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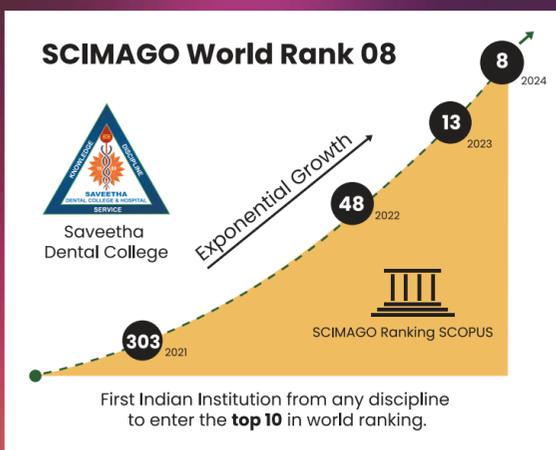
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3(4)	University of Michigan, Ann Arbor	USA	🇺🇸
4(5)	Universidade Estadual Paulista Julio de Mesquita Filho	BRA	🇧🇷
5(6)	The University of Hong Kong	HKG	🇭🇰
6(8)	Universidade Estadual de Campinas	BRA	🇧🇷
7(9)	Kings College London	GBR	🇬🇧
8(10)	Saveetha Institute of Medical and Technical Sciences *	IND	🇮🇳
9(11)	Universitat Bern	CHE	🇨🇭
10(12)	Peking University	CHN	🇨🇳
11(13)	Peking University Health Science Center	CHN	🇨🇳
12(14)	Universitat Zurich	CHE	🇨🇭
13(15)	Harvard University	USA	🇺🇸
14(15)	Tokyo Medical and Dental University	JPN	🇯🇵
15(15)	University of Washington	USA	🇺🇸



SCOPUS SCIMAGO INSTITUTIONS RANKINGS 2024



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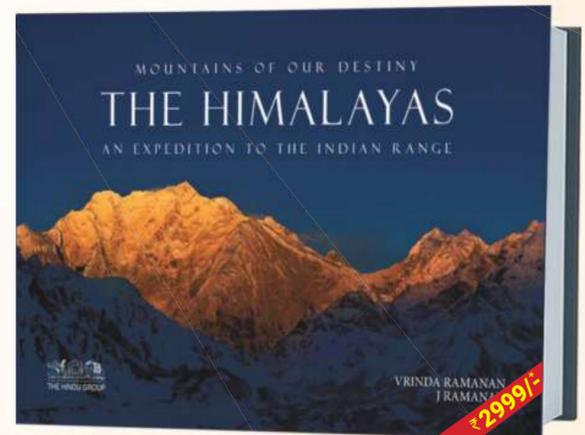
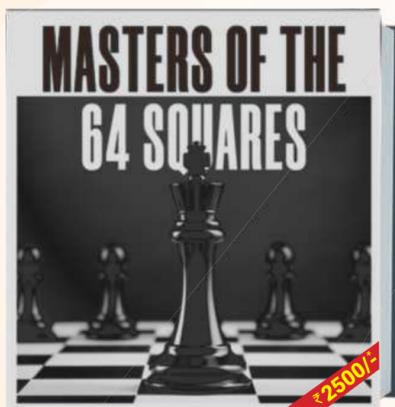
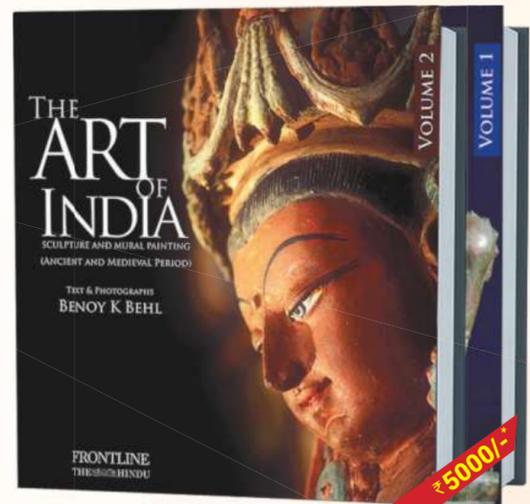
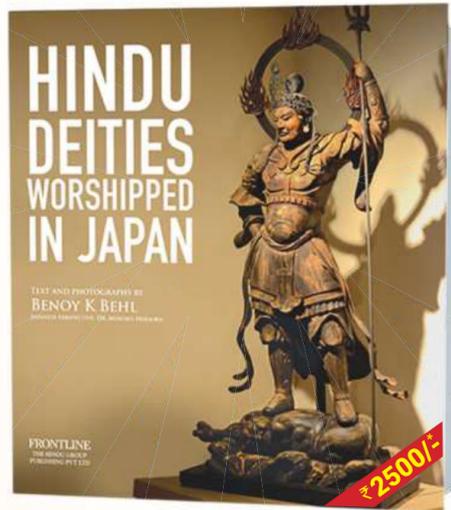
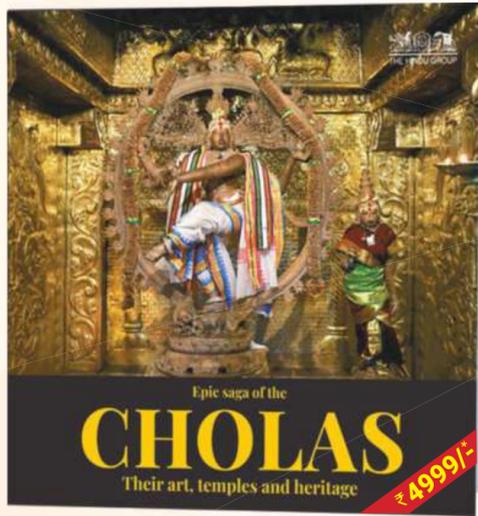
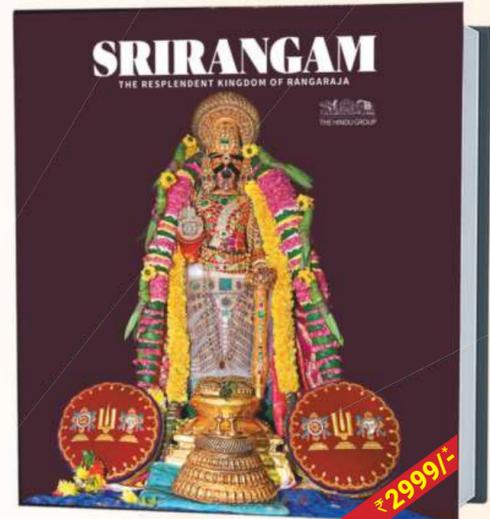
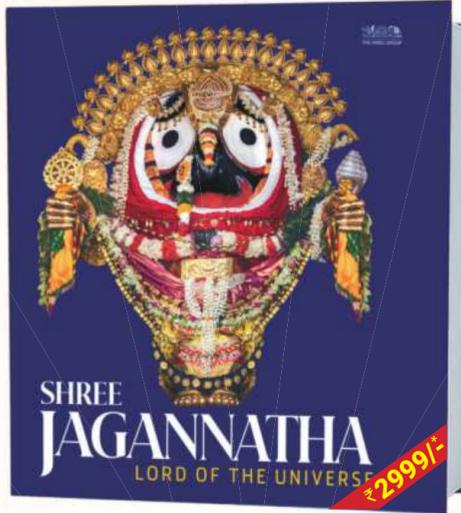
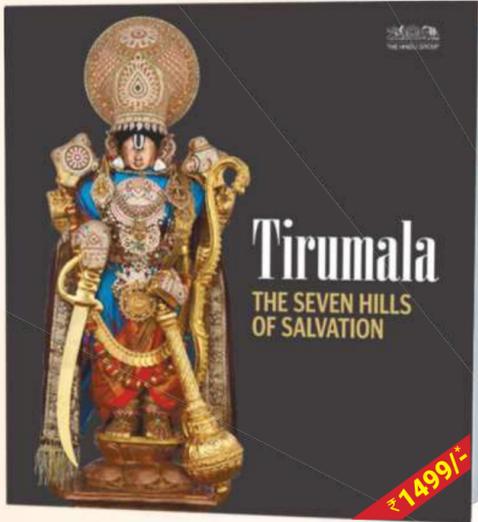
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CANNES FESTIVAL

Payal Kapadia wins Grand Prix

All We Imagine As Light wins the prestigious prize; Anasuya Sengupta wins the Un Certain Regard Prize for Best Actress

NEWS » PAGE 9



Cyclone Remal to cross Bengal, Bangladesh coast today

NEWS » PAGE 7



Knight Riders and Sunrisers battle for bragging rights

SPORT » PAGE 15

EC releases absolute number of votes cast in five phases of polls

Votes polled in a constituency are already recorded in Form 17C and cannot be altered, it says; civil society groups welcome release of data

Sreeparna Chakrabarty
NEW DELHI

The Election Commission (EC) on Saturday released the absolute number of votes cast in each constituency in the first five phases of the ongoing Lok Sabha election. This is the first time that the EC has shared the total number of votes cast in this election.

The commission came out with the data a day after the Supreme Court refused to direct it to disclose details of Form 17C, which contains voter turnout data at the booth level and is handed out to all the polling agents of the candidates, as had been demanded by the NGO, Association for Democratic Reforms, in its petition.

In an affidavit filed before the top court earlier this week, the commission had said that there was a "design, a pattern" at play in the petitioners' approach. In a statement on Saturday, the EC reiterated this. "The commission notes the pattern of false narratives and mischievous design to vitiate electoral process," it said.

Clearing the air

According to the EC, 50.72 crore (66.39%) of the 76.4 crore eligible voters cast their votes in the first five phases of the Lok Sabha election. A phase-wise breakup:

Phase	Count of electors (in crore)	Count of votes (in crore)
1	16.6	11.0
2	15.8	10.6
3	17.2	11.3
4	17.7	12.2
5	8.9	5.6



that the total number of votes polled in a constituency, as recorded in Form 17C, can never be changed even by anyone's "hypothetical mischief", as it is available with all the candidates [agents].

Though the poll body has reiterated that the voter turnout data is available to all polling agents of the candidates, the situation on the ground is different. *The Hindu* had spoken to a host of ground workers of political parties and civil society members last week, who had argued that it was not possible for all parties, specially, smaller ones and independent candidates, to put up polling agents at each booth.

Civil society groups that had petitioned the EC requesting release of the data welcomed the move.

"Big victory for peoples' Right to Information! ECI releases voter turnout figures in absolute numbers. Important step by ECI, though this could have been done sooner. The demand to disclose Form 17C must continue as that is the only statutory authenticated record of voter turnout," Anjali Bharadwaj, director, Common Cause, one of the petitioners, posted on X.

CONTINUED ON » PAGE 7



Onto the last lap: People queue up to cast their vote in the sixth phase of the Lok Sabha election at Jaffarabad in the national capital on Saturday. SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

61.2% voting in penultimate phase of Lok Sabha election

Sreeparna Chakrabarty
NEW DELHI

The sixth and penultimate phase of the ongoing Lok Sabha election saw a voter turnout of 61.20% till 11.45 p.m. on Saturday. Sporadic incidents of violence were reported from West Bengal which reported the highest polling percentage at 79.47.

Jammu and Kashmir's Anantnag-Rajouri seat recorded a turnout of 54.30%, which the Election Commission said was the highest in many decades for the constituency.

Voter turnout drops to 57.67% in Capital

Satvika Mahajan
NEW DELHI

An approximate voter turnout of 57.67% was recorded in the Capital, the Chief

Electoral Officer said on Saturday. In 2019, Delhi recorded a turnout of 60.6%.

DETAILS » PAGE 8

Lok Sabha seats voted, saw a turnout of 60.4%.

The national capital saw an array of high-profile voters exercise their franchise, including President Droupadi Murmu, Congress leaders Sonia Gandhi, Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar.

The turnout in Uttar Pradesh, where 14 seats went to polls, was the lowest at 54.03%. Odisha and Jharkhand recorded polling of 69.56% and 63.76%, respectively. The turnout in Bihar was 55.24%.

CONTINUED ON » PAGE 7
MORE REPORTS » PAGES 2, 8

IN BRIEF



Election internal matter: Kejriwal to Pak. leader

NEW DELHI
Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Saturday asked former Pakistan Minister Fawad Hussain not to meddle in the ongoing Lok Sabha election and said India won't tolerate interference in it by the "biggest sponsors of terrorism". » Page 3

Man uses app to pose as woman prof., rapes 7 girls

BHOPAL
Seven girls, most of them tribals, were allegedly raped in Madhya Pradesh's Sidhi district by a man who used a voice-changing app, pretended to be a woman professor and lured them with scholarship offers to a farm. » Page 7



MAGAZINE » 8 PAGES
CLASSIFIEDS » PAGE 6

Grandfather of minor held for pressuring driver to take blame

The Hindu Bureau
MUMBAI

The Pune police on Saturday arrested the grandfather of a 17-year-old boy, who ran over two 24-year-old IT professionals while allegedly driving his luxury car in a state of inebriation on May 19. A sessions court has remanded him in police custody till May 28.

According to the police, the grandfather had threatened the family's 42-year-old driver to put out a statement taking responsibility for the accident. He also warned the driver against speaking to anyone about it, said Pune Police Commissioner Amitesh Kumar at a press meet.

'Wrongful confinement' "Before being arrested, the minor's father and grandfather offered cash and gifts to their driver, and later threatened him to take the blame for the accident. They have been booked for kidnapping and wrongful confinement. The driver and his family will get police protection," he said.

In his statement to the police, the driver said the minor's grandfather had called him soon after the incident. "He was forcibly taken to their bungalow in a car. The minor's father and grandfather then

Accused booked for kidnapping, sent to police custody till May 28 in Pune car crash case

snatched his mobile phone and confined him in a room. The driver was promised a cash reward only if he accepted their offer to take all the blame," the Pune police chief said.

Earlier, the driver, on being brought to the police station from the accident spot, had claimed that he was behind the wheel, which we did not believe, Mr. Kumar said. "After a preliminary inquiry, we registered an offence against the minor as it was evident prima facie that he was driving the vehicle."

Congress essay contest Meanwhile, the youth wing of the Pune Congress has organised an essay competition on Sunday outside the pub where the juvenile allegedly consumed alcohol with his friends. "The topics include 'What if my father was a builder?', 'The side-effects of alcohol', 'My favourite luxury car', and 'Who killed Ashwini and Anish?'," said Kasba Peth MLA and Congress leader Ravindra Dhangekar.

27 killed in blaze at Rajkot children's game zone, more feared trapped under debris

The Hindu Bureau
AHMEDABAD

At least 27 people were killed in a fire at a sprawling children's game zone built in a temporary structure in Rajkot on Saturday. More bodies are feared trapped under the debris that has not been cleared.

Sources said the fire engulfed the arena, TRP Game Zone, within minutes. There were no fire extinguishers and emergency exits at the venue. It is not known if the play zone had taken a no-objection certificate from the State's fire department, said sources.

The State government has constituted a probe team to ascertain whether the game zone had the necessary licences from the authorities.

"There is no clarity about how many people were inside and what caused the fire," a senior official from Rajkot told *The Hindu*. "Since it is vacation and weekend, the place became overcrowded and the management did not restrict the number of people inside the building."

Due to extreme heat, the temporary structures collapsed aggravating the situation. There were over a dozen air conditioners installed at the venue. The AC compressors were



The massive fire at a gaming zone built in a temporary structure in Rajkot. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

hanging from the temporary walls and structures.

The bodies retrieved were completely charred and DNA tests will be conducted to determine their identities. All the bodies have been taken to the Rajkot Civil Hospital.

President Droupadi Murmu, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah and Congress leader Rahul Gandhi expressed grief over the tragedy.

"The fire tragedy in Rajkot has saddened us all. In my telephone conversation with him a short while ago, Gujarat CM Bhupendra Patel Ji told me

about the efforts underway to ensure all possible assistance is provided to those who have been affected," Mr. Modi wrote on X.

The PM said he has asked the Chief Minister to ensure stern action against those found guilty.

SIT formed The Gujarat Chief Minister announced the setting up of a special investigation team headed by additional DGP Subhash Trivedi and consisting of experts to probe the incident.

Mr. Patel announced a compensation of ₹4 lakh to the families who lost their loved ones and ₹50,000 to

those injured.

After the incident, the Gujarat DGP directed the police to launch an inspection of all play zones across the State and shut down those without a NOC from the fire department.

"It is a man-made disaster in Rajkot. How such a sprawling zone operated in the city without adequate fire protection infrastructure and nobody has any idea what was the capacity of the zone and how many people were inside," a resident of Rajkot said.

The police have arrested the owner of the play zone, its manager and two others over the incident.

Bhutan PM extols smart city project

Suhasini Haidar
NEW DELHI

Rejecting comparisons to other cost-intensive, low-return smart city projects worldwide, Bhutan Prime Minister Tshering Tobgay (in picture) said the Gelephu Mindfulness City is a "once in a lifetime" opportunity for Indian investors in the 2,000 square kilometre carbon-negative city project being designed.

Mr. Tobgay said Indian Airport Authority officials had already visited Gelephu and discussed permissions required for it, but that the contract for developing the airport is yet to be finalised.

Calling Bhutan's economic challenges "deep", he thanked Prime Minister Narendra Modi for doubling India's outlay to Bhutan for its latest five-year plan to begin on July 1 from ₹5,000 crore to ₹10,000 crore. "About ₹8,500 crore is for our 13th five-year plan. Much of that money will go into infrastructure."

FULL INTERVIEW » PAGE 14



IN BRIEF



At 95, CEC's father shows the model code of conduct

Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar went to vote with his 95-year-old father. "Three generations of our family voted together today. It is a matter of pride for me," Mr. Kumar said. The CEC said his father, who could have availed of the home voting facility (extended to those over 85), chose to visit the booth to experience the atmosphere of festivity. Mr. Kumar said people were turning up to vote despite the heat.

'Democracy discounts' add Capital value to the vote

Several restaurants across the city offered 'democracy discounts' to those who showed up with their fingers inked. Discounts of up to 50% were offered to voters. Food and beverage outlets operated by the MCD's Public Health Department and various trade unions also offered similar discounts. "It is a holiday. We took the opportunity to feel special by availing the discount. I feel it will encourage more people to go out and vote," said a voter, Anupreet Singh.

Wheelchair no bar for this 103-year-old from Matiala

A 103-year-old voter, Chander, cast his ballot in West Delhi constituency's Matiala along with family members. He was taken into the booth in a wheelchair. According to data shared by Delhi's Chief Electoral Officer, the city has 97,823 voters aged above 85, more than 5,400 of whom chose to vote from their homes. Former Vice-President Mohammad Hamid Ansari, and former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh cast their ballot from their residences.

Polling concludes smoothly; AAP says L-G tried to 'delay' voting; Saxena denies charge

Lieutenant-Governor 'instructed' police to 'slow down voting' in INDIA bloc strongholds, alleges Atishi; Saxena refutes accusation, calls it 'false and unwarranted'; BJP says wrong to drag constitutional post into controversy; several residents complain of deletion of their names from electoral roll

Satvika Mahajan
NEW DELHI

Polling in the Capital went smoothly on Saturday, barring a few instances in which residents complained about their names being deleted from the electoral rolls, even as the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) accused Lieutenant-Governor V.K. Saxena of a bid to "slow down voting".

While Mr. Saxena junked the charge, the BJP attacked AAP, asking the Delhi's ruling party to refrain from dragging constitutional posts into controversies.

Delhi Finance Minister Atishi had levelled a similar allegation against the L-G a day earlier as well.

Attacking Mr. Saxena on Saturday, she said the L-G had "instructed the Delhi police to slow down voting" in areas considered strongholds of the Indian National Developmental, Inclusive Alliance (INDIA). "If this happens, then it will be a violation of the idea of a free and fair election. So, we hope that the Election Commission will take cognisance of this," she said.

INDIA bloc partners AAP and Congress are contesting the Lok Sabha poll in Delhi in alliance as part of a 4-3 seat-sharing agreement.

Responding to the Minister's accusa-



(Clockwise from top) First-time voters show their inked fingers; CM Arvind Kejriwal with his wife at a polling booth; a policewoman assists an elderly voter. SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA/ SHASHI SHEKHAR KASHYAP

tions, Mr. Saxena, in a post on X, said, "I have taken a stern view of this unwarranted and false statement."

Meanwhile, many voters said their names had been deleted from the electoral rolls without any notification or explanation.

Around 1.52 crore people were eligible to vote for Delhi's seven Lok Sabha seats.

A resident in New Del-

hi constituency claimed that 200 names were found deleted from the voters' list in their area.

Saira Aslam, 35, said, "I had shifted out of the area, which might explain why my name was removed from the list, but there was no prior intimation. We are the world's largest democracy, and yet some of us are not being able to exercise our franchise."

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Saira Aslam, 35, said, "I had shifted out of the area, which might explain why my name was removed from the list, but there was no prior intimation. We are the world's largest democracy, and yet some of us are not being able to exercise our franchise."

Voters beat the heat

Meanwhile, the election officials welcomed voters with fruits and oral rehydration solution (ORS) at polling booths as hot weather conditions prevailed throughout the day.

The maximum tempera-

ture settled at 43.4 degrees Celsius, three notches above normal for the season. In Najafgarh and Narela, the mercury touched 46.8 and 46.7 degrees Celsius respectively.

A 70-year-old woman fainted at a polling booth in West Delhi constituency after casting her vote. She was assisted by the volunteers and taken to the hospital. Coconut water packs and sugarcane juice were distributed at polling booths.

The polling body had also set up selfie points where people were seen taking photographs with their near and dear ones after casting their ballot.

Several residents said



party that prioritises jobs and education.

Sarika Taneja, 45, said she had exercised her franchise keeping local issues such as sanitation and the condition of roads in her constituency in mind.

"These issues restrict women's mobility," said Ms. Taneja.

Jobs, national security, communal harmony on young voters' minds

Alisha Dutta
NEW DELHI

Several young voters in the Capital said they had considered factors such as national security, communal harmony, jobs and women's safety before casting their first vote on Saturday.

Over 2.5 lakh of Delhi's 1.52 crore voters had registered to vote for the first time.

Nineteen-year-old Rajiv Kumar, who is currently preparing for admission to the National Defence Academy, said, "My vote is for the party that strengthened the Army and gave it importance."

"Right now, most of my seniors, despite getting degrees from reputable institutes, have not been able to land well-paying jobs," said Riza Rahman, adding that she voted for the party that promised employment.

"My vote went to the party which understands that India is a secular country and that no religion is better or worse than others," said Shruti Bafna, 21.

Anjali Sharma, 20, said a major factor guiding her vote was which party "put India on the world map". "In the last decade, the world has started recognis-

ing India as a superpower, which is a big achievement," she said.

"I have voted against legal reforms that favour certain communities and encourage politics along communal lines," said law student Subhi Shankar, 20.

Meanwhile, 20-year-old Rekha Gupta said her vote was in favour of "vikas" (development). "The country has developed very fast in a short time frame. Today, trains are clean, and mobiles are equipped with internet banking, so my vote is for the party that has brought in so much development," she said.

The voters said several issues determined their vote, including the accessibility of government hospitals, unemployment, inflation, and governance.

"Delhi needs better go-

Senior citizens cast their ballot with an eye on next generation

Samridhi Tewari
NEW DELHI

Several senior citizens across the Capital lined up at polling booths early in the morning on Saturday, with the number witnessing a steady decline as the day wore on.

The older voters, some of whom came to the polling stations in wheelchairs, said they arrived early to avoid the heat.

The voters said several issues determined their vote, including the accessibility of government hospitals, unemployment, inflation, and governance.

"Delhi needs better go-

vernment hospitals. We all saw what happened during the pandemic. We don't have sufficient health facilities in Janakpuri," said wheelchair-bound Prem Sharma, 83, who cast her vote in Janakpuri in West Delhi constituency.

Sixty-year-old Mohd. Hasan, who cast his vote in West Delhi's Madipur, said he had to let go of several workers at his cloth dyeing shop in the recent past. "I have voted with the hope that my children and former employees can find work," he said.

In North East Delhi's Seemapuri, Bimlesh Devi, 70,

also expressed concern about the lack of jobs. "Having seen how children from our neighbourhood have struggled to find employment in the past decade, I feel anxious about my grandchildren's future," she said, adding that she will vote for the party that has promised employment for the youth.

Seventy-eight-year-old Mohd. Shafiq said his vote had gone to the party that does not target religious communities for political gains. "I have voted for peace," said Mr. Shafiq, who voted in New Delhi constituency.

Special booths draw mixed views as city voters point out flaws

Ashna Butani
NEW DELHI

Model polling booths, as well as those set up exclusively for women and persons with disabilities, received a mixed response on Saturday, with some voters praising the facilities being provided there while others calling the exercise mere "tokenism".

The Election Commission had set up over 13,000 polling booths at more than 2,600 locations across the Capital, of which 70 were model stations and as many were declared Pink Booths with all-women staff while eight polling stations were set up exclusively for persons with disabilities.

In the run-up to the election, the poll panel had said it would provide coolers, waiting rooms, health

staff with medical kits, wheelchairs, shaded waiting areas and engage anganwadi workers to take care of young children accompanying their mothers at each of these polling booths.

However, some voters said the arrangements at the special polling booths were no different from other polling booths.

'No fans'

Fareena Sultana, a 32-year-old Chandni Chowk resident who had undergone an operation recently, said she had to wait in a long queue before casting her vote. "There were no special facilities for people like us. The booth where I voted lacked fans as queues stretched long," she said, adding that there were no separate lines for the elderly either.

Happy to serve, say bike taxi, e-rickshaw drivers engaged to ferry voters in city

Samridhi Tewari
NEW DELHI

Bike taxi and e-rickshaw drivers engaged by the Election Commission to ferry senior citizens and persons with disability to polling stations said they were happy to get a day's work and participate in the election process.

Mohammad Feroz, stationed outside a polling booth in North East Delhi's Seemapuri, said he had received ₹900 for a 12-hour shift.

"From 8 a.m., when I reported for duty, till noon, I have driven at least seven persons with disabilities to the polling station. We have been asked to pick up old people and those with mobility issues from their homes, drop them at the polling station and ferry them back to their homes. I feel happy to be part of the initiative," he said.



Bike taxis and e-rickshaws were engaged by the Election Commission. FILE PHOTO

However, the drivers said they had not forgotten to exercise their franchise despite being engaged in poll duty.

Sunil Yadav, stationed outside a polling booth in Vikaspuri since 8 a.m., said he went to cast his vote in the afternoon when queues at polling booths had thinned.

"A big concern for us e-

rickshaw drivers is the lack of jobs. There is nothing better for us to do right now than drive the battery rickshaw. I voted for job security because I feel it is difficult to go on living like this," Mr. Yadav said.

For Kalka Prasad, who was on election duty in Vikaspuri, civic issues are paramount.

"The roads here have not been maintained properly and garbage continues to pile up on the streets. I voted for the candidate who, I believe, will provide us with better civic amenities," said the 32-year-old e-rickshaw driver.

Slow day at office

Akshay Khurana, who recently did his BA and currently rides a bike taxi, said he logged into his work portal after casting his vote in Kalkaji at 10 a.m.

"I rode around East of Kailash after returning from the polling booth. However, the frequency of customers was lower than usual. On a regular day, I earn around ₹1,000, but today, I've only made ₹600 so far," Mr. Khurana said. "There are no jobs, even for a BA graduate. We should have leaders who raise issues such as unemployment in Parliament," he added.

Voter's voice

It is my first time voting. I don't know which issues to consider or whom to vote for. I pressed a button randomly because I wanted to vote, but my husband had told me to focus on work instead of these things, which he said were not meant for me

RAJNI DEVI
22, domestic help

I have been voting for the same party all these years, but this time, I voted NOTA because I am not satisfied with any of the candidates

PRAVEEN MAHAJAN
62, retired shopkeeper

I voted on the basis of issues like women's safety and schemes pertaining to women. I almost didn't vote due to the pain in my knee, but my daughter told me to fulfil my duty, so I decided to come here, and I'm glad I did

UMA SHARMA
69, retired MCD official

My family and I have voted keeping in mind problems like inflation and unemployment. My son is currently in college, and it is hard to make ends meet as a single mother

RAJNI
38, tailor

I have been voting in North West Delhi for 17 years, but this year, I was unable to cast my vote because my name has been deleted from the electoral list. I filed a complaint with the EC but received no assistance. I feel betrayed by the system

PRIYA SRA
42, homemaker

I am a registered voter but did not cast my vote this time. My parents told me to go to the polling booth but I refused because I didn't want to waste a day of work. If I have to face the heat, I might as well work and earn money

SHAMI AKHTAR
25, Rapido driver



'Is sharing explicit videos a bigger crime than rape?'

The Hindu Bureau
MYSURU

Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Saturday sought to know under what provisions of the law could distribution of explicit videos be considered a "bigger crime" than rape.

He was reacting to a reporter in Mysuru who sought his response to former Chief Minister H.D. Kumaraswamy's alleged contention that leaking of videos explicitly showing sexual abuse, allegedly involving his nephew and Hassan MP Prajwal Revanna, was a graver crime. The Chief Minister sought to know the sections of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) that make the crime of making explicit videos viral a "graver crime than rape itself".

He hastened to add that the act of showing the faces of the victims of the sexual assault and distributing the videos among the public was also an offence.

Reacting to Minister for External Affairs S. Jaishankar's reported claim that there was a delay on the part the



Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah speaking to reporters in Mysuru on Saturday. M.A. SRIRAM

Government of Karnataka in sending the letter for cancellation of the diplomatic passport issued to Mr. Prajwal, Mr. Siddaramaiah said he had written the first letter more than 15 days ago. Later, letters had also been sent by the Police Department and the Special Investigation Team constituted to probe the sexual assault charges.

Mr. Siddaramaiah had followed up by sending a second letter in this regard to the Centre.

"For argument's sake, even if it is assumed that there was a delay in sending the letter, let the Centre cancel it now at least," he said.

Poll internal matter, take care of your own country: Kejriwal to Pak. leader

Delhi CM says won't tolerate meddling by 'biggest sponsors' of terror as ex-Pak. Minister calls for 'defeat of forces of hate, extremism'

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Saturday asked former Pakistan Minister Fawad Hussain to mind his own business and not to meddle in the Lok Sabha poll, saying India won't tolerate interference in it by the "biggest sponsors of

terrorism".

Mr. Kejriwal's response came just minutes after the Pakistan leader shared on his X handle a post from the CM, in which his family members and he were seen showing their fingers marked in ink after they voted in Delhi.

In his post on the micro-blogging service, the CM had said he voted against "dicta-

torship, inflation and Unemployment". Sharing the CM's post with the hashtags, "MorePower" and "IndiaElection2024", Mr. Hussain said, "May peace and harmony defeat forces of hate and extremism."

Mr. Kejriwal hit back on X, saying India's people are capable of handling their issues. "Your comment is not needed. The situation in Pa-

kistan is very bad right now. You take care of your country," he added.

Reacting to the snub, Mr. Hussain said though electioneering is an internal matter, the CM would appreciate that extremism is a "borderless phenomenon and dangerous for everyone".

Meanwhile, the BJP hit out at the CM, alleging that Pakistan is "supporting" his "pol-

itics of corruption".

'CM threat to India'

"It is not a coincidence that a statement in support of Kejriwal came from Pakistan on the day of the election in Delhi. He is in cahoots with the enemies of the country and has become a big threat to the security of the country," Delhi BJP chief Virendra Sachdeva said.

Liquor policy: UDF demands judicial probe

The Hindu Bureau
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The Opposition United Democratic Front has demanded a judicial inquiry into the allegations of corruption in the Left Democratic Front government's proposed move to liberalise Kerala's liquor policy.

UDF convener M.M. Hassan also demanded the resignation of Excise Minister M.B. Rajesh and Tourism Minister P.A. Mohamed Riyas.

T.N. begins steps to spot land for govt. medical colleges

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

Tamil Nadu's Health Department has initiated the process of identifying land to establish six new government medical colleges.

The Joint Directors of Health Services were instructed to coordinate with the respective District Collectors to identify 25 acres of land as well as collate details of existing manpower and equipment in the Government District Headquarters Hospitals in the respective districts.

Health Minister Ma. Subramanian said the State had submitted nearly 20 letters to the Union government including to the Union Health Ministry seeking nod to establish six new medical colleges over the last two years.

The Minister had sought approval to set up the colleges in Perambalur, Mayiladuthurai, Tenkasi, Ranipet, Tirupattur and Kancheepuram during a meeting with the Union Health Minister in New Delhi in 2022.

"We are waiting for the approval to take it forward to the Nation-

al Medical Commission [NMC]. We have already started to identify land for the purpose. The NMC had earlier brought in a regulation to cap MBBS seats based on population following which the Chief Minister wrote a letter to the Prime Minister. This condition was later deferred," he said.

Official sources in the department pointed out that the State did not receive any reply from the Union Health Ministry. The official sources hinted that before it was deferred, NMC's condition of 100 MBBS seats per 10 lakh population at the State-level impeded the process.

"We will be seeking NMC's approval for the six colleges when the window for applications opens for the year," an official said. He added that land was already identified in some of the districts, while the process is on for the others.

In a circular issued last week, the Directorate of Medical Education and Research said it was decided to establish new medical colleges in a phased manner through a Central scheme.




Devbhoomi Uttarakhand

A heartiest welcome and greetings to all the visiting devotees of Chardham Yatra

Appeal

- Pilgrims coming to Char Dham are requested to do mandatory registration online.
- Permission for Chardham Yatra will not be given without registration.
- After registration, visit to the Dham will be allowed only on the day mentioned in registration
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IN BRIEF



Shiv Sena (UBT)'s Abhyankar, Parab nominated for MLC polls

Sitting Member of Legislative Council (MLC) Anil Parab and former State Transport Minister J.M. Abhyankar have been nominated by the Shiv Sena (UBT) for Maharashtra's Legislative Council election scheduled for next month. Two-time MLC, Mr. Parab has been nominated from the Mumbai Graduates and Mr. Abhyankar from Mumbai Teachers constituencies. Mr. Parab was Ratnagiri's Guardian Minister during Maha Vikas Aghadi government. The election for four MLC seats is scheduled for June 10 and the counting is on June 13.

Haryana Independent MLA Daulatabad dies of heart attack

Independent Badshahpur MLA Rakesh Daulatabad died of cardiac arrest at Manipal Hospital in Palam Vihar, Gurugram, on Saturday. He was taken to the hospital following acute chest pain and collapsed and died within minutes. Daulatabad had defeated BJP's Manish Yadav in 2019 Assembly polls, but later offered support to the BJP's Manohar Lal government and the present Nayab Saini government. The effective strength of the Assembly is now down to 87, with the majority mark at 44. The number of MLAs supporting the present government has also reduced to 42. It assumes significance as the Opposition has written to the Governor seeking imposition of President's Rule claiming that the government is in a minority.

Peaceful polling reported in 8 Bihar, 4 seats in Jharkhand; brisk voting in Maoist pockets

Press Trust of India RANCHI

Lok Sabha polls in eight constituencies of Bihar and four in Jharkhand passed off peacefully on Saturday. In Bihar, there was a provisional voter turnout of 55.45%, nearly 3.02% lower than the 2019 polls, officials said.

Polling was also held peacefully in four Lok Sabha constituencies in Jharkhand with a voter turnout of 63%, officials said.

Constituency-wise, Paschim Champaran in Bihar recorded the highest voting percentage of 59.75, followed by Vaishali (58.5), Valmiki Nagar (58.25) Purvi Champaran (57.3), Sheohar (56.3), Siwan (52.5), Maharajganj (51.27) and Gopalganj (50.7), Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) H.R. Srinivasa said, adding that the fi-



Exercising franchise: Voters wait in queues at a polling station in Bihar's Vaishali on Saturday. ANI

gures are provisional.

He told reporters that no untoward incident took place during polling. "In the last Lok Sabha polls, these parliamentary seats had recorded a voter turnout of 58.47%," he added. "The turnout percentage will increase further as voting is still going on at certain booths. Voters who

entered the campuses of polling booths before 6 p.m. are being allowed to cast their votes," Mr. Srinivasa said.

"Officials engaged in polling duty received 217 minor complaints that were immediately resolved," the CEO said, adding the electorate boycotted polling at two booths

(no. 272 and 273) in Valmiki Nagar because of certain local issues.

In all, 107 people were arrested or detained for causing disruptions and attempting to hinder the voting process. Security forces seized ₹2.86 crore in cash and 3.53 lakh litres of liquor from various locations within these eight Lok Sabha during the day.

In a separate incident, a security man assigned to poll duty in Purvi Champaran Lok Sabha was killed in an accident, police said.

Jamshedpur tops

"A voter turnout of 63% was recorded in Jharkhand today. Jamshedpur registered the highest polling at 66.79%, followed by Giridih (66.14%), Ranchi (60.10%) and Dhanbad (59.20%)," Jharkhand CEO K. Ravi Kumar said.

He said in the 2019 Lok Sabha polls, Giridih had registered 67.12% voter turnout, Dhanbad 60.47%, Ranchi 64.49% and Jamshedpur 67.19%.

"The voting remained peaceful across four constituencies, excluding some cases of MCC violations. Three FIRs have been filed for violation of MCC," Mr. Kumar said.

The CEO said in Jamshedpur Lok Sabha seat, a polling staff member died after complaining of uneasiness.

Jharkhand police spokesperson and IG (Operations) Amol V. Homkar said no untoward incident was reported from any place and brisk voting took place even in the Maoist-hit pockets such as Parasnath Hills and Pirtand in Giridih and Jhumra and Luguburu in Bokaro.

EVM glitches, incidents of violence mar polling in Odisha's third phase

The penultimate phase of simultaneous elections in six parliamentary and 42 Assembly constituencies witnessed a voter turnout of 60%; candidates resent the widespread malfunctions

Satvasundar Barik BHUBANESWAR

The sixth and penultimate phase of elections in Odisha saw a voter turnout of 60% despite reports of widespread glitches in electronic voting machines and incidents of violence across the State.

Lok Sabha elections were held in six parliamentary constituencies - Cuttack, Sambalpur, Keonjhar, Puri, Bhubaneswar and Dhenkanal. The Assembly polls were held in 42 segments.

Queues seen

"Voters from all segments such as Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups, women, transgender and the youth participated in the celebration of democracy," said Nikunja Behari Dhal, Chief Electoral Officer of Odisha.

The voting percentage is likely to increase as voters were seen in long queues after the scheduled voting deadline of 5 p.m. Malfunctioning of



Helping hand: A polling official offering water to an elderly voter as she arrives to cast her vote in Odisha on Saturday. CEODISHA - X

EVMs was reported from 25 polling booths in various districts.

The office of the CEO said the issues were sorted out and polling resumed. However, candidates resented the malfunction and there was tension around those booths.

Candidate held

Early in the day, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik and Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan exercised their voting rights

in separate polling booths in Bhubaneswar.

Prashanta Jagadev, the BJP candidate for the Khordha Assembly segment, was taken into police custody after he was accused of smashing an EVM in Booth 114 at Kaunriapana under the Begunia Assembly segment. Similarly, Chhendipada's sitting Biju Janata Dal MLA Sushanta Behera was also purportedly seen in a video clip attacking his opponent near a booth. The CEO said

CCTV footage was being analysed and action would be taken.

The voting in this phase will decide the fate of Mr. Pradhan, BJP spokespersons Sambit Patra and Ararajita Sarangi, and six-time MP and BJP leader Bhartruhari Mahtab.

Pranab Prakash Das, Biju Janta Dal's organising secretary, former Mumbai Police Commissioner Arup Patnaik and corporate leader Santrupt Misra are also in the fray.

Rajasthan to review quota for Muslims under OBC category

The Hindu Bureau JAIPUR

The Bharatiya Janata Party government in Rajasthan is set to review the reservation in jobs and education granted to Muslims under the Other Backward Classes (OBC) category. A high-level committee is likely to be appointed for examining the classification of certain Muslim groups as OBCs in the State.

Social Justice and Empowerment Minister Avinash Gehlot said here on Saturday that the Congress had given reservation to 14 Muslim groups under the OBC category "as part of its appeasement politics" between 1997 and 2013 despite the Constitution disallowing quota on the basis of religion.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi had recently accused the Congress of making an attempt to reduce the quota for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and OBCs, and instead giving it to Muslims in defiance of the Constitution. The BJP has alleged that the Congress intends to extend reservation to Muslims all over the country.

In the overall 64% reservation in Rajasthan, the quota for the OBCs at present is 21%. There are as many as 82 castes and groups classified as OBCs, among whom

Congress intends to extend reservation to Muslims all over the country, alleges BJP

the Muslims getting the benefits include Meo, Kayamkhan, Bhishni, Manganiyar, Lakhera, Mirasi, Kathat, Bisayati, Sindhi, Gaddi, Julaha and Qasai.

Chief Minister Bhajan Lal Sharma also made remarks about reservation during his election campaign tour to Lucknow earlier this week.

He said the Constitution does not allow reservation on the basis of religion. "No one is going to get the quota based on religion in Rajasthan."

The Opposition Congress said the Muslim groups were classified as OBCs at different points of time under due process on the basis of recommendations made by the State OBC Commission after their socio-economic surveys. State Minorities Commission chairperson and Congress MLA Rafiq Khan said the reservation could only be termed as based on religion if the entire Muslim community was given the quota benefit.

AIMIM plans to hold protest against the proposed review.

Rahul misleading people on Agniveers, there is quota in police, Central forces: Shah

The Hindu Bureau SHIMLA

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Saturday alleged that Congress leader Rahul Gandhi is spreading false propaganda on the Agniveer recruitment scheme.

Addressing a rally at Amb in Himachal Pradesh, seeking votes for party candidate Anurag Thakur ahead of the June 1 Lok Sabha election, Mr. Shah also said, "From this holy land of Mata Chintpurni, I affirm that Pakistan-occupied Kashmir is ours, and we will take it."

At his first election meeting in Haryana on Wednesday, Mr. Shah had said that the Agniveer scheme will be scrapped and thrown in the dustbin



Union Home Minister Amit Shah at a rally in Dharamshala on Saturday. PTI

if INDIA bloc comes to power. He had also attacked Prime Minister Narendra Modi for "turning Hindustan ke jawan into labourers".

Talking to reporters in Dharamshala, Mr. Shah said 25% of the Agniveers would get permanent posting in the Army, while

the others would get reservations in the State governments and paramilitary forces. "There would be a rare Agniveer who would not be employed," Mr. Shah said.

He said Mr. Gandhi is spreading false propaganda.

"Rahul has started a tradition of making lies a poll issue, and Agniveer is the biggest example," he said.

The Agniveers have been given several relaxations, he said.

Moreover, private security agencies and companies would also give priority to Agniveers, who would be trained on government expenses, get a good salary, gratuity and other benefits, Mr. Shah reiterated.

(With PTI inputs)

Unemployment, communal harmony on their minds, Nuh voters find EVMs daunting

Ashok Kumar NUH

Kariman, 70, and her sister-in-law Asira, 60, residents of Bhadas in Haryana's Nuh, voted in the general and Assembly elections five years ago also but both were at a loss as they once again came face-to-face with the Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) when they turned up to exercise their franchise on Saturday.

And this, surprisingly, was not confined to a single polling station. Many men and women across the three Assembly segments of the Meo Muslim-dominated district falling in Gurgaon Lok Sabha constituency had a tough time casting their votes through the EVMs.

"More than half of the men and women, especially those above 50 years,

franchise. Her son Saad said he had explained the process to his mother and aunt before coming to the booth and showed them videos online, but still the two could not do it.

The polling staff at booth no. 80 in Ferozepur Namak too said that many women were not able to use the EVMs causing the voting process to slow down. Blaming it on rampant illiteracy in the region, the staff suggested the need for the authorities and the political parties to carry out a campaign to educate the voters.

Vikas Yadav, presiding officer at Punhana's Luhinga Kalan booth no. 140, said also faced a similar situation with the men and women not able to use the EVMs. "Even when they eventually managed to vote, it is difficult to say whether it was for the can-

didate of their choice. Sometimes, they don't press the button hard enough for their vote to get registered and walk away. So we asked them to come back and press the button again properly," said Mr. Yadav.

Harmony weighed heavily on the minds of the voters in Nuh, which has the highest number of around 25 lakh voters.

A resident of Nuh's Ferozepur Namak, Mohammad Usman, 70, said Junior Basic Teachers have not been hired on a regular basis for the past decade and more than 3,000 posts are lying vacant. "For me, unem-



Patient wait: Women voters queue up at a polling station in Nuh district on Saturday. SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

ployment remains the most important issue in these elections. The vacancies in most of the departments are being filled on contractual basis," said Mr. Usman, a retired Haryana Irrigation Department employee. For 60-year-old Ameen, another resident of the village, the alleged discord created between communities was the biggest issue. Rising prices and high rate of unemployment were other important issues for him, he added.

The three Assembly segments of Nuh, Ferozepur Jhirka and Punhana had witnessed widespread communal violence during Vishwa Hindu Parishad's Jalabhishek Yatra last July which left six persons dead and several injured.

Sumati, 40, who had come to vote along with her husband Israil, said

large chunks of their agricultural land was acquired by the government to construct Police Lines and a judicial complex, but the villagers suffered without any source of livelihood and lack of basic amenities. "We need to hire water tankers to meet our daily drinking water needs. There is no power at night. There is no development," complained Israil, 50, a daily wageer.

Wasim Akram, 28, a resident of Malab in Ferozepur Jhirka, said he had voted against the rampant corruption and lack of infrastructure in Nuh. Pointing at the Gurgaon-Alwar National Highway passing through his village, Mr. Akram, a matriculate, said the locals' long-pending demand to widen it was yet to be fulfilled. For Jagriti, who turned up to vote with a group of women, the wait

for a drinking water tap at home was endless. "They have laid the pipeline, but there is no drinking water," she said.

Young Sania, pursuing her master's in Pharmaceutical Sciences in Rohatak's Maharishi Dayanand University, said she had cast her vote for quality education and higher educational institutes in her district. Standing next to her, Sahiba and Asira, both BA (Final) students, waiting for their turn to vote at a polling station in Bhadas, said they went to college once in six months only to take the exams since there were no teachers.

In Punhana's Luhinga Kalan, Shahid, 28, a truck driver, said he had voted for "change". Most of the people in Nuh are truck drivers leading a nomadic life since there is no industry and no jobs, he added.

Kozhikode temple may have played host to Srirangam idols

A.S. Javanth
KOZHIKODE

A less-known temple in Nellikode, near Kozhikode, in Kerala could shed light on the presence of a Vaishnavite settlement on the outskirts of Zamorin's Calicut, and also link it with Mohammed bin Tughlaq's invasion of the Srirangam temple in Tamil Nadu in the 14th century AD.

Functionaries of the Calicut Heritage Forum, a Kozhikode-based group of history enthusiasts who work to preserve the city's cultural past, have come to this conclusion after going through temple records, historical data, and land records.

C.K. Ramachandran, convener of the forum and a former IAS officer, says that Azha Thrikkovil Goshala Vishnu Temple at Nellikode could have been built by Vaishnavite priests from the Srirangam temple who were running away from the Muslim invaders.

In the land records of Nellikode desam, the name of the temple is recorded as Azhvar Trikkovil, a possible reference to the original temple where the Namalvar idol was installed. In the Tamil Vaishnava tradition, Azhvar means Namalvar. The land records also show sizeable land grants which existed in the name of the temple. The name Azhvar could have



It is believed that the temple at Nellikode could have been built by Vaishnavite priests from the Srirangam temple. K. RAGESH

got corrupted to Azha later, he says.

"According to the temple records, the forces of the Delhi Sultanate led by Ulugh Khan, the son and successor of Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq who later assumed the name Mohammed bin Tughlaq, invaded Srirangam in 1323 AD," Mr. Ramachandran says.

"The priests of the temple, led by Pillai Lokacharya and a few others, escaped with the idol of Lord Ranganatha and that of the two consorts, Sridevi and Bhudevi," he says.

The team travelled stealthily to Tirupathur,

Thirukkoshiyur, and Jyotishkudi, and then went to Tirumalirunjolai.

"They wanted to avoid a repeat of the situation when the forces of the then Delhi Sultan Alauddin Khalji managed to take away the main idol, which is supposed to have some 'magical powers', after looting the temple in 1311 AD. The temple authorities had to take a great deal of effort to bring it back," Mr. Ramachandran says.

Koilo Olu, the record of events in the Srirangam temple at least from the 10th century AD, gives details of the flight of the Lord. But, it does not explain why the Sri Vaishnavas chose Kozhikode, re-

At first Punjab rally, Rahul promises to waive farmers' debt 'whenever required'

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Addressing his first poll rally in Punjab, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Saturday hit out at the BJP government at the Centre, alleging that in the last 10 years, Prime Minister Narendra Modi did nothing for the farmers of the country.

"But you were attacked and they brought three black laws," he said while referring to the now-repealed farm laws.

Campaigning in support of the party's Amritsar candidate Gurjeet Singh Aujla, Mr. Gandhi said when the farmers of the country protested against the farm laws, they were called "terrorists".

He promised to waive farmers' debt after the INDIA bloc comes to power.

"It will not be a one-time thing. We will form a group which will study the financial situation of farmers. Whenever farmers require debt waiver, the INDIA alliance government will waive it. Not just once, but many times - we are ready to do it," he said, also mentioning about plans to give a legal guarantee on minimum support price.



Congress leader Rahul Gandhi holding a sword during an election rally in Amritsar on Saturday. PTI

gians - one of the leitmotifs of his campaign - he alleged the BJP will change the Constitution if it wins the 2024 Lok Sabha election.

"On one side is Narendra Modi and BJP people who want to finish it (Constitution) and on the other hand is Congress which is protecting the Constitution," said Mr. Gandhi.

Invoking Guru Nanak Dev, Mr. Gandhi said the first Sikh Guru's message was that all people are equal, and the Constitution also says the same thing.

Holding a copy of the Constitution, he said, "... several great people put the same thinking in front of the country. Be it Buddha or Narayan Guruji, their thinking is here."

(With PTI inputs)

Revanth to invite Sonia for Telangana decennial celebrations

The Hindu Bureau
HYDERABAD

Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy will personally invite Congress leader Sonia Gandhi to be the chief guest of the decennial celebrations of Telangana State to be organised on June 2.

The State government is keen to showcase it as a big affair given Ms. Gandhi's key role in the formation of Telangana when she was the chairperson of the United Progressive Alliance government in 2014. She had assured the Telangana society at a public meeting in Karimnagar in 2004 that the aspirations of the Telangana people would be fulfilled.

Sources said so far there is no confirmation of Ms. Gandhi's participation and the CM personally wants to invite her on behalf of the Telangana society and felicitate her for fulfilling the 60-year aspiration.

Mr. Reddy told his Cabinet colleagues that without her support Telangana wouldn't have been a reality. A fact that was acknowledged even by BRS chief K. Chandrashekar Rao when he was the CM. "Without Sonia Gandhi's support the formation of Telangana wouldn't have been possible and the society has the grace to acknowledge her contribution," he had said.

Meanwhile, the Election Commission has permitted the government to conduct the Telangana Formation Day celebrations on June 2 despite the poll code being in vogue till June 4.

Timings

DELHI

SUNDAY, MAY 26

RISE 05:26 SET 19:12

RISE 22:13 SET 07:22

MONDAY, MAY 27

RISE 05:26 SET 19:13

RISE 23:05 SET 08:25

TUESDAY, MAY 28

RISE 05:25 SET 19:13

RISE 23:49 SET 09:31

Delhi Weather

	max	min
Delhi City	43	31
Safdarjang	43	31
Palam	44	31

Delhi Palam Today
42°C Heat wave to prevail. Morning will be slight warm. The weather will be very hot and uneasy during the day. Night also will be uneasy.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow
43°C Weather will be dry. Morning will be uneasy. The day will be very hot and uneasy. Night will be slight warm. Heat wave to continue.

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THE HINDU

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'Three terror plots in Karnataka over 12 years linked by common accused'

Investigators believe that identifying the online handler may hold the key to three cases in the State - 2012 LeT terror conspiracy, the 2020 Al Hind module and 2024 Bengaluru cafe blast; they suspect the handler to be based out of Pakistan

K.V. Aditya Bharadwaj
BENGALURU

The agencies investigating the Rameshwaram Cafe blast case are now keen on unmasking the identity of an "online handler", suspected to be based abroad, who allegedly indoctrinated and coached the "Thirahalli module" led by Abdul Matheen Taaha, who is allegedly behind the cafe blast.

Interestingly, the case



The front view of the Rameshwaram Cafe in Bengaluru where a blast occurred on March 1. FILE PHOTO

has now been linked to two earlier terror conspiracy cases dating back to the 2012 LeT terror conspiracy case, the 2020 Al Hind module case, with common accused in these cases. In all three cases, the mo-

dules had an unidentified "online handler" suspected to be based out of Pakistan.

However, senior officials said handlers could also be different people.

The NIA on Friday arrested Shoaib Ahmed Mirza, 35, an ex-convict in a 2012 LeT terror conspiracy case. NIA claimed Mirza, who came out of jail in 2017, introduced Taaha to "an online handler through an encrypted email" in 2018.

Taaha's name first emerged on the radar of security agencies in 2020 when they busted an IS-inspired Al Hind terror module in Bengaluru.

"Taaha was one of the main accused in the case, along with his associate Mussavir Hussain, who planted the bomb at the Rameshwaram Cafe. Our probe revealed that Taaha was the link between the module and a Pakistan-based online handler," said a senior police official.

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Applications are invited from Indian Nationals for Admission to Ph.D. Programme - Odd Semester (Jul-Dec 2024) of session 2024-25 under Full Time / Part-Time / Sponsored Scheme and Selection for JRF / SRF positions for the sponsored research projects at NIT Patna. Last date for online application is 28th June 2024, up to 11:00 AM. For detailed information, please visit Institute website www.nitp.ac.in Advt. No. NITP/2024-25/01 Registrar

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FRONTLINE SPORTSTAR THE HINDU

WEST CENTRAL RAILWAY

Letter No.: WCR/S-HQ/Sales Policy/e-auc, Program/2024-25
Date: 22.05.2024

Sub: E-auction Program for the month of July, August & September-2024

E-auction program for sale of huge scrap material during the month of July, August & September-2024 on "as is where is basis" to be held Kota, Bhopal & Jabalpur is as under:-

Auction for	CRWS/BPL	WRS/KTT	JBP/Division	BPL/Division	KTT/Division
Contact Person	Dy.CMM/CRWS/BPL (0755-2747414)	Dy.CMM/WRS/KTT (0744-2467082)	Sr.DMM/JBP (0761-2623491)	Sr.DMM/BPL (0755-4001594)	Sr.DMM/KTT (0744-2467006)
Date of auction	08-07-2024	09-07-2024	10-07-2024	11-07-2024	12-07-2024
July-2024	15-07-2024	16-07-2024	18-07-2024	19-07-2024	22-07-2024
23-07-2024	24-07-2024	25-07-2024	26-07-2024	29-07-2024	29-07-2024
Date of auction	07-08-2024	08-08-2024	09-08-2024	12-08-2024	13-08-2024
Aug-2024	14-08-2024	16-08-2024	20-08-2024	21-08-2024	22-08-2024
23-08-2024	26-08-2024	27-08-2024	28-08-2024	29-08-2024	29-08-2024
Date of auction	06-09-2024	09-09-2024	10-09-2024	11-09-2024	12-09-2024
Sept-2024	13-09-2024	17-09-2024	18-09-2024	19-09-2024	20-09-2024
23-09-2024	24-09-2024	25-09-2024	26-09-2024	27-09-2024	27-09-2024

Auction Items: Scrap Rail & Other P- Way Material, all scrap released from workshop Cast Iron, Condemned Rolling Stock, Non Ferrous and Non Metallic Scrap, Turning & Boring, Used Oil, Paints Drum, Condemned Machinery Plants, Condemned Vehicles, Condemned office equipment, MS/GI pipes, Foundry slag and other Miscellaneous scrap etc.

Dy. Chief Material Manager/Sales, WCR, Jabalpur

स्वच्छ भारत अभियान एक कदम स्वच्छता की ओर

NORTH EASTERN RAILWAY

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Sr. Divisional Material Manager, N.E. Railway, Varanasi for and on behalf of President of India, invites Tender through E-Procurement system "Open Tender" for the supply of the following item. Complete description of the item and other terms and conditions are available on website www.ireps.gov.in Sr. No.-01, E-Tender No.: 50245294, Due Date: 17-06-2024, Description: UTS Thermal Ticket Printer make-TVS/Epson or similar compatible with CRIS UTS/PRS Software on site comprehensive warranty 3 years, (Warranty Period-30 months after the date of delivery), Quantity: 30 Nos., Earnest Money: ₹ 14,660/-.

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Sr. Divisional Materials Manager CPRO/S-23 Varanasi

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EAST CENTRAL RAILWAY

E-TENDER NOTICE

The Senior Divisional Electrical Engineer (E) East Central Railway, Samastipur for and on behalf of the President of Union of India invites Tender from competent and experienced Contractors having valid Electrical Contractor's license, technical expertise, financial solvency through E-Tendering mode of IREPS web portal of Indian Railway for execution of the following works:-

Tender No. & Date: EL-G-SPJ-10-ET-24-25 dt. 24.05.2024

Sr. No.: 1. Name of Work with its Location: (i) Electrical work in connection with At Chakia-Provision of new S B along with facade, improvement of CA, PF surface & 6 bay PP shelter for development of station under ABSS. (ii) Electrical work in connection with At Motipur-Provision of new station building along with facade, development of circulating area & platform surface with 20 bay PP shelter for development of station under Amrith Bharat station scheme, 2. Approx Cost of Work: Rs. 1,06,56,943.07/-, 3. Earnest Money/Bid Security: Rs. 2,03,300.00 Cost of tender document-(Nil), 4. Validity of Offer (Days): 60 days, 5. Date & Time for Closing & Opening of Tender: Date of Closing of E-Tender at 12:00 hours on 14.06.2024, Date of Opening of E-Tender from 12:30 hours on 14.06.2024, 5. Website particulars, Notice board location where complete details of tender can be seen and address of the office: Website-www.ireps.gov.in, D.R.M (Elect.) Office/Samastipur, NOTE:- Any other modification/information related to the above said tender will be uploaded on the website instead of publish in newspaper.

Sr. Divisional Electrical Engineer (G) E.C. Railway, Samastipur PR/00347/SPJ/EGEN/T/24-25/52

OBITUARY & REMEMBRANCE

REMEMBRANCE

In Revered Memory of **DR. N. SESHAGIRI** (Founder Director General, NIC) 10.05.1940 - 26.05.2013

To Live in the Hearts of those you Leave Behind, is not to Die

DR. KASHINATH on behalf of all **NICEAN'S # 9810282797**

ADVERTISEMENT

BREAKING CONNECTIVITY BARRIERS

Unveiling **Adi Kailash & OM Parvat** by helicopter and starting **Manashkhand Express** Bharat Gaurav Special Tourist Train

In a move to provide all-round development & Uttarakhand's tourism sector, the Uttarakhand Tourism Development Board has initiated aerial yatra for **Adi Kailash and Om Parvat** in the region and also started a **Special Tourist Train** to visit various destinations in the state. This is for the first time that aerial yatra for **Adi Kailash**, popularly known as second abode for Lord Shiva, has been accessed through aerial route. In an exclusive interview to *The Hindu*, Uttarakhand Tourism Secretary and UTDB CEO Sachin Kurve disclosed the plans.

Q1: What is the motivation behind the historic aerial yatra to Adi Kailash?

A: The decision to initiate an aerial yatra for **Adi Kailash** stems from a confluence of factors. For the past five years, access to the revered **Kailash Mansarovar Yatra** has been restricted. This has caused a significant increase in the number of devotees seeking blessings at **Adi Kailash**, considered Lord Shiva's second abode. However, the traditionally arduous trek and lengthy road journey have limited accessibility for many pilgrims.

The aerial yatra addresses these concerns by offering a convenient and accessible alternative. This innovative initiative allows us to open the pilgrimage site for the entire winter season, stretching from November to March. The successful pilot run conducted in April 2024, with participants experiencing clear darshans of both **Adi Kailash and Om Parvat**, serves as a testament to the program's effectiveness. With daily departures until 9th May 2024, and registrations open for the upcoming winter seasons, the aerial yatra promises to be a game-changer for pilgrimage tourism in the region.

Q2: What is the blueprint for this aerial yatra?

A: The Uttarakhand Tourism Development Board (UTDB) spearheaded the development of this aerial pilgrimage route through a strategic partnership. We collaborated with **Trip to Temples**, a Noida-based company, and a helicopter company to bring this vision to life. UTDB played a pivotal role in laying the groundwork for the **Adi Kailash and Om Parvat Yatra** by Helicopter. This included securing the necessary approvals and permits to ensure a smooth and safe operation.

Trip to Temples, on the other hand, brings extensive experience in marketing and operation, acting as the execution partner for the yatra.

The yatra itself will operate from November to March, coinciding with the snow-covered Himalayan landscape. The itinerary spans four nights and five days, with participants embarking on the journey from **Pithoragarh** and returning to the same destination. State-of-the-art **H-125** helicopters will be utilized for aerial travel, while all-terrain vehicles (ATVs) will further enhance accessibility within the region. The itinerary boasts six exhilarating helicopter rides, allowing participants to witness the breathtaking beauty of the snow-capped peaks from a unique perspective.

Beyond transportation, we have prioritized local sustainability. Accommodation will be provided by local homestays in villages like **Gunji, Nabhi and Nepalchu**. This not only fosters cultural immersion for pilgrims but also generates much-needed winter employment opportunities for local residents.

By creating year-round employment opportunities, this initiative has the potential to significantly improve the economic well-being of the local population. Furthermore, it seeks to curb migration from the region by providing sustainable livelihoods for residents.

Q3: What is the state's vision behind the Manashkhand Express Train?

A: **Manashkhand Express** aims to promote Uttarakhand's Kumaon region's spiritual and cultural essence. The ancient scriptures portray this region as **Manashkhand**, encompassing **Nainital, Almora, Bageshwar, Champawat and Pithoragarh**. The project aims to unveil the area's potential as a spiritual and cultural haven.

The train aims to carry tourists from different parts of the country showcasing a mix of famous and lesser known gems. The tour packages are being developed by **IRCTC** in consultation with **UTDB**.

Q4: Will the train's route be limited to Kumaon region of the state?

A: We wish to expand the train's routes to other parts of the state also. An itinerary is being planned from **Chennai**, which will be tentatively termed **SRI KARTIK SWAMI EXPRESS**. This trip will start from **Chennai** and reach the newly built **Railway Station** at **Rishikesh**, from where the tourists will visit various centers of spiritual interest including the **Sri Kartik Swami Temple**, which according to the **Skand Purana** is situated on the **Kraunch Parvat** and is considered to be the place where **Lord Kartik Swami**, popularly known as **Lord Muragan** in South India, meditated.

Classifieds

LIFE MADE SIMPLE

Matrimonial

BRINGING PEOPLE TOGETHER

THE HINDU

BRIDEGROOMS WANTED

INDEX OF MATRIMONIAL

BRIDEGROOMS WANTED

BRIDES WANTED

BRIDES & GROOMS WANTED

Classification Common for Brides, Bridgrooms, Brides & Grooms

ASSAMESE

AWADHI

BENGALI

BHOJPURI

BIHARI

CHHATTISGARHI

ENGLISH

GUJARATI

HARYANI

HINDI

KANNADA

KASHMIRI

KONKANI

MALAYALAM

MANIPURI

MARATHI

MARWARI

NEPALI

ORIYA

PARSI

PUNJABI

SAURASHTRA

SINDHI

TAMIL

TELGUGU

TULU

URDU

ADVOCATE

BUSINESS

DEFENCE

DOCTOR

ENGINEER

FINANCE/BANKING

GOVERNMENT/QUASI-GOVERNMENT

IAS/ALLIED SERVICES

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

MBA/CA/ICWA

NRI

COSMOPOLITAN

DIVORCEE

PHYSICALLY CHALLENGED

MARRIAGE BUREAUS

WEDDING ARRANGEMENTS

BUSINESS

Beautiful, Engineer Girl, Masters from London, India Settled

1988 Born, 5'4" Slim, fair Girl from affluent High Profile Konkonnastha Brahmin Family, Short term issueless Divorcee, Seeks Compatible well educated Groom from well-settled business Family Caste no Bar

SUDHIR BHATT
9920099889 / 9619101019 / 20
sudhirmatrim@gmail.com

COSMOPOLITAN

MALAYALI NAIR girl, 29, 161cms, lawyer working at Delhi. Father retired Army Col and mother Educator at Bangalore. Looking for suitable match preferably from Delhi. Family from central Kerala contact 9880490458

NAIR GIRL Aug 1974 US citizen unit manager Chicago caste/lang no bar seeks groom from US residents only. contact 9895824803

DOCTOR

CHRISTIAN, CAST No Bar 28y, MBBS, MD, Father, Mother Well Educated. Seeks Doctor or Suitable Groom. Any Dist.: 7824023030

HINDU REDDY 33 Y, 165cms Doctor MBBS, MS. Suitable Near Married Groom From Chennai CNB Call: 8925640111

VELLALAR (CNB) Fair 30 MBBS seeks Doctor Groom. 8056325579

DKV 27 M.B.B.S Aswini Mesham Father Mother Doctor. Seeks Doctor Groom Only. Ph: 9443151045.

VANIYA CHETTIAR, Poorattali 28/165, Fair, MBBS, Govt. Doctor, Pondicherry, seeks Doctor Groom. All Chettiar ok. Contact: 9442066913

HINDU NADAR 28/170cm, MBBS, MD, Father, Mother Well Educated. Seeks Doctor or Suitable Groom. Any Dist.: 7824023030

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TAMIL

RICH MUDALIYAR 28yrs MBBS MD Elite business family in Chennai. Seeks Suitable Groom 9710093999/ 9710091999

MUKULATHOR Kallar 30yrs/161cm Psychiatrist, Natchathiram - Pooram, Rasi-Simman, seeks suitable Groom. Caste no bar. CT:9994916611.

MAY 94/167 fair SC/PL BE, TCS Chennai, Parents Hindu/CSI. Seeks Groom Dr/Er, Govt Employee. 8056143638

ADDRAVIDAR, AGE 27 BE, Govt 65, 000/- Fair, Well settled. Wants Suitable Groom. 08122289871 / 9444139323.

NAIDU, 33/170, Fair girl, MBBS prep PG, Seeks Doctor/Business groom Rich Family. BC/MBC. Ph: 9944253292.

HINDU NADAR sisters, August 1994 / 167 cms / 63 kg, ME, Thiruvathirai, Mithunam. December 1998 / 166 cms / 60 kg, BE, MNC job Chennai, Poosam, Kadagam. Seeks suitable grooms. CT: 9626515511

SBI MANAGER, BE MBA, SC AD Hindu, 35yrs, Mesham-Bharani, seeking suitable & qualified Groom. Ph: 8056104103

BRIDEGROOM WANTED For 27 Tamil/MS (CSE), USA Software Engr, Seattle, WA. Similar profile wanted. Parents Inter Hindu & RCC. Email: goodrich3210@gmail.com

F-PILLAI, M-SENGUNTHAR, 28/153cms, Doctor MBBS Preparing for PG, Revathi, Meenams Seeks Suitable Groom BC/OC/FC/MBC only. Ct: 9566230325

DEVENDRAKULA VELLALAR Thiruvathirai (4) 26/162 BE CIVIL Jr. Engr. Wrgk Southern Railways, Seeks Suitable Boy. 9443686234.

RICH MUDALIYAR, 23yrs, MBA, Own construction, Ware Houses & Landlord. Elite business in Chennai. Seeks Suitable Groom 9710093999/ 9710091999

MUDALIYAR POOSAM 25/168 USA Citizen, B.Sc. Working IT, seeks Qld. Groom. Whatsapp: +91 7826029997

VANNIYA KULA KSHATHRIYA Bride, 22 Years Old, M.Com, Seeks Groom from same caste upper middle class. mail id: mangalam.leelavathy@gmail.com

PILLAI / SOZHIYA Vellalar 29/162cm, B.Tech (NIT) (UPSC ASPIRANT) (GROUP-II Services TN on the anvil) Working as IT Presales, Seeks suitable Bride/groom. Ct: 9443543456 / 9442712849

48/163 MUDALIYAR/PILLAI M.Com MBA Seeks professionally Qualified Unmarried Below 50 Clean habits CNB 9444837355/9500113136/ anubamatri@gmail.com

HINDU SC AD, Poorattali/Meenam, Age 35, M.C.A Working in a MNC company, seeking Educated Groom from a good family background, below 38 Years from any Tamil Seeks Community. Contact: 9840107770, 9952930893.

TIRUNELVELI HINDU NADAR Girl 26yrs, 5ft 6 inch M.Arch, working in US seeks a well-qualified Groom Ct: 9840100836

FAIR MUDALIYAR 28/170cm BE MS seeks Well Settled Boy Decent Family Ct: 7904735344

GROOM WANTED: Viswakarma 34yrs, 5'3 wheatish Coimbatore based, B.Tech, PVT 30K Monthly Maharam, Avittam, No Dosham. 98943-34457.

HINDU, VANNIYAR, 24, B.Pharm, Own Medical Shop, Seeks Doctor Groom Priority. Ph: 9444399715

VANIYAKULA KSHATHRIYA / Kettai, Viruchangam / 28 / 5'3 / MS (Ph.D) / Fair / Working in private sector at New York/ 120000 USD. Educated Bride's Parents seek well qualified US settled groom with a good family background. Hindu same caste. Mudaliyar/Pillai/Yadava, Mukkulathoor/Chettiar and other equivalent Preferably. Whatsapp: 9940372423/ +919444720315

VANNIYAKULA KSHATHRIYAR bride 36 years Tall, Fair, ME PhD Assistant Professor, only Daughter with strong family background seeks suitable Decent, Employed or Business Groom. Contact: 99443-14575.

SEEKING EMPLOYED bride/groom below 35y for Hindu SC fair, educated, homely & employed divorced 32y bride from Elite family. CNB 9483542477

36 PILLAI B.Com MBA Anusham Divorcee issueless seeks suitable groom 9094020665

TIRUNELVELI SAIVA Pillai, 29 yrs, 159cm, Thiruvathirai, BE(SN)/MBA (IIMB) seeks groom from good family same caste, Pure Veg Ph:9447699888

MUDALIYAR BE MBA Network Engineer GOTTN 24 yrs 158 cm Swathi Thulam only daughter of Joint Director GOTTN own house Chennai seeks Engineer/ Doctor groom from well-settled family 9444113605 drebhaskaran19@gmail.com

DOCTOR MD (Pathology), DCH, 39yrs, Hindu BC, Divorcee without child, placed in private medical college seeks well settled, compatible & affectionate Groom. CNB. Ct: 9176289180

HINDU NADAR 32, 160, B.Tech, Working in IT Star Revathy seeks IT Groom below 35.Ct: 9944410712/ 9514952555

Hindu Surya Vellalar-Ezhava 24/167 cms Thiruvonam fair CBSE/Nilu Lawyer (Hons) CT:7418861398. No Brokers.

MUDALIYAR 26/170 Fair, Beautiful, MBBS, MS-Doing, 600000.PA, Well Settled Family, CNB. 9043991629, 9043997029

CHETTIAR: 25V, FAIR, B.Com, CA, Asst. Manager, MNC, Chennai, Well settled Family- Seeks Groom Eng / Doctor - 9962530015

TAMIL

MUDALIYAR: 22V, FAIR & Beautiful, Master degree, Father Business, Elite Family, Seeks Groom - Business / Abroad - 8925019776

MUDALIYAR 26, BE, MBA, 162cm, Good looking wellsettled family seeks alliance CNB, Ct: 8778514455/ 7200866346

HINDU KARUNEEGAR (Vellore Based), Pure Vegetarian, BE/MBA Good Looking High Society Girl seeks Same Caste with High Profile Groom. 9600181656

HINDU SC MBBS Doctor Age 28 Uthirram-I/Simman seeks suitable well employed Groom within Chennai 9500182723

KONGU VELLALA Gounder, 25yrs, MBA, Elite Business family. Seeks Suitable Groom Ct: 9710093999/ 9710091999

HINDU NADAR 26/163cm B.Tech, MBA (IIM), Rs.150000 per month, Seeks Suitable Groom. KA Ramannadar 9380791999

SC MANJU, 26-11-1985, SBI, BM, Hindu Nadar, Bharani, preferred kanyakumari district, age 39-40, employed, Ct: 8787780654/ 7022786011/ 9043828601

GROOM SOUGHT for Girl 44 Highly Educated Well placed Srim Velamangalam well employed IT Professional Upper Middle Class Unconsummated Divorcee from Affluent Family. Contact Phone / WhatsApp 9789056615

WANTED TALL Well Educated Iyengar/lyer Groom Chennai Based for a Tall Slim Good Looking Girl 31years, Ht 5.8" from affluent family. Contact : 9940414685, 9940043621

RICH MUDALIYAR, 23yrs, MBA, Own construction, Ware Houses & Landlord. Elite business in Chennai. Seeks Suitable Groom 9710093999/ 9710091999

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TELGUGU

BALIA NAIDU, Thiruvathirai/ Midhnam/ 27/165MS / Canda P/F Well Settled seeks Well qualified & Well settled groom from Canada. Caste No bar, Ct- 9840224474

GROOM WANTED Rich Kamma Naidu 27yrs, B.Tech Own Construction, Resorts & Finance. Elite business family in Chennai Ct: 9710093999/ 9710091999

RICH KAMMA Naidu, 29yrs, B.Tech, Well Educated family, Seeks Suitable Groom. Ct: 9710093999/ 9710091999

AHLE HADEES parents seek religious, qualified groom for daughter, 23, 158 cm, fair, BE(CSE) Mob: 9944642150

SMU BRIDE 1990 Fair Slim M.Tech working in MNC. Seeks Groom Professional Educated Family Ct: 9176006218

URDU Muslim, Good looking, Fair, 22/166, M.com seeks Educated & settled Groom. Contact: 9442600462, showhath@gmail.com

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URDU Muslim, Good looking, Fair

From Page One

EC releases number of votes cast in five phases

The EC statement added: "The commission feels duly strengthened by the Supreme Court's observations and verdict on the process of release of turnout data by the Election Commission of India. This brings upon the commission, a higher responsibility to serve the cause of electoral democracy with undeterred resolution," the statement further said.

According to the data released by the EC on Saturday, the highest number of votes were cast in Dhubri constituency in Assam (24.5 lakh), while the least votes were polled in Lakshadweep (48,630).

The first phase polled 11,00,52,103 votes (of a total 16,63,86,344 registered voters), the second phase 10,58,30,572 votes (out of 15,86,45,484), the third 11,32,34,676 (out of 17,24,04,907), fourth 12,24,69,319 (out of 17,70,75,629), and fifth phase recorded 5,57,10,618 votes (out of 8,95,67,973) voters.

61.2% voting in sixth phase of LS polls

In J&K, Peoples Democratic Party chief Mehbooba Mufti, who is the contestant from the seat, staged a sit-in outside the Bijbehara police station on the Srinagar-Jammu National Highway claiming that her party workers and polling agents were detained. The police, however, said those detained are overground workers and the action was taken to ensure smooth conduct of elections.

In West Bengal, clashes broke out between workers of the Trinamool Congress and the BJP in Ghatal, Medinipur and Tamluk Lok Sabha constituencies.

Incidents of violence were reported from parts of the Kanthi constituency, while in the Medinipur constituency, BJP candidate Agnimitra Paul faced "go back" slogans from Trinamool workers. A scuffle broke out between the BJP and the Trinamool workers, resulting in Central forces rushing to the spot to disperse the mob.

In Tamluk, a group of people shouted slogans against BJP candidate and former Calcutta High Court judge Abhijit Gangopadhyay.

"The Election Commission of India has received 954 complaints until 11 a.m. from various political parties, alleging EVM malfunctions and agents being stopped from entering booths," an official of the State poll panel said.

A total of 58 Lok Sabha seats in eight States and Union Territories voted on Saturday to decide the fates of 889 candidates.

'Centre has to settle dues of PM's Mysuru visit, not Karnataka'

The Hindu Bureau
MYSURU

Karnataka Forest Minister Eshwar B. Khandre said the State has no role in settling the outstanding bills of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's stay at a hotel in Mysuru last year as he was there to take part in the Project Tiger golden jubilee event.



Eshwar Khandre

Responding to the report that appeared in *The Hindu* on May 25, 2024, on the non-settlement of bills, Mr. Khandre said the Prime Minister was in Mysuru in connection with the golden jubilee event of Project Tiger but the State government had no role in it. "As the Assembly elections had already been declared in

Karnataka and the model code of conduct was in force, there was no involvement of the State government," said Mr. Khandre. Pointing out that the State government had no role in the event, he said the State emblem was not used during the programme. It is the Centre's obligation to clear the pending amount, he said.

Fire at children's hospital in Delhi, 11 newborns rescued

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

As many as 11 newborns were rescued after a fire broke out at a children's hospital in Vivek Vihar in East Delhi on Saturday night, officials said.

The Delhi Fire Services said nine fire tenders were rushed to the site.

The officials said 11 newborns were rescued from the building.

According to DFS chief

Atul Garg, the rescue operation is still on.

The cause of the fire is yet to be ascertained.

"A fire call from Baby Care Centre, near ITI, Block B of Vivek Vihar area, was received," Mr. Garg said.

The incident comes on a day when at least 27 persons were killed in Rajkot, Gujarat, after a massive fire swept through a crowded game zone and the building collapsed.

Parliament adds facilities for new MPs

With members of the 18th Lok Sabha to assume charge in June, new pathways, reception lounges and waiting areas are being constructed at the ₹970-crore Parliament complex, which is also being refurbished to accommodate the requirements of the CISF that took over the security

Vijaita Singh
NEW DELHI

The temperature is hovering above 41 degrees Celsius, but construction is on in full swing in Parliament.

Racing against time, several new structures, including roads and reception lounges, are being built to welcome the members of the 18th Lok Sabha in June.

As dust blew in the air, labourers crushed with hammers the red sandstone-topped pathways laid only last year. As part of a green initiative, they will be replaced with cobbled pathways made of black stones brought from Karnataka.

Several pockets had been dug up by earthmovers, and labourers milled around the compound when *The Hindu* visited the complex on May 22.

"These are special stones, they are being evenly spread leaving a gap of a few centimetres to pre-



In progress: Renovation of the new Parliament complex goes on in full swing, ahead of the arrival of the new Lok Sabha members. VIJAITA SINGH

vent waterlogging. When it poured, the concrete structure led to accumulation of water. The new pathway will recharge groundwater and help in rainwater harvesting as the water will percolate to the ground," said a Parliament

official on condition of anonymity.

Another official added that two new waiting areas are being constructed after bringing down existing structures in the compound. "The waiting areas or offices on either end will

be of help to the new members of Parliament. It will be a holding area before they proceed to the House as many would be first-time members," said the second official.

The new Parliament building was inaugurated

by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in May last year. The four-storey building, built at an estimated cost of ₹970 crore, held its first special sitting on September 19, 2023. It faces the British-era Parliament building, or the Samvidhan Sadan, which will now be conserved as a heritage asset.

Officials said due to the digging of roads at several places, several electrical lines had been uprooted. "The air conditioner here has not been working for the past two months due to the ongoing construction. As there are no fans and this room is supposed to be centrally air-conditioned, there is little we can do," said a security person posted at the main reception office in the Parliament complex on Red Cross Road.

The office is also being refurbished to accommodate the requirements of the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) that recently took over the securi-

ty of the Parliament complex.

After the security breach on December 13, 2023, when two unarmed men jumped into the Well of the Lok Sabha with colour sprays, a slew of security measures was taken, and a committee, set up to study the lapses, suggested handing over of the Parliament security to the CISF. Facial recognition devices were installed at various points then.

A day before the breach, the Central Public Works Department (CPWD) had floated a tender for additional security infrastructure for the Parliament complex, including security gadgets and bulletproof enclosures, at a cost of ₹35 crore.

The tender document for the project said that the work would include redevelopment of the reception lounge, security blocks, electrical services and external development, including sewerage and drainage.

UAPA tribunal upholds Centre's ban on seven Meitei extremist organisations

Vijaita Singh
NEW DELHI

A tribunal under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) has upheld the Centre's decision to declare seven valley-based Meitei extremist organisations as "unlawful associations" for the next five years.

The order said that in the past five years, the seven outfits were responsible for 335 of 689 violent incidents reported in Manipur, in which nine security personnel and 21 civilians were killed.

The outfits that espouse the secession of Manipur from India operate camps from Myanmar and Bangladesh to provide arms training to cadres and a safe sanctuary for the procurement of arms and ammunition. The order mentions that the insurgent groups are closely linked with the Nationalist Socialist Council of Nagaland (Isak-Mui-vah), which has been engaged in peace talks with



The Ministry said the groups are involved in violent and illegal activities.

the Centre since 1997.

The Union Home Ministry informed the tribunal that the outfits through their front organisations and civil society groups are also engaged in "targeting non-local population, protesting against peace talks of authorities with other ethnic groups of the State, boycotting national days like Republic Day, and opposing merger of Manipur with Indian Union".

The Ministry submitted that in Manipur, militant activities are carried out by

Meitei extremist organisations, also called Valley-based insurgent groups, which include the Peoples' Liberation Army and its political wing the Revolutionary Peoples' Front; the United National Liberation Front; the Peoples' Revolutionary Party of Kangleipak and its armed wing the Red Army; the Kangleipak Communist Party and its armed wing also called the Red Army; the Kanglei Yaol Kanba Lup; the Coordination Committee; and the Alliance for Socialist Unity Kangleipak.

The Ministry said the groups are involved in violent and illegal activities.

"The Union of India has brought to the notice of this Tribunal that the cadre strength of these extremist organisations is approximately 1,250. These extremist organisations have highly sophisticated weapons, arms and ammunition, explosive devices with weaponry numbering 1,559 approximately," the order said.

Man uses voice-changing app to pose as woman professor; rapes seven girls

Mehul Malpani
BHOPAL

Seven girls were raped in Sidhi district of Madhya Pradesh allegedly by a man who used a voice-changing app to pose as a woman professor and lured them with scholarship offers to a secluded farm.

The Madhya Pradesh Police have arrested Brajesh Prajapati, 30, a labourer, and three of his accomplices in the case. A nine-member special investigation team (SIT), constituted on an order by Chief Minister Mohan Yadav, has started investigation.

The police said four FIRs had been registered involving five victims, of whom four were raped. One of the raped girls is a minor, Superintendent of Police, Sidhi, Ravindra Verma, told *The Hindu*.

FIRs have been lodged under Sections 376 (2) (N), 354, 506, 342, 366, and 294 of the Indian Penal Code at the Majhauhi police

Police have sought support from cyber experts to include the app maker in the investigation

station. Section 3/4 of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012 has been invoked in the case relating to the minor girl, he said.

The accused has admitted to the rape of three other girls, the Majhauhi police station in-charge Deepak Baghel, who is part of the SIT, said.

Deputy Superintendent of Police Roshni Singh Thakur, who is heading the SIT, said while Mr. Brajesh was the mastermind, Sandeep Prajapati, 23, Rahul Prajapati, 23, and Luvkush Prajapati, 24, helped him. They also snatched phones and other valuables from the girls and sold them.

Mr. Verma said Mr. Brajesh targeted the first girl after he got her contact

from Mr. Luvkush. Mr. Brajesh snatched the victim's phone and took the contact details of more girls.

He used an app to change his voice and introduced himself as "Ranjana madam". The SP said Mr. Brajesh would target girls who had turned 18 and tell them that they had been selected for a government scholarship. "He would tell that they need to come and sign documents to get the money. He would then pick up the girls, introducing himself as the professor's son," Mr. Verma said.

He said the police had written to the State Cyber Cell and had sought support from cyberexperts to include the app maker in the investigation.

Terming the news "extremely disturbing", former Chief Minister Kamal Nath wrote on X, "Can't girls from the tribal community in Madhya Pradesh even study in college without fear? What is the meaning of the slogan - *Beti Padhao, Beti Bachao?*"

Remal to turn severe cyclone, make landfall in West Bengal, Bangladesh

The Hindu Bureau
KOLKATA

The deep depression over the east-central Bay of Bengal on Saturday evening intensified into a cyclonic storm, "Remal", and is likely to cross Bangladesh and the adjoining West Bengal coasts by Sunday midnight. The weather pattern is likely to continue to move nearly northwards and intensify into a severe cyclonic storm by Sunday morning. It is expected to cross the coasts between Sagar Island (West Bengal) and Khepupara (Bangladesh) around Sunday midnight with a wind speed of 110-120 kmph gusting to 135 kmph.

A special bulletin by the India Meteorological Department (IMD) on Saturday said: "The deep depression over east-central Bay of Bengal moved nearly northward with a speed of 12 kmph during the past



Storm surge: A street flooded during rain under the influence of the cyclone in Vijayawada on Saturday. G.N. RAO

6 hours, intensified into cyclonic Storm "Remal" and lay centered at 17:30 hrs IST of today, the 25th May 2024 over the north & adjoining east central Bay of Bengal near latitude 18.8°N and longitude 89.5°E."

The IMD has issued an orange alert in Kolkata, Howrah, Nadia, Jhargram, North 24 Parganas, South 24 Parganas and Purba Medinipur districts. It has predicted "heavy (7-11 cm) to very heavy rain (12-20 cm) at a few places over

North and South 24 Parganas, East Midnapore, Kolkata, Howrah and Hooghly districts" of southern Bengal. The IMD has predicted extremely heavy rain (over 20 cm) to be very likely at one or two places over North 24 Parganas, South 24 Parganas and East Midnapore districts.

The weather office has cautioned about gale wind speed reaching 60-70 kmph gusting to 80 kmph from Saturday evening. "It would increase further and

extend to adjoining areas of north Bay of Bengal becoming gale wind speed reaching 70-80 kmph gusting to 90 kmph from evening of today, the 25th May and 100-110 kmph gusting to 120 kmph over North Bay of Bengal from morning and 110-120 kmph gusting to 135 kmph from evening of 26th May," the special bulletin said. A red alert has been issued for fishermen advising them not to venture into the sea along and off West Bengal coast and deep sea area of the Bay of Bengal till May 27.

The National Disaster Response Force has stationed 12 teams across coastal areas of West Bengal.

The authorities of Kolkata airport have decided to suspend flight operations for 21 hours from Sunday noon in view of the possible impact of cyclone Remal, an official said.

Doctor held after woman hit by his car inside hospital dies

Ateeq Shaikh
MUMBAI

A senior doctor of Lokmanya Tilak Municipal General Hospital in Sion, Mumbai, was arrested on Saturday for allegedly running over a 60-year-old woman inside the hospital premises late on Friday night. She later succumbed to her injuries.

Prashant Kadam, Depu-

ty Commissioner of Police (Zone IV) confirmed on Saturday that Dr. Rajesh Dere, Professor & Head, Department of Forensic Medicine & Toxicology at the hospital, was arrested after CCTV footage was examined. The victim was identified as Rubeida Shaikh, a Mumbai resident, who had come to get her dressing changed after a recent surgery.

NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF FASHION TECHNOLOGY
(Ministry of Textiles, Govt. of India)
Opp Hitech City, Madhapur, Hyderabad - 500 081.
Ph.No. 04023110841

NIFT/HYD/ADMIN/IT Scrap/2024 Dated: 24.05.2024

TENDER NOTICE FOR SALE/DISPOSAL OF SCRAP (IT ITEMS)

Sealed tenders are invited for Sale/Disposal of SCRAP (IT ITEMS) "AS IS WHERE IS BASIS" of NIFT Centre, Hyderabad. The interested parties/bidders/agencies may visit our NIFT website www.nift.ac.in/hyderabad for detailed information. For further details, you may contact Administration Department on any working days during office hours.

NIFT reserves the right to reject any or all tenders without assigning any reasons.

Director

ELECTIONS 2024



DELHI



Moment of pride: A woman after casting her first vote during the Lok Sabha election on Saturday. SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

JAMMU & KASHMIR



Making it count: Voters queue up at a polling station in Anantnag district of the Union Territory. NISSAR AHMAD

UTTAR PRADESH



Many faces, one intent: People standing in a queue to cast their votes in Sultanpur. SANDEEP SAXENA

ODISHA



Braving the odds: A voter with disabilities arrives at a polling station to vote in Bhubaneswar. BISWARANJAN ROUT



PDP president Mehbooba Mufti after casting her vote in Anantnag district on Saturday. NISSAR AHMAD

54.3% turnout in Anantnag; PDP alleges rigging

Peerzada Ashiq
SRINAGAR

The Anantnag-Rajouri constituency in Jammu and Kashmir on Saturday recorded a 54.3% voter turnout, shows the latest figure, as against 14.3% in 2019. The day, however, was marred by protests and allegations of "tactical rigging" by Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) president and candidate Mehbooba Mufti.

The polling recorded in Anantnag is the highest in 35 years. The overall voter turnout across all five Lok Sabha constituencies in J&K was 58%, higher than the 49.58% recorded in 2014 and 47.99% in 1996.

"It is the highest turnout for these five seats in the last 40 years. The previous high was 49.58% recorded in 2014," Chief Electoral Officer P.K. Pole said, as the sixth phase of the Lok Sabha election saw the completion of the poll process in all the five Lok Sabha constituencies in the Union Territory.

However, Ms. Mufti raised questions about the fairness of the election process, and alleged that hundreds of her polling agents and workers were detained "in a bid to resort to tactical rigging". "Cordon-and-search operation was launched at places to terrorise voters. The role played by Lieutenant-Governor (Manoj Sinha) and Deputy Inspector-General (DIG) of Police Altaf Khan has been very negative. Unfortunately, this has stained the process of free and fair elections started by former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee. It was an attempt to repeat 1987," Ms. Mufti said.

Anantnag district, the home district of Ms. Mufti, recorded the lowest voter turnout of 33.47% in the Anantnag Assembly segment and 36.92% in the Anantnag West Assembly segment.

Gulshan Begam, mother of PDP leader Adil Dukroo, 28, a resident of Bijbehara's Zirpora area, told *The Hindu* that her son was detained on Friday evening. "My son had gone to attend a meeting of the party leaders. He was not facing any police case and has a clean past. My son and another leader Najmu Saqib are the eyes and ears of Ms. Mufti in her hometown. They were detained to ensure a low voter turnout," Ms. Begum said. Both the detained PDP leaders, Mr. Dukroo and Mr. Saqib, were released after Ms. Mufti held a sit-in in front of the Bijbehara police station.

According to the police, "a very few with a tainted past were detained and restricted". "Mostly they are overground workers and were taken into preventive custody for ensuring a safe and peaceful election," a police official said.

Satvika Mahajan
NEW DELHI

An approximate voter turnout trend of 57.67% was recorded in Delhi, the Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) said here on Saturday. This was not the final voting percentage as approximate trends from some polling booths would take time, and the figures did not include postal ballot data, he added.

Voting took place in several parts of the city, which is reeling under a severe heatwave that made it difficult for voters to come out at midday.

Arrangements were made for refreshments and air coolers for the voters' comfort. As voters trickled in, party workers and resident welfare associations encouraged citizens to participate by going door-to-door and messaging on WhatsApp groups. Many showed up with water, soft drinks and other refreshments for the staff manning the polling stations.

Efforts were made to



Marking the future: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi with sister Priyanka Gandhi show their inked fingers after casting their votes in New Delhi on Saturday. SHASHI SHEKHAR KASHYAP

spread awareness amongst 1.52 crore voters in the seven constituencies.

Steady decline

The approximate voter turnout trend was at its lowest in the New Delhi constituency at 53.86%, while it was the highest in North-

east Delhi at 62.87%.

In South Delhi, the voter turnout was 55.15%. In Chandni Chowk, it was 58.06%, in East Delhi 57.83%, in Northwest Delhi 57.06%, and in West Delhi it was 58.28%.

In the 2019 Lok Sabha election, Delhi had record-

ed a turnout of 60.6% against the national voter turnout of 67.4%. In 2014, the capital had recorded 65.10% voter turnout against the national voter turnout of 66.44%.

Owing to the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) and Congress's four-to-three seat

sharing alliance in Delhi, Chief Minister and AAP supremo Arvind Kejriwal, who votes from the Chandni Chowk constituency, and the Congress's Gandhi family, including Sonia and Rahul Gandhi, and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, who vote from the New Delhi seat, found themselves in constituencies where they had no candidates belonging to their own respective parties.

Mr. Kejriwal is currently on interim bail, after being arrested by the Enforcement Directorate. The Delhi CM's family voted along with him.

162 candidates

There are 162 candidates in the fray for the Delhi Lok Sabha election.

Most candidates began the day early by offering prayers before voting with their families and supporters.

President Droupadi Murmu, Vice-President Jagdeep Dhankhar, Union Ministers Hardeep Singh Puri and S. Jaishankar, and

Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud voted from the New Delhi constituency.

Speaking after voting, several leaders from the AAP, the Congress, and the BJP expressed confidence that their campaign had translated into votes, assuring their victory.

While the AAP and the Congress appealed to the voters to vote in numbers against the BJP as it would be their last attempt to "save democracy", the BJP said the people of Delhi had seen through the "hypocrisy" of the AAP-Congress alliance.

The BJP has won all seven Lok Sabha constituencies in the national capital for two terms now.

Delhi's voters, who voted the AAP to power in the State Assembly election with a huge majority in two previous elections, and the BJP in the two previous Lok Sabha elections also with a significant majority, said they had voted keeping national as well as local issues in mind.

Chaos reigns in Jhargram as BJP candidate is attacked; Ghatal nominee comes under siege

Shiv Sahay Singh
KOLKATA

A Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) candidate was attacked and another was gheraoed on Saturday during the penultimate phase of election in West Bengal across eight Lok Sabha constituencies spread across the southern part of the State.

Across the eight seats that cover five districts, a 79.47% turnout was reported, according to the latest figure. Bishnupur, a seat reserved for Scheduled Caste candidates, registered 83.95% polling, while Purulia, reserved for Scheduled Tribe candidates, recorded the lowest voting of 75.37%.

The Tamluk constituency witnessed 80.22% poll-



Tough stance: Security forces shield BJP candidate Hiran Chatterjee as protesters stop his convoy at Ghatal on Saturday. ANI

ing and Kanthi registered 77.75%. Polling in Jhargram was 81.53% and Ghatal 80.73%. In Medinipur, 79.75% of the voters exercised their franchise, while Bankura registered 79.03% polling.

Pranat Tudu, the BJP candidate from Jhargram,

was attacked allegedly by Trinamool Congress supporters at Garbeta. The mob threw stones on the vehicle of the BJP candidate and a person deployed for Mr. Tudu's security sustained head injury. Mr. Tudu and a Central Armed Police Forces

(CAPF) man deployed in his security were seen running away from the mob.

Chaos reigned in the area for almost an hour and there was no intervention of quick response teams of the Election Commission. Vehicles of media personnel were also attacked at Garbeta.

Demand for re-polling

The BJP candidate said he was getting reports of electoral malpractices and a section of residents have been threatening the voters of the party since Friday night. Yet, when he visited the area, he was attacked by Trinamool supporters.

"If security forces personnel were not present, the people would have lynched me," Mr. Tudu

said. Another BJP candidate, Hiran Chatterjee, who is contesting from the Ghatal Lok Sabha constituency, also faced protests by Trinamool supporters in Keshpur area of the constituency who surrounded his vehicles and raised slogans.

Mr. Chatterjee, who raised the demand for re-polling in Keshpur, said the region had turned into a "Pakistan or Afghanistan" during the polling.

While places like Garbeta and Keshpur, which have a history of electoral violence remained on the boil, polling was peaceful at Nandigram, which had witnessed political violence earlier this week resulting in the murder of a 56-year-old woman BJP supporter.

Tamil Nadu 'contractors' steering BJD govt.: Irani

The Hindu Bureau
BHUBANESWAR

Union Minister and senior BJP leader Smriti Irani on Saturday said governance in Odisha was being dictated by "contractors" from Tamil Nadu.

Ms. Irani was alluding to the alleged dominance of V.K. Pandian - Tamil Nadu-born former IAS officer and former private secretary to Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik - in governance and in the affairs of the Biju Janata Dal.

At campaign rallies, the BJP leader said the State government, which was being remotely controlled from T.N., was clueless when natural disasters such as floods and cyclones hit the State.

President votes at pink booth in New Delhi

President Droupadi Murmu cast her vote at an all-woman polling booth in the New Delhi constituency on Saturday in the sixth phase of the Lok Sabha election, officials said.

Ms. Murmu reached the booth, decorated in pink and white colours, inside the President's Estate around 9

a.m., they said.

Later, the President held up her inked finger as she posed for photos for presspersons against a backdrop that read "I'm a proud voter".

Ms. Murmu, who hails from Odisha, was sworn in as the 15th President of India on July 25, 2022.

She received her new voter identification card with the updated address on November 28 last year. Her old voter ID carried her Odisha address. PTI



President Droupadi Murmu after casting her vote on Saturday. PTI

CPI(M) leader slams EC as EVM goes dead

CPI(M) leader Brinda Karat on Saturday alleged she had to wait for almost an hour to cast her vote as the battery of the EVM control unit at her polling booth "drained out".

The Election Commission, however, said voting was halted only for 15 minutes. Ms. Karat had gone to cast

her vote at a polling booth at St. Columba's School in the New Delhi constituency.

"I have written a complaint here, how is it that in the morning at 9 a.m. the battery of the machine is down? What are the arrangements that they have made? People are waiting here in the heat for so long," she told presspersons.

Ms. Karat later said she had to wait for around 50 minutes.

The machine had been down for around 20 minutes before she arrived. PTI



Cong. is trying to frighten us by saying that Pak. has an atom bomb... And, today I speak from this land, that Pok is ours and it will remain ours
AMIT SHAH
Union Home Minister

BJP, Congress policies wrong, says Mayawati

BSP chief Mayawati in Gorakhpur said people have abandoned the BJP and the Congress because of their "bad policies". She added the BJP was following "wrong policies", just like the Congress, and the NDA won't be able to retain power at the Centre. PTI



Modiji and senior BJP leaders are attacking the Constitution. For the first time, their leaders have openly said they will change it if they win
RAHUL GANDHI
Congress leader

IN BRIEF



T.N. police to bring back stolen 'Dancing Krishna' idol

The Idol Wing CID of Tamil Nadu police will soon bring back an antique Chola-era bronze idol of Lord Kaliya Kalki, also called as Kaliya Narthana Krishna (Dancing Krishna), which was stolen several years ago and recovered from Thailand capital Bangkok. The present value of the idol is \$3.5 million. "The rare bronze idol was handed over by the Fine Arts Department of Thailand. It is with the High Commission of India in Bangkok," Director-General of Police (IW-CID) Shailesh Kumar Yadav said. Due to continuous efforts of a special team of IW-CID, the idol from the Later Chola period was traced recently.

Custodial death: suspension of 3 policemen withdrawn

The Assam Police on Saturday withdrew the suspension of three of its personnel in Lakhimpur district after the death of a person accused of theft at the Khelmati outpost was found to be due to a heart ailment. The police also arrested 15 people, including two minors, for throwing stones at the outpost. Arsabh Ali was detained in connection with the theft of a mobile phone. "Preliminary post-mortem reports are indicative of the death of the person in police custody due to a pre-existing coronary disease. The Superintendent of Police has been directed to withdraw the suspension orders," Assam DGP Gyanendra Pratap Singh said.

South Africa to follow up on arrest of Gupta brothers

South Africa on Saturday said it will engage with the Indian government following reports of the arrest of two Gupta brothers in India, one of whom is wanted for allegedly looting billions from state-owned enterprises. Atul, Ajay, and Rajesh Gupta, from an Indian-origin family, have been accused of siphoning billions of rands in South Africa through their close association with former President Jacob Zuma. The trio and their families fled to Dubai after Zuma was ousted from the presidency in 2018. In 2023, the UAE refused the request for the extradition of Mr. Rajesh and Mr. Atul following which South Africa declared them fugitives. PTI

Persistent heat makes Assam districts revise school timings

A few districts across Assam, including Kamrup (Metropolitan) which largely includes Guwahati, have advanced school timings due to "continuous rise in mercury level and prevailing scorching heat". A few districts, including Bongaigaon, Majuli and Jorhat, revised school timings a few days ago to 7 a.m. and 8 a.m. from the normal 9 a.m. The temporary change in schedule in the other districts will be applicable from May 27, Education Department officials said. According to the new timetable, classes will start at 7.30 a.m. and end at noon for primary schools and 1 p.m. for high and higher secondary schools.

SUDOKU

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4		6			8			3
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	2	7		3			4	
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DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

8	4	9	1	7	3	6	5	2
2	3	5	9	8	6	1	4	7
6	7	1	5	2	4	8	9	3
3	9	6	8	1	2	5	7	4
4	5	8	7	3	9	2	6	1
1	2	7	4	6	5	3	8	9
7	6	2	3	4	8	9	1	5
9	8	4	2	5	1	7	3	6
5	1	3	6	9	7	4	2	8

Double treat at Cannes as Payal and Anasuya bag awards

Press Trust of India
CANNES

India received a double treat at the Cannes Film Festival this year, with filmmaker Payal Kapadia taking home the Grand Prix award for her spellbinding drama *All We Imagine as Light* and Anasuya Sengupta, one of the lead stars of the film *The Shameless*, bagging the Best Actress award in the Un Certain Regard category.

The Grand Prix award is the second-most prestigious prize of the festival after the Palme d'Or, while the Un Certain Regard celebrates films with unusual styles and non-traditional stories.

Ms. Kapadia's feature directorial debut, which screened on Thursday night and has received glowing reviews in the international press, already registered its name in the history books after it became the first Indian film in 30 years and first-ever by an Indian woman director to be showcased in the main competition.

The screening of the



Filmmaker Payal Kapadia winning the Grand Prix Award for *All We Imagine As Light* at Cannes Film Festival; actors Rohit Kokate, Omara Shetty, Bulgarian director Konstantin Bojanov and Anasuya Sengupta arrive for the screening of the film *The Shameless*. GETTY IMAGES, AFP

film received an eight-minute standing ovation from the audience members. *All We Imagine as Light*, a Malayalam-Hindi feature, has two nurses as the protagonists. An alumna of the Film and Television Institute of India (FTII), Ms. Kapadia is best known for her acclaimed documentary *A Night of Knowing Nothing*, which premiered at the 2021 Cannes Film Festival's Director's Fortnight sidebar where it won the Oeil d'Or (Golden Eye) award.

The main competition jury was chaired by filmmaker Greta Gerwig and also included Spanish di-

rector Juan Antonio Bayona, Turkish actor-screenwriter Ebru Ceylan, Italian actor Pierfrancesco Favino, American actor Lily Gladstone, Japanese director Hirokazu Kore-eda, Lebanese actor-director Nadine Labaki and French stars Eva Green and French actor Omar Sy.

Ms. Sengupta, who starred in Bulgarian director Konstantin Bojanov's Hindi movie *The Shameless*, is the first Indian artist to win the top acting honour in the Un Certain Regard category.

In her acceptance speech on Friday night,



Ms. Sengupta dedicated the award to the "queer community and other marginalised communities" for bravely fighting for their rights all over the world.

Fight for equality

"You don't have to be queer to fight for equality, you don't have to be colonised to know that colonising is pathetic - we just need to be very, very decent human beings," the actor said.

The win at Cannes is a landmark moment in Ms. Sengupta's career. She earlier played a supporting part in the 2009 Bengali

film *Madly Bangalee*, directed by Anjan Dutt, and worked as a production designer after shifting to Mumbai.

The Shameless, which had its premiere at Cannes on May 17, forays into a dark, disturbing world of exploitation and misery in which two sex workers, one who bears the scars of her line of work, the other a young girl days away from ritual initiation, forge a bond and seek to throw off their shackles. Ms. Sengupta plays the central character of Renuka, who escapes from a Delhi brothel after stabbing a

Sean Baker's Anora crowned with Palme d'Or

Anora, a raw, highly explicit and often hilarious story about a New York erotic dancer, was crowned with the Palme d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival on Saturday. It confirmed its director Sean Baker as one of the leading voices of American indie cinema. AFP

policeman to death and takes refuge in a community of sex workers in northern India, where she meets Devika (Omara), a young girl condemned to a life of sex work.

The actor celebrated her win on Instagram, where she posted pictures with Un Certain Regard jury head, Canadian director Xavier Dolan, and German-Luxembourg star Vicky Krieps. "I won, guys, held so lovingly by my heroes. I'm here for you, to be the one you need THANK YOU @festivaldecannes," Ms. Sengupta wrote in the caption.

INDIA snatching quota to aid those who do 'vote jihad': PM

He says if Opposition bloc wants to accept servitude of vote bank, it's free to do so but he will not allow stealing of quota of SC/STs and OBCs; RJD says it is worried about Modi and his language

Amarnath Tewary
PATNA

On a day when polling was held for eight seats in Bihar, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, at a campaign meeting on Saturday at Bikram in the Pataliputra Lok Sabha constituency in the State which goes to the polls in the next phase, said he would not let anyone snatch reservation from the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes.

"Our Constitution says no reservation can be given on the basis of religion, but this INDI alliance people have snatched the SC, ST, OBC reservation and given it to their vote bank who do 'vote jihad'," Mr. Modi said.

"In West Bengal, 77 Muslim castes were given benefits of OBC reservation in government jobs. Rights of OBC and EBC families were snatched for those practising 'vote jihad'. If the INDI bloc wants to accept the servitude of their vote



Narendra Modi with Bihar Deputy CM Vijay Kumar Sinha and LJP (Ram Vilas) chief Chirag Paswan attending a public meeting. PTI

bank, they are free to do so... if they want to perform *mujra* (traditional Indian musical dance), they are free to do so," he said.

"This is Modi's guarantee. I will not let the SC, ST, OBC reservation snatched away as for Modi, Constitution is above all," he said. "These Congress, RJD and INDI allies have done big betrayal against SC, ST and OBC people. They have committed robbery on their reservation quota," he alleged while taking a few names of castes belonging to such categories.

Reacting to the comments, RJD leader and Ra-

jya Sabha member Manoj Jha said he was worried about what Mr. Modi said in the public meeting. "I am worried about him now. Till yesterday, we disagreed with him but now we are worried about him. I recently said that he [Modi] is becoming a victim of delusion of grandeur. *Machli* (fish), *mangalsutra* (sacred thread) and now *mujra*...is this the language of a PM," he asked.

The BJP has fielded Ram Kripal Yadav, MP, against RJD leader Misa Bharati, who is the daughter of Lalu Prasad, in Pataliputra.

Hitting out at the INDI

bloc leaders, Mr. Modi said: "They are known for three things. They are communal, casteist and dynasts." "They first think of their family. Can such people do better for Bihar," the PM asked. "*Apna kaam banta... mein jaye Janata* (our job is being done and let people go to...)," Mr. Modi said uttering a common phrase and the gathered crowd completed the sentence.

He said that in the next five years, everyone, irrespective of being poor or rich, would get "free electricity". "Your electricity bill will be zero. We have introduced PM Suryaghar free electricity programme for this through solar electricity," he said. "For the solar panel, we have started giving ₹75,000 to every household and one has to only register his name online for this."

Later, Mr. Modi also addressed public meetings at Karakat and Buxar constituencies where the NDA candidates are contesting the polls.

Opposition leaders slam PM's remarks in Pataliputra meeting

Sobhana K. Nair
NEW DELHI



Mallikarjun Kharge

With just four days left before campaigning for the 2024 Lok Sabha election draws to a close, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's remarks, made at election rallies in Bihar, where he accused the Opposition of performing *mujra* (a dance form associated with courtiers) for the Muslim vote bank, has come under sharp criticism from the Opposition, with Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge saying Mr. Modi's comments belied his anxiety over the election results.

Mr. Modi made this remark in the Pataliputra Lok Sabha constituency, where Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) leader Misa Bharati is contesting against the incumbent two-time BJP MP Ram Kripal Yadav.

The PM repeated the remarks at other rallies in Bihar.

RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav said the PM's language had been deteriorating as the elections proceeded. "PM Modi is using such language that even his suppor-

ters are not liking it," Mr. Yadav said.

Mr. Modi also reiterated his remark that the State governments led by Opposition parties are splicing the quota meant for Scheduled Castes (SC) and Other Backward Classes (OBC), and diverting them to Muslims, who were carrying out a "vote jihad" in the election.

Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra said that Mr. Modi's speech was unprecedented. "Never before has an Indian Prime Minister deployed such a language," she said in Gorakhpur.

Communist Party of India (Marxist) [(CPI-M)] leader Brinda Karat said that under Mr. Modi's terms of the past 10 years, the rights of reservation had been severely diluted.

With bypolls, Himachal 'turncoats' now face the people's court

Vikas Vasudeva
KUTLEHAR/BARSAR

The Congress-ruled State of Himachal Pradesh saw political turbulence a few months ago with six of its MLAs turning rebels. With all of them now contesting as candidates of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) for the byelections to six Assembly seats, a strong sentiment among the people surrounding "betrayal by turncoats" appears to have gripped the political narrative in the hill State, which will also witness the Lok Sabha election on June 1.

The stage is all set for a direct fight between the ruling Congress and the BJP for the upcoming byelections. These byelections were necessitated after the six Assembly seats - Dhamshala, Sujampur, Lahaul-Spiti, Barsar, Gagret, and Kutlehar - fell vacant following the disqualification of the Congress MLAs from the Legislative Assembly for defying a party



Supporters of Congress attending a public meeting in Shimla of party chief Mallikarjun Kharge. X/@SUKHUSUKHWINDER

whip in February. Later, all these six Congress rebels joined the BJP and are now contesting as BJP candidates in the byelections. They were all elected Congress MLAs in the 2022 Assembly election.

At Panoh village in Kutlehar, Rakesh Kumar, who runs a welding shop on the busy Una-Amb stretch, says he has been hurt by the behaviour of the legislators who betrayed their party and the people. "Davinder Bhutto won on Con-

gress ticket from here [Kutlehar] in 2022, and later he joined the BJP. And now he is contesting as the BJP candidate. This is complete betrayal of the people's vote, besides disloyalty to their mother party," he said, while awaiting customers amid soaring mercury even as the campaigning hit top gear in the constituencies.

"It's not just me, many in my village feel that way. In Himachal, which is called 'Dev Bhoomi', the

majority of people are god-fearing, and the action of betrayal of any kind is considered nothing short of a sin. I am sure they will suffer politically in this byelection," he adds.

At the main market in Jhalera, a grocery shop owner, who doesn't want to reveal his name, expresses similar sentiments. "It was wrong on the part of the Congress MLAs to switch the party, and now contesting on BJP ticket has sent a bad message. People voted and elected them in 2022 for a term of five years, who gave them the authority to quit only after a year or so?" he quipped.

Political turbulence

Earlier this year, the State saw political turbulence as cracks in the Congress's State unit came to the fore during the Rajya Sabha election, resulting in the defeat of official Congress candidate Abhishek Manu Singhvi due to cross-voting

by six MLAs of the ruling party.

As intense electoral campaigning is under way, addressing a gathering at Bangana, Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu asserts that the people of the State have elected the present Congress government and it will complete its tenure.

Hitting out at the "turncoats", he said, "Some Congress MLAs sold their souls. They all played with the sentiments of the people of the State and won't be spared even by the Almighty. They were not alone, the BJP was also behind them as it attempted to destabilise and topple the Congress as their hunger for power has increased, and since the BJP could not form the government in the State based on votes, they have been attempting to grab the chair through money power," Mr. Sukhu said.

A few kilometres from the rally spot, Karan Ku-

mar, who is a manager at a local restaurant, is annoyed with re-elections and says, "They [ex-Congress MLAs] have caused a breach of trust. Because of their actions, the elections are happening again, the financial burden will eventually be borne by taxpayers. There should be a provision that in such a situation, these legislators should be penalised."

In the Barsar Assembly constituency, Mahender Singh, a retired Subedar from the Army, and a few elderly people are enjoying their evening tea at the local stall at Bhakreri, discussing the political scenario. "I am not sure who is going to win or lose, but a majority of us believe that what Congress MLAs did was not ethical. Contesting on one party's symbol and then later leaving them to join and contest from another party is not acceptable," he said as a couple of others in the group nodded their heads in sync.

IN BRIEF



Aurobindo Pharma Q4 net soars 80% on higher revenue

Aurobindo Pharma reported an almost 80% YoY jump in fourth-quarter consolidated net profit to ₹907.35 crore on the back of a 21% increase in revenue from formulations, while contribution of active pharmaceutical ingredients remained flat. Total revenue from operations rose 17% to ₹7,580.15 crore (₹6,472.96 crore). For the fiscal year ended March, the drugmaker registered a more than 64% increase in consolidated net profit to ₹3,168.97 crore (₹1,927.65 crore).

Divi's Labs Q4 net surges 68% to ₹538 cr. on higher revenue

Divi's Laboratories reported consolidated net profit increased almost 68% to ₹538 crore for the quarter ended March 2024 on the back of a revenue from operations that was 18% higher. Revenue from operations of the active pharmaceutical ingredients, intermediates and nutraceutical ingredients maker increased to ₹2,303 crore (₹1,951 crore). The company has declared a final dividend of ₹30 per equity share of face value ₹2 each for 2023-24.

E.I.D. Parry posts ₹294.30 cr. Q4 consolidated net profit

E.I.D. Parry India Ltd. has reported a consolidated profit after tax (PAT) for the January-March 2024 quarter at ₹294.30 crore. The Chennai-based sugar manufacturer had registered a consolidated PAT of ₹286.90 crore during the corresponding quarter of last year. For the financial year ending March 31, 2024 the consolidated profit after tax fell to ₹1,617.57 crore, from ₹1,827.74 crore registered a year earlier, the company said.

RIL seeks CCI nod for Viacom18's merger with Star India

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

Reliance Industries has sought approval from fair trade regulator Competition Commission of India (CCI) for the \$8.5-billion merger of Viacom18 and Star India Pvt. Ltd. (SIPL).

"The proposed transaction aims to combine the entertainment businesses (along with certain other identified businesses) of Viacom18, part of Reliance Industries Ltd. (RIL) group and SIPL, wholly owned by The Walt Disney Company (TWDC).

"As a result of the transaction, SIPL, currently a wholly owned entity of



TWDC through its subsidiaries, will become a joint venture (JV) which will be jointly held by RIL, Viacom18 and existing TWDC subsidiaries," RIL said in a notice filed with the CCI.

The proposed transaction will not cause any appreciable adverse effect on competition in India, RIL said in the notice.

Brazil, EU urge India to give timely notices on sugar subsidies in WTO

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

A group of WTO member countries, including Brazil, Canada and the European Union, have urged India to submit timely notifications on sugar subsidies in the World Trade Organisation, an official said.

The issue came up for discussion during the meeting of the WTO's agriculture committee on May 23-24 in Geneva.

'Distort sugar trade'

These countries are also major sugar exporters like India and they allege that support measures by India distort global sugar trade.

Brazil, Canada, Costa Ri-



Private affair: India said its governments neither paid for nor procured sugarcane as private mills were involved. REUTERS

ca, Paraguay, New Zealand, the EU, and Guatemala have "urged India to submit timely notifications on the subsidies," the Geneva-based official said.

India has stated that the

LTCG liability to ease on cost inflation reset

Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) notifies cost inflation index (CII) for 2024-25 at 363, a 4.3% rise from FY24's 348; tax liability on the sale or transfer of any capital asset, such as land, property, trademarks and patents expected to be lower this year as a result of the reset of the CII

Shishir Sinha
NEW DELHI

Long-term capital gains liability on the sale or transfer of any capital asset, such as land, property, trademarks and patents is expected to be lower this year as the Cost Inflation Index (CII) for 2024-25 has been fixed at 363, a rise of 4.3% from 348 for FY24.

Notifying the index, the Central Board of Direct Taxes said: "This notification shall come into force with effect from the April 1, 2025 and shall accordingly apply in relation to the as-

essment year 2025-26 and subsequent assessment years."

The CII number assists in determining the long-term capital gains on which an assessee is required to pay taxes when she/he files income tax returns the following year.

'Real appreciation'

Explaining the importance of this index, Sandeep Sehgal, Partner-Tax, AKM Global, said, "The index is useful to adjust the capital gains for inflation so that the taxpayers are taxed on real appreciation of the assets and not the gains due



Inflation impact: Indexation helps adjust the purchase price of an asset such as property to reflect the effect of inflation on it. PTI

to inflation. Taxpayers can use this to calculate gains for the long-term capital assets sold during FY24-25

and reduce the tax liability accordingly."

The CII is a way to calculate inflation, that is, an es-

timated increase in the price of a good or service over the years. Indexation is used to adjust the purchase price of an investment to reflect the effect of inflation on it. A higher purchase price means lower profits, which effectively means a lower tax.

Taxable income impact

With the help of indexation, one can lower her/his long-term capital gains, bringing down the taxable income. The rate of inflation to be used for indexation can be obtained from the government's CII. The indexation was in

news last year as the Finance Act, 2023 removed this for debt mutual funds. April 1 onwards, gains for funds are taxed at the investor's tax slab rate, rather than the previous 20% with indexation benefit and 10% without that. As a result, if the investor is subject to the highest tax bracket, this rate would be 35.8% (including surcharge and cess).

"This is consistent with the retail inflation rate of 4.83% recorded in April," PTI quoted Moore Singhi ED Rajat Mohan as saying. (The writer is with The Hindu businessline)

Hyundai expects 20% of SUV sales from rural markets, says COO Garg

Mini Tejaswi
BENGALURU

Hyundai Motor India, a wholly owned subsidiary of Hyundai Motor Company of South Korea, said rural markets are expected to contribute 20% of its sport utility vehicle (SUV) sales in the 2024-25 fiscal year.

"Our SUV contribution from rural markets will be in the 20% range this year," Tarun Garg, Chief Operating Officer, Hyundai Motor India told *The Hindu*.

"More interestingly, rural SUV penetration and urban SUV penetration are equal now, this never happened in the past," he ad-



Tarun Garg

ded. Hyundai's SUV penetration in India is one of the highest at 65% as against the industry's 51%.

The company witnessed a spike in SUV sales in April and the trend is likely to continue throughout the fiscal, he hinted.

According to Mr. Garg, Indian customers want to have more SUVs, and to cater to the diverse requirements, Hyundai has a full range of SUVs including Venue, Exter, Creta, and Alcazar in multiple variants. During FY23-24, the auto major sold 6 lakh cars, the highest ever in the country.

On the overall industry scenario, Mr. Garg said, post pandemic, the auto industry had two successive years of high growth and two successive years of highest volume growth between 2022-23 and 2023-24 with a growth of 20% and 8%, respectively.

"Most OEMs, after at-

tending a recent conclave organised by the Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers, felt that because of the high base of growth in the last two years, the growth in FY24-25 could be in low single-digit. April growth was only 1.7%," he commented.

'Low industry growth'

He further said that the prevailing high interest rates, geopolitical risks, high base created during FY23 and FY24 and absence of any pent up demand would mean the growth of the industry this year would be limited and in a low single digit.

Busy Bee Airways' Pitti pulls out of bidding for Go First

Lalathendu Mishra
MUMBAI

Diminishing hopes of any resolution for grounded airline Go First, which had filed for bankruptcy protection in May 2023, one of the co-bidders Nishant Pitti, the Founder and CEO of EaseMyTrip.com, has pulled out from the race.

"After careful consideration, I have decided to withdraw from the GoAir [First] bid in my personal capacity," Mr. Pitti announced on Saturday.

In February 2024, the resolution professional of Go First received two fi-

nancial bids for the erstwhile Wadia Group airline, which had changed its name from Go Air to Go First.

One of the financial bids was from SpiceJet's Chairman and Managing Director Ajay Singh in his personal capacity, along with Mr. Pitti, who owns 52% in Busy Bee Airways, in his personal capacity.

Now, with Mr. Pitti withdrawing from the bidding, Busy Bee Airways has also withdrawn from the race as a result, a spokesperson said. It is not known whether Mr. Singh would continue with his bid.

IRDAI reduces audit firms' term to bolster audit quality

K.R. Srivats
NEW DELHI

IRDAI's new corporate governance guidelines have reduced the engagement period of statutory auditors with insurance companies. Audit firms now have a four-year term for joint statutory audits, followed by a mandatory three-year cooling-off period, according to the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority's Master Circular on 'Corporate Governance for Insurers 2024'.

During this cooling-off period, outgoing auditors and their affiliates are barred from undertaking investment risk management or concurrent audits

of the insurer. Additionally, incoming auditors must not include any affiliates of the retiring auditor.

Fresh review

Previously, audit firms could serve up to 10 years, but the new rules ensure a fresh review of financial statements every four years to enhance audit quality and to reduce complacency.

Commenting on the latest move by IRDAI, Jaspreet Bedi, Partner, Nangia & Co. LLP, said, "The auditor refresh policy is to promote independence, impartiality, and integrity in the audit process."

(The writer is with *The Hindu businessline*)

SOMETIMES,
CHAMPIONS
OF CHANGE NEED
CHAMPIONS TOO.

Sometimes, makers of change need believers in change. They need visionaries to foresee their vision. They need voices to amplify their cries. Hands to lift them up when circumstances pull them down. Cheers to keep them going when the road gets rough. They need unbiased individuals with no ulterior motives to support them. Champions of change need champions like you to nominate them, give their ideas a platform and back them up.

The hindu businessline Changemaker Awards is now open for nomination.



Scan the QR code or visit newsth.live/BLCM2024THP to nominate a Changemaker.

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Warming climate intensifies flash droughts worldwide

The Hindu Bureau

Sudden, severe dry spells known as flash droughts are rising in intensity around the world, with a notable exception in mountainous Central Asia, where flash drought extent is shrinking, according to new research. Heat and changes to precipitation patterns caused by a warming climate are driving these trends, the study

found. The new study is the first to apply a systematic, quantitative approach to the global incidence of flash drought, mapping hotspots and regions of rapid increases in recent decades.

Tracking measures

Many parts of the world have witnessed flash droughts for a longer time, with faster onset speed. The study defined and

tracked three critical measures of drought severity: speed of onset, duration and geographic extent. It analyzed 40 years of NASA's MERRA-2 climate data, from 1980 to 2019, drawn from weather observations, satellite imagery and modeled root-zone soil moisture, with the aim of improving prediction and disaster preparedness. The study is published in the journal *Geophysical Research Letters*.

search Letters.

South America, particularly southern Brazil and the Amazon is experiencing strong intensification in all three dimensions of flash drought, aligning with deforestation patterns in the region, high temperatures and less rain. Congo, Angola, Zambia, Zimbabwe, South Africa, Lesotho, and Madagascar are also hotspots. High temperatures were found

to be more important than declining precipitation in the African watersheds.

Land cover is also important to flash drought vulnerability. Savanna and grasslands are more susceptible to flash droughts than other ecotypes, particularly in humid and semi-humid climates, the study found.

In Central Asian watersheds, centered on high mountains, including the

Himalaya Karakoram, Tianshan and Hindu Kush, flash drought extent shrank over the study period, bucking the worldwide trend. Climate-driven changes in precipitation, melting snowpack and a shift from snow to rain in the mountains have kept soils moist. These changes can cause an increase in flash floods, which have been observed in the region.

SNAPSHOTS



Antiviral neutralises many coronaviruses in mice

An experimental antiviral drug has broad antiviral potency and can combat an array of epidemic and zoonotic coronaviruses in mice, including SARS-CoV-2 and MERS-CoV. Testing the drug obeldesivir against a range of coronaviruses in culture, the scientists found it could inhibit MERS-CoV, various alphacoronaviruses that cause the common cold, and the Omicron BA.1 subvariant. It also dampened viral replication and mitigated lung injury in mice infected with the Omicron variant, MERS-CoV, or SARS-CoV

BHU's Covaxin safety study riddled with major limitations

If the most glaring limitation of the study is the lack of a control group, the absence of data on background rates of adverse events that have been assessed in the vaccinated participants makes it difficult to link the adverse events to vaccination

R. Prasad

An observational study carried out by researchers from the Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi, to assess the safety of Covaxin, particularly the long-term adverse events of special interest (AESIs) one year after vaccination, in adolescents and adults has been criticised by ICMR for the poor study design. However, till date, neither ICMR nor Bharat Biotech has published any Covaxin safety data after the drug regulator approved its roll-out in January 2021 in a "clinical trial mode" and wanted the vaccine recipients to be followed up for safety.

Though the researchers acknowledge all the limitations of the study, which is published in the journal *Drug Safety*, many of the limitations are so critical that they defeat the very purpose of the study. "Ideally, this paper should have been rejected at the peer-review stage. Simply mentioning the limitations, some of them critical to arrive at any useful conclusion, defeats the whole purpose of undertaking the study," Dr. Vipin M. Vashishtha, director and pediatrician, Mangla Hospital and Research Center, Bijnor, says in an email to *The Hindu*. Dr. Gautam Menon, Dean (Research) & Professor, Departments of Physics and Biology, Ashoka University shares the same view. Given the limitations of the study one can "certainly say that the study can't be used to draw the conclusions it does," Dr. Menon

Covaxin safety study sparks controversy

The observational study assesses the adverse events of special interest (AESIs) in adolescents and adults one year after vaccination



- The drug regulator approved the rollout of Covaxin in January 2021 in a "clinical trial mode" and the vaccine recipients were to be followed up for safety. But till date, ICMR or Bharat Biotech has not published any data on Covaxin safety in the population

- The BHU study was carried out between January 2022 and August 2023. Covaxin safety was first assessed 14 days after vaccination

- The study has listed numerous limitations. Many are major limitations that defeat the very purpose of undertaking the study

- The most glaring limitations are the lack of a control group and the absence of data on background rates of adverse events of special interest

- Another major limitation is the failure to test the participants for SARS-CoV-2 infection/COVID-19 disease and associate all the adverse events solely to vaccination

- Some of the AESIs in question may be due to SARS-CoV-2 infection and not the vaccination

- Also, participants were contacted over the telephone one year after vaccination. This method, which relies on recall over a long period rather than any independent quantitative measure, can be inaccurate

says in an email. If the most glaring limitation of the study is the lack of a control group, the absence of data on background rates of adverse events of special interest (AESI) that have been assessed in the vaccinated participants makes it difficult to even find an association between the adverse events and the vaccine. However, Dr. Kishor Patwardhan from BHU and co-author of the paper in a tweet justifies the absence of a control group by saying that "in a longitudinal observational study, a traditional control group might not be feasible or necessary. Instead, researchers use the variability within the cohort over time to draw comparisons and identify associations".

"The lack of a control arm is a serious limitation of the study and negates any useful inference and interpretation of the stu-

dy's findings. Further, they didn't try to show a real upsurge in the rates of these common ailments in the vaccinated population as the background rates are not mentioned," says Dr. Vashishtha. Dismissing Dr. Patwardhan's argument that a control group may not be necessary for a longitudinal observational study, Dr. Menon says: "If the question, as here, is the possibility of adverse effects following vaccination, it is a question about causality. To answer these, it is important to remove as many confounders as possible, such as the possibility that some fraction of participants were infected by the virus prior to or after vaccination. If, in a normal non-COVID year, an equally substantial fraction of people were afflicted by upper respiratory tract infections, that would certainly be relevant to ask if

the vaccine was [indeed] responsible for the AESIs picked up by this survey." Objecting to Dr. Patwardhan's claim made in a tweet that the "goal [of the longitudinal study] is often to observe natural progressions and associations rather than to establish direct causal relationships with the use of a control group", Dr. Menon points out that the paper clearly states that "serious adverse events may occur in 1% of BBV152 [Covaxin] recipients", which is a statement of specific causality. The only robust way of linking the administration of the vaccine to a specific set of adverse effects is to have an appropriate control group, stresses Dr. Menon. Dr. Vashishtha too says that it is difficult to conclude natural progression without comparing it with the control arm.

The second critical limi-

tation of the study is the failure to test the participants for SARS-CoV-2 infection/COVID-19 disease and associating all the adverse events solely to vaccination. Since the study lasted from January 2022 to August 2023, the chances that the participants were truly uninfected and all adverse events seen were only due to vaccination are slim. "Serological studies in Uttar Pradesh after the Delta wave point to over 80% of the population having been infected. Some of the AESIs in question could have been a consequence of an initial SARS-CoV-2 infection and not the vaccination," says Dr. Menon. Worse is when the researchers claim some of the deaths to be "possibly" associated with Covaxin even when infection/disease was not ruled out through testing or taking into account pre-existing conditions/diseases such as hypertension and diabetes. The researchers have followed the WHO classification for AEFI categories, and one of WHO's AEFI categories is coincidental reaction/event. "These deaths possibly belong to this category," says Dr. Vashishtha.

"The same group of investigators had studied the Covishield vaccine using an almost similar methodology. They found that Covishield had led to AESIs in 14%, whereas Covaxin led to AESIs in one-third of the participants of the trial. This defies logic. Globally, inactivated vaccines are considered safer than Adenovirus vector-based vaccines," adds Dr. Vashishtha.



Crows demonstrate keen counting skills

Crows can control the number of vocalisations they produce, "counting" up to four in response to visual and auditory cues. The birds are capable of using a non-symbolic approximate number system, showing a level of vocal control that mirrors the early counting skills of human toddlers. The crows could produce specific numbers of vocalisations deliberately in response to specific cues. They used a non-symbolic approximate number system, planning the number of vocalisations before starting.



Genome of the extinct little bush moa reconstructed

Using ancient DNA recovered from a fossil bone, scientists have reconstructed a complete genome of the little bush moa, an extinct species of flightless bird that once roamed the forested islands of New Zealand. The work allowed the scientists to determine the bird's likely population size, and even suggests that the moa's eyes could detect ultraviolet light. The moas made their homes in the island's dense forests and grasslands as recently as 700 years ago.

Why mango is the king of fruits in India



SPEAKING OF SCIENCE

D. Balasubramanian

The mango season across India is on, and along with it the usual debate about which is the best mango variety to have. We in Telangana claim that the 'Banganapalli' and 'Benishan' are matchless and nothing else can come even close. My wife and her family from Gujarat say that the best is Ratnagiri or Alphonso. And friends in UP swear by the Daseri.

Mango trees are planted, and produced and the fruit is enjoyed by people in India, followed by China, Thailand, Indonesia, the Philippines, Pakistan, and Mexico. However, India leads the rest, accounting for 54.2% of the total mangoes produced world-

wide. Not only do we consume the most mangoes, but we also export them. Last year, we exported 28,000 MT of mangoes and earned about 48 million dollars!

'Own special tastes'

Dr K.T. Achaya, in his "A Historical Dictionary of Indian Food" (OUP,1998), points out that mango is native to India, grown in the northeastern hills and Myanmar, and was exported to neighbouring countries. Nowadays, mango trees are planted in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Gujarat, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Odisha and West Bengal, with fruits from each state having their own special tastes.

India has, at the last count, over 1,000 varieties of mangoes, thanks to the ease with which grafting of mango plants occurs. The Indian Council of Agricul-



One mango fruit offers more Vitamins A, B, C, E and K, and metal compounds and more antioxidants than the other fruits. G.N. RAO

tural Research has three outstanding centres involved in mango research. In addition, the National Research Centre on Plant Biotechnology in New Delhi has been analysing the genome of the mango plant to understand its basic biology. The paper from there by Dr Nagendra Singh and colleagues, tit-

led in the *Indian Journal of the History of Science* discusses this aspect.

More recently, R. C. Jena and P. K. Chand have detailed the DNA marker-assisted diversity analysis of the Indian mango population (*Scientific Reports*, 2021), suggesting regional variations in the genetics and the resultant size, co-

lour and taste.

Why is mango called the king of fruits? Across the country, apart from the seasonal mango, we find several other seasonal fruits are available and eaten. Some of these are grapes, guava, jackfruit, papaya, and orange. Some like bananas grow year-round. Yet, mango is termed the king of fruits.

The reason is that mango not only offers superb taste, but is also the healthiest of fruits, since one mango fruit offers more Vitamins A, B, C, E and K, and metal compounds (Mg, Cu, K), and more antioxidants than the other fruits. While some of these health benefits are available in several other fruits, mango leads the rest since it has the highest levels of vitamins, minerals, and fibre content. Hence the kingdom.

The website of Cleveland Clinic in the U.S. has

an interesting article titled: "Mangolicious: the top six health benefits of mango", which are, first, it improves your gut health; the high fibre content helps fight constipation and bloating. Second, mangoes help control hunger, which could help you stick to your healthy eating goals.

Third, the vitamins and antioxidants in mango boost healthy hair and skin. Fourth, the soluble fibres in it help lower cholesterol. Fifth, eating mangoes controls blood pressure, and sixth, the antioxidant mangiferin, present in mangoes, helps prevent some types of cancer. The group at the University of Hyderabad also shows that mangiferin reduces ulcers.

Given all these benefits – taste, variety, availability, and health benefits – let us all go ahead and enjoy eating our favourite mangoes!



Question Corner

Colour blue

Is there any blue pigment with enhanced colour properties, reduced cost and lower cobalt content than cobalt blue?

The Egyptians and Babylonians used lapis lazuli 6,000 years ago. In 1802, a French chemist synthesised cobalt blue. In 2009 scientists discovered YInMn Blue, otherwise known as Oregon Blue. But most of these pigments have limitations. In 2020, researchers reported a new class of 'cool' blue colourants that are inexpensive and more environmentally friendly. For the last 200 years, cobalt blue has been a dominant commercial blue pigment because of its

colour intensity, ease of synthesis and versatility. However, 33% of the colourant by mass is carcinogenic, making cobalt blue relatively expensive and environmentally harmful to produce. The Oregon State University researchers were inspired by the crystalline structure of a light-blue mineral called hibonite. The team substituted aluminum ions in hibonite with cobalt, nickel or titanium ions. The resulting series of pigments showed a range of intense blue colours, some with reddish hues.

Readers may send their questions / answers to questioncorner@thehindu.co.in

How will Iran President's death impact the region?

Will there be changes in Iran's foreign policy? In the domestic arena, will the status quo prevail?

Stanly Johny

The story so far:

The death of Ebrahim Raisi, Iran's President, and eight others, including Foreign Minister Amir Abdollahian, in a helicopter crash on May 19, has sent shockwaves across the region. The timing of the accident was significant. Tensions remain high in West Asia, particularly after Iran launched its first direct attack on Israel in April. The war in Gaza rages on with Iran backing Hamas and other anti-Israel non-state militants in the region. At home, the regime has seen growing protests in recent years. And now, Iran has to elect a new President amid this uncertainty.

How important was Raisi?

In Iran's semi-representative theocratic system, the role of the elected president is limited compared to that of the Supreme Leader, who is appointed by a clerical body. The President's primary responsibility is to run the day-to-day affairs of the government, while critical policies and long-term strategies are set by the Supreme Leader (read 'the establishment'). But the President and his government have a say on how to implement these policies.

In the past, Iran has seen friction between the establishment and the Presidents as they tried to champion their agenda. But in Raisi, who was elected President in 2021, the establishment

found a staunch ally who hardly strayed from the line set by the Supreme Leader. Raisi oversaw a marked shift from the Hassan Rouhani years when Iran pursued dialogue with the West and reached a nuclear deal in 2015 (which was sabotaged by the U.S. in 2018). During Raisi's tenure, Iran sought

closer strategic and economic cooperation with Russia and China, doubled down on its support for the so-called 'axis of resistance' (non-state actors such as Hamas, Houthis and Hezbollah) and expanded the country's nuclear programme. Tehran also adopted a more aggressive policy towards Israel, which saw the April 14 drone and missile attack.

Will his death alter Iran's policies?

The President's death is unlikely to bring in any serious change to Iran's foreign policy. But it is highly likely that the regime's focus would shift to the transition at home. Even before Raisi's death was formally announced, Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei told Iranians that governance would not be disrupted. The message from the Supreme Leader is that the system reigns supreme, not individuals, and the status quo prevails. Iran has lost several high profile officials in recent years, from Qassem Soleimani, the charismatic Quds Force General, to Mohsen Fakhri-zadeh, the country's top nuclear scientist. But the loss of key figures does not affect the national project.

However, Raisi's death poses two succession challenges to Iran's leaders. One, it has to quickly elect the next President. The second challenge is to identify a potential successor to Mr. Khamenei. In the past, different influential clerics were seen as his prospective successors, such as Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani and Mahmoud Hashemi Shahroudi. Rafsanjani died in 2017 and Shahroudi in 2018. In recent years, Raisi, a hardline cleric, an elected President and a former judicial chief, was seen as a potential successor. His death leaves a huge void in the corridors of power in Tehran.

What does Raisi's death mean for India?

India has built a good relationship with Iran since the revolution of 1979. Even though trade ties have taken a beating in recent years, owing to American sanctions on Iran, both sides stayed invested in the overall bilateral partnership. One good example of this partnership is the Chabahar port project where India has made investments worth millions. External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar had attended Raisi's inauguration in August 2021. In January, Mr. Jaishankar travelled again to Tehran to meet its leaders at a time when Houthis, the Iran-backed Yemeni Shia militants, were carrying out attacks against vessels in the Red Sea. India had refused to join a U.S.-led coalition to attack the Houthis.

Earlier this month, India signed a long-term agreement to further develop and operate one of the two terminals of the Chabahar port, formalising a deal that has been in the works for years. On May 20, a day after the accident, Mr. Jaishankar said India and Iran reached the Chabahar agreement "because of the interest and initiative" of President Raisi and Foreign Minister Abdollahian. India was careful not to take a direct position in the West Asian crisis. When tensions broke out between Iran and Israel, India expressed deep concerns but stopped short of condemning any party. The fact that India sent Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar to Tehran to offer condolences shows that retaining the current momentum in ties remains a priority for New Delhi.

Why was Singapore flight turbulence severe?

How does turbulence or changes in air on the flight path affect an aircraft? Is there evidence that turbulence is increasing because of climate change? What are airlines doing to manage in-flight turbulence? What should be the takeaway from the injuries on board the Singapore flight?

Murali N. Krishnaswamy

The story so far:

On May 20-21, a Singapore Airlines flight, SQ321, with 211 passengers and 18 crew, from London's Heathrow Airport to Singapore encountered severe turbulence while over the Andaman Sea/Bay of Bengal near the Irrawaddy Basin, Myanmar. A passenger passed away and several others suffered injuries of varying degrees. The crew decided to divert the Boeing 777-312ER to Bangkok, Thailand. The United States National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) is to assist Singapore's investigation – also because the aircraft is a Boeing jet.

What do we know about the incident?

Granular flight data shows the aircraft dropping rapidly before the crew began ("controlled") descent from 37,000 feet to 31,000 feet. It also shows the aircraft had had an altitude deviation prior to this.

There has been much focus on 'turbulence'.

What have experts told *The Hindu*?

Turbulence occurs "by the relative movement of disturbed air through which an aircraft is flying". It could be thermal or mechanical and can happen "either within or when it is clear of cloud". Its severity depends on the "rate at which the speed or the direction of airflow/or both changes".

According to Professor Guy Gratton, Associate Professor of Aviation and the Environment at Cranfield University, U.K., turbulence is basically what happens when there is friction between airflow or wind flowing in different directions. When it involves aviation, there are two main

'The movement of the air may be random and unpredictable, forcing the aircraft up or down, suddenly and unexpectedly'

forms, which are Clear Air Turbulence (CAT), which happens around jet streams, and the other being inside or around cumulonimbus clouds. These clouds have very strong upwards air currents in the middle and downwards air current around the outside, he explains, which can result in quite serious turbulence. The faster an aircraft is, the more severe the response to the turbulence.

Prof. Richard Dale, Senior Lecturer in Aviation and Tourism at the University of West London, says turbulence consists of changes in the movement of air which the aircraft is moving through over a short distance. For example, there might be updrafts that are quickly followed by downdrafts, but also changes in the horizontal movement of the air. The movement of the air, to some degree, is random and unpredictable, although the location where turbulence will be encountered is more certain. These changes cause the lift produced by the aircraft wing to change for a short time, forcing the aircraft up or down, suddenly and unexpectedly. According to A.D. Ravishankar, former Director, Aviation Meteorology, India Meteorological Department, CAT is turbulence suffered by an aircraft above 18,000 feet.

Dr. Paul Williams, Professor of Atmospheric Science, University of Reading, U.K., says that turbulence fatalities on commercial flights are, fortunately, very rare. Turbulence on flights can be caused by storms, mountains, and strong air currents called jet streams. In this last case, it is called clear air turbulence, and can be difficult to avoid because it does not show up on the weather radar in the flight deck. He adds that a detailed analysis of the meteorological circumstances and the type of turbulence that affected the Singapore Airlines flight will take some time. He also says, "we recently discovered that severe clear air turbulence in the North Atlantic has increased by 55% since 1979. Our latest future projections indicate a doubling or trebling of severe turbulence in the jet streams in the coming decades, if the climate continues to change as we expect."

Will passenger injuries lead to litigation?

As visuals from the Singapore incident show, there has been serious injury to some passengers. Injuries occur from passengers not wearing their seat belts resulting in them being violently thrown from their seats, the overhead bins opening causing items to fall, the cabin ceiling and panels coming off and hot beverages causing burn injuries. A Singapore Airlines spokesperson has told *The Hindu* that it has adopted a more cautious approach to managing turbulence in-flight.



Troubled landing: The Singapore Airline flight SQ321 on May 21. REUTERS

Why COVID vaccine safety needs scrutiny

Why has the Indian Council for Medical Research, which was involved in developing Covaxin, the indigenous COVID vaccine together with Bharat Biotech, criticised a BHU study? What are the key findings? Why should examining vaccine safety be a priority?

Ramya Kannan

The story so far:

The Indian Council for Medical Research (ICMR) issued a letter to the researchers of Banaras Hindu University last week, countering their study on the side effects of India's indigenous vaccine for COVID – Covaxin. In a rejoinder sent a couple of days after the publication of the research paper in a peer-reviewed journal, ICMR head Rajiv Bahl claimed that his institution had been incorrectly and misleadingly acknowledged in the paper. He pointed out what he called 'critical flaws' in the 'poorly-designed study'. Notably, the ICMR was involved in developing Covaxin along with Bharat Biotech.

What did the BHU study conclude?

Adolescent girls and those with co-morbidities were at a higher risk of adverse events after receiving Bharat Biotech's BBV152 (Covaxin) vaccine against COVID-19, BHU researchers said. Nearly a third of the participants reported adverse events of special interest (AESI). The one-year observational, follow-up study titled 'Long-term safety analysis of the BBV152 coronavirus vaccine [Covaxin] in adolescents and adults: Findings from a one-year

'We were hoping and expecting that ICMR would build upon BHU study on vaccine side-effects'

prospective study in North India', also said that serious adverse events occurred in 1% of BBV152 recipients, and that extended surveillance is warranted following the vaccine administration.

Viral upper respiratory tract infections were reported in 47.9% adolescents and 42.6% adults, as per the study. New onset skin and subcutaneous disorders, general disorders, and nervous system disorders were the common AESIs in adolescents. General disorders, musculoskeletal disorders, and nervous system disorders were the common AESIs in adults. Menstrual abnormalities were noticed in 4.6% of female participants. Ocular abnormalities and hypothyroidism were observed in 2.7% and 0.6% of the participants, respectively. Among the serious AESIs (1%), stroke and Guillain-Barre syndrome were identified in 0.3% and 0.1% of the participants, respectively.

In response to this, Bharat Biotech, the vaccine manufacturer which worked with the ICMR's own National Institute of Virology to develop the vaccine candidate, said for such a study in safety to be effective and informative, and for it to avoid investigator bias, some data points were also required. This included the AESI safety profile of the subjects prior to their participation in the study; a comparison of the safety profile of non-vaccinated subjects during the course of the study; a comparison of the safety profile of subjects who received other vaccines during the course of the study etc.

What did ICMR object to?

In his letter, Dr. Bahl said ICMR was not associated with the study and had not provided any financial or technical support. He alleged that the authors had acknowledged ICMR for research support without prior approval or intimation to the institution, calling this "inappropriate and unacceptable."

With reference to the study itself, he claimed there were critical flaws: the study had no control arm of unvaccinated individuals for comparison with the vaccinated group, and therefore, the reported events in the study cannot be linked or attributed to COVID-19 vaccination; it did not provide background rates of patterns observed in the general population,

Turbulence injuries have resulted in the realisation that winning a turbulence claim needs skill and knowledge of the factors that caused the incident. Aviation attorneys work with aviation and weather experts to plot the aircraft's route, obtain satellite images of the weather at the time and location of the encounter, and to quickly secure airline data to help prove the claim. They even look at whether the crew knew there was bad weather ahead but decided not to deviate to save time, fuel, and airline money. In the U.S., for instance, aviation attorneys review government data and reports, Federal Aviation Administration and NTSB findings, and the airline's procedures to obtain full and fair compensation. *Magan vs Lufthansa German Airlines* is one case where a passenger was injured and won a "substantial verdict pursuant to the Montreal Convention".

What about technology in flight planning?

Bill Duncan, aviation forecast operations leader at The Weather Company (a weather forecasting and information technology company) has told *The Hindu* that there is a process behind a dispatcher or pilot planning a route, which includes meteorologists looking at flight planning guidance charts. There is also an accounting for year-round turbulence impacted by climate change. Extreme weather events have risen in severity since 2000. According to Mr. Duncan, there is no doubt that there is warming going on, which can impact and divide the jet stream. "As the jet stream buckles a bit because it is not as strong as it was in the past, you have all this energy associated with the jet stream up 30,000 feet or so, which is allowing colder air to spill south". So the world is seeing major weather events happening more often.

Aviation meteorologists use model data, weather pattern recognition, and experience to help identify these areas of potential turbulence. Pilots get reports out ahead of their route on reported turbulence, and dispatchers are in contact with local meteorologists who actively watch routes and issue Flight Planning Guidance Charts (FPGs) and Significant Meteorological Information (SIGMETs). These SIGMETs are the information that the dispatcher can relay to the pilot about hazardous weather. With improvements in technology and science, there are better numerical weather prediction models. The Weather Company, for instance, has a Global high-Resolution Atmospheric Forecasting model which simulates the physics of the atmosphere to predict the weather and also uses artificial intelligence (AI) methods that build on weather forecasts to predict turbulence and other aviation hazards. Mr. Duncan adds that machine learning algorithms and AI are being used to find the links between historical weather and observations of turbulence. Separately, over 20 airlines now participate in the International Air Transport Association's 'Turbulence Aware Platform'.

and thereby made it impossible to study the observed events in the post vaccination period. Further, Dr. Bahl claimed there was no baseline information of study participants; the study tool was inconsistent with the AESI as defined in the reference paper, and the method of data collection (participants were contacted over the telephone, and their responses recorded without any clinical confirmation).

He further asked the researchers to remove the acknowledgement to ICMR and publish an erratum. His letter also called to retract the paper, with a remark: "This paper implicitly makes conclusions about vaccine safety that are not supported by evidence." The BHU recorded that it had received the communique addressed to its researchers. The researchers have communicated their responses to the ICMR.

What was the fallout?

Most researchers were shocked by the response of the ICMR, terming it as "academic censorship." Multiple accounts of doctors and researchers on social media also pointed out that the ICMR developed the vaccine along with the company, and not declaring its vested interest was also a serious lapse in research terms. Among those who formulated an official response, foremost was the Universal Health Organisation (UHO), a group of researchers, doctors, and public health experts, who echoed the research ecosystem's shock at the belated denial. The UHO wrote an open letter to the ICMR stating the study filled a key gap in terms of field data, analysing the safety of Covaxin.

"While we were hoping and expecting that the ICMR would build upon this study, address its shortcomings, and elevate the standards of vaccine safety, we are aghast to come across letters sent by ICMR asking for the retraction of the paper, and threatening the authors of the study," it said. On the point of not having a control group, the letter said, it was indeed a shortcoming but had been admitted in the study itself. Besides, this actually points to the fact that it was the ICMR that has access to the data with the control group – the original phase 3 trials of Covaxin. Neither the ICMR nor the company had published the long-term safety trials, it charged. While using telephonic interviews was not ideal, it has been used by ICMR in the past, even in papers on COVID vaccines. To call for the retraction of the BHU paper on these lines was unbecoming of a scientific institution of ICMR's stature, the letter added.



Safety concerns: A nurse about to administer the Covaxin vaccine. FILE PHOTO

PROFILES

A party in decline

African National Congress

Nelson Mandela's party, which has been in power in South Africa for three decades after the transition from Apartheid, faces its biggest electoral test amid rampant poverty, widening inequality and intra-party factionalism

Srinivasan Ramani

Even as elections in India are drawing to a close, the citizens of yet another BRICS country and emerging economy are going to the polls on May 29. The largest country in GDP (nominal) terms in Africa, South Africa has been ruled for three decades by the party that was most associated with the anti-Apartheid struggle – the African National Congress (ANC).

Identified with leaders such as Nobel prize winning Nelson Mandela, who went on to become the first President of racially-integrated South Africa, the ANC has maintained its dominance as the party of governance in the country, so much so that political observers have termed the ANC's rule in South Africa one of a dominant party presiding over a "party-state".

The ANC today is helmed by President Cyril Ramaphosa, a businessman with a long association with the party, who served as chairperson of the Constitutional Assembly after the first democratic elections in South Africa following the end of Apartheid in 1994. Mr. Ramaphosa emerged as ANC president after a strongly contested leadership race against Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, who was supported by then president and widely derided to be a corrupt leader, Jacob Zuma. After the election, Mr. Zuma resigned following pressure from the party and Mr. Ramaphosa was elected unopposed as the President of South Africa by the National Assembly in February 2018.

Mr. Ramaphosa was seen by many as someone who could bring in change after Mr. Zuma's controversial years. But his government, elected in May 2019 after winning 57.5% of the votes in the general election, had to tackle many economic challenges – the outcome of the COVID-19 pandemic, the inherited weaknesses in the economy and the many failures of state-owned enterprises.

As a party leader, he also had to confront a leadership that included heavyweights who were associated with Mr. Zuma. In July 2021, when Mr. Zuma refused to comply with a

summons order from a Constitutional Court that was set up to inquire into allegations of "state capture" and "fraud" in the public sector during his tenure, he was sentenced to 15 months of imprisonment. Mr. Zuma went on to announce that he would be voting for the newly formed party, the uMkhonto we Sizwe (named after the armed organisation affiliated to the ANC during the anti-Apartheid struggle) in the 2024 elections despite being a lifelong member of the ANC.

Earlier, factional troubles in the ANC had also resulted in the formation of new parties such as the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) by former ANC Youth League leaders. The EFF, which won 10.8% of the vote in the 2019 elections, retains an ideological view that is closer to some of the radical sections of the ANC and believes in measures such as nationalisation of mines, banks and other industries and appeals to unemployed youth who are not seen as ANC supporters.

While the ANC is expected to retain its presence as the single largest party in the coming elections, its performance could be dented by concerns among South Africans about persisting poverty and rising inequality. The World Bank said in 2020 that 37.9% of the population is living at international poverty levels of \$3.2 per person a day with 25% (13.8 million people) experiencing food poverty. The country's Gini coefficient was 0.63 in its last measured value in 2014, showing widespread inequality.

Dampening enthusiasm

These concerns have already dampened voting enthusiasm among the ANC's core Black voters. Voter turnout in South Africa among eligible voters fell from 85.53% in 1994 to 47.28% in 2019 after a steady decline election after election, according to the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA). Dissatisfaction with the ANC's performance has also led to disillusionment with democratic institutions itself with Afrobarometer in 2021 recording that only 40% of South Africans preferred democracy over non-democratic options.



ILLUSTRATION: R. RAJESH

The chief rival to the ANC in the South African party system remains the centrist Democratic Alliance, which has emphasised its opposition to what it calls the "state capture" of the ANC and its cadres and the reduction of the South African democratic system into a dominant one-party state. But it is largely seen as a party that represents the interests of the white minority and has been unable to expand its reach. Controversial views espoused by the DA's leaders on the legacy of colonialism have only increased the suspicion among Black voters.

The core support base of the ANC, despite misgivings among its voters, remain those who have experienced racism during the Apartheid era and

were aware of the ANC's efforts during the struggle and many who still perceive the ANC as the only party capable of addressing the problems faced by the Black community in particular.

Formed in 1912 as the South African Native National Congress to press for rights of Black South Africans, it was renamed to its current appellation in 1923 and mostly functioned as an organisation devoted to getting legislation passed in favour of the community. But by the 1940s, with the influx of younger left-wing activists committed to mass mobilisation movements, trade union activity and resistance tactics, the ANC, under the leadership of Alfred Xuma, had become a major movement. In the

1950s, the ANC intensified its mass campaigns, which included strikes, boycotts and civil disobedience movements, and by 1955, it was a key signatory to the "Freedom Charter" that became vital to the anti-Apartheid struggle.

Tripartite Alliance

Other signatories included parties and organisations such as the South African Communist Party (SACP), the South African Indian Congress and trade unions. The SACP, along with the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), remains aligned with the ANC as part of the Tripartite Alliance, which was forged in 1990 after the release of Nelson Mandela from prison.

Organisations aligned with the ANC such as the uMkhonto we Sizwe (MK or Spear of the Nation) launched an armed struggle against Apartheid in the 1960s after the ANC itself was banned and its leadership went underground. Leaders like Mandela were arrested and remained in jail for nearly three decades. Negotiations by the Apartheid regime with the ANC to end the system and transit into multi-racial democracy began in the 1980s. After the release of Mandela and the lifting of the ban on the ANC in the early 1990s, an interim Constitution was ratified. The ANC clinched a thumping victory in the 1994 elections and Mandela became President.

Mandela's government was widely popular and allowed for a peaceful transition of power. But with the party retaining a structure which is largely hierarchical that reverted to a culture of patronage on assuming power, degeneration set in over the years. Ineffective governance, economic woes and allegations of chronic corruption led to a sharp decline in the ANC's popularity, especially during the Zuma regime, with the party winning 57.5% of the vote in the 2019 elections.

With Mr. Ramaphosa being seen as unable to stem the decline and relying only on incremental steps to bring change in the party, the ANC may have to rely upon other parties in South Africa's proportional representation system to continue to stay in power.

THE GIST

Formed in 1912 as the South African Native National Congress to press for rights of Black South Africans, it was renamed to its current appellation in 1923

By the 1940s, with the influx of younger left-wing activists committed to mass mobilisation movements, the ANC, under the leadership of Alfred Xuma, had emerged as a major movement

In the 1950s, the ANC intensified its mass campaigns, which included civil disobedience movements, and by 1955, it was a key signatory to the "Freedom Charter" that became vital to the anti-Apartheid struggle

The fight goes on

Prabir Purkayastha

The NewsClick founder was released from jail after the Supreme Court stated that his arrest under UAPA was 'invalid in the eyes of law'

Sreeparna Chakrabarty

"The more things change the more they remain the same" – this adage by 19th century French writer Jean-Baptiste Alphonse Karr possibly holds best for Prabir Purkayastha, founder of online news portal NewsClick.

Incarcerated twice, half a century apart, during two very different time periods in India's political history, Mr. Purkayastha has had a long career as a public intellectual. He has been an advocate for self-reliance, an activist in the literacy and free software movements and an expert in the power and telecom sectors, besides being a journalist.

His two prison sojourns – first under the Maintenance of Internal Security Act (MISA) during Emergency in 1975 and then in 2023 under the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA) have brought his life and work into spotlight. "Prabir has been a lifelong activist. I have been making the argument in public on several occasions. I have been saying why was he jailed is because he is a good citizen," says Sudhanva Deshpande, a theatre personality and a close associate of Mr. Purkayastha.

Born in 1949, Mr. Purkayastha has trained as an



engineer at the universities of Calcutta and Allahabad and joined Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, as a research scholar in the School of Computers and System Sciences in 1975. It was in JNU, after Emergency was imposed by the Indira Gandhi government, where he was arrested, on September 25, in place of D.P. Tripathi in a case of mistaken identity.

According to the book *Emergency Chronicles: Indira Gandhi and Democracy's Turning Point*, by historian Gyan Prakash, Mr. Purkayastha had gone to JNU to carry out a strike called by the Students' Federation of India, the students wing of the CPI (M), to protest the university's action when a team of plainclothes policemen picked him up.

Cut to 2023: this time, Mr. Purkayastha was arrested by the Delhi Police Special Cell on October 3 under the UAPA. He was accused of using Chinese funding to promote "anti-

national propaganda" through digital media.

Multiple journalist collectives had termed "chilling" the raids at the homes of 46 journalists, editors, writers and professionals connected to NewsClick, and seizure of their electronic devices, culminating in the arrest of its founder.

Scientific temper

The Supreme Court, however, on May 15 ordered his release from custody, saying it felt "no hesitation" to declare the arrest and remand of the 74-year-old journalist under the UAPA by the Delhi Police as "invalid in the eyes of law". But what lies behind this man with these controversial prison innings is someone who colleagues and friends describe as a person committed to rationalism, scientific temper and justice for the country's most oppressed people.

"He is really funny. He has a fantastic sense of humour. I have hardly had a conversation with him

without rolling up in laughter," Mr. Deshpande says.

Adds CPI(M) Politburo member Brinda Karat, who has known Mr. Purkayastha since his student days: "He has courage. That courage he has shown many times both in his political and personal life. That courage is also due to his clarity on the ideology he believes in".

Most of his friends also emphasise his commitment to enabling the use of technology by the masses.

His commitment to science can be seen in the numerous organisations he has established or is part of whose objective is to promote scientific temper among people. He is co-convenor of the Just Net Coalition, a global coalition on internet governance, data privacy and digital independence. He is a founder member of the Delhi Science Forum and the All India People's Science Network. He is also president of Free Software Movement of India, set up in 2010.

Mr. Purkayastha had also filed a number of Public Interest Litigations (PILs) to safeguard India's interests in the telecom sector.

The title of his autobiography, *Keeping up the Good Fight—From the Emergency to the Present Day*, seems to be the best way to describe his life's journey.

Man on a mission

Karim Khan

The ICC chief prosecutor says the leaders of Hamas and the Israeli government have committed war crimes and crimes against humanity

Aaratrika Bhaumik

When Karim A.A. Khan was sworn in as the chief public prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC) in June 2021, he famously said the Court should be judged by its act – "the proof of the pudding should be in the eating". By announcing his decision on May 20 to apply for arrest warrants against both the leadership of Hamas and Israel, Mr. Khan seems to have taken an indelible step towards demanding accountability for the Israel-Hamas war.

In an unprecedented event in the history of the World Court, often ridiculed for its glacial slowness, the prosecutor said there are reasonable grounds to believe that three of Hamas's most senior leaders – Yahya Sinwar, Mohammed Deif and Ismail Haniyeh – along with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Defence Minister Yoav Gallant have committed war crimes and crimes against humanity.

In an international law career spanning decades, the British litigator of Pakistani origin has crafted a reputation as a gifted orator and a formidable prosecutor. Mr. Khan has partly credited his early interest in international human rights to his experience of doing voluntary work with the Ahmadiyya Muslim community, a persecuted sect of Islam, of which he is a member. Before his stint at the ICC, Mr. Khan was a special adviser to UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres and served for both the defence and the prosecution at several international courts. He was involved in investigating war crimes committed in former Yugoslavia, Rwanda, Cambodia and Lebanon, and also led the UN team investigating crimes committed by the Islamic State terrorist group.



ILLUSTRATIONS: SREEJITH R. KUMAR

The 54-year-old has faced controversies throughout a career that included stints defending Saif al-Islam Gaddafi, son of the late Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi, and Charles Taylor, the former President of Liberia who was convicted of war crimes in Sierra Leone. In 2016, the ICC dropped crimes against humanity charges against his client

Kenya's President William Ruto after what was described as a "troubling incidence of witness interference and intolerable political meddling". A key witness in the case had been killed two years ago.

The prosecutor was originally not on the shortlist for the ICC role but was later included following discreet lobbying by British bureaucrats and Kenyan officials. The Kenyan government's campaign for Mr. Khan's candidacy was attributed to his trenchant defence of its Premier.

Pursuing accountability

Mr. Khan seems to be a man on a mission to establish the ICC's legitimacy in pursuing accountability from heads of state without fear or favour. Responding swiftly to the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine, he sought arrest warrants against Russian President Vladimir Putin and senior Kremlin official Maria Alekseyevna Lvova-Belova last year over their

alleged role in the deportation of Ukrainian children.

The decision to seek warrants against Israel's leadership with staunch opposition from the U.S. and other Western states is a resounding retort to criticism that the Court is biased against African nations where so many of its cases have been focused. While U.S. President Joe Biden has called the move "outrageous", a dozen Republican senators in April this year, penned a chilling letter "warning" Mr. Khan of consequences after reports began to circulate that such a decision was imminent. But the ICC prosecutor remains undeterred telling CNN that the decision is "not a witch hunt" but in accordance with what is expected from an independent Court.

Well aware of the political ramifications, Mr. Khan has disclosed a list of distinguished experts, two of them former judges, who have backed his claims. While acknowledging that "disinformation has been rife", the experts have unanimously agreed that the prosecutor's work has been fair and rigorous. Although it remains to be seen whether the evidence will withstand scrutiny in a courtroom, the English barrister is here to challenge the long-standing scepticism against the efficacy of international law.

WASHINGTON

U.S., Chinese defence chiefs to meet following Taiwan tensions



U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin will meet his Chinese Admiral Dong Jun, the Pentagon announced on Friday, after Beijing carried out war games around Taiwan in a sign to the U.S.-backed democracy's new leader. The meeting will happen at the May 31 - June 2 Shangri-La Dialogue, a gathering of defence officials. AFP

KYIV

Russian strike on Kharkiv store kills two, hundreds feared inside



Russian strikes on a crowded DIY hardware store in the Ukrainian city of Kharkiv on Saturday killed at least two persons and wounded many more. Two guided bombs hit the store in an attack which also saw 24 people injured. Officials said up to 200 people could have been in the hypermarket at the time of the strikes. REUTERS

ISLAMABAD

43 Pakistan nationals to be repatriated from Sri Lankan jails



The Sri Lankan government will repatriate 43 Pakistani nationals languishing in the island nation's jails. The decision was arrived at during a meeting between Pakistan's Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi and Sri Lanka's High Commissioner Admiral (Retd) Ravindra Chandra Srivijay Gunaratne on Friday. PTI

BEIJING

China and Nepal open vital, traditional border trade points



China and Nepal reopened their traditional border trade points that have played a "significant role" in fostering the development of border areas. The ceremony on Saturday in the city of Xigaze, a pivotal city for China's opening-up to South Asia, bordering India, Nepal and Bhutan, and hosting five trade land ports. PTI

'Gelephu smart city is a lifetime opportunity'

Many investors from India see the potential of the Gelephu Special Administrative Region, and they want to be the first movers, says Bhutan's Prime Minister; we are situated bang on the border with India and this is a very welcome conduit into India's vast economy and to all of South Asia and by extension to Southeast Asia, he adds

INTERVIEW

Tshering Tobgay

Suhasini Haidar

Bhutan announced this week that it will use ₹1,500 crore, part of a ₹10,000 crore outlay promised by Prime Minister Narendra Modi during his visit to Thimphu in March, for an 'Economic Stimulus Programme' to tackle its economic challenges of slow growth, tourism downturn and unemployment. Speaking to *The Hindu* in his first interview since he was elected in January, Bhutanese Prime Minister Tshering Tobgay said that while Bhutan's challenges are "deep", the newly-launched Gelephu carbon-

negative smart-city project is a "once-in-a-lifetime opportunity" for Bhutan's growth.

How deep are Bhutan's economic challenges and as the new Prime Minister, how will you tackle them?

Our economic challenges are deep. However, they are not new. Manufacturing has not really slowed down. It's always been small. We need to step up manufacturing. We have taken a hit in terms of tourist arrivals, so we are working towards getting to pre-pandemic numbers and beyond that. We are quite excited now that tourism is really picking up much more quickly than I had anticipated.

When Prime Minister Modi came to Thimphu,



Tshering Tobgay

he raised Indian support for Bhutan's next five-year plans from ₹5,000 crore to ₹10,000 crore. Where do you see this extra additional outlay being spent?

About ₹8,500 crore is for our 13th five-year plan that starts on July 1 this year. Much of that money will go into infrastructure. Mr. Modi and the people of India have also very gener-

ously given us an assistance package of ₹1,500 crore and we have released details of how we will spend that [this week]. This money will be used for an 'economic Stimulus package' to get our economy back on track, particularly in terms of small businesses, and reviving the tourism and the hospitality sector.

There is much interest in the plan for the Gelephu Mindfulness City project announced by Bhutan's King Jigme Khesar. How will you ensure the plan is feasible and does not become a white elephant like many mega-city projects in the region and worldwide?

If there are white elephants, they are not in

Bhutan. And the reason is because we cannot afford white elephants. The King's vision of [Gelephu] is already succeeding. And I say it's already succeeding because it has captured the imagination of the world. Many investors from India see the potential of the Special Administrative Region, Gelephu Mindfulness City, and they want to be the first movers. We are situated bang on the border with India. This is a very welcome conduit into India's vast economy and to all of South Asia and by extension to Southeast Asia.

Indian airport authorities have visited Gelephu Airport, which you need to expand. Will there be a tie-up between India and Bhutan for the development of the

Gelephu airport?

Indian Airport Authority officials have visited and met officials here to discuss flight paths and aviation regulations of our respective countries. In terms of construction of the airport, right now, it's at a design phase, for an iconic airport. Once the design is complete, I'm sure the Mindfulness City Council will start inviting bids for construction.

In 2017, Bhutan refused to join Bhutan, Bangladesh, India, and Nepal BBIN motor vehicles agreement when you were last in power. As Prime Minister again, do you see a chance of reviewing that?

When I was Prime Minister, we had signed on to the

BBIN agreement, but our parliament did not ratify the agreement, because the people were up in arms. We are surrounded by huge populations in Nepal, India, and Bangladesh - so we cannot have an agreement that will just allow free access in and out. While we had negotiated a very generous deal from our neighbours, which would limit the number and the destinations of the vehicles, our people just were not ready. I will be very frank. I don't think we are ready even now.

Two Prime Ministerial visits already in 2024 - will there be more this year?

My next visit to Delhi I foresee as soon as the elections are over, because I wish to congratulate the incoming Prime Minister in person.

Pakistan PM to visit China next month for CPEC

Press Trust of India
ISLAMABAD

Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif will visit China in the first week of next month to join the formal launching of the second phase of the \$60 billion China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, according to a media report on Saturday.

Mr. Sharif was scheduled to leave for China on June 4.

The CPEC, which connects Gwadar Port in Pakistan's Balochistan with China's Xinjiang province, is opposed by India as it is being laid through Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK). In CPEC-II, both countries will focus on agriculture, Main Line-I of Pakistan Railways, businessmen-to-businessmen deals and realignment of the Karakoram Highway (KKH) etc.

Israel strikes Rafah despite UN top court's orders to halt offensive

Agence France-Presse
RAFAH

Israeli air strikes and artillery pounded Rafah on Saturday, despite the UN's top court ordering an immediate halt to its military offensive in the southern Gaza city.

At the same time, renewed efforts were underway in Paris for a ceasefire in the war sparked by Palestinian militant group Hamas's unprecedented October 7 attack on Israel.

In a case brought by South Africa alleging the is-

Strikes were reported in Rafah, Deir al-Balah, Gaza City, Jabalia refugee camp and elsewhere

raeli military operation amounts to "genocide", the International Court of Justice ordered Israel to halt its Rafah offensive and demanded the immediate release of hostages still held by Palestinian militants.

In spite of the ICJ ruling, Israel carried out strikes

throughout the Gaza Strip on Saturday morning as fighting raged between the Army and Hamas's armed wing.

Witnesses reported Israeli strikes or shelling in Rafah, the central city of Deir al-Balah, Gaza City, Jabalia refugee camp and elsewhere. "We hope that the court's decision will put pressure on Israel to end this war of extermination because there is nothing left here," said a Palestinian woman from Gaza City displaced to Deir al-Balah by the war.

G-7 cites 'progress', but no deal so far on frozen Russian assets

Agence France-Presse
STRESA

G-7 Finance Ministers cited "progress" on Saturday in finding ways to use profits from frozen Russian assets to help Ukraine, envisioning a concrete proposal to present to a leaders' summit next month.

A search for creative yet legally sound solutions was top of the agenda at the two-day Group of Seven meeting in Stresa in north-

ern Italy that wrapped up on Saturday.

They hope to present a proposal that is "defined in all its dimensions" to G-7 leaders ahead of a summit in Puglia, southern Italy, on June 13-15, Italian Finance Minister Giancarlo Giorgetti told a final press conference on Saturday.

An agreed proposal "is clearly not yet finalised because it has significant technical and legal issues", Mr. Giorgetti cautioned.

Muizzu seeks easier funding to battle waves in low-lying Maldives

Agence France-Presse
MALE

The Maldives on Saturday demanded international funding to battle rising sea levels, saying the low-lying Indian Ocean archipelago was being unfairly excluded from the most generous support measures.

"The Maldives is liable for just 0.003% of global emissions, but is one of the first countries to endure the existential consequences of the climate crisis," President Mohamed Muizzu wrote in Britain's



Mohamed Muizzu

Guardian newspaper. "Wealthier nations have a moral responsibility to communities like ours."

His comments came ahead of a once-a-decade

conference of Small Island Developing States (SIDS) - many of them known as luxury tourism destinations but threatened by rising sea levels, which opens on Monday.

SIDS receive "only about 14% of the finance that the least developed countries receive", he said.

Mr. Muizzu has said that his country needs about \$500 million to mitigate the effects of climate change and the tourism-dependent economy was unable to raise the money on its own.

Sport

Leclerc takes pole for Monaco Grand Prix

Agence France-Presse
MONACO

Ferrari's Charles Leclerc snatched pole at his home Monaco GP on Saturday.

The grid: Front row: Charles Leclerc (Ferrari), Oscar Piastri (McLaren); **2nd row:** Carlos Sainz (Ferrari), Lando Norris (McLaren); **3rd row:** George Russell (Mercedes), Max Verstappen (Red Bull); **4th row:** Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes), Yuki Tsunoda (RB); **5th row:** Alex Albon (Williams), Pierre Gasly (Alpine); **6th row:** Esteban Ocon (Alpine), Nico Hulkenberg (Haas); **7th row:** Daniel Ricciardo (RB), Lance Stroll (Aston Martin); **8th row:** Kevin Magnussen (Haas), Fernando Alonso (Aston Martin); **9th row:** Logan Sargeant (Williams), Sergio Perez (Red Bull); **10th row:** Valtteri Bottas (Sauber), Zhou Guanyu (Sauber).



American dream: The Men in Blue, led by Rohit, will look to end their title drought as they depart for the T20 extravaganza. X@BCCI

First batch of Indians leave for T20 WC

Press Trust of India
MUMBAI

The first batch of Indian cricketers, including skipper Rohit Sharma, departed for the USA on Saturday ahead of the T20 World Cup beginning on June 2.

Apart from Rohit, the others who left for the

Americas were Jasprit Bumrah, Suryakumar Yadav, Ravindra Jadeja, Shivam Dube, Mohammed Siraj, Arshdeep Singh, Khaleel Ahmed, Kuldeep Yadav and Axar Patel among others. Head coach Rahul Dravid and batting coach Vikram Rathour also left on Saturday.

SNAPSHOTS

Pujara slams 10th century for Sussex

LONDON: Cheteshwar Pujara scored 129 as Sussex scored a mammoth 554 for nine declared against Middlesex in a County championship Division 2 match on Saturday. This was Pujara's 65th First Class hundred, and 10th for Sussex.

Archer and Buttler star for England

BIRMINGHAM: Jofra Archer took two for 28 on his long-awaited return to international cricket to help England beat Pakistan by 23 runs at Edgbaston to move 1-0 up in the four-match T20I series.

The scores: England 183/7 in 20 overs (Jos Buttler 84, Will Jacks 37, Shaheen Afridi 3/36) bt Pakistan 160 in 19.2 overs (Fakhar Zaman 45, Reece Topley 3/41).

Indian compound teams clinch a gold and a silver medal

ARCHERY WORLD CUP

Sports Bureau

V. Jyothi Surekha helped the Indian compound teams win a gold and a silver in the Archery World Cup Stage-2 at Yecheon (South Korea) on Saturday.

The World champion trio of Jyothi, Aditi Swami and Parneet Kaur shot good scores consistently to beat Turkey, consisting of Hazal Burum, Ayse Suzer and Begum Yuva, 232-226 in the final and get India its second successive women's team title.

The Indian side showed its supremacy by winning three out of four ends, barring the third where the two teams shared points



On target: Parneet, along with Jyothi and Aditi, took India to its second successive women's team title.

with a 58-58 tie. Jyothi and Priyansh gave USA, comprising Olivia Dean and Sawyer Sullivan, a strong challenge before losing 155-153 in the mixed team final and finishing with silver. Prathamesh Fuge lost

his semifinal 148-143 to American James Lutz and the eventual bronze medal contest to Dutchman Mike Schloesser 148-148 (shoot-off: 10-9) to finish without a medal in the compound men's individual event.

Girona ends with 7-0 thumping of Granada

EURO LEAGUES

Agence France-Presse
BARCELONA

Girona rounded off its brilliant LaLiga season with a 7-0 thrashing of relegated Granada on Friday, as Artem Dovbyk retook the lead in the league's goal-scoring charts with a hat-trick.

Michel's side was already guaranteed to finish third before kick-off, behind champion Real Madrid and Barcelona.

The results: On Friday: LaLiga: Girona 7 (Garcia 30, Tsygankov 33, 54, Dovbyk 44-pen, 75, 90-pen, Stuanis 78) bt Granada 0. **Serie A:** Genoa 2 (Malinovskyi 13, Vitinha 59) bt Bologna 0.

TALL LEADER

Cummins is a practical guy, not into big team meetings: Helmot



M. VEDHAN

SRH assistant coach Simon Helmot lauded Pat Cummins' leadership qualities, and also said that the Aussie was not into big team meetings. "He's a practical guy, very humble, very empathetic towards his teammates and coaching staff. I think our team meeting on Saturday went for 35 seconds," said Helmot.

TWO TO TANGO

Narine, Varun have been spot-on in executing their plans: Shreyas



K.R. DEEPAK

KKR skipper Shreyas Iyer praised his spinners Sunil Narine and Varun Chakravarthy, saying they could be the key in the final. "They have been the wicket-takers and they have been spot-on in terms of executing their plans. In the middle overs, they also control the runs. If they execute their plans well on Sunday, it would help us."

CLEAR VISION

We were pretty sure we wanted to play super aggressive: Cummins



B. JOTHI RAMALINGAM

Pat Cummins revealed that Sunrisers had a clear plan to be aggressive this season. "At the start, you map out the style you want to play that you think is going to give the best chance. Along the way, you're allowed to adapt to that and change some personnel. We were pretty sure we wanted to play super aggressive."

VITAL INPUTS

Gambhir adds a lot to the team, his strategies have worked: Shreyas



K. MURALI KUMAR

KKR skipper Shreyas Iyer said team mentor Gautam Gambhir's inputs have made a big difference. "He has got immense knowledge about how the game is played. He has won two titles with KKR and his strategies have worked well. He adds a lot to the team. Hopefully, we keep continuing with the same momentum."

KKR, SRH in a big bucks battle for the IPL crown

The two franchises splurged on Starc and Cummins at the auction, raising many an eyebrow only to be proven right; the league's most exciting teams will now hope for a Super Sunday

PHOTO: R. RAGU

THE FINAL

N. Sudarshan
CHENNAI

Last December, when Mitchell Starc and Pat Cummins went for over ₹45 crore collectively at the auction, it looked like the Indian Premier League market had gone berserk.

Recency bias was the oft-cited explanation, for the two speedsters had played an instrumental role in Australia's 50-over World Cup win just a month earlier. It didn't matter that Starc had last played in the IPL in 2015 and Cummins a grand total of 12 IPL matches since 2020.

Kolkata Knight Riders paid a whopping ₹24.75 crores for Starc and Sunrisers Hyderabad splurged ₹20.50 crores on Cummins. Two bonafide Test greats, with enviable ODI records, had laughed their way to the bank in the bespoke world of T20 cricket.

More than five months after that frenzied afternoon in Dubai, Starc and Cummins will line up for the IPL final at the M.A. Chidambaram Stadium on Sunday, having proved their penny's worth and every critic wrong. Starc has scalped 15 wickets in KKR's commanding run to the summit clash while



Lettin' it rip! Starc will want to recreate his magic from Qualifier 1 against the same opponent. R. RAGU

Cummins, with his midas captaincy touch, has had his best-ever IPL with 17 wickets.

It helps that both are part of robust T20 outfits. KKR, astutely led by Shreyas Iyer, last lost a match exactly a month ago and reserved its best for Qualifier 1 where it walloped SRH by eight wickets.

Sunrisers, despite being not so clinical, has redefined T20 batting this season, with Travis Head — another World Cup winner from Australia — and Abhishek Sharma pummeling

many attacks into submission.

So wholesome an outfit has KKR been that even the loss of the in-form opener Phil Salt hasn't seemingly affected the balance as Afghan Rahmanullah Gurbaz shone in Qualifier 1 in his first visit to the crease.

Sunil Narine, Venkatesh Iyer and Andre Russell have come to the party when required; only Rinku Singh has remained largely subdued.

For SRH, Rahul Tripathi has thrived in three straight games and, along with Heinrich Klaasen, has

bolstered the middle-order. Particularly impressive was the way R. Ashwin and Yuzvendra Chahal were handled in Qualifier 2. This should bode well for the team ahead of another spin test against Varun Chakravarthy and Narine.

New heroes

The biggest gain for SRH from Friday's shootout was the unearthing of new heroes, with the unheralded spin bowlers in Shahbaz Ahmed and Abhishek coming up with match-winning performances on a dry, deteriorating pitch. Will lightning strike twice at Chepauk?

Heavens did open on match-eve, forcing KKR to call off its practice session after a few minutes. Sun didn't beat down on Saturday as it usually does in May in these parts, but the weather remained warm and humid. As to what effect this has on the late-evening dew on matchday remains to be seen, for the absence of it in Qualifier 2 perplexed many.

However, amidst this mystery, what is certain is the fact that one of Starc and Cummins will leave the Indian shores with another colourful feather in an already ornate cap. A World Test champion, an ODI World Cup winner, a T20 World titlist will also be an IPL top dog.

A shot at GLORY

As the top two teams in the league phase clash for the coveted prize, a look at the journeys of Knight Riders and Sunrisers, and their track record at the iconic M.A. Chidambaram Stadium

H2H IN 2024		
Played	KKR	SRH
2	2	0

- KKR won by four runs (league stage)
- KKR won by eight wickets (Qualifier 1)

KNIGHT RIDERS

- CHAMPION: 2012, 2014
- Finalist: 2021

	P	W	L
In 2024	13	10	3
In Chennai	1	0	1

SUNRISERS

- CHAMPION: 2016
- Finalist: 2018

	P	W	L
In 2024	15	9	6
In Chennai	2	1	1

** Records pertain to completed matches*

	BATTING FIRST		BATTING SECOND	
	P	W	P	W
KNIGHT RIDERS	9	6	4	4
SUNRISERS	9	6	6	3

- In IPL finals, on nine occasions, teams batting first have emerged victorious while there have been seven successful pursuits
- KKR has chased in all the three finals it has played. SRH has taken first strike in both its summit clashes

RECORD IN CHENNAI			
KNIGHT RIDERS	PLAYED: 14	WON: 4	LOST: 10
SUNRISERS	PLAYED: 11	WON: 2	LOST: 9

- 2012: bt CSK by five wickets (league stage)
- 2012: bt CSK by five wickets (final)
- 2021: bt SRH by 10 runs (league stage)
- 2023: bt CSK by six wickets (league stage)

- 2021: bt PBKS by nine wickets (league stage)
- 2024: bt RR by 36 runs (Qualifier 2)

Chennai has hosted two IPL finals
 ■ 2011: CSK beat RCB by 58 runs
 ■ 2012: KKR beat CSK by five wickets

SOURCE: ESPNCRICKINFO
COMPILED BY R. NARAYANAN & G. PRASAD

In a galaxy of stars, India's young guns shine bright

S. Dipak Ragav
CHENNAI

While the Indian Premier League is all about the big Indian names and international stars earning the big bucks, the route to a team's success runs through its Indian domestic core.

These players, some still finding their feet in big-league cricket and some on the cusp of National selection, can boost a campaign.

Opponents often try to target these so-called weak links, but many youngsters ace the challenge to play a crucial role in their teams' run to the business end of the tournament.

So, it is not surprising that the two finalists, Kolkata Knight Riders and Sunrisers Hyderabad, have been blessed with some fine performances from their domestic cricketers.

While pacers Harshit Rana and Vaibhav Arora have been a revelation for KKR, Abhishek Sharma and Nitish Kumar's heroics with the bat have been crucial in SRH's progress.

"It's been huge. Some youngsters have come through and won us games



Lapping it up: Abhishek has made his presence felt with the bat, ball and on the field. B. JOTHI RAMALINGAM

on their own. Nitish and Abhishek are probably the two biggest examples of guys who are kind of away from the Indian set-up but have been fantastic," said SRH captain Pat Cummins. "I feel like that's been the story of our team. A lot of guys are taking the game on, putting themselves out there, and having breakout seasons," added the Australian.

KKR skipper Shreyas Iyer, too, spoke about how the domestic players have been proactive and played with freedom.

"When these guys come

in, the youngsters, especially, are fearless in their approach, and their attitude is headstrong. A lot of them are versatile and enterprising in their approach and proactive," said Shreyas.

"They want to go out there and perform. So, it's just that when you give them that sort of freedom and back them during tough times, they deliver the best."

"And when these guys step up at the right time, they see that they win matches for you," he explained.

Shahbaz — a trade from RCB that has yielded rich dividends

S. Dipak Ragav
CHENNAI

An all-rounder, who might not have played if things had gone according to plan, proved the game-changer for Sunrisers Hyderabad against Rajasthan Royals in Qualifier 2.

The Hyderabad outfit has played an aggressive brand of cricket all season, but the 2016 champion was struggling at one point after being six down in the 14th over.

It was here that Shahbaz Ahmed, stepping in as an Impact Player, made a significant contribution. A run-a-ball 18 is unremarkable, but his 43-run partnership with Heinrich Klaasen took the team to a fighting total.

Though the 29-year-old came in primarily for his skills as a batter, it was as a left-arm spinner that he turned the game on its head. On a surface that assisted the spinners more in the second innings — the degree of turn on offer, according to the official broadcaster, was 3.3 degrees when SRH was bowling compared to 1.8 in the



Shahbaz. EMMANUAL YOGINI

first innings — the Bengal all-rounder spun his side to victory with a spell of 4-0-23-3.

Explaining the decision to introduce Shahbaz, SRH assistant coach Simon Helmot said, "We probably had lost too many wickets, so we needed a batter to come in, and we knew how skilled Shahbaz is with the ball as well. Obviously, what he did with the ball was fantastic. He had his best day for Sunrisers."

In an astute move, SRH had recruited Shahbaz in a trade from RCB prior to the season and reaped the benefits at a crucial time.

When I raised my concern, no one agreed: Shreyas

S. Dipak Ragav
CHENNAI

After a successful ODI World Cup in 2023, when he scored 530 runs, Shreyas Iyer has had a tough few months this year.

The middle-order batter lost his place in the Indian Test team midway through the England series and subsequently lost out on his central contract as well, despite qualifying for Grade C based on the number of matches he has played.

It was widely believed that not playing domestic cricket cost him the contract. He eventually played in the semifinals and final of the Ranji Trophy during Mumbai's victorious campaign.

The 29-year-old has battled persistent back issues, and ahead of the IPL final, he spoke about the trying times he has faced in the last few months.

"I was definitely struggling after the World Cup in the longer format. When I raised my concern, no one was agreeing to it. But, at the same time, the competition was with myself.



I said so! Shreyas felt that his fitness issues weren't seen through a compassionate lens. R. RAGU

When I came, when the IPL was approaching, all I wanted was to see to it that I put my best foot forward," said Shreyas.

The Mumbai batter also spoke about how things have started falling into place since the Ranji final.

"It has been fantastic. And yeah, we won the final. I was part of the team and contributed in the final (95 in the second innings). So it gives me immense pleasure, to be honest, to be playing so well in the last few months," said the KKR skipper.

"All I did was stay in the present and not think about what would happen to me or worry about the selection processes or

anything. I just wanted to come and participate and see to it that I play to the best of my abilities."

Today's match

THE FINAL

Chennai, 7.30 p.m.

HEAD-TO-HEAD

Played: 27
KKR 18 | SRH 9

FORM GUIDE
(last five completed matches, latest game first)

KKR	W	W	W	W	W
SRH	W	L	W	W	L

LIVE ON STAR SPORTS 1 (SD & HD) & JO CINEMA

IN BRIEF



Manchester United stuns City to win FA Cup

Manchester United stunned Manchester City 2-1 in the FA Cup final at Wembley on Saturday.

Th result: Manchester City 1 (Doku 87) lost to Manchester United 2 (Garnacho 30, Mainoo 39).

Velavan, Abhay bow out in the quarterfinals of QSF 3 squash

Tarek Momen of Egypt defeated Velavan Senthilkumar 11-9, 8-11, 11-4, 11-8 in the quarterfinals of the \$53,500 QSF 3 squash, a PSA World Tour Bronze event, in Doha. Abhay Singh went down to Eain Yow Ng of Malaysia 6-11, 9-11, 4-11.

Australia beats India to fifth place in Junior Davis Cup

Australia defeated India 2-0 for the fifth place in the Asia-Oceania Junior Davis Cup under-16 boys tennis tournament in Shymkent, Kazakhstan, on Saturday.

The results: Fifth place: Australia bt India 2-0 (Cameron Burton bt Samarth Sahita 6-2, 6-3; Cruz Hewitt bt Aradhya Kshiti 6-3, 2-6, [10-7]).

Position 5-8: India bt China 2-0 (Samarth bt Zichen Shao 1-6, 7-5, 6-3; Aradhya bt Liang Liang 6-3, 6-1).

Consecutive losses for Indian women against Belgium

The Indian women's hockey team on Saturday lost to Belgium 1-2 – its back-to-back defeat to the home side – as its European leg of the FIH Pro League slipped further in Antwerp.

The result: Belgium 2 (Ballenghien Ambre 14, Blockmans Vanessa 20) bt India 1 (Kumari Sangita 34).



Gold for Bharali in World youth weightlifting

Bedabrat Bharali won the 73kg gold medal in the World youth championships in Lima (Peru) on Friday. The 17-year-old Bharali – lifted 136kg in snatch and 160kg in clean and jerk for a total of 296kg.

Indian junior women's team pips Belgium in shoot-out

The Indian junior women's hockey team defeated hosts Belgium 4-2 via shoot-out after both sides were locked at 2-2 at the end of regulation time.

Abhimanyu beats Nikolov in the first round

Abhimanyu Loura packed off Bulgaria's Kristiyan Nikolov 3-0 after a thrilling 80kg category first round clash in the Boxing World Qualifiers for the Paris Olympics in Bangkok on Saturday.

LIVE TELECAST

NBA: Conference finals, Sports 18-1 (SD & HD) & JioCinema, 6 a.m.

Badminton: Singapore Open, 10.30 a.m.

Archery World Cup: Sony Sports Ten 2 (SD & HD) & LIV, 10.30 a.m. onwards

Roland Garros: Sony Sports Ten 2, 5 (SD & HD) & LIV, 2.30 p.m. onwards

Hockey: Pro League, India vs Argentina (Women), Sports 18-1 (SD & HD) & JioCinema, 3.30 p.m.; India vs Argentina (Men), Sports 18-1 (SD & HD) & JioCinema, 10 p.m.

LaLiga: Sports 18-1 (SD & HD) & JioCinema, 5.30, 7.45 p.m. & 12.30 a.m. (Monday)

Formula One: Monaco GP, F1 TV, F1 TV Pro & FanCode, 6.30 p.m.

IPL: (final), Star Sports 1 (SD & HD) & JioCinema, 7.30 p.m.

Serie A: Sports 18-1 (SD & HD) & JioCinema, 9.30 p.m. & 12.15 a.m. (Monday)

West Indies vs South Africa: 3rd T20I, FanCode, 12.30 a.m. (Monday)

Rafael Nadal 'not 100% certain' that it is his final French Open

Defending men's champion Djokovic arrives on the back of a dry spell; Swiatek looks favourite among the women with Sabalenka her closest rival

TENNIS

Agence France-Presse
PARIS

Rafael Nadal said on Saturday that it is likely he is appearing at the French Open for the final time but cautioned it was "not 100% certain".

"There is a good chance that it will be my last French Open, but I cannot say that I am 100% certain it will be the last," said the Spaniard.

The Spaniard, a 22-time Grand Slam champion, won his first title at Roland Garros as a teenager in 2005.

Unseeded this year, his likely farewell may be brief after he was drawn to face world number four Alexander Zverev in the first round with the match set for Monday.

As well as 14 titles in Paris, Nadal can boast a record of 112 wins and just three losses, two of which came against career-long rival Novak Djokovic.

Fellow Grand Slam win-



Darling of the fans: Spectators vie for Nadal's autograph after a practice match on Saturday. GETTY IMAGES

ners Stan Wawrinka and Daniil Medvedev practised with Nadal this week.

Wawrinka said Nadal was as "strong as ever".

Zverev has only beaten Nadal once in six clay-court meetings.

Defending champion and record 24-time Grand Slam title winner Djokovic is enduring a title dry spell unseen since 2018.

Djokovic starts his campaign on Tuesday against home wildcard Pierre-

Hugues Herbert. World number two Jannik Sinner has been laid low by a hip injury which caused him to skip the Rome Open.

The 22-year-old Italian reached the quarter-finals of the French Open on his

Sunday's Picks

Women

Osaka vs Bronzetti

9-Ostapenko vs Cristian

21-Garcia vs Lys

Siegemund vs Kenin

24-Krejciikova vs Golubic

Men

Wawrinka vs Murray

3-Alcaraz vs Wolf

6-Rublev vs Daniel

8-Hurkacz vs Mochizuki

10-Dimitrov vs Kovacevic

in the Open era.

Swiatek is a strong favourite after dominating on clay again this season, arriving in Paris off the back of WTA 1000 victories in Madrid and Rome.

Swiatek, who faces French qualifier Leolia Jeanjean in the first round, is not daunted by what she could achieve.

Obstacle

The biggest obstacle standing in her way is Aryna Sabalenka.

Sabalenka, the two-time reigning Australian Open champion, has reached at least the semifinals in each of the past six Grand Slam events.

She is also the only woman to beat Swiatek in a final on clay.

Sabalenka opens her campaign against Russian teenager Erika Andrejeva.

US Open champion Coco Gauff will be hoping to go one better than when she lost the 2022 French Open showpiece to Swiatek.

Third seed Gauff faces Russian qualifier Julia Avdeeva in the first round.

Sindhu one step away from Malaysia Masters title

BADMINTON

Press Trust of India
KUALA LUMPUR

P.V. Sindhu on Saturday earned a shot at the \$4,20,000 Malaysia Masters crown after entering the women's singles finals with a come-from-behind 13-21, 21-16, 21-12 win over Thailand's Busanan Ongbamrunphan here.

Fifth seed Sindhu, who has not won a title in two years, rallied to prevail against the world number 20 Busanan in a marathon semifinal that lasted 88 minutes to close in on the BWF World Tour Super 500 crown.

Sindhu had won the 2022 Singapore Open and finished runner-up at Madrid Spain Masters last year. It was her 18th win over Busanan, who has beaten the Indian only once in her career way back in the 2019 Hong Kong Open.

World No. 15 Sindhu, who will be eyeing her



Marathon: Sindhu rallied to prevail over Busanan in a match that lasted 88 minutes. FILE PHOTO

third Olympic medal at Paris, will face second seed Wang Zhi Yi of China in the summit clash. Sindhu lost to Wang at the Arctic Open last year but has defeated the Chinese twice in three meetings.

She seemed to have found her mojo back as she dished out some attacking badminton this week after looking out of sorts since making a comeback from injury early this season.

It has been a while since Sindhu has defeated big

guns such as Carolina Marin, Tai Tzu Ying, Chen Yu Fei and Akane Yamaguchi – whom she is expected to come across at the Paris Olympics. A title triumph here will provide her a major boost ahead of the Summer Games.

Despite her overwhelming record against Busanan, it turned out to be a tough fight for Sindhu as she had to do the catching-up job, with the Thai dominating the proceedings in the opening game.

Simran Sharma wins gold, India ends sixth with 17 medals

PARA ATHLETICS

Press Trust of India
KOBE

India ended its World Para Athletics Championships campaign with unprecedented success, scooping 17 medals, including six gold, to take the sixth spot in the standings with Delhi sprinter Simran Sharma winning the country's sixth yellow metal on Saturday.

Simran won the gold medal in women's 200m T12 event with a personal best time of 24.95 seconds on the final day of competitions. She shaved off around one-fifth of a second from her earlier personal best of 25.16 seconds to win the gold.

Darlenys De La Severino (25.08) of Dominica and Lorraine Gomes De Aguiar (25.40) won the silver and bronze respectively.

The T12 category is meant for athletes who have vision impairment.

India finished with 17 medals (6 gold, 5 silver, 6



Dominant: Simran shaved off around one-fifth of a second from her earlier personal best to win the gold. X/SAI MEDIA

bronze) to be at sixth place in the standings. This is India's best-ever performance, having surpassed the earlier record medal haul of 10 medals (3 gold, 4 silver and 3 bronze) it won in the 2023 edition in Paris.

Two other Indians also won a bronze each on Saturday. Preethi Pal won a bronze in women's 100m T35, her second medal of the championships.

Navdeep Singh added another bronze medal in

the men's javelin throw F41 category with a season best performance of 42.82m.

The results: T12: Women's 200m: 1. Simran Sharma (24.95 seconds); 2. Darlenys de la Cruz Severino (Dom, 25.08); 3. Lorraine Gomes de Aguiar (Bra, 25.40).

T35: Women's 100m: 1. Zhou Xia (Chn, 14.06); 2. Guo Quianquian (Chn, 14.35); 3. Preethi Pal (14.43).

F41: Men's javelin: 1. Sun Pengxiang (Chn, 48.94m); 2. Sadeq Beit Sayah (Iri, 47.92); 3. Navdeep Singh (42.82).

Yuki and Olivetti fall short in Lyon ATP final

Sports Bureau

Yuki Bhambri and Albano Olivetti lost 3-6, 7-6(4), [10-8] to Harri Heliouvaara and Henry Patten in the €651,865 ATP tennis doubles final in Lyon, France, on Saturday.

In the \$25,000 ITF men's event in Addis Ababa, National champion Siddhant Vishwakarma beat Benjamin Lock of Zimbabwe 7-6(6), 6-3 in the semifinals.

The results: €651,865 ATP, Lyon: Doubles: Final: Harri Heliouvaara (Fin) & Henry Patten (GBR) bt Yuki Bhambri & Albano Olivetti (Fra) 3-6, 7-6(4), [10-8].

\$25,000 ITF men, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia: Semifinals: Siddhant Vishwakarma bt Benjamin Lock

(Zim) 7-6(6), 6-3.

Doubles: Final: Benjamin Lock & Courtney Lock (Zim) bt SD Prajwal Dev & Adil Kalyanpur 3-6, 6-3, [10-8].

Semifinals: SD Prajwal Dev & Adil Kalyanpur bt Siddhant Banthia & Nitin Kumar Sinha 6-4, 7-6(3).

\$15,000 ITF men, Kingston: Quarterfinals: Kiranpal Pannu (Nzl) bt Aryan Shah 6-1, 6-2.

Doubles: Semifinals: Adhithya Ganesan (USA) & Aryan Shah bt Kosuke Ogura & Leo Vithoontien (Jpn) 6-4, 6-4.

\$25,000 ITF women, Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic: Second round: Mia Horvit (USA) bt Riya Bhatia 4-6, 6-2, [10-5]; Alexandra Bozovic (Aus) bt Saumya Vieg 6-0, 6-1.

\$15,000 ITF women, Monastir: Semifinals: Khomutsianskaya bt Zeel Desai 6-4, 6-1.

Indian boys and girls teams triumph



Sweet win: Indian teams celebrate their victory with coaches Asha Sharma and Indra Kumar Mahajan. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

TENNIS

Sports Bureau

The Indian boys and girls teams won the gold in the South Asia under-12 tennis championships in Kathmandu.

The boys team of Pu-

neeth Manohar, Aarav Chhallani and Yuvaan Garg beat Pakistan 2-0 in the final, after having defeated Sri Lanka 3-0 in the semifinals.

The girls team of Srishri Kiran, Khushi Kadian and Sarena Gahlot, won the title by topping the round-robin league.

Om ousts third seed Shamil

Sports Bureau

Om Semwal recovered from the brink of defeat to beat third seed Shamil Wakeel 11-13, 9-11, 11-9, 11-9 in the men's semifinals of the HCL \$6000 PSA Challenger squash in Indore on Saturday. In the final, Om will play top seed Ravindu Laksiri of Sri Lanka.

In the women's section, top seed Rathika Suthanthira Seelan will be challenged by Pooja Arthi.

The results: HCL \$6000 PSA Challenger: Semifinals: Men: Ravindu Laksiri (SL) bt Vedant Patel 11-5, 11-4, 14-12; Om Semwal bt Shamil Wakeel (SL) 11-13, 9-11, 11-9, 11-5, 11-9.

Women: Rathika Suthanthira Seelan bt Nirupama Dey 11-6, 11-7, 11-3; Pooja Arthi bt Akanksha Gupta 11-8, 11-9, 11-6.

HCL Indian Open junior: Quarterfinals: Boys, u-19: Yuvraj Wadhvani bt L.

Meyyappan 11-4, 11-8, 11-8; K.S. Arhant bt Avalokit Singh 9-11, 11-5, 11-4, 11-1; Anish Tripathi bt P. Sandhesh 3-11, 12-10, 11-9, 17-15; Tavneet Singh Mundra bt Karan Yadav 9-11, 11-7, 11-6, 11-3.

U-17: Shiven Agarwal bt Ishaan Dabke 11-5, 11-5, 14-12; Aryaveer Dewan bt Darshil Parasrampuria 11-3, 11-5, 13-11; Subhash Choudhary bt Vedant Chheda 11-9, 16-14, 11-9; Erwin Kros (USA) bt Yusha Nafees 12-10, 5-11, 11-7, 11-8.

Girls, u-19: Anahat Singh bt Diya Dhillon 11-1, 11-1, 11-1; Yashi Jain bt Aishni Pathak 11-6, 13-11, 2-11, 11-6; Reiva Nimbalkar bt Chhavi Saran 11-8, 7-11, 11-8, 11-0; Aryaa Dwivedi bt Nirupama Dubey (retired).

U-17: Navya Sundararajan bt Aradhya Porwal 8-11, 11-3, 12-10, 4-11, 11-6; Rudra Singh bt Sanvi Batar 8-11, 11-5, 11-4, 12-10; Unnati Tripathi bt Ananya Narayanan 11-3, 11-6, 12-10; Akanksha Gupta bt Karina Phipps 11-7, 11-3, 11-5.



Beating the heat: A supporter of the Congress takes a swig of water during an election rally at Lakhani in Banaskantha, Gujarat on May 4. VIJAY SONEJI



Little respite: Polling officials in Bhopal cover themselves with dupattas before leaving for election duty during the third phase of polls on May 6. A.M. FARUQUI



Long way: Women walk home through a desert area after casting their vote during the second phase of the election in Barmer, Rajasthan on April 26. REUTERS

Poll scorcher

Involving over 96.88 crore registered voters and more than 1.5 crore polling staff, the world's largest and most expensive democratic process braves the heat as it approaches its final lap; long queues and the blazing sun were challenges but the Election Commission's arrangements for extra water supplies and ORS provided some relief

India's 2024 Lok Sabha election will involve over 96.88 crore registered voters, and the election, when it is over, would have spanned over 43 days, with an estimated 1.5 crore polling staff engaged in the process. Security personnel drafted for the purpose are over and above this.

Without doubt, this is the world's largest democratic exercise, with the voting population much more than the combined population of the U.S., and the European Union. From Kanniyakumari in the deep south to the Kashmir Valley in the Himalayas and from Manipur in the east to the Thar desert in Rajasthan, this election is expected to be the world's most expensive.

Cut to the voting itself, where long-winding queues would be no less than a scene at a first day, first show of a blockbuster movie, but add to it, the searing Indian summer. It takes immense commitment to stand for hours, or walk long distances in the heat, and sometimes in the odd summer shower to cast your vote. The urban voter did not show up with as much enthusiasm as the rural and semi-urban voter. While voting began as early as 7 a.m., most booths saw a small crowd ready to do their part in the electoral process. Crowds slacked around noon, again picked up speed towards the evening. At places where EVMs encountered snags, or there were power cuts, people stayed put.

Reports from Andhra Pradesh and Kerala showed the voting went on till almost midnight.

The electors of Delhi cast their votes while enduring the summer heat on Saturday with some voters even fainting due to the blazing sun and hot winds sweeping the national capital even as poll authorities made arrangements to beat the heat. The capital was under an "orange alert" on the polling day with the maximum temperature being recorded at 43.4 degrees Celsius, 3.2 notches above the season's average, according to the India Meteorological Department. A 70-year-old woman fainted at a polling booth in the West Delhi constituency after casting her vote. She was assisted by the volunteers and taken to the hospital.

The Election Commission of India had sent out a heat advisory to all State electoral officers a month before the polls started on April 19. The advisory followed the India Meteorological Centre's forecast of above normal temperatures during the summer, predicting stronger and longer spells of heatwaves, especially during March to June. Drinking water and oral rehydration salts were made available in polling booths. Shaded areas were set up at each polling station and the waiting areas fully covered.

Street vendors saw brisk business on the polling days, offering sugarcane juice, coconut water and buttermilk to thirsty customers who wanted to cool off after they had exercised their franchise.

The final phase of election will be held on June 1 and vote counting on June 4.



Keeping their cool: Water is distributed to polling staff while arrangements for the first phase of the election are made at Bikaner in Rajasthan on April 18. REUTERS

