generated Electricity.

Interested parties to respond on we.project24@gmail.com indicating their choice in any of the above 3 areas. Complete project details are provided to shortlisted parties & responses are treated as confidential.

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DANCE of DEMOCRACY

LAWYERS WRITE TO EC OVER WADETTIWAR'S REMARKS AGAINST UJJWAL NIKAM

More than 800 lawyers from the state have signed a letter addressed to the Election Commission (EC) complaining about an "irresponsible" statement by the leader of opposition in the assembly, Vijay Wadettiwar, against Ujjwal Nikam, BJP candidate from Mumbai North Central. Wadettiwar had accused Nikam of "deliberately suppressing" facts related to the killing of IPS officer Hemant Karkare during the 26/11 terror attack. Wadettiwar later clarified that he was quoting from a book by former senior cop SM Mushrif, where it was alleged that Karkare was killed by an RSS-affiliated police officer rather than convicted terrorist Ajmal Kasab. Nikam was the special public prosecutor in the 26/11 case.



THE TIMES OF INDIA, MUMBAI | MONDAY, MAY 20, 2024

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

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For 83-year-old Sharad Pawar, it was a painful period of his political career spread over nearly six-and-a-half decades when his nephew Ajit Pawar hijacked the NCP set up by him 25 years ago. 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 elections. Pawar is confident that the INDIA bloc will dislodge the Narendra Modi-led NDA and the MVA will win at least 50% seats in Maharashtra. Pawar feels that Modi has lost confidence, therefore the level of campaign is very low. In an exclusive interview, Sharad Pawar spoke at length on the formation of the IN-

DIA bloc, its priorities and the future of Maha Vikas Aghadi comprising Shiv Sena (UBT), NCP (SP) and Congress. Excerpts:

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

A: 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



NCP (SP) chief Sharad Pawar

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 Uttar Pradesh among several other states.

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

We, in the INDIA bloc, are confident that it should not be difficult for the INDIA bloc to dislodge the Modi-led NDA gov. With regard to our PM 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 gov.

What will be your priorities?
Our top priority will be to pro-

vide a stable gov, 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.

TOI EXCLUSIVE

PM Modi is frequently addressing 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, Prime Ministers 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 language 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 legisla-

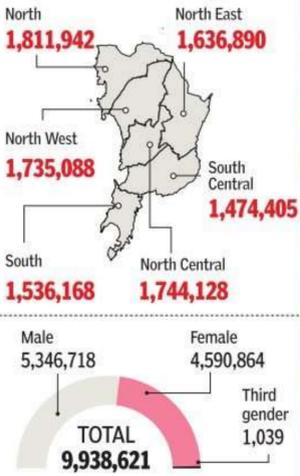
tors have joined hands with Ajit Pawar and Eknath Shinde, grassroots workers are still with the original parties. I have seen in most of my meetings, there is a massive presence of members of the younger generations. Similar is the case with Shiv Sainiks, they are still loyal to Uddhav Thackeray.

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 hometown.

AND FINALLY... IT'S MONDAY, MAY 20 GO OUT AND VOTE FROM 7AM-6PM

VOTERS REGISTERED IN CITY'S SIX CONSTITUENCIES AT A GLANCE



116 Total number of candidates in Mumbai | **9,904** Polling booths | **70,000** Approximate number of polling officials

LAST PHASE SEATS OUTSIDE MMR

NASHIK

HEMANT GODSE | 53 | SHIV SENA

Sitting MP. Enjoys the backing of BJP & NCP, but faces anti-incumbency sentiment. This is an opportunity for him to maintain his winning streak, though amidst resentment among alliance partner workers

RAJABHAU WAJE | 59 | SENA UBT

Handpicked by Uddhav Thackeray, but lacks strong connect with voters of three urban assembly segments. Has an opportunity to make Nashik UBT's stronghold, though must battle the clout of state ministers Girish Mahajan, Dada Bhuse and Chhagan Bhujbal

No. of Candidates	31	18	59.5	58.8
	2019	2019	2019	2014
Voter Turnout (%)				
No. of Electors	20.01 Lakh	Men 52%	Women 48%	

DINDORI

BHARATI PAWAR | 45 | BJP

Enters fray as Union minister, though has been unable to implement big-ticket projects like dry port project. She could try and widen her victory margin, though the withdrawal of the CPI(M) candidate could play spoilsport as MVA votes are now united

BHASKAR BHAGADE | 53 | NCP (SP)

Enjoys a clean image, and will gain from the popularity of Sharad Pawar among farmers. Though is underdog in the fight, can prove to be a giant killer. But then, the NCP split has weakened the organisation in the constituency

No. of Candidates	10	8	65.7	63.4
	2024	2019	2019	2014
Voter Turnout (%)				
No. of Electors	18.41 Lakh	Men 52%	Women 48%	

DHULE

SUBHASH BHAMRE | 70 | BJP

Sitting MP. Though the constituency is a strong base of BJP, there is a strong sense of anti-incumbency. Thus, Bhamre must prove that his previous two victories were not a fluke, but then he is up against a seasoned politician

SHOBHA BACHHAV | 65 | CONGRESS

A loyal Congress worker, she is known for her accessibility. A weakness is her outsider tag since she hails from Nashik, though has an opportunity to resurrect Congress in Dhule. A threat is infighting within Congress's Dhule unit

No. of Candidates	18	28	57	59
	2024	2019	2019	2014
Voter Turnout (%)				
No. of Electors	20.01 Lakh	Men 52%	Women 48%	

Rohit posts 'proof' of booth capturing in Beed, probe on

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Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar: After NCP (SP)'s Beed candidate Bajrang Sonawane alleged booth capturing in some places during voting in the LS seat on May 13, district collector and returning officer Deepa Mudhol Munde ordered an inquiry on Sunday.

Rohit Pawar, the party's MLA from Karjat Jamkhed, on Saturday produced three videos and an audio clip to support the charges. Sonawane has demanded a report.

Two videos purportedly of a polling booth from Parli taluka of Beed district were referred to as proof of whisking away of legitimate voters by goons to facilitate bogus voting. In these videos, several people can be seen inside the polling booth and in front of the EVM. In another video, a villager is raising his voice against the alleged booth capturing and sharing the modus operandi adopted. A few people are spotted trying to stop him from shooting the video. The audio clip is of a con-

LOCATION NOT CLEAR: COLLECTOR

—Rohit Pawar | NCP (SP) MLA



A screenshot showing voters allegedly being taken away to facilitate bogus voting

—Deepa Mudhol Munde | BEED DISTRICT COLLECTOR

versation between a poll official and a local journalist in which the official claims to have been pressured by cabinet minister Dhananjay Munde and some villagers to handover the booth in Halamb from Parli taluka. "Dhananjay Munde called twice, thrice. He even abused some of the officials. Unable to bear the pressure, some women staffers on

polling duty broke down," the polling staffer is heard saying during the call. The staffer adds that nobody was ready to take up election duties in Parli due to such threats.

Rohit sought an impartial probe instead of just registering offences of violation of the model code of conduct. "Will the holy temple town of Parli witness goonda raj instead of

democracy in future? Will the Election Commission stop all this or will it remain a mute spectator?" he posted on X.

The collector said there is no clarity about the locations in the videos. She said it appears from the videos that some persons were "trying to control the crowd" in a polling booth. "It is too early to arrive at any conclusion. We will submit a detailed report to the ECI as soon as it seeks an explanation from us." She said the veracity of the audio clip will be verified as part of the probe.

NCP's chief spokesperson Umesh Patil alleged Rohit has a habit of making allegations without any substance to them. "MVA is staring at a big defeat. Rohit Pawar and other leaders are simply gathering false reasons in advance, which can be produced on the day of the results," he said. Patil said his party has no problem with the impartial probe ordered by the collector.

Beed has a direct fight between BJP's Pankaja Munde and Sonawane. It recorded 70.9% polling on May 13.

Blast threat call turns out to be hoax

Mumbai: City Police's main control room received a bomb threat call, warning of a potential blast at McDonald's in Dadar. The caller claimed to have overheard two persons discussing plans to blow up the fast-food restaurant while travelling in a bus. The police mobilised resources to address the threat, but it turned out to be a hoax call.

In separate operations, the police arrested seven absconding accused, 17 people with non-bailable warrants and 46 people for drug peddling and consumption. Thirty-one people were held for possessing illegal weapons and 15 for gambling. Eighty-two suspects were detained under the Mumbai Police Act on suspicion of potential involvement in anti-social activities and causing law and order problems on the polling day. —S Ahmed Ali

Both MVA, Mahayuti saw a tug of war over city seats

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Mumbai: 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, the 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.

For the next three decades, voter turnout remained below 50%, crossing that mark only three times. In 2009, the first poll after the 26/11 terror strike, it was as low as 41.4%.

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, Prime Minister Modi's first term, when the turnout climbed to 51.6%

15k cops to be deployed to ensure peaceful polling in Thane LS seat

More than 15,000 police personnel will be deployed across Thane Lok Sabha constituency to ensure peaceful polling on Monday. According to data, nearly 7,800 cops and 3,595 home guards have been assigned. Additionally, paramilitary forces have been deployed, including six companies of State Armed Police Force and 14 companies of Central Armed Police Force from Tamil Nadu and other parts of the state. Each company has 100 jawans who will be manning polling stations. — Nishikant Karlikar

and finally in 2019, it reached a high of 55.4%.

This time, the BJP has pulled out all the stops in the hope of making gains in the city and the wider Mumbai Metropolitan region (MMR), 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.

Both alliances pulled out their big guns for the Mumbai campaign. Modi addressed the Mahayuti rally at Shivaji Park besides holding a road show in the last week of cam-

aigning. Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal attended the MVA rally along with Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge.

The desire to wrest the high-profile Mumbai seats led to a tug of war in both Mahayuti and MVA on seat-sharing. Three seats will see a direct fight between the two Shiv Senas: Mumbai South, South Central and North West. Congress, which once held sway in Mumbai, is contesting two seats and Sharad Pawar's NCP is contesting one.

Mumbai's vote will be keenly watched by the political class.

In '19, BJP & NCP netas were opposed to 'unqualified' Shinde for CM's post: Raut

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Mumbai: Shiv Sena (UBT) MP Sanjay Raut on Sunday claimed that senior BJP and NCP leaders who are in the cabinet of the Mahayuti gov, including deputy CMs Devendra Fadnis and Ajit Pawar, had opposed Eknath Shinde's name for the chief minister's post in 2019.

"Nobody wanted Shinde. BJP leaders, including Fadnis, had opposed Shinde's name saying he was not qualified and not experienced," Raut alleged. "Also, many people did not want him because of his working style of paisa, feko, tamasha dekho (Spend money to get things done)."

He further claimed that after the 2019 state assembly polls, when the undivided Shiv Sena, headed by Uddhav Thackeray, broke ties with long-term ally BJP, and forged

Pawar didn't want NCP to get CM post after '04 polls: Bhujbal

Nashik: NCP cabinet minister Chhagan Bhujbal on Sunday said the undivided NCP could not get the chief minister post after the 2004 assembly elections as party chief Sharad Pawar did not want to appoint anyone from his party to become CM.

"NCP had won more seats than its ally Congress in 2004. But as Pawar did not want anyone from his party to become the CM, Congress got the CM's post," he told reporters on Sunday.

Bhujbal's revelations come in the wake of Pawar's statement that had NCP accepted the CM's post then there would have been problems in the party. Pawar had also said that the party would have split if Bhujbal had then become CM. "After the 2004 polls, I went to Delhi and met senior Congress politicians, including the late Ahmed Patel and Margaret Alva. Both told me that Congress had offered the CM's post to NCP, but Pawar was not ready to accept it. Hence, Congress got the post of the CM," said Bhujbal. He added that he could have become the CM in 1999 if he had not joined Pawar who was expelled by Congress. "At that time, senior Congress politicians had told me to stay and offered the CM's post. But I preferred to stay with Sharad Pawar." — Tushar Pawar

an alliance with then undivided NCP and Congress to form Maha Vikas Aghadi gov in the state, senior NCP leaders

Raut was responding to NCP (SP) supremo Sharad Pawar's statement that NCP-Congress were ready to make Shinde CM in 2019, but there was no clarity among top Sena leaders. "Then Sharad Pawar and former Congress president Rahul Gandhi had expressed the view that the MVA gov should be led by someone who was experienced and whose leadership would be accepted by all three components of the alliance..." Raut said.

He added that before Sena joined hands with Congress and NCP in 2019, BJP leaders had said they would not accept Shinde as CM. "BJP had decided that they would accept whatever decision Delhi makes regarding sharing the CM's post... Shinde was already named as Shiv Sena legislature party leader, but BJP said they would not like him as CM," Raut claim

Stone thrown at meet in support of LS candidate

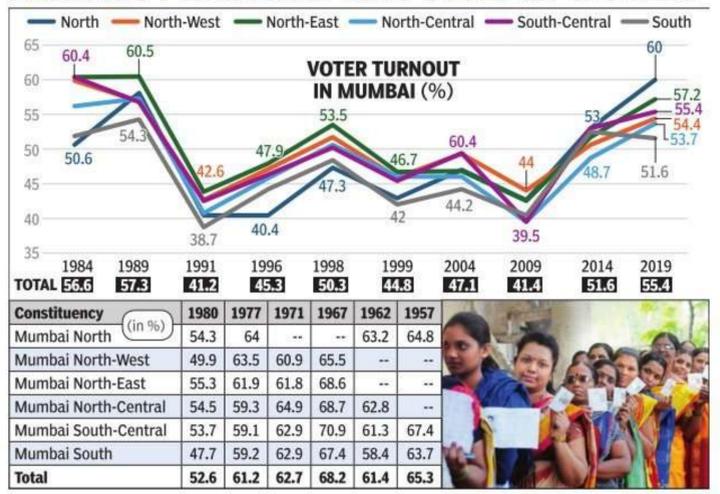
TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Mumbai: An incident of stone-pelting was reported during a sabha (public meeting) in support of Sena (UBT) candidate from Mumbai North West, Amol Kirtikar, on Friday night in Malad East. The Kurar Police registered an FIR, but no arrests have been made so far.

Former MP Vidya Chavan was giving a speech in support of Kirtikar's campaign around 9 pm at Appapada, Kurar village, when the incident happened. "A stone was thrown by an unknown person. It hit one of the banners in the background. Nobody was injured," said a police officer.

Charges were applied against an unknown man under section 336 of IPC (an act endangering life or personal safety of others) by Kurar police. Investigators are examining CCTV footage.

FROM 1984-2019: HOW CITY VOTED IN LS POLLS



Will city pick poll booths and ballots over boardrooms and targets today?

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

Section 135B of the Representation of the People Act mandates businesses and establishments in the voting area declare a paid holiday on voting day. Essential services, including hospitals and electricity providers, have implemented flexible schedules to ensure that both civic duties and critical services are maintained. "To facilitate casting of votes on Monday, functional heads may allow employees to either report late or leave early up to a maximum duration of three hours if their duty timings are between 7am and 5pm," read the memo of a



An all-women staffed 'pink booth' is set up at Children Welfare Centre School on Yari Road in Versova, Andheri (W)

news media outlet.

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

In a city notorious for voter apathy, authorities have been going all out to boost the turnout and bring it closer to the 2019 Lok Sabha polls' national average of 67%. Mumbai's

overall voting percentage has risen over 50% only three times since 1991. In 2019 polls, the six Lok Sabha constituencies in Mumbai recorded a voter turnout of 55%.

However, debates have emerged in certain quarters on whether providing an election holiday results in higher voter turnout. Last month, Tamil Nadu home secretary P Amudha suggested linking paid leave to proof of voting, an order that was swiftly revoked.

"Employees are vital for success in any organisation and for the nation. Enabling them to vote without work commitments can be a significant catalyst for increasing voter turnout," said Home Secretary's head of people's process Neha Mishra.

Thiagarajan said since offices in the city are generally located far away from the residences of most employees, a holiday is justified. In a country where voting is a fundamental right, it's a sentiment that would resonate across sections. Australia, South Korea, France are among nations that declare election day as a holiday. What's more, in certain countries like Australia it is mandatory to vote.

However, the fact that election day in Mumbai is on a Monday, the first day of the corporate week, may dampen enthusiasm due to the pressure of meeting various deadlines. Blackstone-backed Aahar Housing Finance MD Rishi Anand said: "While voting is not obligatory, a day off will definitely encourage voters to cast their ballot." He

added that an organisation can encourage people to vote but not force them to do so. "If they do vote, it will help in deciding who will be the people's representative to run the country on our behalf."

The Election Commission allows voters to use Rule 49-O to choose not to cast a vote, but no authority can mandate voting - India has chosen to find a balance between civic responsibility and personal freedom.

"We believe civic engagement is critical, and that's why we offer flexible work arrangements on election day, along with reminders to ensure everyone has the opportunity to cast their vote," said digital out-of-home advertising company Signpost India MD Shripad Ashtekar.

On a lighter note, the National Restaurant Association of India's Mumbai chapter is offering a "democracy discount" on Monday and Tuesday, providing a 20% reduction on dine-in bills to those who cast their votes. Over 100 restaurants are participating in this initiative. An inked finger will be mandatory to avail the offer.

Poll code breach by Lodha: Aaditya; MLA rebuts claim

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Mumbai: Shiv Sena (UBT) MLA Aaditya Thackeray on Sunday alleged that BJP minister Mangal Prabhat Lodha was running a proxy campaign by visiting housing societies in south Mumbai on Sunday evening, even after the official deadline for campaigning ended at 5 pm on Saturday. Aaditya alleged that an 'invite has been sent to buildings including Prem Court, Maheshwari Niketan, and Anand Darshan in the name of Lodha Foundation where Lodha would be visiting a building, Dheeraj Apartments on Peddar Road, 'to know their issues' and asking residents to come for Lodha's visit.

Lodha, guardian minister for suburban Mumbai and MLA from Malabar Hill, said the Sunday night meeting was not part of the poll campaign and he was going to meet residents to hear and resolve their "I'm not campaigning for our candidate at this meeting and it is not part of the election campaign. Poll code doesn't mean people have to sit at home all the time," Lodha said. "There is no violation of the code of conduct. I'm a public person and I don't run the affairs of my constituency sitting at home. Since I had spare time, I'm meeting resi-

dents to... resolve their issues. There is nothing wrong," he added. Aaditya said in a post on X: "EC, not expecting much action from you, but still trying to open your eyes. Mumbai is seeing a proxy campaign by the guardian minister of the illegal regime Mr Lodha in Dheeraj Apartments, Peddar Road today (Sunday). An invite has been sent to 'Prem Court', 'Maheshwari Niketan', and 'Anand Darshan' in the name of

Fatwa & posters against Modi as PM: Shinde Sena

The Shiv Sena led by Eknath Shinde on Sunday claimed that 37 mosques in Mumbai have put up fatwas and that posters have been put up in the city, asking Narendra Modi not to become the Prime Minister, creating a division in society. Sena secretary Kiran Pawaskar alleged that Sena (UBT) was pressuring Muslims to cooperate in polls, putting up banners and posters and using mullahs and maulvis for campaigning. Pawaskar said that an FIR has been filed.

"For the last year, Sanjay Raut used to say riots will happen before elections, why was he saying this? There was a flag of Pakistan in the campaign of the candidate from Sena (UBT), the accused in the bombings were campaigning, the police should take action on it. Sanjay Raut and Uddhav Thackeray are the masterminds of all this and an inquiry should be made as to whether they received money from abroad. EC must act against Sanjay Raut," Pawaskar said.

Pawaskar said Sena functionary Rupesh Patil has filed a police complaint about the objectionable poster put up in South Mumbai. "These posters have been published saying that mosques are being demolished, and dargahs are being shut down. But if mosques are not demolished, madrasas are not closed, then why such a board?" Pawaskar said. TNN

Lodha Foundation... "to know their issues. This is nothing but a proxy campaign, a day before elections."

Lodha's post on X said: "For the past 30 years, I have consistently engaged with people while serving actively in public life. Today, I have not violated model code of conduct, and I will continue to uphold them. The code of conduct doesn't imply staying home or avoiding public interactions. Meeting people is not a crime!"

Construction firm partners booked in ₹3cr cheating case

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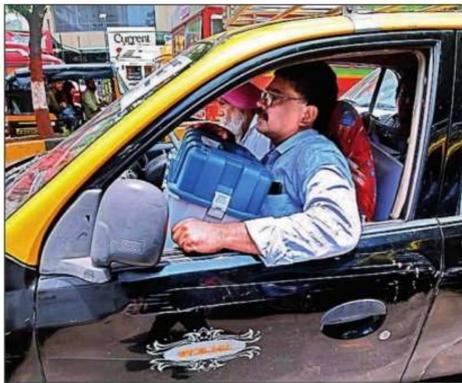
Mumbai: The police have booked three partners of a construction company for collecting Rs 3 crore from an interior designer and not delivering the flats. The flats were instead sold to another entity, the FIR said. Jerry Ducuna, has filed a complaint against the proprietor of Sunshine developers, Kashyap Mehta and Atul Bharani, and Ashok Bharani of SQ Infrastructure, for allegedly cheating him of Rs 3 crore.

His initial transaction was with developer Parvez Lakhadawala who later sold the project to Sunshine Developers.

By 2010, he had paid Rs 1.45 crore to Lakhadawala. In 2012, Lakhadawala informed Ducuna that he had sold the project to Sunshine Housing and Infrastructure, owned by Mehta. Ducuna met Mehta and updated him about his bookings. Mehta informed Ducuna that he had raised the price, and now Ducuna would have to pay Rs 2.22 crore for both flats. Ducuna agreed to pay the balance amount of Rs 77 lakhs at the time of possession. On March 28, 2013, just three days prior to the registration of the flats, Mehta demanded an additional Rs 90 lakh. Ducuna agreed to pay the said amount and the said flats were registered in Ducuna's name. The project was supposed to be completed by March 2015, but due to financial problems, the work was stopped. Despite paying a total sum of Rs 2.78 crores, Bharani refused to hand over possession to Ducuna.

EVERYTHING'S SET, KEEP YOUR DATE WITH THE POLLS

Pics: Sl. Shanth Kumar, Sanjay Madkar



Ahead of D-Day, poll officials safely transport election-related material to polling booths and help set them up

AAP engages 3K volunteers to keep vigil

Mumbai: AAP claimed that it engaged around 3,000 party volunteers to keep vigil on poll eve by using spycameras to prevent vote buying/strong arm tactics. "All Aam Aadmi Party volunteers will be keeping vigil throughout the night. They will use technology, spycameras and etc, to ensure that the BJP doesn't indulge in any electoral malpractices like vote buying and voter intimidation", said Preeti Sharma Menon, AAP Mumbai President. TNN

Two instances of attempt to murder in separate cases

Mumbai: Two instances of attempted murder were reported in the city in separate instances at Powai and Goregaon East.

In the first case at Powai, Imran Khan, a security supervisor working at a construction site, was slashed on his face with a knife over his refusal to pay a 'hafta' on May 17.

In the second case, a 21-year-old man was attacked by his drunk roommate with a pair of scissors over a trivial issue. Krishna Nawade, the victim, was subsequently hospitalised. TNN

Poll time hots up, rain too expected in city & around

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Mumbai: Could the weather upset the electorate for voter turnout on Monday when the city goes to vote? The forecast says it could be sweltering hot and light showers are predicted towards evening. The Met has issued a 'yellow alert' for heat and for showers in Mumbai city as well as for Thane and Palghar districts in Mumbai Metropolitan Region on May 20. The Met has said that there is the possibility of 'light to moderate rains accompanied with thunderstorm by evening' for the city and the two districts.

On Sunday, the day temperature recorded by the Met's Colaba and Santacruz observatories was 35 degrees Celsius and 34.6 degrees Celsius. Relative humidity recorded at the two observatories was 77% and 67% respectively.

Night temperatures recorded were also on the higher side as the Colaba and Santacruz observatories recorded 28.2 degrees Celsius and 29 degrees Celsius respectively.

Atreya Shetty, an independent forecaster, said the best time to head to the poll booth would be before noon and after 4pm though high humidity will make it feel



Officials with election material head to their polling stations on Sunday

extremely uncomfortable throughout the day. "On Monday, Mumbai and suburbs will see maximum temperature around 34-36°C while parts of south Mumbai will be cooler at 32°C. Areas like Mulund are expected to be hotter at 38-39°C," said Shetty.

Another expert, Abhijit Modak who runs the Konkani weather blog, said that the entire metropolitan region will record high day temperatures and the real feel (heat index factor) may be even higher for parts of Mulund, Thane and Navi Mumbai. Parts of Bhiwandi and Kalyan constituency could even record 40 degrees plus day temperature," Modak said.

Last Monday, intense thunderstorm activity had been recorded in the evening. The Met declares a heatwave when maximum temperature crosses 37°C with the departure being 4.5 above normal. For May, Mumbai's all-time highest recorded day temperature at Colaba was 39.7°C on May 24, 1972 and at Santacruz, it has been 41°C on May 12, 1979.

Lawyer finds 100-year-old court order on mango theft

Thane: An advocate has stumbled upon a copy of an order pronounced by a court in Thane 100 years ago in a case of theft of mangoes, providing a glimpse of the legal proceedings at that time. In the order dated July 5, 1924, the then magistrate TA Fernandes convicted four persons of mango theft and released them after admonition, considering they were all young men and he did not want to ruin their life by sentencing them. Advocate Poonit Mahimkar said that while shifting from his previous house in Thane, he found a bag lying unattended in the mezzanine for years, possibly left by the earlier house occupants. When he opened the bag, he found some old property papers and a copy of the magistrate's order. The order was pertaining to the case titled 'Crowns Vs Anjelo Alvares and 3 others', charged under sections 379/109 of the Indian Penal Code for the theft of "185 green mangoes". The judgement recounted the prosecution's case alleging the accused were caught red-handed while plucking mangoes from a field belonging to Bostiv Ellis Andraden. TNN

21-year-old stabbed to death, 1 held

Mumbai: Deonar police have arrested one of the four youths who allegedly stabbed a 21-year-old over a previous dispute, on Friday.

Police arrested Soheb Shaikh and are looking for three of his associates, Chand Sawant, Afzal and Salim Khan. The deceased was identified as Shahbaz Ali (21), a fridge mechanic by profession. According to the police, the incident took place at around 6.30pm when the deceased went for a stroll and was attacked by the accused. TNN

Fire erupts in highrise, no one injured

Mumbai: A fire erupted in a flat at Bandra's L'Amour building late on Saturday night.

The fire brigade said the blaze was on the fourth floor of the 13-storey highrise. Fire was confined to electric wiring, electric installation, household articles etc. in the kitchen of room no- 401. There have been no reports of injuries. - Richa Pinto

Whoever in Mahayuti is CM, strings pulled from Delhi, Guj: Cong

The Congress on Sunday accused the BJP of carrying out a "special vendetta" against Maharashtra, and claimed that no matter who from the Mahayuti sits in the chief minister's chair, "the strings are always pulled from Delhi and Gujarat".

Congress general secretary Jai Ram Ramesh asserted that Congress party does not believe in playing favourites and said, "we believe in the equitable development of the entire country".

"The Anyay Kaal of 'Hum Do, Humaare Do' has been characterised by a special vendetta against Maharashtra. Whoever from the Mahayuti might sit in the CM's chair, the strings are always pulled from Delhi and Gujarat," Ramesh said in a post on X.

"The Congress party does not believe in playing favourites - we believe in the equitable development of the entire country. New infrastructure projects, special investment zones, and modern industry

should benefit all Indians, not one state alone," he said.

When industrialisation of Gujarat was underway in the 1970s and '80s, projects like Gujarat State Fertilisers and Chemicals Limited, Gujarat Refinery, and ICPCL were set up without taking away projects from other states, the Congress leader said.

"Unfortunately, to please its masters, BJP has decided that Maharashtra does not deserve any new projects or Central support: An International Financial Services Center has been set up only in

GIFT City, Gujarat. Mumbai has been the financial capital of India for 200 years, but the outgoing PM has repeatedly refused to set up an IFSC in Mumbai," Ramesh said.

Dr Manmohan Singh in 2006 had begun the effort to set it up in Mumbai and land in BKC had already been set aside for IFSC, but it was reallocated to the bullet train, costing Mumbai potentially 2 lakh jobs, Ramesh said. TNN

और सभी न्यूज़ पेपर मैगजीन प्राप्त करने के लिए सर्वप्रथम इस टेलीग्राम ग्रुप को ज्वाइन करें नीचे दिए लकि पर क्लिक करके ज्वाइन टेलीग्राम

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CITYLIGHTS

SOS from Fireman

Mumbai fire brigade, which led the search-and-rescue operation at the Ghatkopar billboard crash site last week, received one of the first alerts about the tragedy from one of its own staff members. A fireman residing in Kalwa who was returning from the Fire Brigade's Byculla headquarters, stopped to refuel at the ill-fated petrol pump and had a narrow escape. "Our fireman survived but sustained injuries. Despite his condition, he called us to report the incident, requesting that rescue vehicles be dispatched with utmost urgency," deputy fire officer of special operations S D Sawant told this correspondent. As many as 16 died in the crash. Simultaneously, a senior police officer from Pant Nagar police station, who had previously worked with the fire brigade, contacted Sawant. "He informed



SUMMER INSPIRATION: A vendor covers his head with one of the baby dresses on sale on a hot day

me that it was an extremely serious crash and advised increasing the number of rescue vehicles. His experience with fire brigade protocols came handy when required the most," said Sawant.

Mahim Revisited

A new govt publication compiled by the Maritime Museum Society recounts Mahim's former

life as a bustling port trading in rice, dried fish, salt, coconut, coir, areca nut, ivory, clarified butter, lead, sword blades, dates, spices, cloth, camphor, perfumes, brown incense and copper. 'Baradbet', as it was earlier called, meant 'island of sand'. Centuries ago, Mahim was a sandbar that sat in between the headlands of Bandra and Worli, which sheltered it from the stormy waves of the

sea. As high and low tide currents kept the lagoon entrance free of sand, the Kolis—natives of Mahim island—carried out fishing in the coastal waters to the west as well as the lagoons and creeks to the north and the east, says Dipesh Karmarkar of Smt CHM College in the publication. Due to the presence of a sheltered site, sand-free water channel, well-connected hinterland and a

strategic location, it grew as an excellent port for international trade. A 'target port' since the days of the Arabs, it formed a landmark for navigators. Besides Arabia and Persia, Mahim traded with ports along the coasts of Gujarat, Gulf of Khambhat, Malabar and South Kannada. In 1709, the very first work of reclamation of Mumbai began in Mahim. It was a large town with a bazaar under the Raj till ecological destruction due to reclamations and topographical changes began its decline. By the mid-19th century, Mahim jetty vanished completely.

Ponting for Amre

Over the years, Pravin Amre has earned respect for his work both as a team coach—he was head coach of the Mumbai team when it won three Ranji Trophy titles in the 2006-07, 2008-09 and the 2009-10 seasons and as assistant coach of the Delhi Capitals for the past few years—and as an individual coach to the likes of Shreyas Iyer, Ajinkya Rahane, Robin

Uthappa, Dinesh Karthik and Abhishek Nayar. At a recent event, the former India and Mumbai batsman earned praise from Australia's World Cup winning captain Ricky Ponting for his coaching style. "As a young boy, I used to get glossy books on Christmas every year. It always had (pictures) of touring teams that were coming to Australia. You get to learn about players like that. I've learnt a lot about his (Amre's) first-class and international career. Regarding his coaching background, some of the great players that he's been able to coach on a one-on-one basis, some of the academies he used to run. I know that he's financially looked after a lot of young players as well. Put them up, and paid for their coaching through some of the work he's done. It's a really extensive coaching career that he's had today," Ponting said.

(Contributed by Richa Pinto, Sharmila Ganesan Ram & Gaurav Gupta. Compiled by Rucha Chitrodia)

The Self-Help Question

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 shelves 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 clichés, 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 millions to them to hear what is usually nothing more than self-evident clichés. 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

CITY CITY BANG BANG

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 clichéd, 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.

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After 'biased' claim, Nashik admin in a fix during CM visit

For Nashik poll officials, it was a huge embarrassment when they had to check the baggage of CM Eknath Shinde following Sena (UBT) MP Sanjay Raut's allegations.

A fortnight ago, when Shinde arrived for a two-day election tour of Nashik, Raut took on the CM for making his security personnel carry two huge bags. Raut came down heavily on law enforcement agencies, saying when private aircraft of leading politicians, particularly those belonging to those from the opposition were being checked thoroughly, the CM was granted an exemption. Recently, ECI officials had searched the helicopter of AICC chief Mallikarjun Kharge and

Shinde's baggage during his first visit itself, the huge embarrassment could have been avoided, but the moot question is, who could have taken on the CM?

Ashok Chavan MIA

Has Ashok Chavan become politically insignificant after joining BJP? It's not just senior Congress functionaries but BJP office-bearers, too, feel it will take him a long time to make himself politically relevant in the party. In his career of more than three-and-a-half decades, Chavan held significant political assignments—he was the CM twice, he held prime portfolios as a cabinet member, and at the organisational level, he was the president of MPCC.

When he was the CM, the state was rocked by the Adarsh scam, following which the Congress high command asked him to step down. But Congress never dumped him. He was elected from the party to the assembly from Bhokar. All along, Chavan had claimed that the Adarsh case was closed. But, he became restless when the scam was mentioned in a white paper tabled in Parliament in the last session. Sensing fresh trouble, he quit Congress and joined BJP with the hope that the scam would never resurface.

A day after joining BJP, he was nominated to the Rajya Sabha, with the expectation that his entry would benefit the party in the LS polls in Maharashtra. But during the entire poll campaign, he was conspicuous by his absence. In Mumbai, too, he did not address a single rally. Congress and BJP leaders are asking: Where is Ashok Chavan?

PUBLIC EYE

PRAFULLA MARPAKWAR

Congress MP Rahul Gandhi. Raut had felt that all such searches were selective. On Shinde's second visit to Nashik, the entire district administration was on high alert. The moment his helicopter landed, police personnel thoroughly checked it. Nothing objectionable was found in the baggage. Shinde reacted guardedly, saying while some people worked secretly, he worked openly and had nothing to hide.

For Shinde, the Nashik seat is politically significant. After a prolonged period, he was able to secure the seat for his trusted aide, Hemant Godse. Minister Chhagan Bhujbal from NCP had been the frontrunner for the seat. A senior bureaucrat felt that had officials checked

SERIOUS LAPSES IN '18 REGARDING EVMs MADE EC TIGHTEN SECURITY PROTOCOL

Jolted by several incidents involving negligent behaviour by polling staff during assembly elections that occurred in 2018, Election Commission overhauled its poll procedure manual, with special focus on EVM-VVPAT transfer. EC was compelled to act after incidents surfaced of EVMs—after polling—being found at hotels, police stations, abandoned on the highway, and disturbingly, at an MLA's home!

HOW EVMs WILL BE TRANSFERRED

SPECIAL VEHICLES

EVMs are to be transferred from polling stations to designated strong rooms by state buses, private trucks, jeeps and other vehicles hired by EC, and police vehicles, depending on how logistics are decided by the district election officer

SECURITY

A joint team of central and state police forces is to accompany the vehicles transporting EVMs/VVPATs
Presiding officer of each centre is supposed to accompany the vehicles

USE OF TECHNOLOGY

EC is using technology to ensure tamper-proof transfer of EVMs and VVPATs to polling stations, and after voting to strongrooms

Some officials will have body-worn cameras

Vehicles have been fitted with GPS and Geographic Information System (GIS) to track their movements

Drone cameras are to be used for aerial monitoring

There's also a personnel tracking system

APPROVED I-CARDS

Carry any one of these:
Voter ID card (EPIC) | Aadhaar card | Unique disability ID (UID) card | Service identity card | Passbook with photo



GUARDING STRONGROOMS

1 After polling, EVMs will be placed in boxes that come along with them. VVPATs come inbuilt in boxes



2 The boxes will be sealed in the presence of polling officials and polling agents

Once a strong room receives the machines, its door will be locked and sealed in the presence of poll contestants or their agents. Windows, if any, too will be sealed

An armed police picket will be kept for round-the-clock security till counting day. The platoon will be under the supervision of the district election officer

IN MUMBAI SUBURBAN

23,430 ballot units | 13,411 control units

13,853 VVPATs

After polling, to be stored at NESCO, Goregaon & Vikhroli



to bank/post office | Health insurance smart card (ministry of labour) | Driving license | Passport | Smart card issued by RGI under NPR | Pension document | Official identity card issued to MPs/MLAs/MLCs | MNREGA job card

NOTE: Voter slip, electricity bill, ration card will not be accepted as ID proof



COUNTING DAY JUNE 4

8am Counting begins

10am Trends to emerge, but based on informal accounts

1pm Trends to be declared officially

5pm Broad outline of results

BANNED ITEMS

Mobile phones, cameras or any other gadget not allowed inside polling booth

No facilities to deposit belongings; police may confiscate gadgets if found inside booth

KONKAN RAILWAY CORPORATION LIMITED
(A Government of India Undertaking)

NOTICE INVITING E-TENDER

On behalf of Konkan Railway Corporation Ltd., Dy. Chief Engineer (works), Ratnagiri, invites **Open Tender in Single Packet bid** system through E-Tendering on IREPS portal from eligible contractors for the following work. **Name of Work:** Construction of a Foot Over Bridge (3m wide, for 4 line station) including approach ramp at Railway Km 283/8-9 in Vaibhavwadi Road Station over Konkan Railway route in Maharashtra State. **Tender Notice No.:** KR/RN/DYCEW/FOB/BW/03/24. **Total Estimated Cost:** ₹ 1.41 crores excluding GST. **Bidding start date:** 20.05.2024, **Closing Date/Time:** 10.06.2024 up to 15:00 hrs for submission of online Offers/Bids. **Completion period:** Nine months including monsoon. Manual offers shall not be accepted. Please visit <https://ireps.gov.in> website for details/participation and Corrigendum /addendum will be hosted in this website only.

SYAMA PRASAD MOOKERJEE PORT, KOLKATA
(Formerly KOLKATA PORT TRUST)

Tender No. : Ad/0019/W/Manpower Hiring/T/24-27

Syama Prasad Mookerjee Port, Kolkata invites bid for initial repairing/ refurbishing of one HDC, SMPK's own Foam Crash Tender (No. 8) followed by Operation and Maintenance of the said FCT-8 for a period of 3 years at Haldia Dock Complex, Syama Prasad Mookerjee Port, Kolkata. **Derived Estimated Cost for Pre-Qualification Criteria :** Rs. 65,66,667/- excluding GST. **Period of Contract : 3 Years**

Estimated Cost Rs. 1.97 Crore excluding GST for 3 years

Last date of Submission 07.06.2024

For details, Please Visit <https://kopt.envida.in> & <https://smporkolkata.shipping.gov.in>

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: KSMSC/DRUGS/RETND/SBC/SCD/POC-1/01/2023-24 Dated: 18.05.2024

TENDER NOTIFICATION

Ref: 1. Tender Notification No: KSMSC/ 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
KSMSC, Bengaluru.

DIPR/CP/RO75/AAPL/2024-25

2 steal laptop, booked

Kalyan: The Kolsawadi police have registered a robbery of offence against two for attacking a woman with caustic soda and fleeing with her laptop bag. TNN

CHITTARANJAN LOCOMOTIVE WORKS

CORRIGENDUM

No. PCMM/CLW/HWH/E-Procurement/ CORRIGENDUM/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.ireps.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: 19/04/2024; 25245023; 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/24/24 Dated: 19/04/2024; 29245022; 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/24/23 Dated: 16/04/2024; 29245033; 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; 29245039; Tender Opening Date is to be read as '23/05/2024' instead of existing entry;
PRR/424 PCMM/CLW/HWH

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Heritage Museum at CSMT now hosts kids battling cancer

Somit.Sen@timesgroup.com

Mumbai: As part of the International Museum Day celebrations on Saturday, Central Railway opened the doors of its Heritage Museum at Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus (CSMT) to 29 young warriors battling cancer from Tata Memorial Hospital.

This special guided tour was aimed at bringing joy to the children, offering them a memorable and educational experience, a senior official said on Sunday.

On the invitation of Central Railway, the children aged between 8 years and 14 years, all undergoing treatment for cancer, were introduced to the rich history and legacy of Indian Railways. A few of them, who had come from other parts of the country, requested if they could get a train ride and the officials obliged by taking them on a

suburban train from CSMT to Cotton Green.

The museum guide captivated the children with engaging stories and fascinating facts about the artifacts on display. CR officials said. The young visitors asked numerous questions, and showed great interest in the Indian Railways' historical treasures. Some of them also inspected the models of trains and engines.

The museum, which showcases the heritage and relics of India's first railway line, had recently converted static exhibits into mobile ones — with one steam engine moving on a small track and emitting smoke, the model of another steam loco lighting up its boiler and the first electric local train.

"We plan to organise such visits once every six months," chief public relations officer Swapnil Nila, said.

Air India's cockpit window 'bubbles up', blurs visibility

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Mumbai: A portion of the cockpit window of an Air India aircraft operating a flight from Amritsar to Mumbai on Sunday turned opaque after it 'bubbled up' and blurred visibility.

The delamination which occurred on a side panel on the port-side of the windshield left a large pattern of trapped bubbles on it. "Cockpit window screen is made of multiple layers. Some form of damage must have occurred which resulted in air leaking into the folds," said a senior commander. "The aircraft cannot be cleared for the next flight with this damage on the window," he added. "Generally when a delamination problem occurs, it's limited to the sides of the windshield panel. But the photograph of this particular one shows a large area of the side windshield affected with bubbles going up the panel," he added.



Delamination occurred due to air

An Air India spokesperson said: "The crew reported an issue with the slider window in the cockpit, which is being checked. If necessary it will be replaced per standard practice. Air India always accords top priority to the safety of its passengers and crew." On Saturday, an Air India Express flight from Bengaluru to Cochin was diverted within minutes of take-off after one of its engines caught fire.

Man held in ₹263 crore I-T refund case

Mumbai: The Enforcement Directorate (ED) arrested one Rajesh Batreja in a money laundering case connected to a Rs 263 crore income tax (I-T) refund fraud involving a former income tax inspector and produced him before the court on Friday. The court remanded him to ED custody.

Earlier, the ED had arrested former IT inspector Tanaji Adhikari and businessmen Bhushan Patil and Rajesh Shetty in the case, who are in judicial custody.

The ED alleged that Batreja helped Tanaji Adhikari in diverting PoC of Rs 55.5 crore into three shell companies in order to convert the same into cash for sending it outside India by the hawala channel. Batreja also helped Adhikari in concealing the proceeds of crime and later in the placement and layering of the said siphoned-off PoC by incorporating firms with the help of a local person in Dubai to project the same as untainted. —Vijay V Singh



FAROOQ ABDULLAH SEEKS PROBE INTO J&K TWIN TERROR ATTACKS, ASKS PAK TO 'STOP TERRORISM'



CENTRE WITHHOLDING WB'S FUNDS FOR NOT DISPLAYING PM'S FACE ON RATION SHOPS, SAYS JAIRAM RAMESH

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

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, report **Krishnendu Mukherjee & Monotosh Chakraborty**.

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 were assaulted by villagers in South 24 Parganas division while probing a tiger poaching case. Last Dec, forest dept had arrested six Bangladeshi fishermen, who had entered the 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 10 pm when four forest personnel were patrolling Gosaba 1 compartment on a small boat. The team encountered 10-15 robbers, believed to be from Bangladesh.

Wrong implant inserted during arm surgery: Kin

Kozhikode: Yet another allegation of medical negligence surfaced at Govt Medical College in Kerala's Kozhikode after relatives of a youth alleged a wrong implant was inserted during a surgery of his fractured arm on Saturday.

The Kochi youth's mother said one end of an inserted wire was protruding from his arm after the surgery, arousing suspicion. Medical college authorities refuted the allegation of a wrong implant.

Police have filed a case. Earlier 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. **TNN**

5 men rape 14-year-old, assault mom in Patna

Patna: Five men raped a 14-year-old girl in front of her mother inside an SUV, beat them up, and then threw them out of the vehicle in Patna late Saturday night, police said. They were found unconscious on the roadside by the emergency Dial 112 police team who admitted them to AIIMS-Patna, reports **Faryal Rumi**.

On Sunday morning, the woman told police that the five men had called her near Dumri railway station on the pretext of giving her a job in Patna.

"The woman has complained that when she and her daughter reached there, two persons forced them inside an SUV, where three others were already sitting. They assaulted both, and the girl was gangraped inside the car, as per the complaint," said Deepak Kumar, sub-divisional police officer. A case has been registered in this connection, and spot investigation done by an FSL team, he said adding search is on to nab the accused.

Builder's minor son rams Porsche into bike, 2 dead

Deceased Were Techies From MP: Pune Cops

Gitesh.Shelke
@timesgroup.com

Pune: Two young software engineers died after a Porsche Taycan, driven by a 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 released him later with conditions.

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



The 17-year-old driver of the car was detained and Juvenile Justice Board released him later with conditions

who had recently left her job, resided in Kharadi.

According to police, the accident occurred when Awadhia was dropping Koshta home. The Porsche struck their bike from behind, dragging Koshta for 50ft. The vehicle also hit a parked car and a two-wheeler before coming to a stop. Aneesh's friend Aqib

Ramzan Mulla, 23, a software developer, 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 after partying at a pub in Mundhwa. We have collected the driver's blood samples to check for alcohol."

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

Close shave for 179 on board as AI Express 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 stopover on Saturday evening, forcing a return and emergency evacuation of its 179 fliers, 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 aircraft 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 in-



2ND FIRE SCARE WITHIN DAYS: Flyers were stranded for 13 hours

vestigation with the regulator shall be accomplished to establish the (fire) cause," the official said.

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

The airline later arranged an alternative flight for the passengers that took off at 11.20am and landed in Kochi at 12.10pm on Sunday.

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Dalit couple from MP village paraded with garlands of shoes, tied to pillar & thrashed

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

Karan Singh (46) and wife Betibai (40) had been staying away from their home for the past three months fearing harassment by a strongman from the village. The dispute between the two families started after the couple's son was accused of molesting a woman from the influential family. Kanna suffered a fractured leg and Betibai multiple wounds. **TNN**

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

Ashish.Mehta@timesgroup.com

Jaipur: Sunny Khan, a 38-year-old resident of Pathanon Ka Chowk in Jaipur's Brahmपुरi neighbourhood, has lost vision in one eye and faces the risk of partial vision loss in the other.

He is currently battling for his life in the ICU of a military hospital in south Kashmir's Anantnag. His wife Farah Khan is also in critical condition.

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



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 J&K on Saturday

Parvez Khan, 39, recounted Sunday the horror that unfolded before his eyes the previous night.

"Oh, we're so happy coming to Kashmir!" he exclaimed with grief and sarcasm from Anantnag. His brother is on 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 Mazidan 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 LS 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 food vendor from Bihar was shot dead.

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17-year-old UP boy 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 Uttar Pradesh's Farrukhabad constituency on May 13 led the authorities to file an FIR and detain him late Sunday, initiate disciplinary proceedings against officials managing the booth, and recommend a replot.

SP chief Akhilesh Yadav, Wayanad MP Rahul Gandhi, and Congress's X handle were among those who shared the two-minute, 19-second video

WAS SEEN FLASHING DIFFERENT ID CARDS

compilation showing 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.

He is seen wearing two shirts in the video of multiple frames stitched together. UP's chief election officer Navdeep Rinwa said, "An FIR has been registered under Sections 171F and 419 (impersonation) of the IPC, and Sections 128 (violation of the secrecy of voting), 132 (misconduct) & 136 (fraud) of the Representation of People Act," he said. The teen's father told TOI polling agents to take his son ahead of voting "to participate in EVM inspection/randomisation".

Hour before PM rally, Bengal BJP MP joins TMC

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

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, reports Sujoy Khanra.

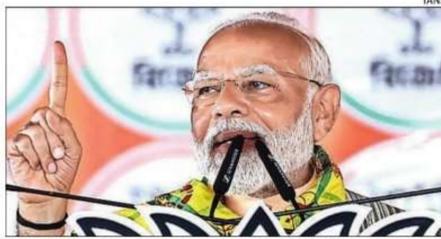
Hembram said his decision was well-considered, praising Trinamool's work in Jangalmahal over BJP's, adding that he didn't harbour any personal ambitions before making the switch.

PM: TMC blaming Sandeshkhali women to save its 'Shahjahan'

Hits Out At Didi Over Remarks On 'Few Monks'

Rohit Khanna, Falguni Banerjee & Sujoy Khanra | TNN

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



Modi charged TMC with trying to alter the state's demography

our sisters from SC-ST families, TMC does not even think of them as humans." "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 Ma-

mata Banerjee over her remarks about "a few monks", whom she accused of working for BJP. "The 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. TMC stoops so low just to please its vote bank, least bothered about the feelings of lakhs of people," he said. In Kharagpur, he charged TMC with "playing a dangerous game" and trying to alter the state's demography.

'PM silent on clips, knew of untrue claims'

Kolkata/Keshpur: Trinamool Congress on Sunday alleged that PM Narendra 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 and Sujoy Khanra.

"In the last fortnight, he also zipped his lips on Sandeshkhali after the videos surfaced," said TMC Rajya Sabha MP Derek O'Brien. Calling BJP seniors "migratory birds" who only visit West Bengal during polls, he said: "Modi and his minions insult Bengal, degrade the dignity of women and choke the state of funds."

BJP is running 'Op Jhaadu' to jail all AAP netas: Delhi CM

Abhinav Rajput @timesgroup.com

New Delhi: 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, as it saw them as a challenge.

Kejriwal was addressing party workers before leading a protest march to BJP headquarters following the arrest of his aide Bibhav Kumar in the Swati Maliwal assault case.

AAP Rajya Sabha MP Raghav Chadha, who had been missing in action for months due to speculation over his affiliation with the party, was also present in the march.

Addressing party workers, Kejriwal said Prime Minister Narendra Modi could get all functionaries arrested in one go instead of taking them one by one. He told the cadre to be prepared to face bigger challenges ahead.

"The top leaders of our party, all ministers, MLAs, MPs, councillors and office-bearers are present here. Why



Kejriwal marches towards the BJP HQ along with party functionaries Atishi, Saurabh Bhardwaj, Kailash Gahlot & others, in Delhi on Sunday

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'," Kejriwal said.

He added 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.

"They arrested me, Sanjay Singh, Manish Sisodia and Saayendrar Jain. Yesterday, they even arrested my PA. Raghav

Chadha has just come back; now they are saying that he will also be arrested. They are saying that Atishi, Saurabh Bhardwaj and Kailash Gahlot will also be arrested soon," he said, adding that in 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.

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

B Sridhar@timesgroup.com

Ghatshila (Jamshepur): Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced on 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 the Congress-JMM-RJD functionaries," the PM 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

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

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 and Kapil Dixit. At election rallies in UP's Prayagraj and Machhlishahr constituencies, Shah focused on issues like abrogation of Article 370, Ram Temple, appeasement of minorities, and nepotism to attack the opposition. Attacking Congress MP Rahul Gandhi and Samajwadi Party (SP) chief Akhilesh Yadav, Shah said voters should hold them accountable for minority appeasement. He added that Congress couldn't build the Ram Temple during their govt and SP govt was responsible for firing on 'kar sevaks'.

country their personal property," he said. Without taking his name, the Prime Minister 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 in Maharashtra agree with the Congress MP's views on corporates and investors.

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 assembly polls in state.

Two sitting MPs and seven MLAs of the BJD resigned ahead of elections this time and joined the 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. On April 17, BJD named BJP turncoat Dillip Kumar Nayak as its Nimapara candidate. Nayak had unsuccessfully contested from Nimapara assembly constituency in 2019 on a Congress ticket.

"Dash's switch will have no impact on BJD. We will win," said Nayak. —Debabrata Mohapatra

Maliwal case: Cops ready 50 questions for Kejriwal's PA

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: Delhi Police is learnt to have questioned members of the security team stationed at Delhi CM 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

'Cops leaking selective information to media'

AAP minister Saurabh Bhardwaj on Sunday hit out at Delhi Police, accusing it of operating at the behest of BJP. He alleged police were leaking "selective and incorrect" information to the media to tarnish the party's image before the polls. He said he had never seen a woman complainant's photo being shared with the country. TNN

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

'AAP taking to streets to save accused'

Swati Maliwal has accused AAP of taking to the streets to "save the accused". "There was a time when we all used to come out on the streets to get justice for Nirbhaya. Today, after 12 years, we all came out on the streets to save the accused who made the CCTV footage disappear and formatted the phone," Maliwal posted on X. TNN

him (Kumar) who 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 published.

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

Rohit Khanna @timesgroup.com

Kolkata: 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 on a poster of the AICC president in front of the state party's headquarters in Kolkata on Sunday. 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 Bha-

EC transfers Purulia SP, 3 others after complaints

EC has transferred Purulia SP, Avijit Banerjee, five days ahead of polls in the district on May 25. Similarly, SDPO of Contai in East Midnapore, Dibakar Das, along with two officers, were also transferred. EC had received complaints against them, reports Debashis Konar.

This was done soon after Kharge had said TMC chief Mamata was "very much a part of INDIA bloc".

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' are the two most prevalent "gatekeeping" factors when it comes to selecting

candidates. Beyond dynastic politics, the most common pathways for candidates are party organisational politics (15.4%), local politics (12.2%), and student politics (9.5%).

LITTLE OVER 27% HAVE 'DYNASTIC' BACKGROUNDS

"Of the 27.6% of dynastic candidates, 71.2% are second-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 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, and over 50% of them have dynastic backgrounds.

Rally turns violent as RaGa, Akhilesh leave without speaking



Cops control the gathering during a public meeting of INDIA bloc addressed by Congress's Rahul Gandhi and SP chief Akhilesh Yadav

Kapil Dixit@timesgroup.com

Prayagraj: Chaos prevailed for over an hour at a joint rally of INDIA bloc, attended by Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav and Congress MP Rahul Gandhi, at Padila in Phulpur on Sunday.

The SP chief left the venue without addressing the crowd after he found the microphones not working, leaving supporters in a frenzy, who then 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, 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 Lok Sabha seats."

In a video clip 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 failed to have any effect. Then, Rahul and Akhilesh had a brief discussion before they left the stage.

In Bundelkhand, fields thirsty for water, people for change

Vishwa Mohan @timesgroup.com

Banda/Hamirpur: Six of the seven districts in the poll-bound Bundelkhand region of Uttar Pradesh, 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. This is reflected on the ground in depressed agricultural activities, water scarcity and land degradation in all four Lok Sabha

constituencies 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 vulnerability assessment done by Indian Council of Agricultural Research.

The list shows Hamirpur as the riskiest in UP followed by Banda. Nationwide, Hamirpur is the ninth riskiest whereas Banda is at number 20 due



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

to constant rise in minimum temperatures, extensive degraded land and high drought proneness.

The situation, that has affected farming operations, has already led to ru-

rral 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 measures will help them face challenges of climate change in future. "We cannot survive without irrigation facilities. Underground water is depleting quite fast. We use diesel pump sets for irrigation. But the high price of diesel and high cost of deep boring make farming expensive," said Ashok Singh of Banda tehsil. Other villagers have similar concerns, saying their

district needs industries so that more and more people get jobs.

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

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Wheat procurement may miss target, but set to cross '23 mark

Punjab & Hry Saw Higher Purchases, MP 33% Down

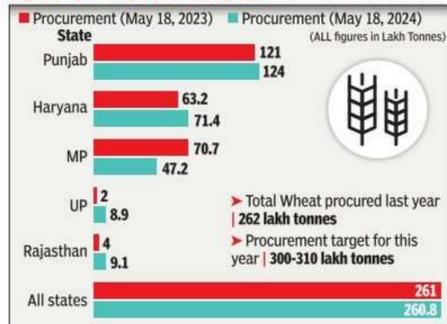
Dipak.Dash@timesgroup.com

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 the earlier estimate of 300-310 lakh tonnes, which was arrived at after consultation with states.

75% OF TOTAL FROM PUNJAB & HRY



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

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 Madhya Pradesh. The state won't be able to achieve the initial target of 80 lakh tonnes.

Though there has been a more than four-fold jump in wheat procurement in Uttar Pradesh and 2.5 times in Rajasthan, their contribution to the central pool is hardly 18 lakh tonnes. Govt had expected procurement of around 50 lakh tonnes of wheat from UP, Rajasthan and Bihar. Officials said the procurement period in UP is likely to be extended till June so that more farmers can get the benefit of MSP. Sources said with the current level of procurement, there is hardly any scope to lift the restriction on wheat export this year as well. It remains to be seen if the wheat-rice ratio will be restored as it was before May 2022. Govt had changed the policy to allocate more rice instead of wheat.

Cops raze illegal structures of 4 cow slaughter accused

Indore: The police on Sunday razed the illegal constructions belonging to four men accused of cow slaughter in Madhya Pradesh's Dewas. "Early on Sunday a farmer in Khetakhe-di village found both his cows missing from his farmland. He saw some people packing something into sacks nearby. When he approached them, some of them fled and a few threatened him," ASP Jayveer Singh Bhadoria said.

"The man saw remains of the cows in seven-eight sacks and alerted villagers," the ASP added. The villagers dashed to the farm, along with right-wing activists, caught a 'suspect' Aamin, and thrashed him before handing him over to Barotha police.

Man assaulted for 'cattle smuggling' in Jharkhand
One person was arrested on charge of thrashing a 60-year-old man on suspicion of cattle smuggling in Garhwa district of Jharkhand on Sunday, police said. It is alleged that the elderly man, Saraswati Ram, was also stripped and dragged from a motorcycle. **TNN**

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

Partha.Behera@timesgroup.com

Raipur: Plucked from his classroom by Maoists at age 16, handed a rifle and dragged through the jungles of Abujmahar, Libaru Korram aka Naxal Diwakar always yearned to return to school. He did. And, he has now cleared his Class 10 examination.

Hailed as a hero by fellow surrendered cadres, Korram proudly shows a worn printout of his marks. "I was taught to fire AK-47, SLR, Insas, and 303 rifles. I'd much rather wield a pen," Korram, who carried a bounty of Rs 1.4 lakh, told TOI. His journey is inspiring school dropouts in Maoist-affected villages to return to education.

Korram has now set his sights on passing Class 12, and helping his wife, Lakshmi, a former Maoist who carried a



Libaru Korram, 34, was plucked by Maoists when he was 16 years old

bounty of Rs 8 lakh, clear her Class 10 exam.

"Diwakar, now 34, was taken by Maoists when he was in Class 5 at an Abujmahar school. He was 16 years old then. Maoists forced him into a vasectomy, which was reversed after he surrendered to police in Kawardha in 2021. He has since married a woman from Sukma," Kawardha SP Abhishek Pallava said, adding, "Diwakar's 35% is equivalent to 90% marks achieved by students who have ac-

cess to all resources." "I cannot forget the day Maoists took me away from school," said Korram. Life in the jungles was very hard, he recalls. "We never had enough food or water and always on the move, looking behind your shoulder," said Korram. "After surrendering, he... wanted to continue his education, and we supported him," said the SP. He tried twice but failed both times. Not one to give up, he tried again, and passed this time.

"We are taking Diwakar to Maoist-hit bordering villages of Kawardha and projecting him as a role model. This has yielded positive results, with school dropouts getting motivated to resume their education," the SP told TOI.

Deputy CM and home minister Vijay Sharma congratulated Korram on video call.

CBI inspector held for graft in MP college probe

Bhopal: CBI has arrested one of its own inspectors for allegedly accepting a bribe during the probe into irregularities in Madhya Pradesh's nursing colleges. Four persons, including the inspector stationed at Bhopal's Anti-Corruption Branch (ACB), have been arrested on charges of bribery. This arrest comes as a setback to the 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, but it couldn't be confirmed immediately. A special team from Delhi held the inspector along with the director of a nursing college, his wife, and a middleman. **TNN**

3 pilgrims die, Char Dham toll touches 29 in nine days

Tanmayee Tyagi & Abhyudaya Kotnala | TNN

Dehradun: At least 29 people have 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.

The victims include, 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



Devotees at Badrinath Temple in Chamoli district on Sunday

the shrine to four.

Two more devotees lost their lives while visiting the Yamunotri shrine. The 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 Uttarakashi. With this, the toll at the shrine has reached 11.

According to Dr BS Rawat, chief medical officer, Uttarakashi, 11 people have died in Yamunotri and two in Gangotri shrine. Sources within Rudrapurayag 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.

3 passengers, including child, hurt as poll falls on train & smashes window

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

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

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

The train was passing through Urkura station, around 10km from Raipur, when the pole fell on the train, smashing a window of an AC coach and injuring three passengers, one of them identified as Soumya Mondal. "The passengers were given first-aid and they were



The train was passing through Urkura station, 10km from Raipur, when the incident happened

taken to a private hospital in Raipur. All of them are out of danger," said an official. As per sources, a CSEB contractor had told labourers to drill underneath the railway line near Urkura station. RK Shukla, managing director, CSEB, said a "collaborative survey" was carried out before starting work. "We can't say it was unauthorised," he said.

Raj Bhavan staff defy summons, served notice

Kolkata: The three Raj Bhavan employees summoned at a Kolkata police station on Sunday did not turn up, prompting cops to issue a notice asking for their presence 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 or deny it.

MOLESTATION CASE

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 on May 2. A CCTV grab showing an accused woman carrying a bag belonging to the complainant has helped firm up the evidence, said police.

Fire at new Noida hotel chokes 1st guest 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 douse the flames on their own and called up the fire department only when the blaze went out of control.

"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

fourth floor while the smoke bartered 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 persons. 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 Shamli 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 installed on the fourth floor. "No, the hotel did not have any objection certificate from the fire department. We will file a police complaint against the hotel owner," Pal said.

HC: No bar on 2nd divorce petition on grounds of cruelty

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 high court 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 grounds to deny divorce if he is able to establish the grounds 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.

Later, the woman registered a police complaint against her husband, accusing him of demanding Rs 3 lakh from her father. Thereafter, the wife alleged the husband had an illicit relationship with a colleague. The husband, who had earlier filed a divorce petition and withdrew it on the advice of friends and relatives in 2018, filed a fresh petition in 2019, after the wife made these serious allegations.

On Jan 22, 2021, the family court rejected the husband's petition, holding he had failed to prove the allegation of cruelty and added he had neglected the boy.

K'taka notification on wildlife articles 'bad in law': Centre

Bengaluru: The Centre has pulled up 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 (Protec-

ROLL IT BACK, STATE TOLD

tion) Act, 1972, which said "illegal" wildlife artefacts 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 asking for 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 Lok Sabha polls results are announced in June. A large number of wildlife articles, without ownership certificates, have been seized from Bengaluru. Now, the state govt has to decide what to do with the ones that have been surrendered.

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With a heavy heart we bid farewell to Leelu Sidhwani, daughter of Late Shankar B.C & Bhag S.C and wife of Chandan Sidhwani. She was a loving soul, passionate about life, cooking, and traveling. Her loving legacy and cherished memories across generations will forever inspire us. Remembered with affection and admiration:

Sidhwani & Choithramani Family

Sundeep, Priti, Nisha, Ritesh, Dolly & Tikaram (children)
Trishant, Preetia, Akansha, Arav & Nirvaan (grand-children)
Aahaan & Yuvan (great grand-children)

Prayer meeting on 20th May from 5:00 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.

Grand Ballroom JW Marriott Sahar Behind International Airport
No condolences thereafter

MARKA

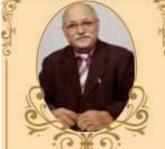


Shri. Ishwar Bulchand Ramchandani
Left for heavenly abode on sat. 18 May 2024

Marka
For ladies & gents
Will be held today 20 May 2024 from 4.30-5.30 pm at Sher E Punjab Gurudwara, Andheri East, Mumbai-93
Deeply Grieved
Sunita Ishwar Ramchandani (Wife)
Hitesh & Hiten (Sons)
Kornal (Daughter in law)
Ramchandani & Bhatia Family
No Condolences Thereafter

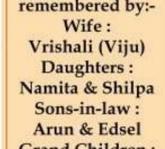
SAD DEMISE

SAD DEMISE



Shyam Raghunath Karmarkar
17th May 2024
We love you and miss you so much. You left us with beautiful memories & warmth. You will live in our hearts forever & ever.
Fondly remembered by:-
Wife :
Vrishali (Viju)
Daughters :
Namita & Shilpa
Sons-in-law :
Arun & Edsel
Grand Children :
Aaroheh, Vivaan, Arnab & Karmarkar Family

SAD DEMISE



Shri Jitendra Kumar Saboo
(18th January 1952 - 18th May 2024)
Prayer Meet on Monday, 20 May 2024
Time: 4 - 6 pm
Address: Club House, Emerald bay, Plot R-3/B, Sector - 14, Nerul, Navi Mumbai

SAD DEMISE



Hannah A Samson
05/01/1930 - 18/05/2024
Beloved W/o Asher J. Samson (late)
M/o Abraham & Nina
MIL/o Kailas & Eva
GM/o Azriel, Amiel & Kushal (Aviv)
GGM/o Ved.
Deeply mourned by Samson & Wagle fly and extended families of friends & relatives

REMEMBRANCES

REMEMBRANCE



BIREN DINESH SHAH
Birth : 18/3/1964
Death : 20/5/1999

A thorough gentleman and a loving family man with a heart of gold
He was and continues to be an inspiration for many

Milan Dinesh Shah & Family
M: 9821936787

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Your life was a blessing. Your memory a treasure. You are loved beyond measure. The fragrance of your love still invigorates our lives. Although we seem so far apart, you are always within our hearts. We always love you. Deeply remembered by Laxmi Kant Prasad, Sitesh, Kanchan, Prachi, Devendra, Ritesh, Nikki, Saanvi, Trisha, Tiya, Aashvi, Kiaan, & Family Relatives & Friends.

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CONTRAPUNTO

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

-EMMELINE PANKHURST

Don't Play This Game

Poll rhetoric that weaponises women victims is a new low

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

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

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

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

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

UNCUET

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

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

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

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

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

Ebony in India

On foreign spouses, desi parents and rough relations

Bikram Vohra



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

VOCAL DALITS, SILENT MUSLIMS

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

Anand.Soodas@timesgroup.com



Life confuses Amit Sharma. Elections too. Not very long ago he had three taxis in Ghaziabad, with all-India permits. Then, during Covid, he lost two of his cars. Back at square one, he said, "I'll need to work my heart out to retrieve the vehicles I had to let go." Ferrying passengers in the middle of the poll season in UP, where voting in its 80 constituencies is spread over seven phases, he was amused elections could throw up such tough choices.

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

POLLITICS
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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..."

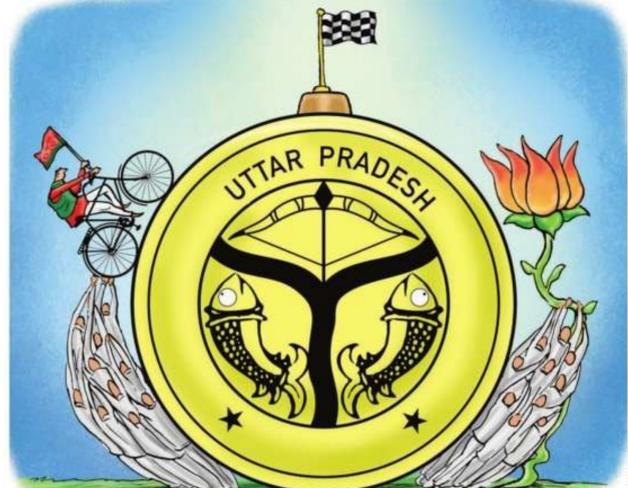
India shining | The new Ram Mandir in Ayodhya has filled many Hindu hearts with pride and joy. As have reports of the "disappearance of stone-pelters" in Kashmir. UCC and CAA were hardly mentioned at *chaupals* and street corner addas during exchanges and altercations, but India's "growing stature" in 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 (ret'd) served as Assistant Chief of Air Staff

Calvin & Hobbes



Sacredspace



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

Henry D Thoreau

Romancing Honeybees That Give Us Life

Narayani Ganesh

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Not only do bees act as pollinators,

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

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

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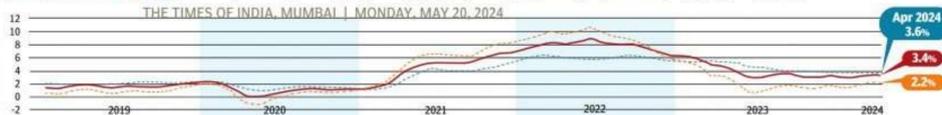
US Inflation Momentum Slows But Housing, Services Stay Hot

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

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

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

CPI for urban consumers in the US (YoY change)



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

Source: US Bureau of Labor Statistics, Statista

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Visit <https://grp.hsbc.kycr.com> 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%

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

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

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

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

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

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



► 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 5G.

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

M Nirmala 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

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.

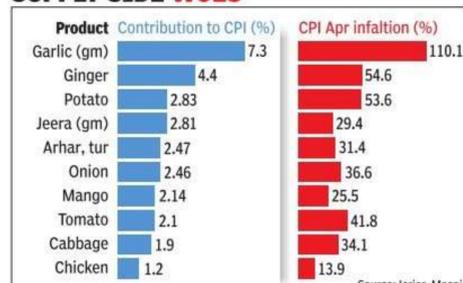
Veggies, pulses face heatwave price pressures

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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.



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

How To Remove The Lien On MFs?

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

What Happens In Case Of Default?

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

—PRASHANT MAHESH

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 development 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 Sagging Fortunes Around

Manuja.Veerappa@timesgroup.com

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 name!" (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 Bengaluru 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...

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.

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.

THE FOREIGN FLAVOUR

A stumbling Faf du Plessis, Glenn Maxwell with a cold bat, and the indifferent form of Reece Topley, Will Jacks and Cameron Green were a major worry for RCB. But in the second half of the season, Jacks raised the tempo with the bat and Green filled the role of an 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-handed 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 the coaches 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 team in England's top flight to touch City since Guardiola began his remarkable run by winning the title in 2018.

66 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

66 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 Juergen 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

Marcus.Mergulhao@timesgroup.com

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.

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.

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. REUTERS

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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



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". "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 ex-heavyweight world champion - was ringside in Saudi Arabia but echoed his sibling's words. AGENCIES

BEATS TYSON FURY TO BECOME UNDISPUTED WORLD HEAVYWEIGHT BOXING CHAMPION

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

FORMULA ONE

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 his career, lifting him 48 points clear of Leclerc in the drivers' title race. AGENCIES

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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 ENDED

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

FINISHING ON A HIGH

Abhishek Stars As SRH Chase Down Punjab's 214, Finish 2nd After RR-KKR Tie Rained Out

Shiva.Gundra@timesgroup.com
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. **And they ended second after the second game between Rajasthan royals and Kolkata Knight Riders in Guwahati was washed out.**

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 Arshdeep, the hosts had by then powered to 84/2 in the powerplay.

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

Nitish and Heinrich Klaasen then kept the hosts on course. Both hit sixes off Brar and Rahul 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.

41 Number of sixes hit by Abhishek Sharma in 13 innings in this IPL are the most by any batter apart from the most by an Indian player in a season. The previous best by an Indian batter was 38 by Virat Kohli in 16 innings in 2016.

Stats: Rajesh Kumar

SHARMA SCORCHER



Playoffs schedule

May 21: Qualifier 1: KKR (1) vs SRH (2), Ahmedabad
May 22: Eliminator: RR (3) vs RCB (4), Ahmedabad
May 24: Qualifier 2: Loser of Qualifier 1 vs Winner of Eliminator, Chennai
May 26: Final: Winner of Qualifier 1 vs Winner of Qualifier 2, Chennai



SCOREBOARD

Punjab Kings: Atharva Talde c Sanvir Singh b Natarajan 46, Prabhsimran Singh c Klaasen b Natarajan 71, Rilee Rossouw c Abdul Samad b Cummins 49, Shashank Singh run out (Nitish Kumar Reddy/Klaasen) 2, Jitesh Sharma not out 32, Ashutosh Sharma c Sanvir Singh b Natarajan 2, Shivam Singh not out 2. **Extras** (lb 5, nb 1, w 4) 10. **Total:** (for five wickets, 20 overs) 214.
Fall of wickets: 1-97, 2-151, 3-174, 4-181, 5-187.
Bowling: Bhuvneshwar Kumar 4-0-36-0, Pat Cummins 4-0-36-1, T Natarajan 4-0-33-2, Vijayakanth Vijayakanth 4-0-37-1, Shahbaz Ahmed 1-0-13-0, Nitish Kumar Reddy 3-0-54-0.
Sunrisers Hyderabad: Travis Head b Arshdeep Singh 0, Abhishek Sharma c Shivam Singh b Shashank

Singh 66, Rahul Tripathi c sub (Arshdeep Singh) b Patel 33, Nitish Kumar Reddy c Shivam Singh b Patel 37, Heinrich Klaasen b Harpreet Brar 42, Shahbaz Ahmed c Shashank Singh b Arshdeep Singh 3, Abdul Samad not out 11, Sanvir Singh not out 6. **Extras** (lb 6, nb 1, w 10) 17. **Total:** (for six wickets, 19.1 overs) 215.
Fall of wickets: 1-0, 2-72, 3-129, 4-176, 5-197, 6-208
Bowling: Arshdeep Singh 4-0-37-2, Rishi Dhawan 3-0-35-0, Harshal Patel 4-0-49-2, Rahul Chahar 4-0-43-0, Harpreet Brar 3-0-36-1, Shashank Singh 1-0-5-1, Atharva Talde 0-1-0-4-0.
Impact sub: Sunrisers Hyderabad: Travis Head in for T Natarajan (innings break); Punjab Kings: Arshdeep Singh in for Ashutosh Sharma (innings break).
Result: SRH won by four wickets.
Player-of-the-Match: Abhishek Sharma

Dayal tames Rinku ghost, stuns CSK

Manuja.Veerappa
 @timesgroup.com

Bengaluru: On Saturday night, Chennai Super Kings needed 17 runs off the final over to deny Royal Challengers Bengaluru the lone slot up for grabs in the playoffs. Faf du Plessis tossed the ball to pacer Yash Dayal. The bowler from UP delivered a full toss to MS Dhoni, which he 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 for five consecutive match-winning sixes. 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.

"I got hit off that ball, I subconsciously went back to that place (match vs 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 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.

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," would be his first words to his mother on a video call.

"After what happened to me last time, there was nervousness," he would say. "Since coming to this RCB set-up, I have practised a lot and have delivered in matches. All that was going through my mind was to deliver two balls well. Even if I didn't execute it well, there were seniors right behind me," he said and added that it was Dinesh Karthik and Faf du Plessis who took the call for him to bowl the last over.

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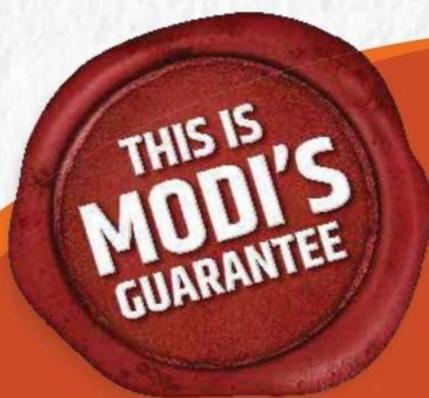


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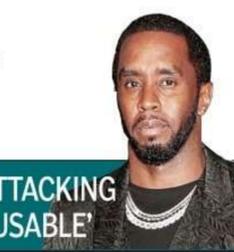
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Published by: Bharatiya Janata Party, Maharashtra Pradesh, Mumbai | The "Clock" symbol is sub-judice before the Honourable Supreme Court and the respondents have been permitted to use the same subject to the final outcome of these proceedings.



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.

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.



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

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/ANVT

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).

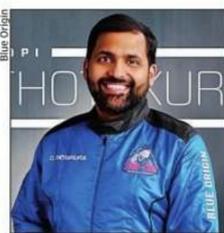
Born in Vijayawada (Andhra Pradesh), Gopi, an entrepreneur and a pilot, journeyed to the edge of space beyond the Earth's atmosphere along with five others. He is officially the second astronaut from the country after Wing Commander Rakesh Sharma, who flew as a professional cosmonaut to space on board 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



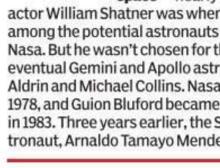
A screen grab shows the Mission NS-25, with the New Shepard 4 rocket & crew capsule, taking off from Texas's Van Horn on Sunday



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.

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.

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



Ebrahim Raisi

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 deputies, 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."

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



Netanyahu

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

Several students and faculty members at the commencement wore keffiyeh scarves, which have become a symbol of protest against the war. 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

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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 Gutler, a professor of American Studies at Brown University, said flying the flag upside down "seems to have become a part of our hyperpartisan symbolic surround, especially on the right, where it symbolises the impending death of the nation and a call to arms". Other symbols include thin-blue-line flags, a pro-police symbol, and a Punisher skull, based on the comic-book vigilante, he said. NYT

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 issues scratch-and-sniff baguette stamps

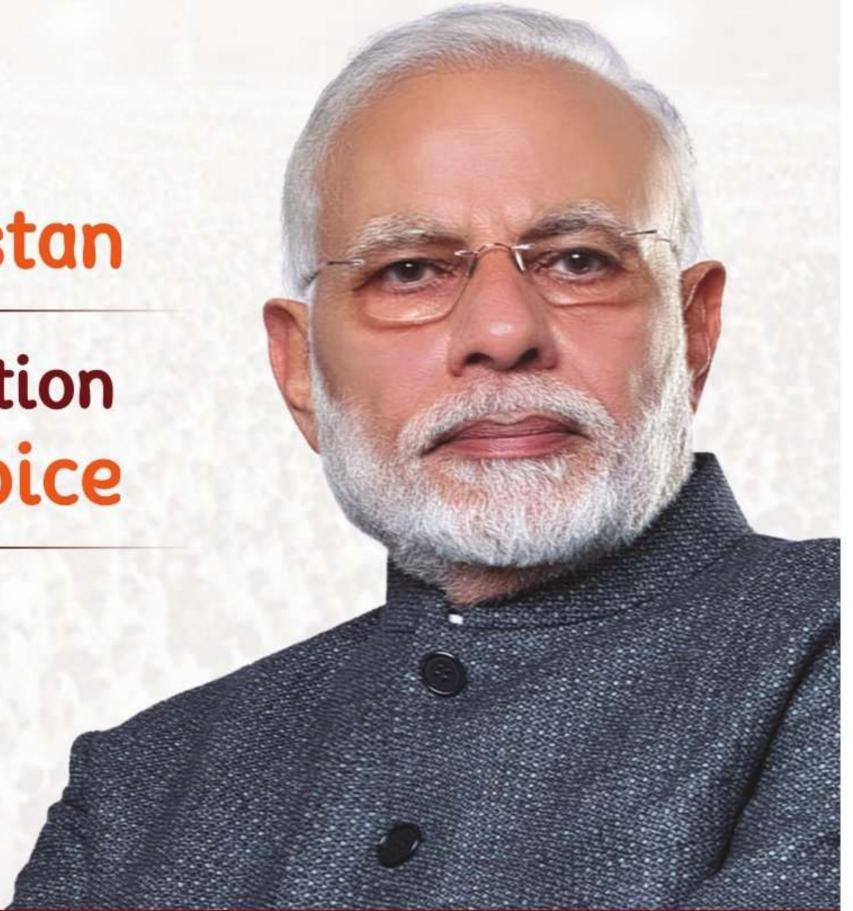


Joining the ranks of screen goddess Brigitte Bardot and the Eiffel Tower, another French treasure is being celebrated with its own postage stamp: the baguette. And this one is scratch-and-sniff. It is the latest showcasing of French cultural heritage as Paris prepares to host Olympics. Priced €1.96 each, 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.



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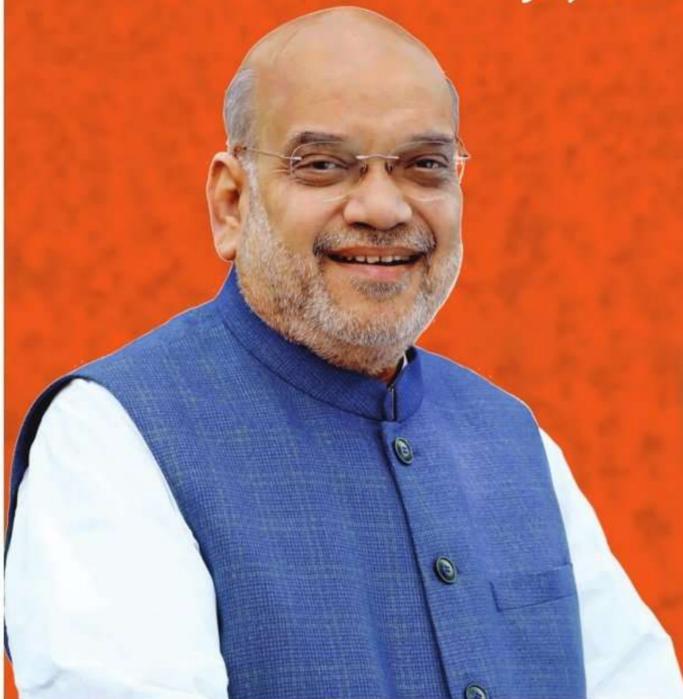
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BATTLEGROUND INDIA | APRIL 19-JUNE 4, 2024

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

Shalvee.Sharda@timesgroup.com

Rae Bareilly/Amethi: Recently, when Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi reached Bachrawan in Rae Bareilly for addressing an evening election gathering, the time window given by the police for the meeting had expired. That meant she couldn't use the public address system. Under 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 lift to tackle the upcoming assembly polls in October. Shinde has fielded former mayor and close aide Naresh Mhaske as the Mahayuti candidate



IT'S ALL ABOUT MAKING THE RIGHT MOVES

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

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

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

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

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

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

but there is simmering discontent.

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

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

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

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

Ranjan.Dasgupta@timesgroup.com

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

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

But his ordeal had just begun. As moneylenders turned up the heat on Kokane, he was forced to find other sources of income. He finally ended up as a labourer at the APMC.

"I blame the Union govt for my plight. Even though it lifted the embargo later on, it did not help improve the wholesale prices," he said. Now, he earns a paltry Rs 40 for unloading onions from farmers' tractors and loading them on to traders' vehicles. He handles about 10-15 vehicles daily.

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

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

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

BJP hopes onions won't leave it weepy in Dindori

CONSTITUENCY WATCH

Dindori Maharashtra VOTES ON May 20



2024 FACE-OFF

Mahayuti Bharati Pawar (BJP)	
Maha Vikas Aghadi Bhaskar Bhagare (NCP-SCP)	

2019 LS POLL PERFORMANCE

Winner	Bharati Pawar (BJP)	Votes	5.7 lakh
Runner-up	Dhanraj Mahale (NCP)	Votes	3.7 lakh

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

Zeeshan Jawed & Faiguni 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 govts 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.

Chandannagar Strand

Portuguese settlement | Bandel 1571

Dutch settlement | Chinsurah 1635

French settlement | Chandernagore 1673

British settlement | Calcutta 1686

Danish settlement | Serampore 1755

Bandel Church

Serampore College

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

BOULEVARDS OF BROKEN DREAMS

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".

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23 States

would have concluded polling in the ongoing general elections for the 18th Lok Sabha after today

UP, Bihar & Bengal are big states where voting will continue after the fifth & smallest phase. National capital Delhi votes next



MAX CITY, MAHA YUDH

It's the grand finale of the Maharashtra grudge match as the subplot in the NDA vs INDIA contest becomes the main theme. In and around India's commercial capital, the two Senas square off in the most bitter & personal of fights in these Lok Sabha elections. The other big face-offs are in UP & Bengal

WHAT'S AT STAKE IN PHASE 5

NDA

TO DEFEND: 39 seats, including 13 out of 14 in UP, 11 out of 13 in Maharashtra (excluding 2 Sena candidates who are with Uddhav group), all 5 in Bihar, all 3 in Jharkhand, 3 out of 5 in Odisha, 3 out of 7 in West Bengal and lone seat in Ladakh.

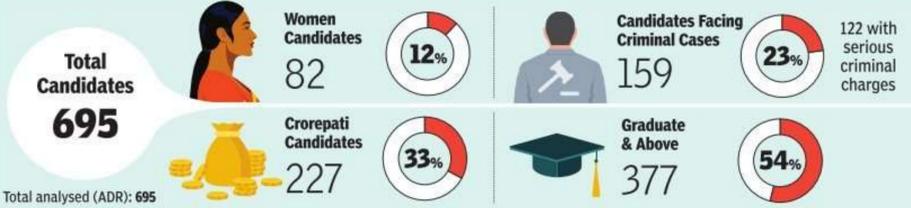
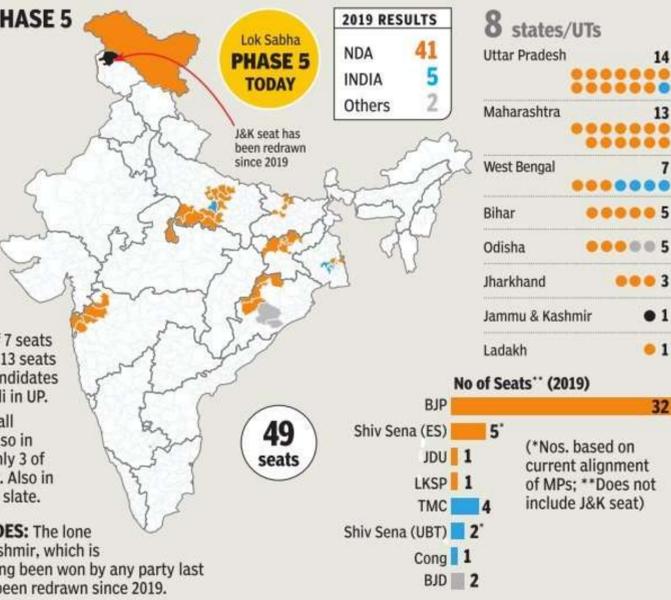
CAN LOOK FOR GAINS IN: Bengal, where it lost 4 of 7 seats polling today last time, and in Odisha.

INDIA

TO DEFEND: 7 seats, including 4 of 7 seats polling today in West Bengal, 2 of 13 seats in Maharashtra (adding 2 Sena candidates with Uddhav group) and Rae Bareilly in UP.

CAN LOOK FOR GAINS IN: Almost all the states in this round, but more so in Maharashtra, where it had won only 3 of the 13 seats that go to polls today. Also in Bihar, where it starts with a clean slate.

WHAT THIS BREAK-UP EXCLUDES: The lone seat polling today in Jammu & Kashmir, which is not possible to categorise as having been won by any party last time since seat boundaries have been redrawn since 2019.



HIGH-STAKES BATTLES TO WATCH TODAY

Maharashtra: This Lok Sabha election's most complex political arena sees its final act today with a high-voltage Sena vs Sena showdown, a fight that's as much about political relevance as it is about Balasaheb's legacy and prestige for the two protagonists — Uddhav Thackeray and the man who unseated him as CM, Eknath Shinde. Of the 13 remaining seats in the state polling today, six are in India's commercial capital, Mumbai, the Sena bastion where Uddhav is looking for voters' stamp of condemnation of the "betrayal" he accuses Shinde of leading to the party splitting in two. The Shinde group is part of Mahayuti (BJP) and Uddhav's Sena UBT with MVA (Sharad Pawar's NCP and Congress). Four of the seats are in the wider Mumbai Metropolitan Region, which includes Shinde's home turf Thane. Here, Shinde is seeking endorsement of his rebellion. BJP, which did very well here in 2019, will see an advantage, but with two Senas and two NCPs in the mix, it's a new playing field for all parties.



Uttar Pradesh: The state that votes in all seven phases moves into one of its biggest two rounds today — the next one in Phase 6 — as 14 seats in Awadh, including capital Lucknow, and the entire Bundelkhand (Jalaun, Jhansi, Hamirpur and Banda) go to polls today. In 2019, BJP swept these seats except Rae Bareilly. This time, with the Gandhi bastion at the centre, INDIA bloc (Cong & Samajwadi Party) is eyeing a revival here. Other high-profile seats are Faizabad, which includes Ayodhya, and controversial former wrestling federation chief Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh's stronghold Kaiserganj. Also keep an eye on Mohanlalraj 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.



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.



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.



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)

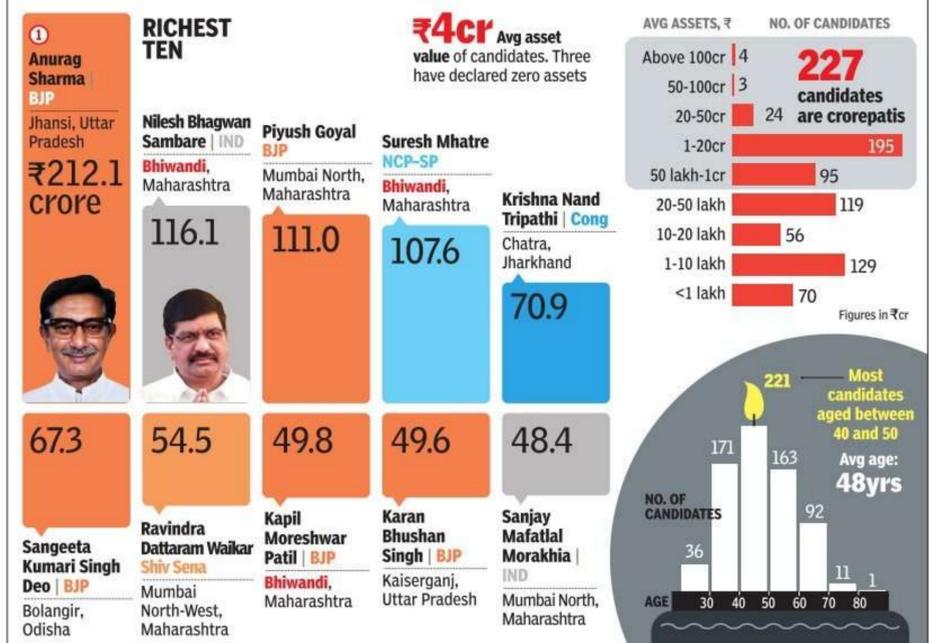
In this constituency that includes Ayodhya, two-time BJP MP Lallu Singh is banking on the euphoria of Ram temple along with govt's 'vikas' theme, to score a hat-trick. A Thakur and an accused in the Babri demolition case, Singh was a five-time MLA from Ayodhya assembly seat between 1991 and 2007. He 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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