



# Hindustan Times

## Bengal coast bears brunt as Remal makes landfall

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**NEW DELHI/ KOLKATA:** Severe Cyclone Remal made landfall over coastal areas of West Bengal and Bangladesh on Sunday evening, lashing the region with winds of 110-120 kmph gusting up to 135 kmph, according to the India Meteorological Department (IMD).

The landfall, which began around 8.30pm, was expected to continue for the next four hours, causing widespread destruction and disruption to nearby regions where close to a million people had been evacuated in the last couple of days.

"Forward sector of wall cloud region is entering into land. The landfall process has commenced over coastal areas of Bangladesh and adjoining West Bengal. It will continue for next 4 hours," an update from IMD said.

The eye of the storm was located about 30km from the Bangladesh coastline, and experts expected the landfall mostly to occur in the Sundarbans region, where the mangroves were likely to absorb the worst of the storm surges.

On Sunday evening, coastal Bengal experienced gale-force winds reaching 100-110 kmph, with some of these effects felt in adjoining North Odisha coast.

continued on → 10



Police personnel in Kolkata make announcements ahead of Cyclone Remal's landfall on Sunday. PTI

## From J&K to Raj, extreme heat grips North; hottest day of season in Delhi

**JAIPUR/NEW DELHI/SRINAGAR:**

Several parts of the country continued to sizzle under high temperatures on Sunday, with little to no relief in sight.

The situation in Rajasthan due to the persisting heatwave remained dire, with at least eight cities crossing the 45°C mark and the India Meteorological Department predicting a further rise of 1-2°C over

the next 48 hours.

There was a slight drop in the temperature in Phalodi in Jodhpur district, as it recorded a maximum temperature of 49.8°C on Sunday, down from the 50°C it recorded on Saturday.

In the national capital, the mercury surged to 45.4°C, the highest so far at the Safdarjung base weather station this sea-

son and five degrees above normal, in what was the city's hottest day in two years. Matters were worse at other stations in the Capital, with some even crossing the 48-degree threshold for the first time this season.

Up north, Qazigund in Srinagar recorded 33.5°C, the second highest maximum temperature in the last 43 years. → P11

{ SUSPENSE ON SUCCESSOR CONTINUES }

## In a rare move, Gen Pande given 1-month extension as army chief

Rahul Singh

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**NEW DELHI:** The Appointments Committee of Cabinet, headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, on Sunday granted a rare extension in service to army chief General Manoj Pande, days before his retirement on May 31, with the unexpected development deepening the suspense over who will be the next chief of the world's second largest army.

The only such extension was granted over five decades ago by the Indira Gandhi government to



General Manoj Pande

General GG Bewoor, who succeeded Field Marshal SHFJ Manekshaw as army chief in January 1973.

The government has granted a one-month extension to Pande till

June 30 under the relevant army rules, the defence ministry said in a statement.

The date is also significant because the two senior-most generals believed to be in the running for the top post retire on the same day. Army vice chief Lieutenant General Upendra Dwivedi, so far widely seen as the frontrunner, is the senior-most officer in service after Pande followed by Southern Army commander Lieutenant General AK Singh. To be sure, a top officer can be appointed service chief even if he is retiring the same day as the outgoing chief. → P10

## 12 FLYERS INJURED AS TURBULENCE HITS FLIGHT FROM DOHA TO DUBLIN

**LONDON:** Twelve people were injured when a Qatar Airways plane flying from Doha to Dublin on Sunday hit turbulence, airport authorities said.

Dublin Airport said that the plane landed safely as scheduled before 1pm. "Upon landing, the aircraft was met by emergency services, including Airport Police and our Fire and Rescue department, due to six passengers and six crew... reporting injuries after the aircraft experienced turbulence while airborne over Turkey," the statement said.

The incident comes five days after a British man died of a suspected heart attack and dozens of people were injured when a Singapore Airlines flight from London hit severe turbulence. → P13

## Modi waives loans of rich but didn't give flood relief to Himachal: Rahul

HT Correspondent

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**SHIMLA:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi waived loans worth ₹16 lakh crore for 22 wealthy individuals over the past decade but failed to provide ₹9,000 crore to Himachal Pradesh for monsoon disaster relief last year, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi alleged on Sunday.

Gandhi alleged that instead of assisting the hill state, Modi tried to "steal" its elected government, openly declaring at rallies his intention to topple the Congress regime in Himachal Pradesh.

The former Congress chief referred to Modi's speeches in Nahan and Mandi on Friday, where the Prime Minister asserted the Congress government in Himachal Pradesh would be short-lived. Modi also



Rahul Gandhi during a rally in Nahan, Himachal Pradesh. HT PHOTO

alleged the state government mishandled central flood aid distribution and vowed to take action.

"The prime minister says he

will bring down the Himachal Pradesh government through stealing, bribery and corruption," Gandhi said.

→ FULL REPORT ON P8

## TRIPLE DELIGHT FOR INDIA AT PRESTIGIOUS CANNES FESTIVAL

**CANNES:** It was a triple feat for Indian talent at the 2024 Cannes Film Festival with major wins in each of the three competitive sections of the prestigious gala. Payal Kapadia charted history by becoming the first Indian filmmaker to win the Grand Prix award for "All We Imagine as Light". Anasuya Sengupta who starred in a key featuring role in Bulgarian director Konstantin Bojanov's "The Shameless", became the first Indian to win the best actress prize in Un Certain Regard. "Sunflowers Were the First Ones to Know" by FTII student Chidananda S Naik won the La Cinef first prize (film school fiction or animated films). → P2

{ WEST ASIA TURMOIL }

## Escalation in conflict as Hamas military wing says launched 'big missile attack' on Tel Aviv



The remains of a rocket fired towards Israel. REUTERS

**GAZA STRIP:** Hamas fired a barrage of rockets from Gaza that set off air raid sirens as far away as Tel Aviv for the first time in months on Sunday in further escalation more than seven months into Israel's massive air, sea and ground offensive.

There were no immediate reports of casualties or damage in what appeared to be the first long-range rocket attack from Gaza since January. Hamas' military wing claimed the attack. Palestinian militants have spo-

radically fired rockets and mortar rounds at communities along the Gaza border, and the military arm of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad group later Sunday said it fired rockets at nearby communities.

The Israeli military said eight projectiles crossed into Israel after being launched from the area of the southern Gaza city of Rafah, where Israeli forces recently launched an incursion. It said "a number" of the projectiles were intercepted.

In a statement on its Telegram channel, the Hamas al-Qassam Brigades said the rockets were launched in response to "Zionist massacres against civilians".

Earlier Sunday, aid trucks entered Gaza from southern Israel under a new agreement to bypass the Rafah crossing with Egypt after Israeli forces seized the Palestinian side of it earlier this month. But it was not immediately clear if humanitarian groups could access the aid because of fighting.. → P13

# NUMBER THEORY

## Can BJP edge past BJD in bitter Odisha contest?

By Sreedev Krishnakumar

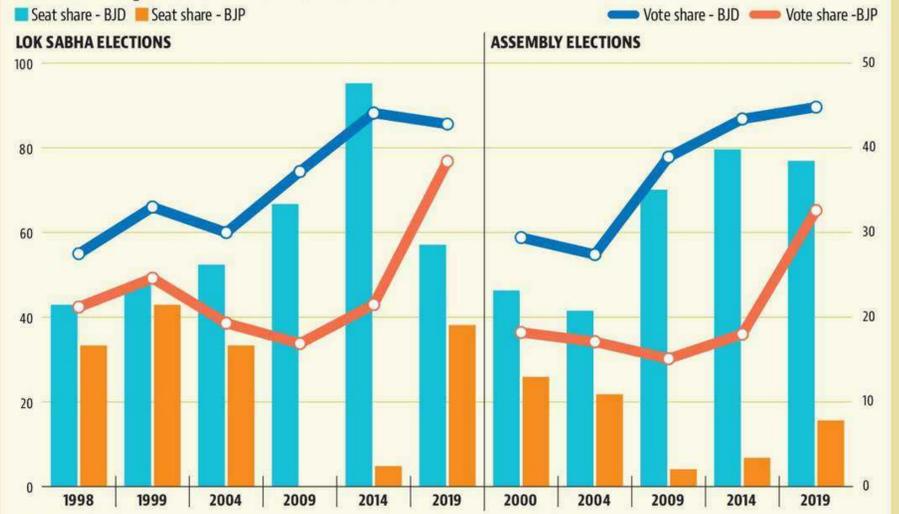
From talks of a possible alliance, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and Biju Janata Dal (BJD) are now locked in a bitter contest for 21 parliamentary constituencies (PCs) and 147 assembly constituencies (ACs) in Odisha. What are the factors driving the Odisha contest? Here are some charts that answer this question.

### 1 The BJP has narrowed its gap vis-à-vis the BJD in Odisha

The BJD contested its first election in Odisha in alliance with the BJP in 1998. However, it parted ways and contested on its own in 2009 which led to the BJP losing significant ground in the state. This trend continued in the 2014 elections as well. But the BJP turned the tide in

2019 when it managed to close its vote share and seat share gap with the BJD, especially in the Lok Sabha elections. The question is whether this trend continues in the 2024 contest and whether the BJP can surge past the BJD in the state.

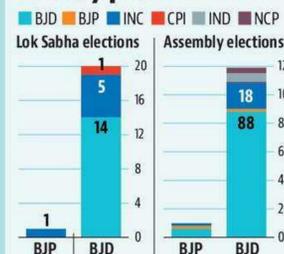
#### BJP-BJD seat share and vote share in past Lok Sabha and Assembly elections in Odisha



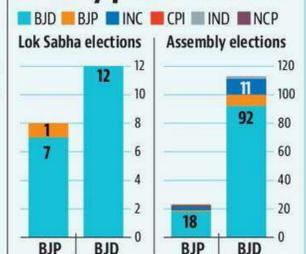
### 2 What led to the BJP's rise in Odisha?

The intuitive answer is that it has usurped the Congress's support base. The Congress and BJP vote shares were 32.7% and 16.9% in the 2009 Lok Sabha elections in Odisha. These numbers changed to 13.8% and 38.4% in the 2019 Lok Sabha elections. However, a careful analysis suggests that the actual dynamics in the state could be more complicated. Out of the six PCs that the Congress won in 2009, five were won by the BJD in 2014 and only one by the BJP. Similarly, out of the 27 ACs won by the Congress in 2009, 18 went to the BJD and just two to the BJP in 2014. The BJP won eight PCs in 2019, and out of this, seven were won by the BJD in 2014. The Congress did not win any PCs in 2019, as many as 18 were previously won by the BJD. This suggests that the BJD has taken away the traditional support of the Congress before 2019 and now the BJP is wresting back some of it from the BJD. A region-wise analysis supports this theory. 4 out of the 6 PCs won by the Congress in 2009 came from Western Odisha. The Congress first lost ground to the BJD in this region in 2014. But by 2019, the BJD ceded a lot of space to the BJP in this part of the state. Although, the BJD was able to become the single largest party in the state assembly from Western Odisha in 2019, it had to field the party supremo Naveen Patnaik from an AC in the region for the first time in his political journey to ensure popular support. Patnaik, who won from both Bijepur in Western Odisha and Hinjili in Coastal Odisha, vacated the former to retain his traditional seat. In the 2024 Assembly elections as well, the BJD chief will be contesting from an AC in the western region—Kantabanji—apart from Hinjili, presumably in a bid to strengthen his party's chances in the entire region.

#### 2009 winners of seats won by parties in 2014



#### 2014 winners of seats won by parties in 2019



#### Region-wise seat-share of BJP and BJD in Odisha

LOK SABHA ELECTIONS (In %)				ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS (In %)					
Region	Year	BJD	BJP	Congress	Region	Year	BJD	BJP	Congress
Central	2009	88	0	13	Central	2009	77.3	3.0	10.6
	2014	100	0	0		2014	84.8	1.5	12.1
	2019	75	13	13		2019	77.3	16.7	4.5
Coastal	2009	75	0	13	Coastal	2009	83.7	0.0	8.2
	2014	100	0	0		2014	87.8	4.1	6.1
	2019	75	25	0		2019	85.7	10.2	4.1
West	2009	20	0	80	West	2009	34.4	12.5	50.0
	2014	80	20	0		2014	56.3	21.9	15.6
	2019	0	100	0		2019	62.5	21.9	12.5

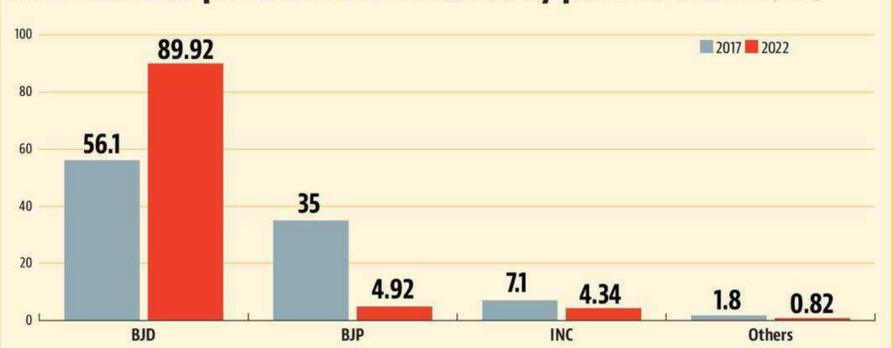
Note: The 2019 results include Patkura AC, where the polling was initially cancelled due to the death of the BJD candidate, and was later rescheduled and held in the same elections cycle. Source: TCPD-IED and ECI

### 3 Has the BJD regained some of its lost ground after 2019?

While the BJP saw a significant increase in its seat share and vote share in both Lok Sabha and Assembly elections in Odisha in 2019, the BJD might have, at least to some extent, been able to rein in the BJP's rising popularity in the state since. The biggest evidence for this comes from the rural local body polls held in the state in 2022. Out of the 853 Zilla Parishad seats (ZP) in the state, the BJD won 767 in 2022, bringing its ZP seat share to 89.92%. In the previous

rural local body election in 2017, the BJD's ZP seat share stood at 56.07%. In comparison, the BJP's ZP seat share fell from 35% in 2017 to 4.9% in 2022. Even within Western Odisha, the BJD's seat share rose from 25.5% to 86.5%, while that of the BJP fell from 61.5% to 9.3%. Whether or not the BJP can buck this local level trend in a national and state election will be known on June 4.

#### Seat share of parties in rural local body polls in Odisha (in %)





# Hindustan Times

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## 6 newborn babies dead in fire at Delhi hospital

Jignasa Sinha and Hemani Bhandari  
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**NEW DELHI:** Six newborn babies, some just hours old, were killed and five wounded when a fire ripped through a paediatric hospital in Vivek Vihar late on Saturday, a tragedy that triggered condemnation and anger across the national capital, as authorities pointed to a litany of lapses and violations of basic safety protocol and arrested the owner of the neonatal facility.

The blaze in Baby Care New Born Hospital was likely set off by a short-circuit that in turn set off blasts in oxygen cylinders, said police.

Devastated parents and families packed a nearby mortuary to identify the charred bodies of the babies, the youngest of whom was less than a day old and the oldest 17 days old.

"We didn't even name her... I never even held her in my arms," said Anjar Khan, whose 11-day-old daughter died in the inferno.

The hospital's license had expired nearly two months ago, it did not have a no-objection certificate from the fire department, the facility was packed beyond its authorised capacity, its doctors were not qualified for neonatal care and the building had neither emergency exits nor fire extinguishers, said Delhi Police, who also arrested the doctor on duty when the fire broke out.

President Droupadi Murmu continued on →10



The gutted hospital in Vivek Vihar, where the fire broke out late on Saturday night. ARVIND YADAV/HT PHOTO

## Conduct a fire audit in hospitals, NDMA said in advisory last week

Jasjev Gandhiok and Jayashree Nandi  
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**NEW DELHI:** The Union health ministry and NDMA on March 23 issued a joint advisory to states and UTs, directing that all accredited hospitals conduct thorough inspections of their electrical load capacity and address discrepancies, and

obtain valid fire no-objection certificates (NOCs) from their respective fire departments.

At a review meeting on May 22, NDMA directed Delhi to carry out an audit of all hospitals and coaching centres in the city, and share a report within a month's time. The directive came just five days before a blaze ripped through a paediatric hospital killing six babies. →P5

Affordable care the reason why many turn to such facilities

**NEW DELHI:** Hospitals like the one in Vivek Vihar do good business because they offer relatively cheap neonatal or paediatric care, said experts. →P5

## TWO ARRESTED, SIX BOOKED AS TOLL IN RAJKOT FIRE REACHES 28

Maulik Pathak  
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**AHMEDABAD:** The death toll in the blaze at a Rajkot gaming arcade rose to 28 on Sunday and 15 people were still unaccounted for, officials said, with new revelations showing a raft of violations in fire safety mechanisms and certifications that could have otherwise prevented Saturday afternoon's tragedy.

Police have booked six people in the case. Officials said the owner and manager of TRP Game Zone have been arrested over the incident, and that the entertainment venue — which was teeming with families on a hot Sunday afternoon when the fire broke out — had its booking license renewed for the current year, but without the fire safety permit. →P7

## 'FIRE A MAN-MADE DISASTER': HIGH COURT TAKES SUO MOTU COGNISANCE

**AHMEDABAD:** The Gujarat high court on Sunday took note of the fire at a Rajkot gaming arcade that killed 28 people, calling the incident a "man-made disaster", and directing state officials to appear before it on Monday.

Taking suo motu cognisance of the incident at TRP Gaming Zone, the court directed Gujarat's additional advocate general and lawyers of Ahmedabad, Vadodara, Surat and Rajkot municipal corporations to appear before it and explain under what provisions of law the authorities allowed these units to be set up and operate. →P7

## Kolkata Knight Riders win IPL after 10 yrs



Kolkata Knight Riders won their third Indian Premier League (IPL) title with an eight-wicket thrashing of Sunrisers Hyderabad in a lopsided final in Chennai on Sunday. Related story on page 16 PTI

## Prayers in Pak for SP, Cong victory: PM Modi

HT Correspondents  
 letters@hindustantimes.com

**VARANASI/LUCKNOW/GORAKHPUR:** The Samajwadi Party and the Congress are getting support from across the border, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Sunday, in a fresh attack on members of the opposition INDIA bloc.

On a day that the PM addressed three rallies — Ghosi, Deoria and Mirzapur — in the Purvanchal region of Uttar Pradesh, Modi attacked the two parties for allegedly wanting to turn the country's majority community into second-class citizens by rewriting the Constitution to provide reservations on the basis of religion.

"In Pakistan, 'duas' (prayers) are being made for the INDI alliance of Samajwadi Party (SP) continued on →6



PM Modi addresses a rally in Mirzapur, UP, on Sunday. ANI

## Will enforce nationwide UCC: Shah

**NEW DELHI:** A Uniform Civil Code (UCC) for the entire country will be rolled out and efforts will also be made to implement the idea of 'One Nation, One Election' in

the next five years, if the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is voted back to power in the ongoing Lok Sabha elections, Union home minister Amit Shah has said. →P9

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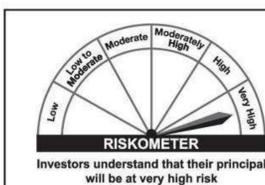
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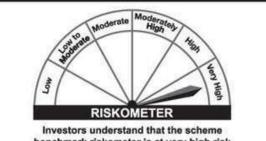


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{ SPORT } AHEAD OF PARIS OLYMPICS

**Neeraj quits event over injury concern**

Olympic javelin champion Neeraj Chopra pulled out of Tuesday's Ostrava Golden Spike meeting, saying on Sunday that he was concerned about injuring his adductor. Chopra said he was not injured but was unwilling to take risks with the Paris Olympics around the corner. The 26-year-old pulled out of the same meeting last year as he recovered from a muscle strain he suffered in training. "Following a recent throwing session, I decided not to compete in Ostrava as I felt something in my adductor. I have had problems with it in the past and pushing it at this stage can lead to injury," Chopra said in a statement. "Just to clarify I am not injured but I don't want to take any risk during the Olympic year so had to take this decision. Once I feel it's fully recovered, I will get back to competitions." →P16

{ MY INDIA } EN ROUTE TO U'KHAND

**12 killed as truck hits bus in Shahjahanpur**

Twelve people en route to a temple in Uttarakhand were killed when a speeding gravel-laden truck hit a stationary bus on a highway way point near Shahjahanpur in Uttar Pradesh late Saturday night, police said. Among the dead were three minors and eight women. Eleven others were critically injured. They were rushed to Shahjahanpur Medical College hospital (chk name) and are receiving treatment. The accident occurred around 11.30 pm when the bus had stopped at a roadside eatery near Hajiyapur village under the Khatul police station area, said Ashok Kumar Meena, superintendent of police, Shahjahanpur. The bus was on its way to Purnagiri temple in Uttarakhand. →P11

{ SPORT } TITLE WAIT CONTINUES

**Sindhu loses 1st final in 14 months despite early lead**

Leading 11-3 in the decider, PV Sindhu was well on her way to her first title in almost two years. The former world champion was aggressive in her approach, was winning points at the net and displaying the agility one hasn't seen from her in recent times. But China's Wang Zhi Yi wasn't done yet. Returning to the court after the mid-game break, both shuttlers engaged a scintillating 56-shot rally that sucked every ounce of energy from both. The world number 7 made some desperate lunges to keep the shuttle in play which did the trick as the second seed claimed what proved to be the most crucial point of the contest. Sindhu's wait for her first title since winning the 2022 Commonwealth Games gold in Birmingham continues. Despite the loss, she showed glimpses of her best, playing her natural, aggressive style. →P16

{ MY INDIA } STRING OF CASES

**JEE aspirant goes missing from Kota**

A 19-year-old student, who was preparing for Joint Entrance Examination (JEE) in Rajasthan's Kota district for admission in engineering courses, went missing on Friday night, when he was on his way to Delhi to appear for an exam, police said on Sunday. The incident comes amid growing concerns over an increase in the number of runaway students, preparing for various competitive exams, in the country's coaching hub. Twelve students went missing this year so far. While eight of them either returned or were traced later, efforts are on to find the remaining, police said. The student had arrived in Kota two years ago and was staying in a paying guest (PG) accommodation in Jawahar Nagar area. →P11

{ MY DELHI } IN NOIDA

**Speeding luxury car runs 64-yr-old over**

A 64-year-old man was killed by a speeding car in Noida Sector 53 on Sunday morning, said police. CCTV footage of the accident was uploaded on social media website X. HT could not independently verify the authenticity of the video. "The deceased was identified as Janak Dev Shah, a resident of Gijhore in Sector 53. Shah is a retired employee from Akashwani," said Vivek Kumar Shrivastava, station house officer, Sector 24. Based on a complaint from Shah's son Pradeep, a case was registered against the unidentified vehicle driver under Section 304A (causing death by negligence) of the Indian Penal Code, said police. "The registration number is not visible in footage from any CCTV camera we scanned till 6pm. Teams have been formed and efforts are underway to nab the suspect," the SHO added. HT

**OpenAI's voice scandal sounds larger AI alarm**Shweta Taneja  
letters@hindustantimes.com

**SAN FRANCISCO:** On May 13th, Sam Altman posted one word through his X account: "her". The word was tweeted by the OpenAI CEO to announce the release of the company's new multimodal AI model, GPT-4o, that could interact with humans through voice, camera, and text. In the company's online live-telecast of the announcement the same day, one of the AI voices named 'Sky' was charming and flirty in its responses, ready to please the company's executives with whom it talked. Sky's intonation and personality also sounded like the sultry AI voice in a film called Her, portrayed by actress Scarlett Johansson. A 2013 iconic movie by director Spike Jonze, Her starred Johansson's voice as an AI personal assistant who forms a relationship with actor Joaquin Phoenix's lonely character. It's a tragic story about loneliness, love, and human emotion. It's also a film that Altman has constantly mentioned as one of his favourite renditions of how AI can interact with humans.

A week after the tweet, Johansson posted a public statement accusing OpenAI of consciously, without permission, copying her voice to make the AI model Sky sound like her. She mentioned that Altman had approached her in September 2023 and then again two days before the launch of the multimodal AI model to license her voice, something she had refused.

"The voice of Sky is not Scarlett Johansson's," said Altman in a counter statement on May 20th, adding that the company cast a voice actor for Sky before any outreach to Johansson. Though OpenAI paused the use of Sky, the damage was done.

**Can AI give you compensation or credit?**

For more than a decade, Big Tech has been developing generative AI by feeding these models data from the World Wide Web, all of it gathered without permission or consent. It then analyses it and regurgitates logical, contextual answers. Most of the technology leaders, like Altman, want to see the culmination of this technology: An idea called Artificial General Intelligence or AGI, a machine that can respond, interact, learn, and think like humans, trained on data created by humans.

According to estimates by MarketsandMarkets, a market research publisher, the projected AI market size is expected to reach a staggering \$407 billion by 2027. But today, these models regurgitate synthetic content without compensation, consent, or credit to any of us. For the profit of a few corporations.

The question of compensation is something top media companies are already working on. Last year, media companies like CNN, The New York Times, and Reuters coded their platforms to stop AI bots from OpenAI or Google from crawling their websites and learning from the content they create. The muscle-flexing helped as the ever data-hungry AI companies are now partnering with media companies to license their data for AI training. Recently, OpenAI and NewsCorp signed a content deal valued at over \$250 million. Media organi-

**THE QUESTION OF CONSENT AND COMPENSATION IN THE CASE OF GENERATIVE AI MODELS LIKE CHATGPT IS YET TO BE SETTLED**

sations across the world might be able to adopt this method to generate revenue for their content.

What the Johansson-versus-OpenAI dispute has done is highlight how AI can use intellectual property, copyrighted material, and even imitate individuals without permission, credit, or payment. If a popular beloved actress like Johansson's cadence can be so readily copied by tech companies, what chance do creative individuals stand? The independent bloggers who run websites, the influencers, the small mom-and-pop stores of digital content who cannot get SEO leads anymore but aren't big enough to sign a deal with a tech company?

**Synthetic media requires consent**

It doesn't help that AI technology is advancing at a much faster scale than policymakers can understand. We're already in the new era of multimodal AI. These tools can recreate anyone's voice or video likeness in minutes. With two minutes of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's audio, for example, you can recreate a synthetic voice of him in any language that says anything. While the potential of digital identity theft, financial fraud, and scams has just increased, synthetic media also threatens personal privacy and consent.

Synthetic video and audio — with and without consent — were prolifically used in India's election campaigning. It was used for politicians who wanted to outreach to their varied vote banks in their dialects and languages. On the other hand, synthetic videos of Bollywood stars Ranveer Singh and Aamir Khan were created to campaign politically, without their consent. Governments are already working on protecting citizens from the AI onslaught. In April, the UN with more than 120 member nations adopted a global resolution on artificial intelligence that asks countries to safeguard human rights, protect personal data, and monitor AI for risks. Each piece of text, photo, audio, and video that AI is generating today was churned by training AI models on publicly available media on the web — created by real people. Someone's hard work. Someone's sweat. Someone's copyright. Someone's voice. In the film Her, Johansson's character Samantha leaves the human, citing that he has learned everything there was from humans.

Would we, the humans, also be left behind by AI? How much likeness does an AI voice need to have to a human for them to file a lawsuit? How do you define AI's uses and restrict its abuses? This technology has put all of us in a new, strange world. What we make of it, and how we rage against the AI machines, is on us, the humans, and perhaps the lawmakers that represent us.

Shweta Taneja is an author and journalist based in the Bay Area.

{ TRAGEDY STRIKES }

**Hundreds die in Papua New Guinea landslide**

More than 670 people may have died in a massive landslide in Papua New Guinea, the UN migration agency estimated on Sunday

**670** killed in the landslide | **150** houses buried

**A VILLAGE BURIED**

The hillside village in Enga province was almost completely obliterated when the landslide struck in the early hours of Friday morning. Mud and rocks barrelled down the face of Mount Mungalo, burying scores of homes. Locals said it may have been triggered by heavy rains that have saturated the region in recent weeks.

**Rescue efforts hobbled**

The terrain, damaged roads and an outbreak of tribal violence nearby have hamstrung efforts to get help into the disaster zone, where over 1,000 have been displaced.

"The land is still sliding, the water is running and this is creating massive risk for everyone involved."

- UN migration agency representative Serhan Aktoprak, who oversees teams of emergency workers from Port Moresby.

**Toll expected to surge**

Rescue workers used spades, shovels and pitchforks to dig out bodies. Officials said the number of deaths is expected to start climbing in the coming days as diggers and other heavy machinery speed up the painstaking excavations.

**Normal life rocked to a standstill**

Located on the side of densely forested Mount Mungalo, the village was home to a transient population that could swell to more than 4,000 people. It served as a trading post for the alluvial miners who panned for gold in the highlands. "People come from near and far to do their alluvial mining, and then they come here to trade," said Nickson Pakea, president of the chamber of commerce of nearby Porgera.

**Climate crisis link?**

Papua New Guinea has one of the wettest climates in the world, according to the World Bank, with the heaviest downpours concentrated in the country's humid highland interior. Research has found shifting rainfall patterns linked to climate crisis could exacerbate the risk of landslides. This year has seen intense rainfall and flooding across Papua New Guinea.

{ CANNES GLORY }

**Payal Kapadia imagines Indian cinema in a new light**Sachin Chhate  
letters@hindustantimes.com

**CANNES:** On Saturday night, Payal Kapadia's 'All We Imagine as Light' boldly went where no Indian film had gone before. Not only was it the first Indian film in the competition at Cannes in thirty years — after Shaji Karun's 'Swaham' (1994) — it also took home the Grand Prix. Chetan Anand's 'Neecha Nagar' had shared the Grand Prix but that was before Independence, in 1946.

Kapadia's film has broken new ground in more ways than one. For a country that is movie crazy and produces almost a thousand films a year, the impact it makes on the international festival circuit is trivial. It is pertinent to note here that all the new Indian feature films at Cannes this year — 'Santosh', 'Sister Midnight', 'The Shameless' (directed by Konstantin Bojanov, a Bulgarian film maker), 'In Retreat' and 'All We Imagine as Light' — were international co-productions. It seems like it is difficult to break through in the global festival circuit without international backing.

But be that as it may, this moment belongs to Payal Kapadia and her team; to Anusuya Sengupta who won Best Actress for 'The Shameless' in the Un Certain Regard; and Chidananda Naik whose short film 'Sunflowers Were the First to Know' won the first prize

and Manasi Maheshwari's 'Bunnyhood' that won the third prize in the La Cinef section (for film school films and animation films). The common thread that binds them is that they are all alumni of the Film and Television Institute of India (FTII), an institute that is often foiled by controversy. But this is something that the organization can justly be proud of. Kapadia's film was pitted against some of the biggest names in the world of cinema. There was Francis Ford Coppola, Paul Schrader, Jia Zhang-ke, Yorgos Lanthimos, Paolo Sorrentino and more. There was also Mohammed Rasalouf, the Iranian film maker who literally crossed mountains to escape from a repressive regime to make it to Cannes.

Any debutant filmmaker would be over the moon to be mentioned in the same league as those illustrious names. But cinema is a great leveler; it doesn't matter if you are a great auteur, the audience judges you by your latest offering. When the lights came on at the Grand Theatre Lumiere after the screening of 'All We Imagine as Light' to a thunderous eight-minute standing ovation, it was clear as daylight that the film would not go empty-handed. It was not just the ovation that gave an indication of what was to come, but the film itself was clearly a few notches above several others in its theme, craft and storytel-



From left: Divya Prabha, Payal Kapadia, Chhaya Kadam and Kani Kusruti after winning the Grand Prix for 'All We Imagine as Light' in Cannes on Saturday. AFP

ling. The international press gave it glowing reviews: "Will this 'magical' ode to nocturnal Mumbai win the Palme d'Or?" asked the BBC; "Dreamlike and gentle modern Mumbai tale is a triumph," said Peter Bradshaw writing for The Guardian; and the Variety headline said, "A glowing portrait of urban connection and unexpected sisterhood."

It was clear that the film was going to create history, with or without the top prize.

Even though the story is set in Mumbai and is a tribute to the city itself, the manner in which it connects universally is the biggest triumph of the film. Kani Kusruti and Divya Prabha play two nurses from Kerala, living in Mumbai where we

also see the monsoon, the local trains, and the quintessential elements of the city in all their glory. Chhaya Kadam (who is on a roll this year with films like 'Laapataa Ladies', 'Madgaon Express' and 'Sister Midnight' besides this film) plays a widow working in the hospital canteen who is facing eviction because her late husband didn't leave any property documents behind. "Without papers, one just vanishes into thin air," she says, and the reference to kagaz is clearly not only about property papers. If the first half is about the hustle and bustle of Mumbai, the second half is set in the sylvan surroundings of Ratnagiri on the Konkan coast, where the three women converge.

The film is like a room where everything is beautifully arranged, or a complex physics equation that is explained in the simplest manner; you can see the complexities of life, and Kapadia puts it across in the most gentle, sympathetic and understanding manner. The actress Vicky Krieps, who won Best Actress at Cannes for 'Corage' in 2022, said that it was one of the most poetic films she had seen in a while and was visibly moved after the screening. Poetic is a word that is often associated with Kapadia's short films as well, particularly 'Afternoon Clouds', which made it to Cannes in 2017 followed by 'And What Is The Summer Saying' which is also set in Maharashtra.

Her documentary on student unrest at FTII, 'A Night of Knowing Nothing', won the LOeil d'or (Golden Eye) at Cannes in 2021.

When Viola Davis came on stage to announce the award, she said, "Art doesn't come from a safe space. It is a double whammy: making a film is difficult enough, but to put up a fight to make one is another thing. When the Japanese auteur, Hirokazu Koreeda declared the winner, history was made. Kapadia gave the most gracious speech, and spoke about sisterhood. "This film is about friendship, about three very different women. Oftentimes, women are pitted against each other. This is the

way our society is designed and it is really unfortunate. But for me, friendship is a very important relationship because it can lead to greater solidarity, inclusivity and empathy," she said with Kani Kusruti, Divya Prabha and Chhaya Kadam — elegantly dressed in saris — on stage with her. It was a big moment for them as well because they are not mainstream actresses, and don't grab eyeballs the way stars do.

But Payal Kapadia's triumph at Cannes may still not free her from her troubles back home. As Oscar-winning sound designer Resul Pookutty said on Facebook, Payal who is accused number 25 in a case filed against students for agitating against the FTII chairman Gajendra Chauhan, will have to go to court on June 26 for the next hearing. Perhaps that is what Davis meant about art not coming from a safe space. But all those who try to crush dissent should pay heed to what Bob Dylan said — "Come mothers and fathers throughout the land/ And don't criticize what you can't understand/ Your sons and your daughters are beyond your command/ Your old road is rapidly agin' / Please get out of the new one if you can't lend your hand/ For the times they are a-changin'".

A young woman with a powerhouse of talented ladies brought home the Grand Prix — the times are indeed changin'.

# Delhi logs hottest day in 2 yrs, max crosses 45°C

HT Correspondent

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**NEW DELHI:** The mercury surged in the Capital on Sunday to levels not seen in two years as the maximum temperature hit 45.4°C, the highest this season so far and five degrees above normal — making for an uncomfortably hot daytime — according to data from the India Meteorological Department (IMD).

The torrid temperatures led to "heatwave" to "severe heatwave" conditions in Delhi, which recorded its hottest day in two years. The previous high was 45.6°C on May 16, 2022.

Though the Safdarjung observatory, representative of Delhi's weather, recorded 45.4°C, matters were worse at other stations with some even crossing the 48-degree threshold for the first time this season. At Mungeshpur, it was 48.3°C and at Najafgarh 48.1°C, IMD said.

This was also the first day this season when Safdarjung recorded a heatwave. Until now, only other weather stations in Delhi had been recording heatwave to severe heatwave conditions.

## IMD issues red alert till Thursday

No immediate relief is in sight, the Met said, issuing a "red alert" for severe weather conditions till Thursday. These conditions are largely down to the westerly winds returning to the region.

"The westerlies on Saturday led to a sharp rise in temperature again. These extremely hot winds, that blow from Rajasthan, combined with clear skies, is leading to such extreme conditions," said Kuldeep Srivastava, scientist at IMD, adding that a



The Met issued a red alert for severe weather conditions till Thursday.

ARVIND YADAV/HT

marginal drop in temperature is only likely on May 31, when a western disturbance might bring cloud cover.

Despite the high temperature, Delhi's heat index (HI) or "real feel" was only around 49°C, a degree higher than Saturday's 48°C. This too was down to the drier westerlies that have replaced the humid heat that prevailed on Tuesday. The HI at the time was 55.4°C. HI takes into account relative humidity and air temperature — a phenomenon that makes it difficult to sweat and leads to potential health crises in the process.

Delhi's wet bulb temperature, another indicator of how uncomfortable it is outside, was recorded at 26.1°C. It was 28.3°C a

day earlier. A wet-bulb temperature of 32°C or higher makes it difficult for people to work outdoors for too long. If the wet-bulb reading is 35°C, the maximum threshold, humans can no longer regulate body temperatures, leading to heatstroke and potential collapse.

Though temperatures seared through the day, the morning was much cooler. The minimum temperature was 27°C, which was around normal for this time of the year. The minimum is forecast to rise again and may touch 30°C by Friday, IMD added.

IMD classifies it as a "heatwave" when the maximum temperature is 4.5°C above normal and also above 40°C. It is a "severe heatwave" when the maximum is

6.5°C or more above normal.

For Safdarjung, the highest maximum before Sunday was 44.4°C, on May 19. On the same day, Najafgarh touched 47.8°C, the highest for any weather station in Delhi this season. "Sunday's heat has seen two stations in Delhi cross 48°C for the first time this year. There are chances the maximum may hover in this range for the next two to three days," said an IMD official.

Parts of Delhi-NCR reeled under four consecutive heatwave days to severe heatwave days between May 17 and 20. From May 21, moist easterly winds led to a drop in temperature and heatwave conditions abated. This second spell of heatwave in Delhi-NCR began on May 25.

# N-E Delhi records most voting, New Delhi least

Alok KN Mishra

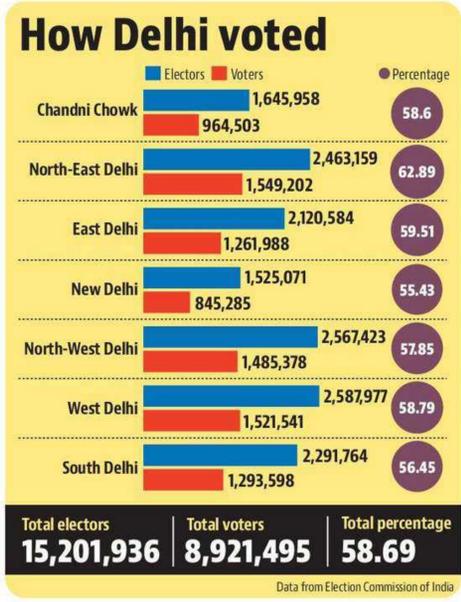
letters@hindustantimes.com

**NEW DELHI:** The North East Delhi parliamentary seat reported the highest voter turnout in the elections held on Saturday, with 62.89% of the registered voters in the constituency exercising their franchise, according to data released by office of the Delhi chief electoral officer (CEO). This was a slight dip from the 63.8% polling recorded in the 2019 general elections.

The second highest voter turnout was in East Delhi, with 59.51% of the registered voters turning out to vote, followed by West Delhi (58.79%), Chandni Chowk (58.60%), North West (57.85%), and South Delhi (56.45%).

Meanwhile, the worst performing constituency was New Delhi, with only 55.43% electors stepping out to cast their vote, according to the figures released by the CEO office. This figure too was a drop from the 56.9% polling logged in the last elections.

With 15.2 million eligible voters — including 8,212,794 males and 6,987,914 females — voting began at 7am, and queues of voters were witnessed at several polling stations, while at others, voters continued to turn out in a staggered manner till 6pm to exercise their franchise. How-



ever, the Capital recorded a total turnout of 58.69%, lower than 60.6% turnout reported during the 2019 Lok Sabha polls.

The turnout left poll officials dismayed, who hoped that the 2024 polling percentage will surpass the turnout in 2019.

An official said the poll panel undertook a slew of steps to tackle the intense heat. "Proper shading was arranged at all polling booths, providing relief to voters as they exercised their rights," the official said, on condition of anonymity.

## EVMs STORED IN SEVEN STRONG ROOMS, TO BE OPENED ON JUNE 4

Alok KN Mishra

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**NEW DELHI:** All the electronic voting machines (EVM) used in the Capital have been stored in seven strong rooms — each in a Lok Sabha constituency — and are being monitored 24x7 by poll panel and security officials, people aware of the matter said.

After voting concluded across 13,641 polling stations in the city, the approximately 28,000 balloting units and 14,000 control units of the EVMs, and 14,000 VVPATs (voter verifiable paper audit trails) used for polling were transported to the strong rooms by the respective polling personnel. The strong rooms were then sealed in the presence of candidates' representatives, and poll panel officials, and the process was recorded on video.

The postal ballots and the votes polled under the home voting facility have also been stored in the strong rooms.

"The strong rooms are guarded in the outer layer with central paramilitary forces guarding and Delhi Police personnel in the inner layers. The premises are under CCTV cover. The returning officers visit the strong rooms once a day. Candidates can also monitor CCTV feeds of the strong rooms," said a poll panel official.

The counting centres will be set up near the strong rooms which will be opened on June 4 for counting.

# Ggm: High turnout in developing sectors

Abhishek Behl

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**GURUGRAM:** The polling booths set up in condominiums and high-rises in developing sectors along the Southern Peripheral Road (SPR) and the Dwarka Expressway witnessed a significantly higher turnout compared to those set up in sectors 1 to 57, provisional polling data shared by the district administration on Sunday revealed.

The authorities had set up 52 urban polling booths across the city in both Badshahpur and Gurugram assembly constituencies to encourage urban voters.

The polling station at Sare Homes in Sector 92 logged the highest turnout among the urban booths at 69.7%.

Gurugram deputy commissioner Nishant Yadav on Sunday said that the decision to set up the urban polling stations in condominiums helped in improving the turnout which stood at 53% while earlier the turnout figures remained between 40 and 45%.

The district administration also said the polling data being shared was an estimate, and the provisional and final count would be provided by the Election Commission of India later.

Provisional data shared by the district administration revealed that in the polling stations in developing sectors along the SPR and Dwarka expressway, where booths had been set up for the first time, the turnout was even higher and crossed 60% on an average.

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## SPOTLIGHT | VIVEK VIHAR FIRE

## Hospital without licence, eligible doctors

Though the exact cause of the fire is to be ascertained, initial probe has pointed towards an array of lapses and violations

Jignasa Sinha and Hemani Bhandari  
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**NEW DELHI:** The list of lapses and violations that marred Baby Care New Born Hospital, Vivek Vihar, east Delhi, ran long, pointing at the administrative apathy and criminal negligence in ignoring basic safety norms that resulted in the deaths of six babies on Saturday night.

A preliminary probe carried out by the Delhi Fire Services pointed to a raft of costly mistakes, such as an illegal expansion of beds inside the hospital, improper use of oxygen cylinders, and a lack of adequate fire exits despite being located in a congested neighbourhood.

Atul Garg, chief of Delhi Fire Services, said the fire may have started due to an electrical fault. "We are investigating whether it started from the generator or the electric pole outside the building. In any case, the wires were dangerously close to the building. The fire was fuelled by oxygen cylinder that were all kept close to each other and exploded. We cannot confirm things because all the medical staff fled after the incident. Only they can say what happened," Garg told HT.

Some locals alleged that the building owner, Dr Naveen Khichi, dealt in oxygen cylinders illegally, which could have meant that there was illegal stockpiles.

Oxygen as a gas is highly flammable and pressurised cylinders are prone to exploding.

Yogesh Goyal, an area resident, said complaints regarding the illegal refilling of cylinders at night were made in the past.

Police said they looked into these allegations but have not found anything so far.

Deputy commissioner of police (Shahdara) Surender Chaudhary said: "Most likely, there was no illegal trading or refilling of oxygen cylinders."

The DCP, however, listed out a litany of violations, including employing people with Ayurvedic medicine degrees as doctors. "The wrongdoings include employing doctors who cannot treat newborns. Dr Khichi is a paediatrician but he was running the hospital with doctors who are not qualified. His wife, Dr Jagriti, also works at the hospital and is a dentist. There is no fire extinguisher installed in the hospital for emergencies. There is no emergency exit either," he added.

Police said the hospital had a licence from the health depart-

ment which expired on March 31. However, the licence was only for five beds but 12 were inside the two-storey facility at the time of the blaze.

Police also found over 32 oxygen cylinders while the permissible limit was only between 15-20. "To gain more money, the doctor put in more beds, electric equipment and oxygen cylinders... which are all in violation of law," said an officer.

According to locals and DFS, the building was a businessman's residence earlier and was converted into a commercial building after a bank auctioned off the house around three years back.

**Cramped neighbourhood**  
The hospital, facing the main road in Vivek Vihar, is cramped between houses and commercial buildings housing banks, boutiques and shops.

"It was difficult to rescue the children because there was no access point," said Vivek Kumar, a resident of the area.

Locals used a narrow service lane behind the buildings to rescue 12 children, of whom five survived. A sixth infant had died prior to the fire.

"The wires are a major issue. We knew this would lead to a major tragedy. Never expected that babies would die... We approached the police and MCD multiple times over the encroachment but nothing happened," said Fayyaz Alam, another resident.

One of the first responders, fire officer Deepak Hooda, said the babies were on the first floor and there was no wall or partition. "The ground floor was full of cylinders and equipment. The owners had put aluminium sheets to separate beds. There was no fire safety equipment. We could only see a small window from behind which was then broken to get inside and save the babies," said Hooda.

**Violation of multiple municipal bylaws**

The Municipal Corporation of Delhi, in an official statement, said that under the Master Plan of Delhi 2021, "other activities", including nursing, and hospital activities, are allowed under Chapter 15 of the mixed land use regulations.

"...In a case titled as 'Delhi Medical Association V/o UOI', there are directions of the High Court of Delhi not to take any coercive action against such activities i.e. nursing/hospital activities," the statement said.

The civic body has said the site was inspected. The building was constructed in 2001-02 and the hospital has been in operation since 2015. However, a senior MCD official said that the owners of the building covered the balcony and open areas with an iron frame covered with chrome panels. "This is a clear violation of building bylaws and the open areas cannot be covered to extend the building," the official said.



People gather in front of the hospital in Vivek Vihar where six infants died after a fire broke out on Saturday night. ARVIND YADAV/HT PHOTO



Burnt oxygen cylinders lie scattered at the spot. ARVIND YADAV/HT

## Locals braved cylinder blasts to rescue babies

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**NEW DELHI:** A little after 11.30pm on Saturday, 68-year-old Brijender Kumar heard a series of blasts next to his house in C Block, Vivek Vihar, and rushed outside. To his shock, he saw the neonatal hospital next door wrapped in flames. Brijender and his family soon evacuated their house to save themselves before the fire tore across walls and took over his two-storey house.

None of this deterred Brijender and his son, Yogesh Goyal, 40 and grandson, Arnab, 17, from springing to action to rescue the babies trapped inside. "We managed to save our lives but our house is gone. We did not have time to worry about this. We found a nurse who told us 12 children were inside," he said. They sustained burns to their hands.

Some residents said they worked tirelessly for an hour to rescue the babies using ladders, pipes, and ropes. Goyal said few residents were scared to get involved seeing the magnitude of the blaze, as the building looked like it was going to collapse.

"We did not have a ladder. Two men climbed on my shoulder to reach the window and I broke it. There were four babies right next to the window. We stood on an iron grille and pulled out the babies," he said.

**Many challenges**

The ground floor of the building housed a small reception area and storage space that had at least 32 cylinders, police said. The first floor of the building had a wide room with three aluminium partitions where the beds were placed and an ICU section. The treatment room was also in the same space. The floor had tiny glass windows at the front and a staircase at the back leading outside. The second floor was used to store equipment, along with some furniture.

Babies were carried one at a time, passed from one person to another, and brought down.

Jitender Singh Shunty, another resident, said he and his son Jyot Jeet entered the building from the rear window. "We saw five to six babies and pulled them out," he said. Shunty then

drove to the nearest hospitals to admit the babies and five of them survived.

Another resident, Lokesh Gupta, said he was scared for his elderly parents but also had to look out for the babies. "The rescue operation was tough because we could only reach the building through the back window. There were no other exits. All the babies were rescued within 20-30 minutes but it took time to get them to the hospital," said Gupta.

He added that locals took the babies in cars, vans and bikes to the other hospitals.

Deepak Hooda, a fire officer who stayed for the cooling and rescue operation, said the blasts did not stop for a while. "We were scared that our staff would get injured. The room was on fire and it was difficult to save the babies. We wrapped them in blankets and rushed them. We used a ladder to reach the first floor," said Hooda.

**A few relieved families**

Mithlesh Kumar, 36, a factory worker, rushed to East Delhi Advanced NICU Hospital in Vivek Vihar hoping his six-day-old son had survived. "Last week, my wife gave birth to twins but the baby girl died. My wife and I have been trying for a child for 15 years and were scared to lose our second child. We put him in neonatal care as he had some infection. When I heard the news, my heart almost stopped. The doctors here told me he is alive and needs treatment. I am just relieved," said Kumar.

Among the five injured, one baby had been on a ventilator for 10 days, since his birth, as he had difficulty in breathing. Police said he sustained minor injuries and was stable.

Suman Singh, 35, started checking the hospital records but soon sat down to drink water after she saw her son's name in the list.

He is seven days old and was admitted because he was a premature baby. "He is our fourth child. I was scared when I saw the news. Neither the nurses nor the doctors took our calls. I just want to take him home now. The hospital did look shady but do people like us have an option? My husband is a carpenter," said Suman.

## LEADERS CONDOLE TRAGEDY

The fire tragedy at a hospital in Delhi is heart-rending. My thoughts are with the bereaved families in this incredibly difficult time.

NARENDRA MODI,  
Prime Minister

The news of the death of many children due to a fire in a hospital in Vivek Vihar is heart-rending. May God give strength to the bereaved parents and relatives to bear this shock.

DROUPADI MURMU,  
President

We all stand with those who lost their innocent children in this accident... The causes of the incident are being investigated and whoever is responsible for this will not be spared.

ARVIND KEJRIWAL,  
chief minister

The news of the death of many newborn babies due to fire in baby care hospital in Delhi is extremely heartbreaking. My deepest condolences to all the grieving parents and relatives.

RAHUL GANDHI, Congress leader

## Fatal transgressions

Authorities point to a litany of violations of norms leading up to the fire

Licence issued to hospital by Directorate General of Health Services expired on March 31

Expired licence allowed for 5 beds only, but hospital had admitted 12 newborns

No fire extinguisher installed in the hospital. No emergency exit in the hospital

Doctors were under qualified to treat newborns in neo-natal intensive care, according to police

Hospital permitted to store only 20 oxygen cylinders, but had 32 at the site



11.40PM First call received by Delhi Fire Services ₹10,000-15,000 charged by hospital per day

## Families struggle to come to terms with loss of loved ones

Hemani Bhandari and Jignasa Sinha  
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**NEW DELHI:** "We were supposed to take my niece home on Sunday," said Arun Kumar, whose brother Raj Kumar and sister-in-law Uma Devi lost their 17-day-old daughter.

Uma collapsed as soon as she got the news that the facility where their newborn was admitted was engulfed in a fire the previous night.

They were one of six families who were celebrating the birth of their babies and making plans to welcome their newest members home, but had their joy brutally cut short when they found out that a fire had ripped through the Baby Care New Born Hospital.

The families rushed to the facility at Vivek Vihar to find a hospital gutted. Guided by residents and police officers, the families were directed to the East Delhi Advanced NICU Hospital,

where the injured infants were undergoing treatment.

Their faint hopes shattered when they could not find their babies there either.

They then reached the mortuary at Guru Teg Bahadur Hospital, where the dead infants were being put through autopsies. Gathering under the shed next to the complex where the post-mortem examinations were being conducted, they frantically asked police officers if their newborns were among the dead. The officers took the fathers to identify the deceased infants. They left the mortuary inconsolable.

"Neither the hospital nor police informed us about the incident. We only got to know about it after watching the news," said Robin, a resident of Bulandshahr and whose brother lost his son.

Around 11.30pm on Saturday night, the fire broke out at neonatal care centre, during which at least four to five oxygen cylinders exploded. Twelve babies were



Vinod Sharma (in white) mourns the death of his newborn outside the mortuary of GTB Hospital on Sunday. Sharma and his wife, Jyoti Devi, had lost two babies earlier. SANCHIT KHANNA/HT

taken out of the hospital, out of which six died. The death of one more baby was recorded before the blaze broke out.

All the seven dead babies were aged between one and 17 days.

Meanwhile, the families did

not inform the infants' mothers of the deaths as they were recuperating after childbirth. Five of the six parents have already lost their children before as well, the families told HT.

Jyoti Rani, 35, and Vinod

Sharma, 36, residents of Jwala Nagar in Shahdara, gave birth to their baby boy on Saturday. "They have lost three babies so far. The first time, Jyoti suffered a miscarriage. The second baby died right after birth due to some complications about two years ago. Now, they have lost their third child. It's unbearable," said Vinod's nephew Amit Sharma, 37, who stood next to him.

Robin's brother Hrithik Chaudhary and his wife Nikita brought their one-day-old son to this centre on May 18. "Why did the facility store so many oxygen cylinders right below the ward where the infants were kept," Robin asked.

Sitara and Masi Alam celebrated their son's birth on May 22. "We saw the news on Facebook... We want justice for our child," said Alam. The family said that the couple lost their five-year-old son a few years ago.

A constable from UP lost his six-day-old son.

Pawan Kumar, 28, and his wife Bharti, 24, were blessed with their first born—a daughter—and welcomed her with much fanfare at their home in Ghaziabad. "The pain is beyond measure," said Kumar's brother Yogesh Kasana.

Just like other families, Anjar Khan, 30, from Kanti Nagar received a call around noon from a friend who asked him to watch the news. His 11-day-old daughter was in the facility. "We didn't even name her. I never even held her in my arms," said Khan, who works at a digital embroidery workshop in northeast Delhi.

**A newborn died before**

Around 9.30pm on Saturday, Naveen Kumar, 32, a farmer, received a call from the facility informing him that his three-day-old son died. They informed the hospital that they'll collect the body on Sunday morning.

"Our child did not die in the fire but a loss is a loss," said Seva Ram, 63.

# LG, govt order inquiry into blaze

HT Correspondent  
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**NEW DELHI:** The Delhi government and lieutenant governor VK Saxena on Sunday ordered chief secretary Naresh Kumar to conduct an inquiry into the fire tragedy at a children's hospital in Vivek Vihar which left six newborns dead and five others injured.

The government has also directed that compensation should be provided to the victims' families and has asked for free treatment of the rescued children at reputed private hospitals.

President Droupadi Murmu and Prime Minister Narendra Modi condoled the loss of lives. The PMO announced an ex gratia of ₹2 lakh from the Prime Minister's National Relief Fund to the next of kin of each deceased, and ₹50,000 to those injured.

"I have asked the chief secretary to institute an inquiry into the tragic incidents of fire in children's hospital in Delhi. I have also instructed the commissioner of police to ensure all that is needful... My heartfelt condolences to the bereaved families... I assure all relief and will ensure



The Baby Care Newborn Hospital in Vivek Vihar where a fire broke out on Saturday. ARVIND YADAV/HT

that guilty are brought to book," Saxena posted on X.

Earlier in the day, Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal called the incident "heartbreaking". "The causes of the incident are being investigated and whoever is responsible for this negligence

will not be spared," he said.

Meanwhile, Delhi health minister Saurabh Bharadwaj also issued directions to the chief secretary Kumar to initiate a probe into the case. His order directed the officials to ensure "free treatment of rescued children in best

private hospitals" and "speedy compensation to the families of deceased and injured."

Bhardwaj inspected the site of the tragedy on Sunday morning. Later in an order, the minister said he was unable to communicate with the health secretary

My heartfelt condolences to bereaved families... will ensure that guilty are brought to book

VK SAXENA, LG

and the order is being sent to the chief secretary. At 9pm, Bhardwaj added that he was putting it on record that the health secretary has "still not responded".

HT reached out to the health secretary who did not respond to queries. The chief secretary, meanwhile, said that an inquiry has been ordered.

"You are directed to ensure... an enquiry into this incident, and provide names and designations of officers... responsible for this negligence... ensure free treatment of rescued children in private hospitals... and ensure speedy compensation to the families of deceased and injured," the order said. The order also directed the chief secretary to expedite the arrests of those operating the hospital.

"...I have asked Secretary (Health) to update about the current situation. Culprits will not be spared... Strictest punishment will be ensured for those found negligent or involved in any wrongdoing," Bharadwaj posted on X.

Additionally, divisional commissioner Ashwini Kumar directed the Shahdara district magistrate to start a magisterial inquiry into the incident. DM Shahdara, Rishita Gupta, also submitted a brief factual report on the incident detailing timing, details about victims and the chain of events.

Delhi Bharatiya Janata Party president Virendra Sachdeva visited the site on Sunday. Sachdeva said that this was not just an accident but a "case of murder due to negligence".

"There have been continuous incidents of major fires in Delhi. The negligent government brushes off these incidents by talking about investigations. Only money is extorted in the name of investigation, and the entire incident is swept under the rug," said Sachdeva.

He also recounted major fire tragedies in the Capital like those at Anaj Mandi Filmistan, Munkda, Narela, Alipur, and Karol Bagh.

## Disaster officials asked for fire-risk audit last week

Jasjeev Gandhiok and Jayashree Nandi  
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**NEW DELHI:** The Union health ministry and National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) on March 23 had issued a joint advisory to states and UTs, directing that all accredited hospitals conduct thorough inspections of their electrical load capacity and address discrepancies, and obtain valid fire no-objection certificates (NOCs) from their respective fire departments.

NDMA in a review meeting on May 22 had directed Delhi to carry out an audit of all hospitals and coaching centres in the city, and share a report within a month's time. "This needed to be done to ensure that in case of a short circuit, what preparations are in place. Also, how will people be evacuated," said a senior official, part of the meeting, on condition of anonymity.

Separately, the Delhi heat action plan, which according to the Delhi Disaster Management Authority (DDMA) was implemented in April, recommends replacing and upgrading all damaged transformers and loose wires, with special care for power supply in hospitals, dispensaries and clinics.

These advisories most certainly did not reach New Born Baby Care Hospital at Vivek Vihar in east Delhi, where a blaze that led to the death of at least six infants.

**What advisories say**

The NDMA advisory states that a detailed set of instructions, outlining the steps and measures to be undertaken by hospitals to ensure fire safety compliance should be disseminated to all accredited hospitals.

Some steps in the advisory include conducting a comprehensive fire safety audit, ensuring that fire-fighting systems are present and fully functional, and directing hospitals to address insufficient electrical load capacity.

Any identified discrepancies must be promptly rectified and that hospitals must strictly adhere to regulatory requirements and obtain valid fire NOCs from their respective state fire departments.

Meanwhile, Delhi's heat action plan has a detailed plan to save lives from extreme heat. It also asks for replacement and upgradation of all damaged transformers and replacing loose wires.

"Special care should be taken for power supply in hospitals, dispensaries and clinics," it adds. Abhijant Tiwari, lead of climate resilience and health at NRDC India, said there is a clear link between summer heat and an increase in fire incidents.

HT reached out to NDMA on whether the action plan is indeed being enforced but did not receive a response.

The Delhi government did not respond to requests for comment.

## With NICUs too costly for many, are smaller clinics necessary evil?

Rhythmia Kaul  
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**NEW DELHI:** The Baby Care New Born Hospital at Vivek Vihar in east Delhi, where six infants were killed following a fire on Saturday night, is part of a medical industry with scant oversight in the National Capital Region offering neonatal intensive care facilities at relatively lower prices.

The hospital in its website said that it is an institute dedicated "for neonates specially premature and extremely low birth weight babies". It said that the hospital "is most affordable and economical NICU in whole NCR Delhi without compromising in treatment care", and has "dedicated and trained staff that are committed to care for these small angels".

However, investigating agencies have discovered that the hospital's licence to operate issued by Delhi government's Directorate General of Health Services had expired on March 31, and even the now-invalid permit only allowed for five beds—less than half of the 12 newborn children admitted at the time of the fire.

The hospital was also operating with "doctors" who had Bachelor of Ayurvedic Medicine and Surgery (BAMS) degrees—not those with medical science degrees of MBBS or MD—and was thus not qualified to treat newborns in neonatal intensive care, according to police.

Experts said that there is a high likelihood that many simi-



Medical equipment at the hospital after the fire. ARVIND YADAV/HT

lar clinics operate across the Delhi and its satellite cities, without proper permissions, infrastructure, and manpower. However, these hospitals do roaring business, primarily because not everyone can afford to pay for high-end neonatal or paediatric intensive care units for sick babies.

The cost of intensive care treatment at any prominent private hospital runs into lakhs of rupees on a daily basis, with a significant chunk of the expenditure not covered under most health insurance schemes. At government hospitals—which cost much less—finding a bed during an emergency can be a herculean task. The wait period for certain procedures may stretch from days to even years at such institutions.

"There is a huge unmet

demand for such facilities, which is why the unorganised sector is thriving. I doubt if there will be an exact number available immediately of similar hospitals that are functioning across the city," said a senior administrative official formerly with the Delhi government's health services department, requesting anonymity.

A 2020 Lancet study said, "To provide adequate care, India needs 20 000–30 000 level 3 neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) beds and 75 000–100 000 level 2 special newborn care beds. But beds available, especially level 3 NICU beds, are grossly inadequate. It remains common in government hospitals to have up to five sick newborn babies sharing a cot."

"Such facilities are necessary as there is an immense load on private hospitals, but safety standards cannot be compromised... There is absolutely no room for using substandard machines, medicines, working with less staff and not following safety guidelines. There have clearly been a lot of misses but we cannot blame just the hospital, the government is also to be blamed equally. Who is supposed to check these lapses? Who is allowing them to run without adequate permissions/licences?" said Dr Yatin Mehta, chairman of the institute of critical care and anaesthesiology at Medanta Hospital.

As temperatures escalated this year, the Union health ministry and NDMA had issued a joint advisory to states and UTs on measures to prevent fires at hospitals. But the official quoted above said, "These kinds of disasters are usually waiting to happen because most people aren't doing their job properly. There may be advisories in place, but who is there to ensure compliance?"

Another senior official, who works at a government-run children's hospital, said having accreditation, and conducting fire drills on a regular basis is important.

"You cannot not have safeguards in place for such sensitive facilities. This incident should be taken as a wake-up call, and not forgotten as we have the tendency to forget and move on. Loopholes need to be plugged, responsibilities must be fixed," the official said, also requesting anonymity.

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The charred two-wheelers at the parking lot of the building where fire broke out in Krishna Nagar on Sunday. ARVIND YADAV/HT

## Fire at east Delhi building, 3 killed

Hemani Bhandari  
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**NEW DELHI:** Three people, including a 68-year-old woman, were killed after a massive fire engulfed a residential building at Krishna Nagar in east Delhi in the early hours of Sunday. The blaze started at an illegal scooter godown located at the parking space of the four-storey building, officials aware of the matter said.

The victims' families alleged that the building was constructed illegally with five floors having eight flats instead of four flats. No arrests have been made so far, they added.

The incident took place about 5 km from the Baby Care Newborn Hospital at Vivek Vihar in east Delhi where six newborns died after a fire broke out at the facility late on Saturday night.

Deputy commissioner of police (DCP) (Shahdara) Surendra Chaudhary said that the deceased were identified as Promila Sadh, 68, Anju Sharma, 39, and her son Keshav Sharma, 18.

Sadh's daughter Sonam Sadh, 24, sustained severe burns and has been admitted to a city hospital. The other injured victims were identified as Karan Raj Bhalla, 56, his wife Seema

Bhalla, 54, their sons Rahul, 33, Rohit, 30, and Manish, 25; Devender Sharma, 45; Gaurav Sharma, 41, his wife Ruchika, 38, and their six-year-old son Divyansh, the DCP added.

The fire department said that they received a call regarding the blaze at 2.35am after which five fire tenders were pressed into service. "The fire broke out at the parking where the two-wheelers were kept, and the blaze spread to the first floor. The building comprises ground floor and four floors above with an area of 100 sq yard. The upper floors were affected by the heat and were filled with smoke," said Delhi Fire Service director Atul Garg. Sadh's body was found charred on the first floor and the other two people are suspected to have died of suffocation, he added.

Police said that 14 two-wheelers, including two bicycles, parked on the ground floor parking were found burnt.

DCP Chaudhary said that they have registered a case under section 285 (mischief by fire), 304A (causing death by negligence), 337 (act endangering life), and 427 (mischief causing loss) of the Indian Penal Code at Krishna Nagar police station.

## SUV hits divider on Noida-G Noida e-way, one killed, 2 injured

Arun Singh  
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**NOIDA:** A 26-year-old man was killed and two others sustained severe injuries after the speeding SUV that they were travelling in rammed a divider and overturned near Sector 126 on the Noida-Greater Noida Expressway early on Sunday, police said.

Police identified the deceased as Vijay alias Bablu (who went by a single name), a businessman, and resident of Jaitpur, Phase 2, south Delhi.

"On Sunday around 1am, Vijay and his friends Ashish Thakur, 24, and Aryan Kumar alias Bobby, 24, both residents of Delhi, were going home from Greater Noida, when their SUV (Mahindra XUV 500) rammed the divider at a high speed," said station house officer (Sector 126) Pramod Kumar Singh.

The impact was so intense that the SUV crossed the service road and came to a halt on the green belt after rolling multiple times, said another officer.

"One of the car occupants got thrown out of the SUV while the other two were stuck inside," said sub-inspector (police outpost in-charge, Sector 126) Yogesh Chaudhary, who was on patrol duty in a police response vehicle (PRV)



The damaged SUV. SUNIL GHOSH/HT

at the time of the incident. "As we heard the accident, we rushed to the spot and rescued the injured. We took the Vijay to a nearby private hospital where he was declared dead on arrival," he added.

"A few other friends of Vijay were in a separate car travelling ahead of the victim's SUV. They spotted the accident in their rear-view mirror and rushed back to take Ashish and Aryan to hospital, from where the two men were referred to a government hospital in Delhi," the officer added.

The two are undergoing treatment and their condition is currently stable.

It is yet to be determined who was behind the wheel, police said.

Police said that Vijay's post-mortem was conducted on Sunday.

"No case has been registered yet and further investigations are underway in the case," an officer said.

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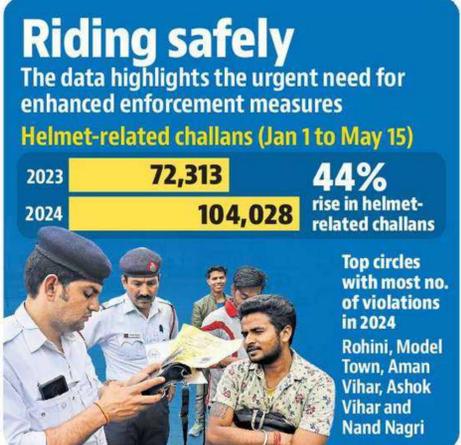
# Police: Surge in fines for riding two-wheelers without helmet

**HT Correspondent**  
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**NEW DELHI:** Delhi witnessed a 44% surge in challans against two-wheeler riders commuting without wearing helmets between January 1 and May 15 this year compared to the corresponding period last year, the Delhi Traffic Police data shows.

According to data shared by Delhi Traffic Police, from January 1 to May 15, 2024, they booked 104,028 violators, compared to 72,313 during the same period in 2023.

"With intensified special drives and routine checks to target motorcyclists riding without helmets between January 1 and May 15, 2024, we have booked 104,028 violators, compared to 72,313 during the same period in 2023. This represents a significant increase of 44% in helmet-related violations. The data highlights the urgent need for enhanced enforcement measures and public awareness campaigns to effectively address this growing concern,"



a senior traffic police official said.

Traffic police said that additionally, a thorough analysis of the top 10 traffic circles with the most challans issued in

2024 has been carried out by the Delhi Traffic Police. "By identifying the areas with the most frequent helmet-related violations, this study facilitates targeted enforcement efforts to

enhance road safety and ensure compliance with traffic regulations," the official added.

The top 10 circles with the most violations have Rohini at the top followed by Model Town, Aman Vihar, and Ashok Vihar with 5,288, 4,346, 4,296, and 4,208 violations, respectively. These areas are followed by Nand Nagri, Bhajanpura, Badarpur, Narela and Khajuri Khas which recorded 3,915, 3,889, 3,502, 3,501 and 3,220 challans.

"This initiative is part of a broader strategy to improve compliance with traffic laws and promote safe driving practices across the city. Alongside enforcement, the Delhi Traffic Police have launched extensive awareness campaigns to educate the public about the importance of wearing helmets. The initiatives include roadshows, educational programs in schools and colleges, social media campaigns, and collaborations with the other stakeholders," the statement added.

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## Working in extreme heat

On a group of citizens most vulnerable to extreme temperature

**{ PRIVATE CAPITAL }** The sun's glare was repeatedly hitting the auto rickshaw's windshield. It was not even 10am, but the road, the roadside, and the trees on the roadside were flooded with hot white light. So white that it was hurting his eyes, driver Mahadev Kumar says, recalling his first half of the day. The pain inside his head was picking up intensity.

Since Delhi's green-and-yellow auto rickshaws are open on both sides, their drivers have to absorb the full blast of the summer season's wrath, all through the day. One auto rickshaw driver copes with the heatwave-like conditions by tying a wet gamcha, length-wise, along the steering to prevent the sun rays from falling straight on his arms.

Anyways, it was almost noon when Mahadev Kumar dropped a customer, here on a central Delhi avenue. He then parked the auto rickshaw under the shade of this huge peepal tree, got up from the driver's seat, and claimed the long passenger seat on the back, curving his body into a fetal position.

He woke up moments ago. The pain in the head is gone, he says, explaining that he has been taking

ing a two-hour-long break during the peak summer heat.

Some auto rickshaw drivers, he says, confront the extreme heat by covering the rickshaw's rextine roof with cardboard sheets sourced from discarded cartons. Many drivers also tend to wrap their water bottle in a cotton cloth, the evaporation keeps the water cool. A few even resort to the old-fashioned hand-fan (the drivers find the small electric fan impractical—the breeze it produces is super-hot and the fan itself is liable to be stolen because of the auto's open build).

Returning to his seat following the nap, driver Mahadev Kumar intently gazes at a pavement barber shading a customer. The simple stall is partly shaded by a tree's dense green foliage. He continues to stare at the barber, who on noticing that he is being watched, waves at the driver. Mahadev Kumar turns away his head. In the summer, he says, many "bungalow wale" install cold water filters for passers-by outside their bungalow gate. He stops to refill his bottle each time he spots such a free facility. He now restarts his auto rickshaw, and leaves the tree shade, re-entering into the city's hot white light.

Steps ahead, another auto rickshaw comes to a halt, under the shade of another tree. Driver Shiv Kumar has stopped to drink water—see right photo.



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## Flight with 135 on board hits bird, returns to IGI

**HT Correspondent**  
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**NEW DELHI :** A SpiceJet flight from Delhi to Leh had to return to the capital's Indira Gandhi International Airport (IGIA) soon after taking off, due to a bird hit, officials aware of the matter said.

The flight, which had taken off from the airport at about 10:30am, landed safely at 11am after one of the aircraft's engines was hit by a bird, they said. "On May 26, 2024, a SpiceJet B737 aircraft (SG-I23) operating from Delhi to Leh returned to Delhi after suffering a bird hit on engine two. The aircraft landed safely in Delhi and passengers deplaned nor-

mally," said a SpiceJet spokesperson, adding that the aircraft made a normal landing and did not have to make an emergency landing.

An airport official confirmed the incident, stating the flight requested priority landing at 10:49am.

"The flight was carrying 135 passengers on board and landed safely at about 11am. The pilots told the ATC that there was vibration in the engine," the official said, requesting anonymity.

On May 17, an Air India flight, which took off from Delhi with 175 passengers, also had to turn back and land in the capital, after a fire broke out in its air-conditioning unit.

## Maliwal says won't quit: 'AAP doesn't belong to 3-4 people'

**Alok KN Mishra**  
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**NEW DELHI:** Rajya Sabha member Swati Maliwal, who has accused Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal's aide of assaulting her, said on Sunday that she does not intend to quit the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP).

She also claimed that she was told that if she were to lodge a complaint over the matter, they would term her a Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) agent.

The AAP did not respond to requests for comments on the allegations. Kumar has filed a counter complaint, accusing Maliwal of forcefully entering the CM's premises and using abusive language.

"I left my job as an engineer in 2006... I was a full-time volunteer with Arvind Kejriwal. I was a core committee member of the Anna (Hazare) movement... My blood and sweat went into the foundation of the party... I was made MP because of my hard work and dedication... I want to make it clear that I did not have any personal animosity with anyone at the party. Delhi Police will investigate why I was assaulted and at whose behest," she said.

"The AAP does not belong to three-four people. It is my party as well. I will remain in this party," she added.

Maliwal also denied claims by the AAP that she reached the CM's residence without an appointment, trespassed, and



Swati Maliwal

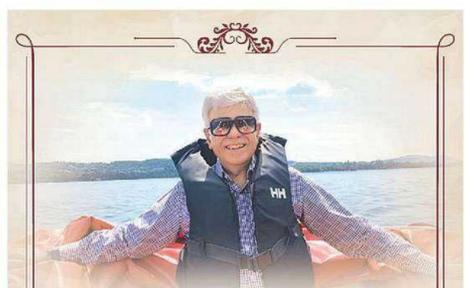
misbehaved while forcibly trying to meet the CM.

"No one can enter the CM's office residence if security personnel do not allow them to enter. I did not force my way into the CM's office by fighting with security officials. If I was trespassing, how did I reach the drawing room of the CM's residence?" she said.

"AAP leaders called me and also met me... In the three days following my assault, I was told that if I lodged a complaint they would term me as a BJP agent... When I reached the police station, I was flooded with phone calls," she said.

"After I reached home, (AAP MP) Sanjay Singh arrived at my residence, other leaders also arrived. They saw my condition, and went back to meet Arvind ji and also met Bibhav... Later he (Singh) acknowledged it (the alleged assault) in the media... But the next day we saw Bibhav moving around with Arvind ji. Arvind ji also held a street protest for Bibhav, he never hit the streets for Manish (Sisodia) ji," she said.

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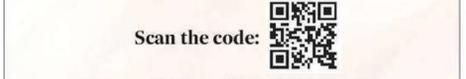
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## 'Use holistic progress card up to Class 8'

**Fareeha Iftikhar**  
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**NEW DELHI:** The National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) has asked the states and union territories to implement the Holistic Progress Card (HPC), an initiative under the National Education Policy 2020, for a "multidimensional progress monitoring" of school students up to class 8 this year, officials familiar with the development said.

PARAKH (Performance Assessment, Review and Analysis of Knowledge for Holistic Development), a national assessment centre under the NCERT, has developed the progress card for the foundational stage of

classes 1 and 2), preparatory stage of classes 3 to 5 and middle stage of classes 6 to 8.

HPC takes into account feedback from peers, parents and self-assessment of students to track their progress in different domains throughout the year. The NCERT with the Central Board of Secondary Education conducted a pilot of these holistic in select schools last year.

The progress card is a comprehensive assessment of children throughout the year, said Indrani Bhaduri, CEO of PARAKH. "It will document his or her achievements in different domains, including physical, socio-emotional, literacy, studies and others, in a year. We are advocating it for all schools," she

said. "Many private schools have approached PARAKH for training their teachers."

The card will also form an important link between the home and school, and will be accompanied by parent-teacher meetings to actively involve parents in their children's holistic education and development.

PARAKH has so far trained faculty from the state councils of educational research and training, teachers from all the district institutes of education & training, and 100 teachers from each state as master trainers. "There are around one crore teachers and to reach all these teachers will take time," bhaduri said. "Now, states have to train their own teachers with the help of

these master trainers."

PARAKH are working on digitizing the progress cards, she said, adding that the council is presently working on the framework for classes 9 to 12 as well. "Many states have already started translating HPC in their regional languages. The Hindi translation has already been done by Haryana, Chandigarh and Chattisgarh. Maharashtra is also doing Marathi language," Bhaduri said. The HPC is progressive but will take time to implement, a Haryana school education department official said. "It will need teachers' training and awareness among parents. We will have to implement HPC in a staggered manner," the official said.

{ FROM PAGE 1 }

### MODI RALLIES

and Congress. Jihadis across the border are supporting them. The SP and the Congress are making an appeal for 'vote jihad', Modi said at the rally in Deoria.

"This (INDIA bloc) group is saying that if they come to power, they will reimpose Article 370 in Kashmir. They will repeal the CAA (Citizenship Amendment) Act which gives citizenship to the victims of Partition. Whose agenda is this... this is what these anti-India forces want?" he said.

Hitting out at the bloc, Prime Minister Modi claimed the "INDI jamaat" has been abusing him for his opposition to reservation on the basis of religion.

Referring to the Ram temple in Ayodhya, the Prime Minister said people from across the world are visiting it for a 'darshan' of Ram Lalla. But those of the SP and the Congress rejected the invitation for the temple's consecration ceremony, Modi said.

"They pretend to go to temples during elections. But these people started abusing the Ram temple when such a grand festival (consecration ceremony) of our faith came after 500 years. These people were angry with the construction of the Ram temple," he said.

The opposition has three "big conspiracies", the PM said. "First, the people of INDI alliance will change the Constitution and write in it afresh that reservations should be given on the basis of religion in India. Second, these INDI people will

end the reservation given to SC, ST, OBC. Third, they will give the entire reservation to Muslims on the basis of religion," Modi said in Ghosi.

The opposition has alleged that if voted to power for a third term, BJP-led NDA will rewrite the Constitution to do away with reservations.

Modi went on to add, "Today, the SP, Congress and the INDI people want to make the majority community in India second-class citizens."

He also branded the bloc as communal and casteist, and targeted the SP, saying people associated with it have a "chhatees ka ankara" (animosity with law and order).

"The SP used to release captured terrorists and its government used to suspend police officials for catching terrorist," Modi said and added that the party kept Purvanchal backward under a conspiracy.

"During the SP government, mafias had built palaces on public land. But since Yogi Adityanath has come (as chief minister of Uttar Pradesh) the environment has changed. Now, the 'acche din' (good days) of mafias are over. Houses of the poor are being built in place of their palaces. This is the difference between the BJP and the INDI alliance," he said at the rally in Mirzapur, from where Union minister and Apna Dal (S) chief Anupriya Patel is seeking re-election as an NDA candidate.

Modi alleged that the "families of the SP and the Congress had their dynastic mindset to

turn Purvanchal into a region of mafia, poverty and helplessness".

"I want to remind you that in 2012, the SP in its manifesto had stated that Muslims should get reservation equal to that of Dalits. The INDI jamaat wants to change the Constitution for this. When I ask them (about reservation) they abuse Modi," he said, adding he is opposing reservation on the basis of religion.

The people of the Purvanchal region will punish them for these, he said.

The region sent 13 MPs to the Lok Sabha. Polling for all 13 seats — Maharajan, Gorakhpur, Kushinagar, Deoria, Bansa-gaon, Ghosi, Salempur, Ballia, Ghazipur, Chandauli, Varanasi, Mirzapur and Robertsganj — will be held in the last phase of the elections on June 1.

In the 2019 elections, the NDA won 11 of the 13 seats. While the BJP won nine, its ally Apna Dal (S) led by Union minister Anupriya Patel won two seats.

INDIA bloc constituents Samajwadi Party (SP) and Congress failed to win any seat in the region.

Modi also alleged that the Congress created "roadblocks" for countries that wanted to purchase the BrahMos missiles.

"There has been a demand for these in many countries but the Congress does not like it. Many countries wanted to purchase the BrahMos but the Congress government created hurdles because the 'INDI' people do not want India to become self-reliant in the defence sec-

tor," Modi said.

The Prime Minister said, "The day is not far when BrahMos missiles will also be made in Uttar Pradesh."

Referring to previous poll manifestos of the SP and the Congress, Modi said, "In 2012 (assembly polls), the SP had clearly written in its manifesto that the reservation that Babasabheb gave to Dalits, similar reservation will be given to Muslims."

The Congress declared educational establishments as minority institutions and gave reservation to Muslims there, he said.

"Before 2014, the Congress changed the law overnight to declare schools, colleges and universities as minority institutions. They declared thousands of educational institutions as minority institutions. Earlier, the reservation SC, ST and OBC students were getting there was completely ended and Muslims got reservation," Modi said.

"What can be a bigger betrayal than this of the sons and daughters of Dalits, backward tribals?" Modi asked and added that the INDI bloc wants to "take back the country by several decades".

The prime minister said when "Modi openly exposes them (opposition), they raise slogans of digging Modi's grave." "They issue fatwas of vote jihad against Modi but as long as Modi has the protective shield of mothers and sisters of the country and the blessings of all of you, no one can do any harm to Modi," he said.

SPOTLIGHT | RAJKOT FIRE

# Unit lacked fire permit, flouted norms

The Rajkot gaming arcade, where a blaze killed 28 people, was operating without safety equipment and had single entry, exit

**Maulik Pathak**  
letters@hindustantimes.com

**AHMEDABAD:** The death toll in the blaze at a Rajkot gaming arcade rose to 28 on Sunday, officials said, with new revelations showing a raft of violations in fire safety mechanisms and certifications that could have otherwise prevented Saturday afternoon's tragedy.

Officials aware of the investigation said the TRP Game Zone's owner and manager have been arrested over the incident, and that the entertainment venue—which was teeming with families on a hot weekend afternoon when the fire broke out—had its booking license renewed for the current year, but without the fire safety permit.

"While the gaming zone owners had submitted bills of fire safety equipment to the police and claimed to have installed them on the premises, the measures taken were inadequate and ineffective...The process for obtaining the necessary fire NOC (No-Objection Certificate) was underway but had not been completed when the tragic incident took place," Rajkot police commissioner Raju Bhargava said.

According to the first information report (FIR), the accused erected a 50-metre wide and 60-metre long structure with a height of around a three-storey building using metal sheet fabrication to create an arcade with only a single entry and exit point. It was operated by Raceway Enterprise. The venue also consisted of a go-karting track.

"The fire is likely to have started from a welding spark on a ladder. With only one available staircase, visitors on the second and third floors found themselves trapped, leading to a higher number of casualties," said a person aware of the matter.

The arcade housed highly

inflammable materials such as fuel: tyres, fibre glass sheets, and thermocol partitions, some of these were for go-karting, the person added.

"They did not have proper fire-fighting equipment and had not obtained the no-objection certificate from the local fire department, thereby endangering the lives of people despite knowing that a blaze in such a structure could cause deaths and injuries," the FIR said.

Out of the 28 deceased, at least four were children. However, some reports suggested that the number of dead children could increase as some bodies were charred beyond recognition and authorities were relying on DNA matching to identify them.

"A total of 27 bodies have been recovered, along with human remains that could belong to an additional victim, bringing the death toll to 28. All individuals have been accounted for, and there are no reports of missing persons. Furthermore, the debris has been fully cleared, eliminating the possibility of any additional casualties," Bhargava said.

Police have booked six people—Dhaval Corporation proprietor Dhaval Thakkar, Raceway Enterprise partners Ashoksinh Jadeja, Kiritsinh Jadeja, Prakashchandra Hiran, Yuvrajsinh Solanki and Rahul Rathod in the case.

They have been charged under Indian Penal Code (IPC) Sections 304 (culpable homicide not amounting to murder), 308 (attempt to commit culpable homicide), 337 (causing hurt by an act that endangers life or personal safety of others), 338 (causing grievous hurt to a person by doing an act that endangers their life or personal safety), police officials said.

"Yuvrajsinh Solanki and the entertainment facility's manager Nitin Jain have so far been arrested," said Rajkot deputy commissioner of police (crime) Parthrajsinh Gohil said.

Bhargava said a five-member Special Investigation Team (SIT), headed by Joint CP Vidhi Chowdhary, has been formed to probe the incident.

(With agency inputs)



Debris are removed on Sunday from the site of a gaming zone in Rajkot that was gutted in a massive fire.

## Family loses 5 of its members in blaze

**Press Trust of India**  
letters@hindustantimes.com

**RAJKOT:** A fun weekend outing turned tragic for the Jadeja family, which lost five of its members in the massive fire at the TRP game zone in Gujarat's Rajkot city.

The Jadejas were at the game zone at Nana Mava on Saturday evening when the place was engulfed in flames, and 28 people lost their lives. Virendrasinh Jadeja (42) went missing after he rushed to the upper floor of the game zone to rescue his son and three other relatives after the blaze broke out, his daughter Devikaba Jadeja said.

Authorities count the deceased as "missing" while families await confirmation of



Ambulances and fire trucks parked at the site of the Rajkot gaming arcade after the fire.

their DNA samples sent to Gandhinagar Forensic Science Laboratory (FSL) for examination. Rajkot collector Prabhav Joshi said the death toll in the tragedy stood at 28, and DNA

samples of all the victims were sent to Gandhinagar FSL in the wee hours of Sunday by air ambulance.

"To be sure and ascertain there is no issue of bodies getting exchanged, we decided to send samples of all the bodies," he said. Of the five members of the Jadeja family who are missing and presumed dead, three are children in the age group of 10-15 years, said Devikaba.

Recalling Saturday's horror, Devikaba said, "My parents, brother, and my maternal uncle's family went to the game zone, and we were at a restaurant while my two brothers and sister went to the upper floor to play a trampoline game." "We were sitting in the restaurant when the fire broke out. My father and uncle rushed up to where my brothers and sister were playing on the trampoline, and a couple of blasts occurred, and nobody could escape," she said.

# 'It is a man-made disaster': Guj HC calls for hearing

**HT Correspondent**  
letters@hindustantimes.com

**AHMEDABAD:** The Gujarat high court on Sunday took note of the fire at a Rajkot gaming arcade that killed 28 people, calling the incident a "man-made disaster", and directing advocates of various civic bodies in the state to appear before it on Monday.

Taking suo motu cognisance of the incident at TRP Gaming Zone, the court directed Gujarat's additional advocate general and lawyers of the Ahmedabad, Vadodara, Surat and Rajkot municipal corporations to appear before it and explain under what provisions of law the authorities allowed these units to be set up and operate.

"We are shocked to read newspaper reports which indicate that the gaming zone at Rajkot appears to have taken advantage of the loopholes in the Gujarat Comprehensive General Development Control Regulations (GDCR). These entertainment zones, as newspapers suggest, have come up without the necessary approvals from the competent authorities," the bench of justice Biren Vaishnav and justice Devan M Desai said.

The high court also asked the state government and the municipal corporations "whether such licences, including the licences to use and compliance of fire safety regulations" were given to the (entertainment) zones.

"Prima facie, a man-made disaster has occurred where innocent lives of children have been lost," the court said.

The high court said that such gaming zones "pose a significant threat to public safety, specially the innocent children".

"Apart from having constructed such gaming zones/recreational activities, they have been put to use apparently, according to our information through the newspaper reports, without permission," the bench added.

In the wake of the tragedy, the state director general of police has issued instructions to the commissioners of police and superintendents of police to inspect all the game zones in Gujarat and close those running without fire safety permission.

Meanwhile, chief minister Bhupendra Patel visited the incident site at Nana-Mava road on Sunday morning as well as a hospital where injured people were admitted.



Relatives of one of the victims of the blaze break down at a government hospital in Rajkot on Sunday.

**INTEGRAL COACH FACTORY**

The following e-tender is published in IREPS website. Firms are requested to login to [www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in) and quote against the tender. Manual Quotation will not be entertained for the tender.

Open Tender No.	Short Description of the item	Tender Value (₹)
2024499211445	Works contract for Carrying out installation of Brake system for Kolkata Metro Coaches.	₹ 1,73,90,141.62

Date of tender Closing: 18.06.2024 at 14.45 Hrs / Opening on 18.06.2024 at 15.00 Hrs. Hindi Version of the above advertisement is available in <https://icf.indianrailways.gov.in> Deputy Chief Mechanical Engineer / Fur-III

**Hindustan Times**

**I SHAKILY WALKED TO THE STAGE: ANASUYA**

**HT City**

CHECK OUT TODAY'S EDITION

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA**  
**MINISTRY OF EDUCATION**  
**DEPARTMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION**

**Appointment of Vice-Chancellor of Hemvati Nandan Bahuguna Garhwal University (A Central University)**

Applications are invited for the post of Vice-Chancellor of Hemvati Nandan Bahuguna Garhwal University. The Vice-Chancellor, being the academic as well as administrative head, is expected to be:

- A person possessing the highest level of competence, integrity, morals and institutional commitment.
- A distinguished academician, with a minimum of 10 years' experience as Professor in a University or 10 years' experience in a reputed research and/or academic administrative organisation with proof of having demonstrated academic leadership.
- Preferably not more than 65 years of age as on the closing date of receipt of applications of this advertisement.

**Salary and Service Conditions**

- The post carries a pay of Rs. 2,10,000/- (Fixed) per month with Special Allowance of Rs. 11,250/- and other usual allowances.
- The terms and conditions of the services will be those as set forth in the Act, Statutes and Ordinances of the University.

**Procedure for appointment**

- Appointment will be made from a panel of names recommended by a Committee constituted under the provisions of Act of the University.
- The advertisement is available on the websites <http://www.education.gov.in> and <https://www.hnbgu.ac.in>.
- Candidates are required to "APPLY ONLINE ONLY" on the Ministry of Education SAMARTH portal as per the link given below: <https://vrec.samarth.ac.in/index.php/>
- The above link will be active from 27.05.2024 1000 Hours to 26.06.2024, 1700 Hours.

CBC 21201/12/0001/2425

**PUBLIC NOTICE**

**LAND/PROPERTY IN VILLAGE BIJWASAN, NEW DELHI.**

"Be it known to all that my client has agreed to purchase land measuring 22 Bighas and 7 Biswas, bearing Mustali No. 88, Killa Nos. 21/1 Min (2-10), Mustali No. 105, Killa Nos. 1 Min (4-3), 10/1 Min (4-1), 10/2 (0-8), 11/1 Min (0-19), 11/2 Min (3-10), 20 (4-9), 21/1 (0-10) and 21/2 (1-12), 26 (0-5), with boundary wall, tube-well, electric connection, together with built-up residential house thereupon, situated at Village Bijwasan, Tehsil Kapashera, New Delhi, [say 'said property'] from Mrs. Renuka Chawla W/o Shri Rahul Chawla and Mrs. Ritika Chawla W/o Shri Hemant Chawla [say 'owners'] who have represented themselves to be the absolute and exclusive owners of the said property and have further represented that said property is free from all disputes, litigations, charges, liens and other encumbrance(s) whatsoever.

That previous original documents viz (1) Sale Deed dated 24.11.1994, duly registered as document no. 4092, in addl. book no. 1, volume no. 8728, on pages 1 to 6 on 15.05.1995, with Sub-Registrar, New Delhi, duly executed in favour of Shri Ajay Khanna S/o Late Shri Jagdish Khanna, and (2) Rectification Deed dated 29.08.1995, duly registered as document no. 7862, in addl. book no. 1, volume no. 8877, on pages 132 to 134, on 18.09.1995, with Sub-Registrar, New Delhi, duly executed in favour of Shri Ajay Khanna S/o Late Shri Jagdish Khanna, are reported as missing/lost. Any other person(s) having any claim against, into or upon said property or any part thereof by virtue of sale, inheritance, agreement, contract, mortgage, lien, charge, or on the basis of the aforesaid misplaced/lost documents, or otherwise howsoever and of whatsoever nature is hereby required to notify the same in writing along with supporting documentary evidence to the undersigned within 15 (fifteen) days, from the date of publication of this notice, failing which my client shall conclude the sale and any claim and/or objection if any shall be considered as waived and abandoned and shall not be binding upon my client.

**AMIT GUPTA (Advocate)**  
C-13, Pamposh Enclave, New Delhi-48. Tel: 26284741, 26284569

**Have fun with facts on Sundays**

Catch the latest column of **HT TWTW** THE WEEK THAT WAS

A quiz on the week's development.

**Sunday Hindustan Times**

**HT TWTW** THE WEEK THAT WAS

Take a cue from the clues

Authors who are not authors, leaders who no longer lead, a beauty queen walks her last walk, and a book appears in a Hindi village. More happened this week. Take the quiz to find out!

Answer: **Prakash Singh** (the author of the book 'Killer and the Gun'), **Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee** and **Manushi Chellur**

Answer: **Prakash Singh** (the author of the book 'Killer and the Gun'), **Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee** and **Manushi Chellur**

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**HT** FIRST VOICE. LAST WORD.

**WESTERN RAILWAY-AHMEDABAD DIVISION**

**DEVELOPMENT WORKS AT GOODS SHED**

e-tender notice No. 07 of 2024-2025 dated 24.05.2024; (01) e-Tender No.: **DRM-ADI-69-2024-25**; Name of work-Kandla port: Development works at Goods shed (Composite work); Approximate NIT Cost: ₹ 24,35,43,360.02; EMD Cost: ₹ 13,67,700.00; Closing date & time of tender: Date 18.06.2024 at 15:00 hrs; Opening date & time of tender: Date 18.06.2024 at 15:30 hrs; Office Address: Sr. Divisional Engineer, (Coordination), Ahmedabad, DRM Office, Near Chamunda Bridge, Opp. New Swadeshi Mill, Naroda Road, Amdapura, Ahmedabad - 382 345; Website for participating e-tender: [www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in)

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**INTEGRAL COACH FACTORY**

**TENDER NOTICE**

The following e-tenders are published in IREPS website. Firms are requested to login to [www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in) and quote against these tenders. Manual quotations will not be entertained for the tender

Sl. No.	TENDER No.	OPEN TENDER FILE REFERENCE No.	NAME OF THE WORKS	QUANTITY	DATE & TIME OF TENDER CLOSING & OPENING
01	2024471211416-OT-02-WL	ML/C/OT/02/SW/WL/LHB/2024-25	COMPLETE TIG WELDING AND GRINDING OF FRAME WORK ON SIDEWALL, INTEGRATION OF SIDEWALL WITH CARLINE ASSEMBLY AND MIG BRAZING, ASSEMBLY AND TIG WELDING OF WELDING PARTS ON SIDEWALL FOR LWACCN COACHES (WET LEASING) AT ICF/CHENNAI	125 COACH SETS	03.06.2024 at 15.00 Hrs.
02	2024471211435-OT-01-SW	ML/C/OT/01/SW/LHB/2024-25	ASSEMBLY AND TIG WELDING OF DETAILS OF SIDEWALL FRAME WORK, ASSEMBLY OF SIDEWALL AND CARLINE AT JIG, AND WELDING OF DETAILS OF SIDEWALL AT SIDEWALL ACCEPTANCE STAND FOR DIFFERENT VARIANTS OF VANDE BHARAT TRAIN SET.	189 COACH SETS	07.06.2024 at 15.00 Hrs.
03	2024471211431-OT-05-TIG	ML/C/OT/05/TIG/Welding/LHB/2024-25	TIG WELDING OF DIFFERENT VARIANTS OF SHELLS AT LHB DIVISION	1,66,132.76 METRES	07.06.2024 at 15.00 Hrs.
04	2024471211439-OT-03-ROOF	ML/C/OT/03/Roof/LHB 2024-25	ASSEMBLY AND WELDING OF WELDING PARTS AND ALL OTHER DETAILS ITEMS OF ROOF AT ROOF ACCEPTANCE STAND (TRESTLE) IN SPOT WELDED ROOF FROM WET LEASING MACHINE	125 SHELLS	10.06.2024 at 15.00 Hrs.
05	2024471211438-OT-04-SF	ML/C/OT/04/S&F/LHB/2024-25	ASSEMBLY AND WELDING OF STAND ACTIVITIES & FINISHING ACTIVITIES AND ONLY FINISHING ACTIVITIES OF DIFFERENT VARIANTS OF LHB SHELLS AT ICF, CHENNAI	322 SHELLS	10.06.2024 at 15.00 Hrs.

Hindi version of the above advertisement is available in <https://icf.indianrailways.gov.in/>

**thsti** **BRIC-Translational Health Science and Technology Institute** **BRIC**

(An Institute of the Biotechnology Research and Innovation Council, Govt. of India)  
NCR Biotech Science Cluster, 3<sup>rd</sup> Milestone, Faridabad – Gurugram Expressway, P.O. Box No. 04, Faridabad – 121001

**Recruitment Notice Nos. THS/RN/21/2024**

THSTI proposes to fill the following positions under the project of THSTI: 1. Project Manager 2. Clinical Coordinator 3. Head Nurse/ Senior Study Nurse 4. Project Technical Officer (Field Supervisor) 5. Occupational Therapist 6. Staff Nurse 7. Technician (Clinical/Field/Lab) 8. Field Worker/ Telecounselor 9. Multi-Tasking Staff 10. Senior Project Associate 11. Computer Programmer Grade B 12. Data Entry Operator Grade C 13. Senior Technical Assistant 14. Project Associate-II, 15. Project Scientist-I, 16. Data Manager/PS-III.

For more details, please visit our website: [www.thsti.res.in](http://www.thsti.res.in)

**INTEGRAL COACH FACTORY**

**TENDER NOTICE No. ICF/EL/Cons/2024-25**  
**Date: 27.05.2024**

For and on behalf of the President of India, The Deputy Chief Electrical Engineer / Maintenance/Shell, Integral Coach Factory, invites E-Tender for the following works.

Tender No.	Name of the Work	Approx. Value in Lakhs ₹	EMD ₹	Tender Closing Date and time
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
2024245211447	EL/CAMC/2024-25/63 Comprehensive Annual Maintenance Contract (CAMC) for MIG-MAG synergic pulse inverter based welding machines installed in Shell & LHB / ICF for a period of three years.	194.66 Lakhs	2,47,300/-	26.06.2024 at 15.30 hrs.

Web site for submission of offer : [www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in)  
Hindi version of the above tender notification is available in: <https://icf.indianrailways.gov.in>

## SPOTLIGHT ELECTIONS 2024

## Rahul mounts attack on PM, says he tried to topple Himachal's govt

HT Correspondent

letters@hindustantimes.com

**SHIMLA:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi waived loans worth ₹16 lakh crore for 22 wealthy individuals over the past decade but failed to provide ₹9,000 crore to Himachal Pradesh for monsoon disaster relief last year, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi alleged on Sunday.

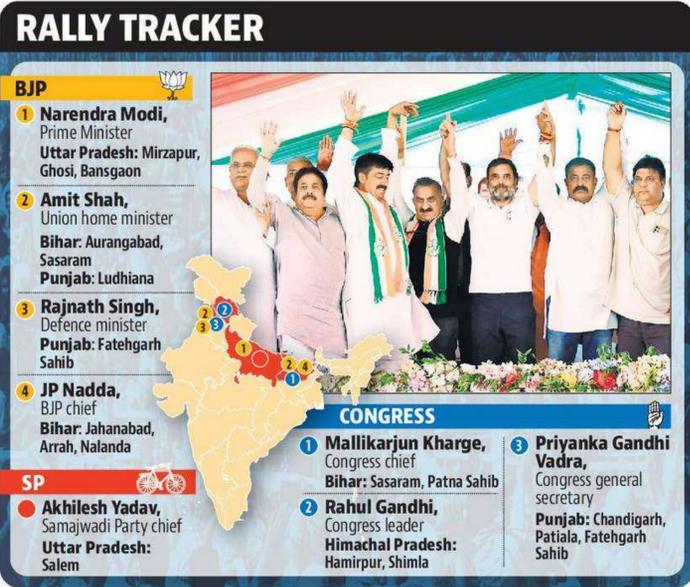
Gandhi claimed that instead of assisting the hill state, Modi tried to "steal" its elected government, openly declaring at rallies his intention to topple the Congress regime in Himachal Pradesh.

The former Congress chief referred to Modi's speeches in Nahan and Mandi on Friday, where the Prime Minister asserted the Congress government in Himachal Pradesh would be short-lived. Modi also alleged the state government mishandled central flood aid distribution and vowed to take action.

"The Prime Minister says he will bring down the Himachal Pradesh government through stealing, bribery and corruption," Gandhi said, accusing Modi of forming "stolen" governments in Goa, Arunachal Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh.

Gandhi addressed election rallies in Nahan and Una to support Congress candidates Vinod Sultanpuri and Satpal Raizada for Shimla and Hamirpur Lok Sabha constituencies, respectively, and to seek votes for party candidates Rakesh Kalra and Vivek in Gagret and Kutlehar assembly bypolls.

Elections to all four Lok Sabha



seats in Himachal Pradesh will be held on June 1 during what will be the final phase of the ongoing general elections.

The Congress leader accused Modi of allowing one person, apparently referring to industrialist Gautam Adani, to control apple prices by owning cold storage facilities in the state. He claimed Adani-owned companies' share prices rise whenever Modi becomes Prime Minister.

Gandhi alleged that under the BJP-led central government, only 22 people's dreams were fulfilled while the country's population remains mere spectators. He accused Modi of increasing unemployment by assisting Adani, destroying small and medium businesses, and introducing measures like demonetisation and the Goods and Services Tax (GST).

"Modi waived loans worth ₹16

lakh crore for 22 people in the last 10 years but couldn't provide ₹9,000 crore to Himachal Pradesh for monsoon disaster relief," Gandhi said. Extreme rainfall last July and August devastated Himachal Pradesh, killing over 550 people and damaging private and public infrastructure.

Gandhi promised that scrapping the Agniveer short-term military recruitment scheme would be the Congress party's top

priority upon assuming power at the Centre. He also pledged a legal guarantee on minimum support prices for crops, farm loan waivers, ₹1 lakh annually for poor families until they escape poverty, and filling 30 lakh government vacancies to provide jobs for unemployed youth.

Speaking at the Nahan rally, chief minister Sukhinder Singh Sukhu said Gandhi instructed him to ensure the government reaches the last person in society. Sukhu criticised the BJP for allegedly conspiring to remove the Congress government in the state.

Deputy chief minister Mukesh Agnihotri said Gandhi has fought decisively against dictatorship and asserted that people are voting for the Congress.

Former BJP minister Suresh Bhardwaj hit back, accusing Gandhi of resorting to personal attacks. Bhardwaj also took a swipe at the Congress leader over his choice of a smaller venue compared to the areas where Modi's rallies are held.

{ SAYS JAISHANKAR }

## 'Press right button for Modi guarantee'

Shishir Gupta

letters@hindustantimes.com

**VARANASI:** External affairs minister S Jaishankar on Sunday emphasised the need for India to have a strong and decisive leader like Prime Minister Narendra Modi for the present decade as global turbulence shows no signs of abating.

"Push the right button for the Modi guarantee," Jaishankar said while addressing a large gathering at the Benares Club in Varanasi.

The minister is among the big guns deployed by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in the constituency, with party president Jagat Prakash Nadda and Union commerce and industry minister Piyush Goyal landing on Sunday and home minister Amit Shah slated to arrive on Monday evening to ensure that PM Modi wins the seat again by a record margin.

Jaishankar pitched for Modi's third term as PM, saying that domestic achievements of India in the past decade have been the main reason why the country is globally respected.

"You need a leader who balances Bharat First with Vasudev Kutumbkam and only then India can be Vishwabandhu... we have done 36 plurilaterals and we have shown we can balance America and Russia, Iran and Israel, G-7 and the Global South," Jaishankar said.

He said India under Modi in the past five years has met the challenges arising out of the Ukraine war, the Chinese army transgression on the LAC, cross-



External affairs minister S Jaishankar at the Benares Club in Varanasi on Sunday.

border terrorism, the Covid pandemic and abrogation of Article 370. To enhance national security, the country needs Modi's "Make in India" approach, he said.

The minister said under previous governments, one rupee used to travel from Delhi and only 15 paise reached the intended beneficiary, which was no longer the case.

"Today, development works in the country are gaining momentum and behind it is the honest thinking and digital revolution. Due to the digital age, we are able to identify the beneficiaries, otherwise there was a time when one rupee used to travel from Delhi, only 15 paise reached the beneficiary. On the contrary, today every single rupee goes directly into the

bank accounts of the beneficiaries," he said.

Earlier, Jaishankar interacted with educationists, schoolchildren, members of the Tamil community and Kashi's intellectuals to convince people that India under Modi will not only grow manifold economically but also become a nation with comprehensive international power.

On a two-day visit to the poll-bound Kashi, where voting is scheduled to be held on June 1, the minister said the key to Viksit Bharat 2047 (a developed India by 2047) was economic growth, stability and robust national security, all of which could only be provided by a leader like Narendra Modi. Addressing private educationists at Sunbeam School, Jaishankar explained at length that India needs to compete with the world, including adversarial powers such as China, so that the dream of a developed India could be achieved.

While the BJP is comfortably poised to retain the seat, the party is leaving nothing to chance in the campaign.

Goyal landed late Sunday night to address young entrepreneurs, the Banarsi Textile Industry Association, food service workers and businessmen on Monday.

UP chief minister Yogi Adityanath has also shifted base from Lucknow to Varanasi and Gorakhpur to ensure that the BJP sweeps Poorvanchal in the high-stakes Lok Sabha elections in the political bellwether state of Uttar Pradesh.

## MAMATA: BJP'S DREAM TO OUST TMC GOVT AFTER LS ELECTIONS WILL NOT MATERIALISE

HT Correspondent

letters@hindustantimes.com

**KOLKATA:** West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee on Sunday launched a scathing attack on the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), asserting that its aspiration to overthrow the democratically elected Trinamool Congress (TMC) government after the Lok Sabha polls will remain unfulfilled.

Addressing an election rally in Jadavpur constituency, Banerjee said that the BJP's speculation that the days of the TMC government were numbered after the Lok Sabha polls was akin to issuing a veiled threat but such ambitions will not materialise.

"BJP should not dare to try to topple a democratically elected government. Its ambitions for success in the Lok Sabha polls will be shattered, as the people's verdict will be with the TMC," she asserted.

"My analysis of the last six phases is that the BJP will not cross the 200-seat mark, while the INDIA bloc will come to power in Delhi, in which West Bengal and TMC will play a pivotal part," she said.

Banerjee claimed that the TMC is solely confronting the BJP in Bengal, accusing Congress and CPI (M) of clandestinely aligning with the BJP.

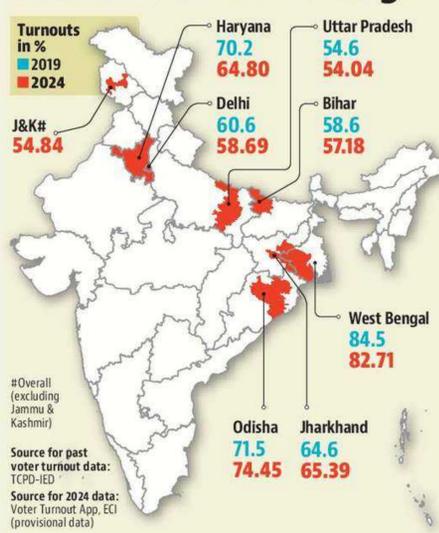
Without naming Bengal leader of opposition Suwendu Adhikari, Banerjee said, "One leader from Purba Medinipur district is issuing diktats to district and police officials to manipulate election outcomes." She criticised the Narendra Modi government for favouring big corporations like Adani and Ambani, stating that stakes in defence sector and vital PSUs were sold in the interest of big businesses, while LPG prices were hiked to over ₹1,000 per cylinder.

Modi is plotting to drive a wedge between Muslims and SCs, STs and OBCs as manifested in the conspiracy to scrap the OBC certificates issued since 2010 and take away certain benefits under the OBC Bill passed in 2012, Banerjee alleged. "We respect the judiciary but we will move the higher court against the Calcutta high court order after summer vacation."

My analysis of the last six phases is that the BJP will not cross the 200-seat mark in the general elections

**MAMATA BANERJEE,**  
West Bengal chief minister

## How turnouts have changed



## BJP MLA arrested for damaging an EVM at Odisha polling booth

Debabrata Mohanty

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**BHUBANESWAR:** Police on Sunday arrested Prashant Jagdev, Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) legislator from Chilika in Odisha, who is contesting the assembly elections from Khordha constituency, a day after he was accused of toppling an electronic voting machine (EVM) during the third phase of polling.

CCTV evidence showed that Jagdev kicked a table on which the EVM was kept, according to Nikunja Bihari Dhal, chief electoral officer of Odisha.

Jagdev has been booked under various sections of the Indian Penal Code, including trespass after preparation for hurt, assault or wrongful restraint, use of abusive, humiliating or defamatory words, assault or criminal force to woman with intent to outrage her modesty, voluntarily causing hurt and undue influence at elections, among others, Dhal said. Jagdev was earlier accused of trying to run over BJP workers with his SUV.

The candidate manhandled two polling personnel, including a woman, in booth no 114 of Kaunripatana under Bolagarh block in Khordha district on Saturday when polling was on, said Sanjay Kumar, additional director general of police, law and order. "In the webcasting system at the polling booth, Jagdev can be seen manhandling a woman polling



Prashant Jagdev

staff and the presiding officer," Kumar said.

Police later detained him on the basis of a first information report filed by presiding officer Manoranjan Tripathy. Jagdev allegedly vandalised property inside the booth, including an EVM, and was fleeing when the cops caught him, police said.

However, supporters of Jagdev said the allegations levelled against the MLA were politically motivated. They alleged that the presiding officer at the booth misbehaved with several voters and did the same with the MLA. They demanded that the CCTV footage of the incident be made public.

In 2022, when Jagdev was with the Biju Janata Dal (BJD), he was charged with attempt to murder when he allegedly tried to run his SUV over BJP workers in Banapur area of Khordha district. He was arrested and then expelled from the BJD.

In Angul district, BJD's Chhendipada MLA Susanta Kumar Behera was accused of attacking a BJP worker at Similishahi under Kosala block during polling.

{ MK STALIN } TAMIL NADU CHIEF MINISTER

The results will be out on June 4. That day we shall hoist the victory flag and dedicate INDIA's (bloc) victory to Kalaignar (Karunanidhi).

{ PUNJAB POLLS }

## BJP looks to rebuild its Amritsar bond

Vinod Sharma

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What makes Amritsar difficult for the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)? The city that's home to the Golden Temple has made it a habit of rejecting some of the best talent the party has had on offer since 2014.

The late Arun Jaitley, arguably, the BJP's most gifted parliamentarian, legal mind and political strategist in Narendra Modi's first term as Prime Minister failed to pass muster in Amritsar even in the wake election that swept his party to power. He rose to be the finance minister in the new government at the Centre.

The winner then was Capt. Amarinder Singh, who became the Congress's deputy leader in Parliament's Lower House. Jaitley couldn't enter. More interested in his party's captaincy in Punjab, the scion of the Patiala royalty quit the Lok Sabha midway through to return to state politics. He became chief minister in 2017.

The Captain's exit necessitated the by-election won by a Congress dark horse, Gurjeet Aujla, the incumbent trying now for a third term. In 2019, Aujla defeated another accomplished BJP nominee, Hardeep Singh Puri. A former diplomat, Puri is now a minister of considerable gravitas in Delhi.

Not surprising that on the eve of another election, many Ambarisarias act in half-zest whether not getting their mandate was a 'blessing in disguise' for BJP leaders. They introspect as much whether the "smart" choices they made were plain stupid, more so because the Captain, their 2014 darling, not only deserted them but has since joined the BJP.

The quandary gnaws. Despite figuring in a list of 27 (potential) smart cities the Centre cherry-picked in 2016, Amritsar has scant signs of the infrastructure it requires to make the grade. The irony is only compounded



BJP's Amritsar candidate Taranjit Singh Sandhu during a door-to-door campaign in the city on May 14.

by the fact that Hardeep Puri, the suitor they spurned five years ago, holds the urban affairs portfolio in Modi's second regime.

"Had he been our MP, imagine the kind of attention we'd have received as a historical city," asked Dharmpal, a local teacher associated with the BJP. He's convinced Amritsar was second time unlucky in 2019.

The retrospective wisdom is correctly harboured. Had he won, Jaitley, a foodie who loved feasting friends in Delhi over delicacies flown in from Amritsar, would've been a greater godsend for the city known for its culinary delights and potential for religious tourism. Besides, it's a round-the-year destination of thousands of people from across India for the colourful Beating Retreat ceremony at the India-Pak Attari-Wagah border.

One can safely assume Amritsar would've gone with Jaitley but for the Captain's last minute candidature. Currently aligned with the BJP after a bitter parting with the Congress, he was a late entrant in the contest at Sonia Gandhi's personal intervention. That made the election difficult for the BJP leader.



POLL WATCH

What tilted the scales in the Congress's favour was Amarinder Singh's royal charisma and the word attributed to the Sikh clergy: "Sikhhan da maharaja Harmandar di nagri to harna nahi chahida (the Sikh Maharaja shouldn't be defeated in the city of Harmandar Sahab (Golden Temple))." At work simultaneously was palpable sympathy for the then sitting BJP MP, Navjot Sidhu who, many felt, was wrongly discarded to adjust Jaitley.

Also hailing from Patiala, the former cricketer made things worse by going into a sulk and keeping away from the campaign. The city hung up on the Patiala duo, Jaitley's love for Amritsar stayed unrequited.

**Decent man in a difficult fight**

Albeit for other reasons, history may get repeated in the constituency where again the BJP has fielded a debutante celeb: former Indian envoy to the United States, Taranjit Singh Sandhu. The superannuated (Foreign Service) officer with a stellar record is also the grandson of Teja Singh Samundri, an iconic figure of the gurdwara reform

{ MK STALIN }

## Cash, liquor worth ₹95 crore seized during Lok Sabha polls in J&amp;K

SRINAGAR:

Election authorities in Jammu & Kashmir seized close to ₹95 crore in cash and freebies like liquor that were meant to influence voters during the staggered elections to five Lok Sabha seats in the Union territory, officials aware of the matter said. The polling process in J&K was completed on Saturday as Anantnag-Rajouri constituency voted for their candidates. While the voter turnout in the three constituencies of Kashmir has broken decades-old records, attempts were made by some candidates to influence the voters using money, liquor and other freebies, officials said.

Political bigwigs to campaign in Odisha for last phase of polls

BHUBANESWAR:

Top leaders of the BJP and the Congress will again make a beeline to Odisha ahead of the last phase of simultaneous Lok Sabha and assembly polls in the state. Prime Minister Narendra Modi will visit Odisha on May 29 and address three public meetings in Baripada, Balasore and Kendrapara, BJP's Odisha unit vice-president Golak Mohapatra told reporters on Sunday. AICC in-charge for Odisha, Ajoy Kumar said Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge will address election rallies in Balasore and Bhadrak on May 29, while Rahul Gandhi will address a public meeting in Balasore on May 30.

There are fears also of internal sabotage in the AAP and the Congress camps where important local players are working against their candidates - state minister Kuldeep Singh Dhalwal and Aujla. On paper, the fight's quadrangular between the Congress-AAP-SAD-BJP. The BJP's "weak" challenge, however, makes city-based journalists perceive the contest triangular.

Arvind Kejriwal and Rahul Gandhi have already done separate road shows in favour of their candidates. Strangely, Amarinder Singh hasn't canvassed for the BJP. He's stated to be unwell," informed an aide of Sandhu. The only significant BJP arrival from Delhi has been of external affairs minister S Jaishankar. Also slated to join the campaign is BJP president JP Nadda.

Residents predict a party and personality based vote. The Ram Temple isn't a major factor with the Hindus in the manner the Potemkin village-type sprucing up of approach roads to the Golden Temple hadn't fetched the SAD any extra electoral heft in previous elections.

In fact, the Akali-bid to claim credit for the beatification had angered the Sikh fellowship (sangat). They considered it all to have been achieved not by human effort but the "will and blessings" of the fourth Guru, Ramdas (1534-1581) who had founded and built Amritsar.

The question that nevertheless begs an answer is: can Sandhu rebuild with Amritsar his party's bond that broke in 2014? The jury's out still. The climb ahead is steeper.

Joshi's popular. The votes he gets will be out of Sandhu's kitty," forecast a shopkeeper in the marketplace of Majitha. He felt the defection of a close aide of SAD strongman Bikram

READ: Sandhu says Modi has deep commitment to Sikh issues

SPOTLIGHT ELECTIONS 2024

# Shah promises nationwide UCC roll-out in next term

**HT Correspondent**  
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**NEW DELHI:** A Uniform Civil Code (UCC) for the entire country will be rolled out and efforts will also be made to implement the idea of 'One Nation, One Election' in the next five years, if the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is voted back to power in the ongoing Lok Sabha elections, Union home minister Amit Shah has said.

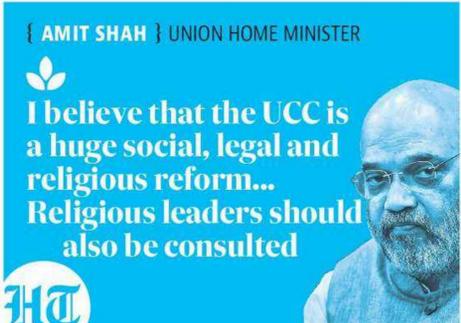
Shah said the ruling party at the Centre has not resorted to any religion-based campaign, but insisted that if canvassing against reservations for Muslims, over the abrogation of Article 370 in Jammu & Kashmir, and promising a UCC "appears religion-based", then the BJP "has done it and will continue doing so."

The Union minister made the remarks during an interview with news agency PTI on Saturday.

Speaking on the UCC, Shah said: "The UCC is a responsibility left to us, our Parliament and the state legislatures of our country since Independence by the makers of our Constitution. The guiding principles decided for us by the Constituent Assembly include the UCC. And even at that time, legal scholars like K M Munshi, Rajendra Babu, Ambedkar Ji had said that there should not be laws based on religion in a secular country. There should be a UCC."

A UCC, in theory, will implement homogenous rules for marriage, divorce, inheritance, financial compensation and adoption, among others, for all communities but many activists and experts fear that this may obliterate the customs and traditions of particular communities, such as tribals, and become a proxy to target their faiths.

In February, BJP-ruled Uttarakhand enacted a law for implementation of UCC. Other



states ruled by the party are expected to bring similar laws. Shah said: "I believe that the UCC is a huge social, legal and religious reform. The law made by the Uttarakhand government should undergo social and legal scrutiny. Religious leaders should also be consulted."

He added: "What I mean is that there should be an extensive debate on this. And (see) if there is anything to change in the model law made by the Uttarakhand government after this extensive debate... someone will definitely go to court. The judiciary's opinion will also come. After that, the state legislatures and Parliament of the country should think seriously over this and a law must be enacted. That is why we have written in our 'sankalp patra' (manifesto) that the BJP aims to have a UCC for the entire country."

Shah said that if UCC can be implemented in the entire country within the next five years, "it will be done during this period only". "Five years are a sufficient period," he said.

Asked about simultaneous polls, the Union minister said the government will "make every effort to achieve One Nation, One Election". "This should also be discussed. The

Prime Minister had formed the Ram Nath Kovind committee. I was also a member of it. Its report has been submitted. The time has come that elections should be held simultaneously in the country."

On whether a bill on this can be introduced in the next session if the BJP returns to power, Shah said, "Our resolution is for five years. We will bring it during this period."

In March, a high-level panel led by former president Ram Nath Kovind recommended simultaneous polls for Lok Sabha and state assemblies as the first step, followed by synchronised local body polls within 100 days, in its report on 'One Nation, One Election' submitted to President Droupadi Murmu.

Shah dismissed the Opposition's claims that the BJP is conducting a "religion-based" campaign.

The BJP has not resorted to any religion-based campaign but if canvassing against reservation for Muslims, and reaching out to voters on the abrogation of Article 370 and implementing a UCC is religion-based campaign, then the party has done it and will continue doing so, he said.

On May 1, Modi had challenged the Congress and its allies in the INDIA grouping to

undertake in writing that they will never provide a religion-based quota. He also said that as long as he is alive, he will not allow anyone to "play the game of reservation".

Amid the Opposition's promise to scrap the Centre's Agniphath scheme for recruitment to the armed forces, if it wins the elections, Shah said: "There cannot be a more attractive scheme for the country's youth than Agniveer. It is a very well thought-out scheme."

Taking a swipe at Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, who has been vocal on the issue, Shah said: "He (Gandhi) calls it a loot. You call the law of the country which was passed in Parliament where you yourself sit Gabbar Singh Tax. I feel pity for him. No one in the Congress party even advises him."

Shah also spoke on the ethnic strife in Manipur that has roiled the state since last year, saying the government is working on removing the trust deficit between the warring groups - Meiteis and Kukis - to bring lasting peace and the process will be expedited with utmost priority once the Lok Sabha elections are over.

"This is not an issue of riots or terrorism. This is an issue of ethnic violence. It can't be resolved through force. This is ethnic violence," he said.

"We have to repair this (conflict). This is a time consuming job. We were working on it speedily. But it has been delayed due to the elections. That is quite natural," he added.

On the high voter turnouts in Jammu & Kashmir, where polling ended on Saturday, the Union minister said: "It was a very big victory for democracy and a big success of the Narendra Modi government's Kashmir policy, which it has been pursuing for the last 10 years. I have said in Parliament that we will give the statehood after the assembly elections."

## Campaigning on in full swing for last phase



(From top to bottom) Prime Minister Narendra Modi during a rally in support of Suheldev Bharatiya Samaj Party candidate from Ghosi constituency in Uttar Pradesh, Arvind Rajbhar; West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee waves at supporters during an election rally in support of Trinamool Congress candidate from Barasat constituency, Kakoli Ghosh Dastidar; and Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal holds a roadshow in favour of Aam Aadmi Party candidate from Hoshiarpur in Punjab, Raj Kumar, on Sunday.



## SIBAL ISSUES LIST TO VERIFY AGAINST 'EVM TAMPERING' FOR RESULTS DAY

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**NEW DELHI:** Rajya Sabha MP Kapil Sibal on Sunday issued a checklist for all political parties and their counting agents and directed them to check whether the Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) have not been tampered with.

"You all know that the voting results will be out on June 4. I want to make the public and the political parties aware of what you should do when the machines (EVMs) open. So, I have made a chart for all the parties and all the counting agents. In this chart, the CU (control unit) number, BU (ballot unit) number and VVPAT ID will be present. The third column is very important. 4th June 2024 is written in the third column and the time when the machine will be opened is written below. If there is any difference in this time, then you will know that the machine has already been opened somewhere," Sibal said.

He added that a serial number of the control unit will also come in written format and counting agents and political parties will have to match it.

"When the total poll vote comes, then look at it carefully so that when there are more votes in the counting, the problem may come again. Keep in mind two things: do not press the result button until the verification is done in the above column and if there is a difference between that timing and the timing of the result, then there is something wrong. I would like that all political parties and all the candidates who are sitting there should carefully check the first column and get it opened only then," the senior advocate said.

Six phases of polls have been completed. The last phase of polling will be held on June 1.

**A SERIAL NUMBER OF THE CONTROL UNIT WILL COME IN WRITTEN FORMAT AND COUNTING AGENTS AND POLITICAL PARTIES WILL HAVE TO MATCH IT: SIBAL**

## Minister Pradhan urges Odisha DGP to act against BJD leader

**BHUBANESWAR:** Union minister Dharmendra Pradhan on Sunday requested Odisha DGP to take strict action against a ruling BJD leader accused of physically assaulting a woman for refusing to vote for the BJP in Hindol. The woman from Hindol, in her police complaint, said she had gone to cast her vote at a booth in Rasol in Dhenkanal district during the third round of LS and assembly elections on Saturday. She recounted, "The BJD leader, present at the booth, urged women to vote for his party. When I opposed him, the leader attacked me. I sustained a fracture in my hand and injuries on my head," she told reporters.

## Polling party treks for a day to deposit EVMs from J&K village

**RAJOURI:** After trekking for a day, a polling party reached Rajouri in Jammu & Kashmir Sunday evening to deposit electronic voting machines at a designated strongroom, having conducted polling in Hill Kaka - a village in Poonch. Poonch is part of Anantnag-Rajouri Lok Sabha constituency, in Jammu & Kashmir, which went to polls on Saturday. Hill Kaka, which has 377 eligible voters, is one of the remotest villages in the Pir Panjal region and has a polling station that falls under the 'P2 category', where an election team has to be dispatched one day in advance and returns a day after the conclusion of polling.

# Oppn steps up attack amid Modi's 'mujra' remark row

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**NEW DELHI:** The political row over Prime Minister Narendra Modi's "mujra" remark continued on Sunday with Opposition leaders accusing him of demeaning his post and saying that he was "rattled" ahead of Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) impending defeat in the ongoing Lok Sabha elections.

Modi had on Saturday sharpened his attack on the Opposition over "appeasement politics," saying that the INDIA bloc can choose to perform "mujra" for its vote bank, but he won't let them divert the reservations meant for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and Other Backward Classes (OBCs) to Muslims.

"Bihar is the land which has given a new direction to the fight for social justice. I wish to declare on its soil that I will foil the plans of the INDI alliance to rob SCs, STs and OBCs of their rights and divert these to Muslims. They may remain enslaved and perform 'mujra' (a dance performed by courtesans) to please their vote bank," he said during a rally at Bikram, which falls under the Patliputra constituency.

The PM's remark had triggered a controversy as a host of Opposition leaders, including senior Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, accused him of using words that did not do justice to the post held by him.

Continuing with the attack



Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge, RJD's Tejashwi Yadav and SP chief Akhilesh Yadav.



on Sunday, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge said the Prime Minister insulted the people of Bihar with his statement.

"Modi ji insulted Bihar by using this word... It means mujra happens here. This is an insult to Bihar and its people. This is not how a PM should talk. He should be talking in a statesman-like manner," Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge said during a rally in Patna.

He said that the BJP was trying to divert the attention of the people from the issues that matter.

"Neither the PM nor other BJP leaders will talk about issues such as growing unemployment or price rise. They are spreading communal hatred. The forces that are attacking the Constitution and spreading the politics of hate... must be defeated. They are dividing this country on the lines of religion and caste," he

alleged. Earlier, Kharge also alluded to some of the other remarks made by the Prime Minister during the campaigning for the ongoing Lok Sabha polls and said, "M' reminds Modi ji muton, 'M' reminds him of machli, 'M' reminds him of 'Mughal', 'M' reminds him of 'Mangalsutra', 'M' reminds him of 'mujra'. But 'M' does not remind him of 'maryada' (dignity), which should be there for the post of prime minister," he had posted on X.

Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) leader and Bihar's former deputy chief minister Tejashwi Yadav wrote a letter to the PM, saying that the words he used in his rally did not do justice to the post held by him.

"You came to Bihar and after coming here, you said as many baseless and false things. Now it is not expected from you that you will keep the discourse high... But today you have come to use words like 'Mujra'.

Frankly speaking, we are worried about you. Should the language of the Prime Minister of this big-hearted country be like this? You think and decide," he said.

Samajwadi Party (SP) chief and Uttar Pradesh's former chief minister Akhilesh Yadav also said that the PM's speech was faltering due to his diminishing self-confidence in the face of an impending electoral loss.

"When the self-confidence is faltering, the speech also falters. There is a decrease in his confidence. And as a result, he is using such language," he said.



# SC to hear today BJP's plea against HC order on its ads

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**NEW DELHI:** The Supreme Court is scheduled to hear on Monday a plea filed by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) challenging a Calcutta high court order that had refused to interfere with a single-judge verdict restraining the party from issuing advertisements that are allegedly "violative" of the Model Code of Conduct (MCC) during the Lok Sabha polls.

According to the cause list of May 27 uploaded on the apex court website, a vacation bench of justices J K Maheshwari and K V Viswanathan is scheduled to hear the plea.

On May 22, a division bench of the high court had said it was not inclined to entertain the appeal against the interim order passed by the single-judge bench.

The single-judge bench on May 20 had restrained the opposition party in West Bengal from publishing advertisements that violated the MCC until June 4, the day the Lok Sabha poll results are scheduled to be declared.

The court had also restrained the saffron party from publishing the advertisements mentioned by the ruling Trinamool Congress (TMC) in Bengal, in its petition claiming unverified allegations against it and its workers.

The high court's division bench had said that the BJP can approach the single judge for a review or for modifications or a recall of the order.



In its petition filed in the apex court, the BJP said the division bench of the high court ought to have considered that an ex-parte mandatory injunction was granted at an ad-interim stage by the single judge.

The BJP had moved the intra-court appeal before the division bench, claiming that the single-judge bench had passed the order without giving it any hearing.

In its petition filed in the apex court, the BJP has said the division bench of the high court ought to have considered that the party was not heard and an ex-parte mandatory injunction was granted at an ad-interim stage by the single judge.

"It is pertinent to highlight that such interim relief granted by the high court was beyond the prayer sought by the All India Trinamool Congress (AITMC/respondent no.1) which was limited only to the grant of interim order directing the ECI (Election Commission of India) to take steps in accordance with law," it has said.

The plea has claimed that the single judge "erred by granting an interim injunction" based on

the purported violation of the MCC, without taking into consideration that the issue is pending before the EC, which, by virtue of Article 324 read with Article 329 of the Constitution, has the authority to take appropriate action against any political party that violates the MCC.

It has pointed out that aggrieved by the publication of certain advertisements that were allegedly against the spirit of the MCC, the TMC had approached the EC.

The plea has said on the basis of the TMC's complaint, the EC issued a show-cause notice on May 18, directing the BJP to file a reply by May 21.

"On May 20, 2024, the writ petition was listed before the high court. The single judge, despite observing that the ECI is seized of the issue and a show-cause notice has been issued, proceeded to pass a blanket interim order, which is in the nature of a final order, thereby restraining the petitioner (BJP) from further continuing with the publication of the allegedly offending advertisements till June 4, 2024 or until further orders," it has said.

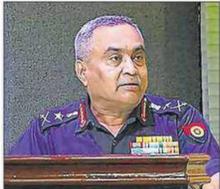
It has added that the division bench ought to have considered that the matter was heard and the order passed by the single judge in the absence of the BJP, which has a "significant impact on its ability to canvas during the election".

As an interim relief, the plea has sought an ex-parte stay on the operations of the May 20 interim order as well as the May 22 order passed by the high court.

# In a rare move, army chief gets one-month extension

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**NEW DELHI:** The Appointments Committee of Cabinet, headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, on Sunday granted a rare extension in service to army chief General Manoj Pande, days before his retirement on May 31, with the unexpected development deepening the suspense over who will be the next chief of the world's second largest army.



General Manoj Pande

The first and only such extension was granted more than five decades ago by the Indira Gandhi government to General GG Bewoor, who succeeded Field Marshal SHFJ Manekshaw as army chief in January 1973.

The government has granted a one-month extension to Pande till June 30 under the relevant army rules, the defence ministry said in a statement.

The date is significant as well because it is the day the two senior-most generals believed to be in the running for the top post also retire. Army vice chief Lieutenant General Upendra Dwivedi, thus far widely seen as the frontrunner for the top job, is currently the senior-most officer in service after Pande followed by Southern Army commander Lieutenant General AK Singh.

Both Dwivedi and Singh will retire on June 30. They were commissioned into the army in December 1984.

To be sure, a top officer can be appointed service chief even if he is retiring on the same day as the outgoing chief.

The move comes at a time when it was widely expected that the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government would name the country's next army chief before Pande's retirement.

"The Appointments Committee of Cabinet, on May 26, 2024,

approved the extension in service of Chief of the Army Staff (COAS) General Manoj Pande for a period of one month, beyond his normal age (date) of superannuation (May 31, 2024), i.e. up to June 30, 2024, under Rule 16 A (4) of the Army Rules 1954," it said.

Pande took over as army chief from General Manoj Mukund Naravane on April 30, 2022.

Successive governments have traditionally gone by the seniority principle to appoint service chiefs, though there have been rare instances of senior-most officers being overlooked for the top post.

The recent ones include the appointment of General Bipin Rawat as army chief in 2016 by the NDA government, and Admiral Robin Dhowan being made the navy chief in 2014 by the United Progressive Alliance government.

The top generals after Dwivedi and Singh are Northern Army commander Lieutenant General MV Suchindra Kumar, Central Army commander Lieutenant General NS Raja Subramani, Western Army commander Lieutenant General Manoj Kumar Katiyar, South Western Army commander Lieutenant General Dhiraj Seth, Army Training Command chief Lieutenant General Manjinder Singh and Eastern Army com-

mander Lieutenant General Ram Chander Tiwari.

"The extension given to Pande has triggered a lot of speculation about who will succeed him. The top job could go to the senior-most officer or any of the army commanders if the government goes in for deep selection. We will have to wait and watch," said a senior officer, who asked not to be named.

The extension provided to Bewoor led to Lieutenant General PS Bhagat being denied the army chief's post.

The extension given to Pande has surprised many in the army as he was felicitated during the recent retiring officers' seminar for those superannuating on May 31.

"LTGen Upendra Dwivedi #VCOAS felicitated General Manoj Pande #COAS during the Retiring Officers' Seminar #ROS, for his glorious & meritorious service dedicated to the Nation spanning more than four decades. General Manoj Pande #COAS will continue to be an inspiration for current and future generations having pioneered a large number of technological initiatives and persistent efforts towards transformation of #IndianArmy into a modern, agile, adaptive & technology enabled future ready force. #IndianArmy," the army wrote on X on May 21.

It is the government's prerogative to appoint whoever they feel would make the best army chief, said a top retired officer, who asked not to be named.

"It should exercise this right in a clear and transparent manner. Taking some roundabout decision a few days before the new appointment is due only creates instability in the organisation which is completely avoidable," he added.

## DELHI FIRE

led the condolences, which also came from Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal.

Meanwhile, as the number and scale of violations underlined a series of administrative lapses, Kejriwal and lieutenant governor VK Saxena separately ordered probes into the incident.

Shahdara deputy commissioner of police Surender Chaudhary said the owner of the hospital, Naveen Khichi, tried to evade investigators, but was arrested from outer Delhi on Sunday.

"We have booked Khichi for causing death by negligence and endangering the lives of others," he said.

Khichi was also booked for culpable homicide not amounting to murder as well as for attempted culpable homicide, under sections 304 and 308 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) respectively.

"We also arrested his associate Akash Singh, a BAMS (Bachelor of ayurvedic medicine and surgery) doctor. He was on duty at the time of the incident but fled," added Chaudhary.

The narrow two-storey building is squeezed between a row of homes lined cheek-to-jowl on Vivek Vihar Road, with no breathing room on either of its sides.

It was occupied by 12 babies, a couple of nurses and other staff when an oxygen cylinder on the ground floor exploded at around 11.30pm on Saturday, setting off a cascade of blasts and fires that eventually engulfed the hospital.

The blasts rocked the entire neighbourhood, said residents, jolting dozens out of their homes. Some residents said a bunch of oxygen cylinders exploded outside the hospital's facade onto the main

road. The flames, meanwhile, ensnared the surrounding buildings.

Police said the hospital was only permitted, under the norms of the Delhi health department, to store 20 oxygen cylinders, but probe officers found that it had stored 32, apart from a string of other blatant violations.

"The hospital was allowed to house only five beds, but the doctor had placed 13. In our initial inquiry, we found that the fire started due to a short circuit that in turn set off a blast," said Chaudhary.

Bystanders also claimed the hospital staff left within minutes of the fire.

"Only a nurse who left came back to help. The men fled. In fact, if the nurse hadn't come, we would have never known how many babies were trapped inside," said SK Jain, who lives in adjacent building.

Local residents battled spreading flames and noxious fumes to pull babies out of the hospital as Delhi Fire Services (DFS) made their way to the spot.

DFS chief Atul Garg said they were informed about the fire at 11.40pm.

"Initially, nine fire tenders were rushed to the spot. The fire was massive and the entire building was gutted. We were trying to control the fire, but there was no way to enter the building and rescue 12 babies who were trapped. We then used the service lane behind the building and smashed through the windows," he said.

"Locals helped us pull out all the babies," Garg added. The babies were taken to Gupta Nursing Home in Shahdara and then referred to East Delhi Advance NICU Hospital, around 1km away, where seven babies were declared dead on arrival.

Police said one of the babies had died before the fire broke

## { FROM PAGE 1 }

out. Officers said the baby's family was informed about the death around 9.30pm on Saturday, hours before the blaze.

The five are being treated in the intensive care unit (ICU).

Police and fire officials said the rescue was complicated by the fire's rapid pace as it raced from the ground floor to the top in minutes. All the babies were on the first floor.

Soon, it became clear that the hospital administration had violated a host of rules and that the facility failed to meet most standards set for such premises.

For instance, the Delhi fire department has no record of the building at all.

"They have never come to us for a no-objection certificate. They didn't have one. The building was violating several norms by keeping all the children in one small room and by storing all the cylinders on the ground floor. We have started an investigation and will prepare a report," he said.

Senior Delhi Police officers said Khichi was a repeat offender. In 2021, he was granted bail in a case of criminal intimidation, voluntarily causing hurt and cruelty to a child after a newborn baby's parents alleged he and his staff assaulted their baby, they said.

Khichi also allegedly threatened the baby's father, who complained that his boy's arm was severely injured due to the assault, said the officer, who added that the charge sheet, though, was only filed against a nurse. Khichi was granted bail.

Delhi's joint commissioner of police (eastern range) SS Kalsi said the hospital was not registered under the Delhi Nursing Home Registration Act.

"The hospital's health department license expired on March 31 this year," he said. Haunted families, mean-

while, cried out for answers and said they wanted justice.

Jyoti Rani (35), from nearby Jwala Nagar, gave birth to a boy on Saturday morning. She and her husband Vinod Sharma (36) lost him in the fire hours later.

"They have lost three kids so far. One died after being conceived, another died of complications about two years ago. This is unbearable," said Vinod's relative Amit Sharma (37). Vinod stood beside, inconsolable.

The child, who had not been named, had been referred to the hospital soon after he was born because of a breathing problem.

Families said the hospital charged patients between ₹10,000 and ₹15,000 a day.

Condolences poured in from across the country.

President Murmu, in a post on X, said, "The news of the death of many children due to a fire in a hospital in Vivek Vihar, Delhi is heart-rending. May God give strength to the bereaved parents and relatives to bear this shock. I pray for the speedy recovery of other children injured in this incident."

Prime Minister Modi announced compensation for the victims' kin.

"The fire tragedy at a hospital in Delhi is heart-rending. My thoughts are with the bereaved families in this incredibly difficult time. I pray that those injured recover at the earliest." The PM office announced that an ex gratia of ₹2 lakh from PMNRF would be given to the next of kin of each deceased. "₹50,000 would be provided to each of those injured," he said on X.

Chief minister Kejriwal said a probe will identify the people at fault and none responsible will be spared.

"This incident of fire in a children's hospital is heart-breaking. We all stand with

those who lost their innocent children in this accident. Government and administration officials are busy providing treatment to the injured at the spot. The causes of the incident are being investigated and whoever is responsible for this negligence will not be spared," he said on X.

Meanwhile, police officers said the babies' parents' DNA will be tested, to accurately match their identities.

A doctor at the East Delhi Advance NICU Hospital said the five babies in the ICU are stable.

"Just unplugging babies from the machines they were hooked up to could be fatal. It was traumatising," he said, asking not to be named.

## CYCLONE REMAL

Howrah, Hoogly, Kolkata, and East Medinipur districts reported squally winds reaching 45 to 55 kmph, gusting to 65 kmph, which are expected to strengthen to gale-force winds of 70 to 80 kmph, gusting to 90 kmph.

In preparation for the cyclone, the Bengal government evacuated approximately 110,000 people from coastal regions, including the Sundarbans and Sagar Island, to cyclone shelters. The National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) deployed 14 teams to vulnerable areas across nine districts in West Bengal, with additional teams on standby for rapid deployment if necessary.

The Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose International (NSCB) Airport in Kolkata was shut from Sunday noon until 9am on Monday, resulting in the cancellation of 394 domestic and international flights.

A senior official said the cyclone may have become stronger than it was due to very high sea surface temperatures. "Severe cyclonic storm Remal did not intensify any further because of two reasons. First, the system was initially attached to the monsoon flow that did not allow it to intensify. When it detached from the monsoon flow, it had already reached close to the WB and Bangladesh coasts and did not have much time left to strengthen. Second, moderate amounts of wind shear was not favourable for its intensification too," said this expert, asking not to be named.

"We do not anticipate any major negative impact on the monsoon from this cyclone," this person added.

The official said higher storm surge is likely on the Bangladesh side at nearly 3 metres. "Over the Indian Sunderbans, we expect the storm surge to be at least 1 metre high. It's important to note that this is during high tide so inundation of low-lying areas is expected," this person said.

Political parties called off planned rallies and roadshows for the seventh and final phase of the Lok Sabha polls in the affected areas. Samik Bhattacharya, Bengal BJP's chief spokesperson, said, "Safety of people comes first. We have cancelled several rallies that were to be addressed by senior leaders including our state president Sukanta Majumdar." Trinamool Congress national general Abhishek Banerjee also cancelled his roadshow at Basirhat constituency in North 24 Parganas.

The IMD warned of extremely heavy rainfall in the coastal districts on May 26 and 27. Kolkata Mayor Firhad Hakim assured citizens that the Kolkata Municipal Corporation put its employees on high alert and is personally overseeing the preparations. "Around 15,000 civic employees have been mobilised. IMD has said wind-speed in Kolkata can go up to 80 kmph. All our pumps have been kept ready in case heavy rain leads to water logging in the streets," Hakim said.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday chaired a meeting to review the preparedness for the cyclone, asking the Union home ministry to monitor the situation and take a review after the cyclone's landfall to extend necessary assistance for restoration.

During the meeting at his 7, Lok Kalyan Marg residence, the Prime Minister instructed that apart from 12 National Disaster Relief Force (NDRF) teams that have already been deployed in West Bengal and one in Odisha, more teams be kept on standby to move within an hour, a statement issued by the Prime Minister's office (PMO) said.

**PM MODI ON SUNDAY CHAIRED A MEETING TO REVIEW THE PREPAREDNESS FOR THE CYCLONE, ASKING THE UNION HOME MINISTRY TO MONITOR THE SITUATION**

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## PUBLIC NOTICES

**PUBLIC NOTICE**

The undersigned represents the interest of Indrajit Singh Binda, who is the plaintiff in CS (OS) No. 63 of 2017 pending in the High Court of Delhi. This public notice is being issued for the benefit of all and sundry who may be concerned and the public at large is being notified that lands bearing Khaska No. 33/72, 33/82, 33/13, 33/14/1, 33/17, 33/18/2, 36/2 and 36/3 falling in Village Samalkha, Tehsil Mehrauli, New Delhi is the subject matter of civil suit pending in the High Court of Delhi. This land falls in the area that is being wrongfully claimed by Mr. Nitesh Bhardwaj, son of Late Deepak Bhardwaj. It is apprehended that Mr. Nitesh Bhardwaj is attempting to create third party rights illegally in favour of an unsuspecting third party and this public notice is being issued to warn any such third party against the same. In fact, he has gone so far as to have illegally commenced a banquet facility on part of the said land by the name of The Nikunj. By means of an interim order which is still subsisting, the Hon'ble High Court of Delhi acting in its original jurisdiction has been pleased to direct all parties to maintain status quo as to title and possession of the said properties. All persons intending to deal with this property and all intending purchasers are hereby notified that it is not legally permissible to transfer, alienate, sell or otherwise create third-party interest over the said lands by any party to the said suit and any such transaction that is either proposed or envisaged shall be invalid, illegal, and in violation of the interim orders passed by the High Court of Delhi in CS (OS) No. 63 of 2017.

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**CHANGE OF NAME**

I, NEHA sawhney d/o sh. deepak sawhney, r/o 601, saksham apts, plot 40/B, sector 10, dwarka, new delhi-75, have changed my name to susanne sawhney.

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INDIA'S GOVERNANCE CHALLENGE

# 'Capacity, not funds key to development'

**HT Correspondent**  
letters@hindustantimes.com

**NEW DELHI:** A new book by development economist Karthik Muralidharan, *Accelerating India's Development: A State-Led Roadmap for Effective Governance*, is one of the most detailed and exhaustive books written about the political economy of India's development in recent years. Over 600 pages (plus 200 pages of notes), it takes readers on a granular deep dive of India's governance challenges, especially in delivering essential public services. The book draws on a wealth of research and practical insights to offer actionable, evidence-based strategies for reforms.



GRAND TAMASHA

The author was the featured guest on last week's episode of Grand Tamasha, a weekly podcast co-produced by HT and the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

Muralidharan is the Tata Chancellor's Professor of Economics at the University of California San Diego and a prolific economist whose work spans public finance and development economics, with a focus on education, health, welfare, and public service delivery.

As Muralidharan told Grand Tamasha host Milan Vaishnav,

state capacity is the crucial variable that determines whether development spending in India translates into better development outcomes on the ground. "So, the way my mind makes sense of this, broadly speaking, state capacity is the capacity of the organization to fulfill the goals it takes on. And then when I say we haven't invested adequately in state capacity is what I really mean is that we haven't invested adequately relative to our democratic goals. India's unique trajectory of early universal franchise democracy expands the ability to make claims on the state before the state has the capacity to meet those claims."

Whereas previous work has often measured capacity by looking at outcomes, Muralidharan argued that this does not tell us much about how you actually improve the capacity of the state.

"What the book is doing is responding to the call of people like Divesh Kapur who noted that scholars should be looking at the state not just as an institution, but an organization. As an organization, you get into the black box of the beast and say, 'let's understand why it is or is not effective and how you improve that.'" Muralidharan's new book also

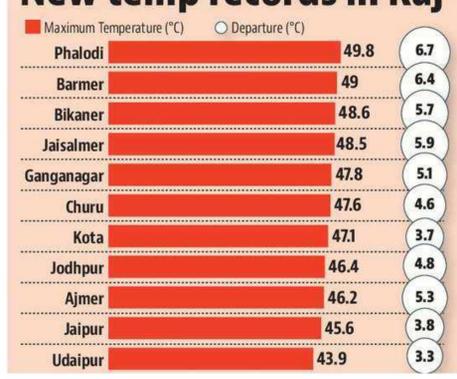
sets its sights on redefining global development debates. "Within development economics, so much of academic research has focused on what should governments do without asking how they will do it, or can they even do it," he said. "The book is trying to bring state capacity to the core of the global development discourse in saying this is not just something that happens, it is something that one needs to deliberately invest in. Because that is going to allow us to do more of everything."

In that sense, he argued, he is trying to plot a third way in the traditional bipolar debates between economists like Jagdish Bhagwati and Arvind Panagariya who emphasize economic growth and their peers like Amartya Sen and Jean Dreze who focus instead on human capital. "What I am saying is that the growth-wallahs are the physical capital people, the development-wallahs are the human capital people. And I am the TFP [total factor productivity] person," Muralidharan explained. "Paying attention to productivity is going to let you do more of everything."



Listen: Scan the QR code to listen to the latest episode of Grand Tamasha

# Rajasthan continues to simmer, two more die due to heat stress



**HT Correspondent**  
letters@hindustantimes.com

**JAIPUR/BARMER/JODHPUR:** The situation in Rajasthan due to the persisting heatwave remained dire on Sunday, with at least eight cities crossing the 45°C mark and the India Meteorological Department predicting a further rise of 1-2°C over the next 48 hours.

There was a slight drop in the temperature in Phalodi in Jodhpur district, as it recorded a maximum temperature of 49.8°C on Sunday, down from the 50°C it recorded on Saturday. The Sunday temperature was 6.7°C above normal, indicating the sizzling conditions that the western state has been reeling under.

"In the next 48 hours, there is a possibility of a 1-2 degree Celsius increase in the maximum temperature in some parts of the Bikaner, Jaipur, Bharatpur, and Kota divisions. The ongoing severe heatwave and warm nights are likely to continue for the next three days in the state," the Met department forecast on Sunday.

While Phalodi again topped the charts, Barmer followed

**PHALODI IN JODHPUR DISTRICT RECORDED A MAXIMUM TEMPERATURE OF 49.8°C ON SUNDAY, DOWN FROM THE 50°C IT RECORDED ON SATURDAY**

with 49°C. Bikaner experienced intense heat at 48.6°C, while Jaisalmer and Ganganagar reached 48.5°C and 47.8°C, respectively. Churu and Pilani recorded temperatures of 47.6°C and 47.4°C, with Kota not far behind at 47.1°C. Jodhpur and Jaipur also endured high temperatures, with readings of 46.4°C and 45.6°C, respectively.

Some respite is expected from May 29 onwards with a 2-3°C drop in maximum temperatures, the Met department said. "From May 29, there is a possibility of a 2-3 degree Celsius drop in the maximum temperature in some parts of the state. In the first week of June, the maximum temperature is expected to be around normal

in most areas," it said, adding that the intensity and areal coverage of the ongoing heatwave is expected to reduce from May 29.

"Between May 27 and 29, strong surface winds (storm) at speeds of 25-35 km/h are expected in some parts of the Jodhpur, Bikaner, Ajmer, and Jaipur divisions," the department said.

In the last one week, 33 people are suspected to have died due to heatwave-related symptoms in the state.

The state health department, however, has said there was only one confirmed death due to heatstroke, which was reported from Ajmer. According to the health department data, a total of 2,809 cases of heat stroke have been reported in the state since March 1. There were reports of Jaisalmer hitting a maximum temperature of 55°C, but the Met department did not confirm the record. According to IMD data, the district recorded 48.5°C. Radhey Shyam Sharma, the director of the meteorological centre in Jaipur, said that the state has witnessed similar heatwave episodes in the past.

# UP: 12 killed as gravel-laden truck overturns on bus in Shahjahanpur

**HT Correspondent**  
letters@hindustantimes.com

**NEW DELHI:** Twelve people en route to a temple in Uttarakhand were killed when a speeding gravel-laden truck hit a stationary bus on a highway way point near Shahjahanpur in Uttar Pradesh late Saturday night, police said.



The damaged bus after a dumper truck overturned on it in Shahjahanpur

Among the dead were three minors and eight women. Eleven others were critically injured. They were rushed to Shahjahanpur Medical College hospital. The accident occurred around 11.30 pm when the bus had stopped at a roadside eatery near Hajipur village under the Khutar police station area, according to Ashok Kumar Meena, superintendent of police, Shahjahanpur. The bus was on its way to Purnagiri temple in Champawat district of Uttarakhand. Most of the passengers had alighted from the bus, eyewitness Pankaj Kumar

said. Around 25 people were still in the bus when the truck hit it and overturned, he added.

President Droupadi Murmu on Sunday grieved the loss of lives in the accident and extended condolences to the bereaved families. "The news of the death of several people in a road accident in Shahjahanpur, Uttar Pradesh, is very sad. I express my condolences to the

bereaved families and pray for the speedy recovery of those injured," the President said in a post on X (formerly Twitter) in Hindi. The deceased have been identified as Sudhanshu (7), Aditya (8), Ajeet (14), Suman Devi (36), Rohini (20), Chutaki (50), Seema (30), Sonwati (45), Brinda (50), Ram Gopal (48), Shiv Shankar (48) and Pramod (30).

# Rising temperature sets new records in Kashmir

**HT Correspondent**  
letters@hindustantimes.com

**SRINAGAR:** At 33.5°C, Qazigund in Anantnag district of Kashmir logged its second-highest temperature ever recorded on Sunday, barely missing the last record of 33.6°C — set on May 31, 1981.

While a heatwave continues to blister across Jammu and Kashmir, Mukhtar Ahmad, the meteorological department in

Srinagar said that the second highest maximum temperature in the last 22 years was recorded at Kokernag in the same district at 31.5°C after the highest at 32.6°C on May 15, 2001.

"The second highest maximum temperature of 34.8°C was recorded over Baderwah in Jammu division on Sunday, after highest of 37.6°C on May 30, 2000," Ahmad said. In Jammu city, the maxi-

**THE HIGHEST TEMPERATURE IN QAZIGUND WAS RECORDED AT 33.6°C ON MAY 31, 1981.**

imum temperature was recorded at 42.5°C, 3.4 degrees above normal, while summer capital Srinagar logged 32.7°C, which is 6.6 degrees above nor-

mal. The weather office said that the heat wave is likely to continue in the region for the next three days.

"Heat wave over plains of Jammu and Kashmir divisions, and hot and dry weather over hilly districts will continue for the next three days," Ahmad said.

"From May 26 to 28, the weather will be generally dry. However, the possibility of

thundershower activity at isolated places cannot be ruled out," he said, adding, "May 29 to 31 is expected to witness partly to generally cloudy sky with light rain and thunders likely at isolated places."

A relentless heatwave has engulfed large parts of North India with temperatures touching 50 degrees Celsius in Rajasthan. The 50 degrees Celsius was recorded in Phalodi in the last 24 hours.

# JEE Aspirant, en route to Delhi from Kota, goes missing

**JAIPUR:** A 19-year-old student, who was preparing for Joint Entrance Examination (JEE) in Rajasthan's Kota district for admission in engineering courses, went missing on Friday night, when he was on his way to Delhi to appear for an exam, police said on Sunday.

The incident comes amid growing concerns over an increase in the number of runaway students, preparing for various competitive exams, in the country's coaching hub. Twelve students went missing this year so far. While eight of them either returned or were traced later, efforts are on to find the remaining, police said.

The disappearances also come in a year that has recorded nine suicides by students in the coaching hub. Last year, 27 students died by suicide in the district.

According to the police, in the latest missing case, the student from Uttar Pradesh went missing after boarding a train with his mother, to travel to Delhi for the JEE (Advance) exam on Sunday.

The student had arrived in Kota two years ago and was staying in a paying guest (PG) accommodation in Jawahar Nagar area, Dalveer Singh, sub-inspector (SI) at GRP (government railway police) police station in Gangapur City, where a missing complaint was filed by the mother on Saturday, said.

"On Friday, the student's mother came to Kota to take him to Delhi for his JEE (Advance) exam on Sunday. They boarded the Delhi-bound Nanda Devi Express from Kota at 5.55 pm. His mother said when the train entered Sawai Madhopur, they had some food, after which she went to sleep. When she woke up, she could not find her son. Passengers told her he was last spotted before the train reached Hindaun," Singh said. **HTC**

# Anti-Maoist security system set for revamp

**Pravesh Lama**  
letters@hindustantimes.com

**NEW DELHI:** The security system to tackle insurgency in Chhattisgarh will undergo a major overhaul after the general elections, as part of the Centre's continuous efforts to eliminate Left Wing Extremism (LWE) in the state, where more than 114 Maoists have already been killed this year, officials aware of the developments said.

As part of the revamped system, the number of personnel deployed from the paramilitary forces, mainly the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) and Border Security Force (BSF), will be increased, and the old camps or forward operating bases in what initially were consid-

**CRPF PERSONNEL TO BE INCREASED, CORE MAOIST AREAS TO BE HANDED OVER TO STATE POLICE**

ered core Maoist-controlled areas will be handed over to the state police, to enable the forces to move to newer camps, the officials said. The development comes in the backdrop of forces trying to wrest control over Maoist stronghold Abhujmaad — 4,000 square kilometres of forests that straddle Chhattisgarh and Maharashtra. On April 30, 10 suspected Maoists, including three women, were

killed in an encounter with security forces in the area. Later, two camps or forward operations bases were opened in Kasturmeta and Mastur by forces on March 1 and March 11. "First, the number of forces deployed by the Centre will naturally increase after the elections. Secondly, the old camps are likely to be handed over to the state police forces, allowing the paramilitary personnel to move to interior areas to flush out more Maoists hiding in the forests," a CRPF officer said, seeking anonymity.

A camp is usually set up after the police and central forces take control of a Maoist-dominated area. It typically comprises over 250-300 paramilitary personnel and is helmed by a deputy com-

mandant. Officials said around 48,000 CRPF and 10,000 BSF personnel are deployed in the state and the number is likely to increase after the elections.

"There are camps which were opened three to four years ago. Over the years, several Maoists in these areas have surrendered, so these areas have largely remained peaceful. Thus, an arrangement such as setting up of a police post will likely be made in those areas," an official in the Chhattisgarh home department said.

"The paramilitary personnel stationed in those camps will then be moved to newer camps, which are more vulnerable. It is also important since the security forces launch anti-Maoist operations on a regular basis," the official added.

# WHY INDIAN CITIES SHOULD TAKE TRANSPORT LEAF FROM VENICE

**Bharati Chaturvedi**  
letters@hindustantimes.com

**NEW DELHI:** Last week I spent time in Venice. I was pleasantly surprised by the public transportation system.

For context, Venice comprises 118 islands with over 400 small bridges linking them. These bridges are mostly narrow and steep. The main public transport system is the Vaporetto, or the water bus system — a slew of boats along specific routes, as crowded as India's public buses at peak time. You can snobbishly hire water taxis if you must travel alone. Trains run to other cities, as do a few buses at a distance from most of these islands. I even saw a water ambulance.

People simply don't use cars for their everyday lives. They aren't allowed to. In fact, cycles are also not allowed, because these were found to be a hassle. As a result, two great things have evolved. First, the 15 minute city has organically evolved. Given that locals including the elderly cannot walk endlessly for everything, each district seems to be self-sufficient in terms of basic shopping and so on.

Second, several people say they don't miss cars. Many rent them, many own them, to go to other cities. Standing to take water bus at peak hours, I was refused a ride in two consecutive ones because priority was given to workers, not tourists.

Most cities aren't forced by their ecology to be this green, but here's a grand city that shows us how its possible to shift to public transport — make both the city and the transportation safe. Smaller cities in India should take a leaf from the Venetian book.

PARLIAMENT SECURITY

# Armed team, frisking by specialists to be part of cover

**Pravesh Lama**  
letters@hindustantimes.com

**NEW DELHI:** There have been many changes in the Parliament complex security system after the Central Industrial Security Force was given the responsibility by the home ministry two weeks ago, which include a doubling of personnel and scanning and frisking done by UN certified staff, according to officials familiar with the development.

"There are two components of 3,317 sanctioned personnel at Parliament. Almost 2,900 have taken charge. One component is the armed one, which is posted to thwart any terror attack or movement of infiltrators. They are armed and in their uniform," a senior officer said, asking not to be named. "The others, who are frisking visitors or monitoring the baggage scanners, are wearing safari suits. They will be interacting with the visitors." Earlier, there were 1,400 personnel of the Central Reserve



Security personnel in Parliament complex

Police Force posted to deal with forced intrusion or terror attacks. The watchtowers and perimeter patrolling they used to conduct are now done by the CISF. The baggage counters were earlier manned by Delhi police personnel, who were assisted by the Parliamentary Security Service. The PSS is still assisting the CISF in the new scheme of things. "All the CISF personnel on frisking and baggage scanning duty are those who have been certified by International Civil Aviation Organisation, the United Nations' specialised

agency that provides support for aviation security across member countries," a second officer said, seeking anonymity. "Each have undergone two weeks of a certificate course. The armed component are those who have served in the Special Protection Group (SPG) and National Security Guard (NSG)."

The SPG is the country's elite agency that oversees the Prime Minister's security. The NSG is India's counter terror unit used only in exceptional circumstances such as in 2008 during the 26/11 attacks in Mumbai and the terror attacks at the Indian Air Force base in Pathankot in 2016.

In December last year, a massive security breach took place at the Parliament complex. On the anniversary of the 2001 Parliament terror attack on December 13, two men walked through with smoke canisters concealed in their shoes, vaulted into the Lok Sabha from the visitors' gallery and sprayed smoke inside the chambers during Zero Hour.

The home ministry ordered a security review, based on which the CISF was tasked to secure the Parliament complex.

The staff of the PSS will continue to help the CISF personnel at access control areas till further orders. "If the PSS is removed completely from access control, then some form of training will have to be imparted to the CISF because it will be difficult for anyone to recognise each parliamentarian," the officer said.

The changes also include having the CISF's fire unit inside the complex.

The force has a separate fire unit, which provides fire cover to 104 installations across India. Earlier, the fire fighting services was provided by Delhi Fire Services. After results of the parliamentary polls are declared on June 4 and a new government takes over, and ahead of the monsoon session, the number of CISF personnel is likely to increase.

## PUBLIC NOTICE

**PROCLAMATION OF SALE (Under Order XXI, Rule 66) IN THE HIGH COURT OF DELHI AT NEW DELHI (ORDINARY ORIGINAL CIVIL JURISDICTION) O.M.P. (EFA) (COMM.) NO. 6 OF 2016.**

Dailichi Sankyo Company, Limited ... Decree Holder  
Malvinder Mohan Singh & Ors. ... Judgment Debtors

To, The public at large

(1) Notice is hereby given that, under rule 64 of Order XXI of the Code of Civil Procedure, 1908, an order dated 21 March 2024 has been passed by this Court for the sale of the attached property being an Agricultural Land measuring 5 Bighas 16 Biswas bearing Kharsa No. 1580 min (5-16) situated at Village Asola, Tehsil Saket, New Delhi 110074 owned by Bindas Realtors Private Limited, as more specifically specified in Schedule I, towards partial satisfaction of the claim of the Decree Holder in the captioned execution proceedings, aggregating to INR 48,95,42,63,347.30 including interest as on 21 March 2024.

(2) The sale of the attached property being an Agricultural Land as specified in the Schedule I will be held by public auction. The date and time of inspection of the attached property by prospective buyers is 18 June 2024 to 21 June 2024 between 10 AM IST to 4 PM IST.

(3) The public auction of the attached property will be held on 22 June 2024 between 10:30 AM IST to 2 PM IST at the Meeting Room, The Electric Room, The Lodhi Hotel, Lodhi Road, New Delhi, Delhi 110003, and the liabilities and claims attaching to the said property, so far as they have been ascertained, are those specified in the schedule.

(4) In the absence of any order of postponement, the sale will be held by the Court Commissioner on 22 June 2024 between 10:30 AM IST to 2 PM IST at the Meeting Room, The Electric Room, The Lodhi Hotel, Lodhi Road, New Delhi, Delhi 110003. In the event, however, of the debt above specified and of the costs of the sale being tendered or paid by the Judgment Debtors, the sale will be stopped.

(5) At the sale the public generally are invited to bid, either personally or by duly authorized agent. No bid, by or on behalf of, the Judgment Debtors, however, will be accepted, nor will any sale to them be valid without the express permission of the Court previously given. The following are the further:

**Conditions of sale**

(a) The particulars specified in the schedule below have been stated to the best of the information of the Court, but the Court will not be answerable for any error, misstatement or omission in this proclamation.

(b) After the confirmation of sale by the Court, the person declared to be the purchaser shall upfront and immediately upon declaration pay a deposit of 25% of the reserved price or the amount of purchase-money to the court commissioner by way of a pay order in favour of the Registrar General of the High Court of Delhi, and in default of such deposit, the attached property, as specified in the annexed Schedule I, shall forthwith be put up again for auction and resold in terms of Order XXI Rule 84(1).

(c) The balance amount of the purchase-money shall be paid by the successful purchaser before the Court closes on the 15th day after the sale of the property, exclusive of such day, or if the 15th day be a Sunday or other holiday, then on the first office day after the 15th day.

(d) In default of payment of the balance of purchase-money within the period allowed, the property shall be re-sold after the issue of a fresh notification of sale. The defaulting purchaser shall forfeit all claim to the property or to any part of the sum for which it may be subsequently sold. The deposit of the defaulting purchaser, after defraying the expenses of the sale, shall stand forfeited to the High Court of Delhi for the benefit of the Decree Holder.

SCHEDULE OF PROPERTY	
Number of lot	One
Description of property to be sold, with the name of each owner where there are more Judgment Debtors than one	Agricultural land measuring 5 Bighas 16 Biswas bearing Kharsa No. 1580 min (5-16) situated at Village Asola, Tehsil Saket, New Delhi 110074. The land is presently owned by M/s Bindas Realtors Private Limited.
The revenue assessed upon the estate or part of the estate, if the property to be sold is an estate or a part of an estate paying revenue to Government.	Not applicable
Details of any encumbrances to which the property is liable	Nil
Claims, if any, which have been put forward to the property and any other known particulars bearing on its nature and value	Nil.
The value of the property as per the valuation report submitted by SDM, Saket (moderated by the Court Commissioner, reference para no.8 of the report)	(a) INR 11,38,39,200/-
The value of the property as per the valuation report submitted by Independent Valuer appointed by Court Commissioner	(b) INR 13,06,80,000/-
The value of the property as stated by the Decree Holder	(c) INR 12,08,30,000/-
The value of the property as stated by the Judgment Debtors	XXX
The value of the property as Proposed by Court Commissioner	(a) + (b) + (c) = INR 12,17,83,000/-
	3

(NAROTTAM KAUSHAL)  
Court Commissioner/Former Principal District & Sessions Judge  
Mobile No.-9910384683, E-mail: narottam.kaushal@gmail.com



## OPINION

The  
**Hindustan Times**  
ESTABLISHED IN 1924

OUR TAKE

## What Rajkot fire disaster tells us

The bar on public safety at entertainment hubs is low and the administration is lax about it. This is unacceptable

At least 27 persons, many of them children, died late Saturday in a fire accident at TRP Game Zone, a privately run recreation facility, in Rajkot, Gujarat. Culpability in the tragedy will be established by a State probe and, hopefully, the guilty punished quickly. The facility reportedly did not have a no objection certificate (NOC) from the fire department. If the authorities did not know the facility was functioning without an NOC, that qualifies as a grave administrative failure. If they knew that the mandatory safety protocols were not in place, yet they let the party run its business, that's a crime. Fire safety is not a luxury. And safety regulations are not meant for rent-seeking but for authorities to enforce in the public interest. The onus is on the administration to ensure that safety measures at entertainment and leisure spaces are in place: A registry of such spaces, licences and NOCs issued to them have to be maintained and regular inspections held. Lack of compliance should be acted upon and public officials should be held accountable for negligence — not just after a disaster strikes.

The Rajkot tragedy is, unfortunately, not rare. Earlier this year, 12 students (and two teachers) died in a boating accident while out on an excursion in Vadodara, Gujarat. Two years ago, in Morbi, Gujarat, 135 persons died when a newly opened bridge, which had become the hot entertainment spot in the town, collapsed. A probe pointed to administrative lapses and mismanagement. In 2017, 14 persons died in a fire at a rooftop pub in Kamala Mills Complex, Mumbai, which did not have emergency exits and whose fire safety equipment did not work. In 2009, 45 tourists drowned at the Thekkady lake in Periyar Wildlife Sanctuary when their boat, which was operating without life jackets and lifeguards, sank. The worst of such tragedies at entertainment spots has to be the 1997 Uphaar theatre tragedy in Delhi when 59 persons perished in a fire.

These tragedies could have been prevented, or many casualties avoided, if the facilities had complied with safety norms. There is no shortage of regulations in India but officials often see them as avenues for rent-seeking and ignore their intent. Scores die or are maimed in avoidable accidents — including in fires and stampedes at shrines and fairs — annually. There is rarely any closure in any of these. The idea is not to ensure some sort of retributive justice, but it has to be hardwired into the system that no person/utility/facility shall be allowed to be lax about public safety. It is time we end this criminal negligence of the safety of citizens.

## Cannes shines light on indie filmmakers

India has won big at the Cannes film festival this year with many firsts. Anasuya Sengupta became the first Indian actor to win the best actress in the Un Certain Regard segment for her role in *The Shameless*; Chidananda S Nair's *Sunflowers Were the First Ones to Know* won the first prize of La Ciné for best short film; cinematographer Santosh Sivan was bestowed the Pierre Angénieux ExcelLens in Cinematography award; and most importantly, Payal Kapadia's *All We Imagine As Light* bagged the prestigious Grand Prix, the second-highest award at the festival. It was the first film in 30 years to have competed in the main category.

In an industry driven by glitz and glamour, the accolades highlight how Indian stories and filmmaking can create a dent in world of cinema. They emphasise how grounded and fulfilling independent cinema can be, suspended from the commercial *la-di-dah* of the box office. In one interview, Kapadia makes the point that we make great films in India, which are "arthouse", but never make it to prestigious festivals for reasons best known to us. Art in India is a complex webbing of cultures often limited by the aspiration of "unity in diversity". Ironically, Kapadia, who is now being toasted for her Cannes success, was "disciplined" by her *alma mater*, the Film and Television Institute of India (FTII), in 2015 for participating in a protest against the appointment of BJP leader and small-time actor Gajendra Chauhan as chairman.

Though we have become more accepting of the commercial successes of films made in languages other than Hindi, such as *RRR* or *Pushpa*, there is much to be viewed in terms of nuances of the different cultures for both us and the West. As for the audience, there is scope to indulge in the genre-bending filmmaking and not get swayed by the allure of box office success.

STRAIGHTFORWARD

Shashi Shekhar



## Mandate 2024: The view from Varanasi

The presence of the Prime Minister as a candidate enlivens the contest in Uttar Pradesh's Purvanchal region

I am writing this piece from Kashi, which, being the Prime Minister (PM)'s constituency for the past 10 years, has drawn great national and international attention.

The PM has built a rapport with Kashiwasis (residents of Kashi), and so, does not see any significant challenge, says Rinku, who owns a kiosk in front of Banaras Locomotive Works. Rinku needs to relocate his kiosk for the length of the PM's visit just as dozens of other such businesses have to. But, he says, he can do that much for the PM — and he is not the only person willing to make such sacrifices for Narendra Modi.

Last Tuesday, sometime before the PM's visit to Sampurnanand Sanskrit Vishwavidyalaya, I noticed a group of women waiting behind a police barricade along the route. When I spoke with them, I gathered that they were from Shivdaspur and had originally wanted to meet Modi at the university. But owing to the security

arrangements for the PM's visit, they could not make it to the university in time. So, despite the scorching summer heat, they had decided to wait for the PM to pass by. I told them it could take a long time for the PM to come. "No problem, now that we've left the house, we thought we'd wave to him and greet him," they said. In areas such as Karaundi, the clearing of encroachments for the widening of a road has left some people outraged. Nonetheless, the wider road benefits a huge number of commuters.

The Congress's Ajay Rai is pitted against Modi in Kashi. Rai is the party's state president and an established political figure. He is looking to narrow the margin of defeat by as much as possible.

Kashi has traditionally flown with opposing political currents. Tea and *paan* stalls in this city are venues of heated discussions among people of different political hues — communists, socialists, nationalists, etc. These people forge the spearheads of resistance that can determine victory or defeat. Chakraborty Moshay of Agastkunda says satirically: "Don't fall into their trap; no matter what they say, in the end they will only vote for Modi."

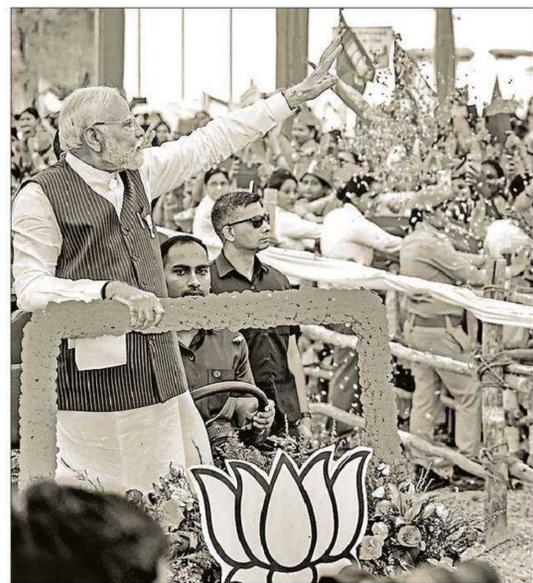
I don't even remember the names of the other contenders here. Athar

Jamal Lari is the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) candidate in Kashi. But he is nowhere in the discourse.

Varanasi is known as the capital of Purvanchal, a region that includes 11 other Lok Sabha seats. The electoral battle is fierce in each seat. In Chandauli, which is part of Varanasi district, for instance, Mahendranath Pandey is trying his luck again. Pandey is a member of the Modi cabinet and has previous administrative and organisational experience. He is being challenged by Virendra Singh of the INDIA bloc. Singh, a former minister of Uttar Pradesh, is contesting on a Samajwadi Party ticket.

Anupriya Patel, another minister in the Modi cabinet, is fighting from neighbouring Mirzapur. She is the daughter of Apna Dal founder Soneylal Patel and the president of Apna Dal (Soneylal). Ramesh Bind of the INDIA bloc is challenging her. Both Anupriya and Pandey are fighting for the honour of their cabinet posts.

Meanwhile, Laliteshpati Tripathi in Bhadohi and Neeraj Shekhar in Ballia face a tough fight to maintain their legacies. Tripathi is the great-grandson of Pandit Kamalapati Tripathi, a former acting president of the Congress, and Neeraj is the son of former PM Chandra Shekhar. Lalitesh, a Trinamool Congress candi-



There is a fierce fight for every seat in Purvanchal except Varanasi

date, is backed by the INDIA grouping, while Neeraj is a Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) candidate.

Muscle power is also a factor that comes into play in two other Purvanchal constituencies. Afzal Ansari, elder brother of the late Mukhtar Ansari, who was known as a mafia king, is also contesting the election from Ghazipur. Similarly, Dhananjay Singh of Jaunpur is backing the BJP after the BSP denied his wife, Srikala Reddy, a ticket. In Azamgarh, Akhilesh Yadav's cousin Dharmendra Yadav has the tough task of retaking the legacy seat. The mandates for Azamgarh, Lalganj, Jaunpur, Machhlishahr, and Bhadohi are already sealed in EVMs, while the fight for the remaining seats contin-

ues. Although no one is talking about Robertsganj, Machhlishahr, or Lalganj, I was saddened to witness the pathetic state of the first. I'll go into more depth about this another time. However, the fight for these seats is equally fierce.

The message is clear: There is a fierce fight for every seat in Purvanchal except Kashi. If it is muscle power at stake in one; in others, it is legacy or the prestige of a ministerial post. The results on June 4 will not only determine victory or defeat but will also establish a new political trend in Purvanchal.

Shashi Shekhar is editor-in-chief, Hindustan. The views expressed are personal.

## Rethink the immunity granted to governors

Serious allegations of sexual harassment and molestation have been levelled against the governor of West Bengal. Such allegations are substantial for the criminal justice process to start against an accused under India's criminal jurisprudence. But, when an accused enjoys constitutional or statutory powers, as in the present case, it is very rare that an individual or woman would come in public to lodge a complaint. Here, the accused holds a constitutional position and enjoys immunity as set out in Article 361 of the Constitution, especially in Clause 2 which states that "no criminal proceedings of whatsoever shall be initiated or continued against the governor".

This widely worded provision of immunity can be attributed to our colonial past which functioned with the concept of "the king can do no wrong". This concept was reflected in independent India's Constitution. Even in England, the Crown Proceedings Act — passed in 1947 — made it possible to sue the Crown for civil wrongs, while retaining several privileges and immunities. Under India's constitutional mechanism, the governor's immunity is very wide. One consequence of this is that the bar under Article 361(2) is set even when there are allegations of crime against women, and corruption, among others. In 2015, there were allegations of corruption against the then governor of Madhya Pradesh, Ram Naresh Yadav, but legal processes could not be initiated because of his position. Similarly, in 2017, then Meghalaya governor V Shanmuganathan faced allegations of serious moral turpitude involving several women survivors.

It is not that Constitution makers, while articulating the provision under Article 361 (2), were unaware of the possible misuse of this provision. The Constituent Assembly debates reflect that; on September 8, 1949, HV Kamath questioned if the governor or the ruler shall have "no liability for the criminal act committed by him during his term of office". He asked, "Suppose for instance he commits a crime, God forbid that the President or the governor or the ruler of a State

should be guilty of criminal conduct but human nature is fallible and so if he unfortunately commits a criminal act, does this clause mean that no proceeding can be instituted against him during the whole prescribed term?" On this issue, he kept probing for a strong logical reason for such wide immunity, but the provision was nevertheless adopted.

In the case of Rameshwar Prasad (2005), while interpreting the immunity of the governor under Article 361(1) with regard to action in the discharge of official duties, the Supreme Court (SC) held that the *mala fide* actions of the governors shall be amenable to court proceedings. The SC clarified that due to the immunity, a governor cannot be sued, but that does not mean that the ground of mala fides or a proclamation without any basis in law would not be examined in court.

It further said such allegations against a governor were required to be defended by the State, given the bar in Article 361(1) meant the governor cannot be present in Court. As per this judgment, in cases of personal *mala fide*, the immunity of the governor stands diluted. Ironically, when it comes to allegations of criminal acts, the criminal justice process cannot be set in motion against the governor.

Immunity for the governor (or the President) is based on the fact that all their actions are on the aid and advice of a Council of Ministers. Hence, direct accountability for an illegal action lies only with the concerned minister(s). Thus, Article 361(1) grants immunity from acts done by governors in the exercise and performance of their powers and duties.

There is a sitting chief minister in judicial custody, facing allegations of corruption. The Prevention of Corruption Act makes government officials liable for prosecution for allegations of corruption. At the same time, they also enjoy immunity for the discharge of their duties in the exercise of official function. If the governor indulges in corruption, sexual harassment, or any other offence under the Indian Penal Code, whether these are incidental to the discharge of their official functions or not, their liability needs to be determined through an appropriate legal process irrespective of whether they are holding office or have demitted the same.

We have seen many governors resign after allegations against them were reported in the public domain, but there are also many who didn't. This depends on the political scenario at the time and the will of the central executive. Both these factors function arbitrarily and without accountability. There have been some changes, though, in England, ushered in by legislation. We have also seen President Bill Clinton facing trial as per the mechanism of the United States Constitution, in the Monica Lewinsky matter. But India continues to stick with the "king can do no wrong" principle. After 75 years of the Constitution, it is high time that we take Kamath's warning seriously. Either through an appropriate amendment in the Constitution or through the intervention of the SC in the matter already pending before it, the scope of immunity granted under Article 361(2) calls for immediate reconsideration.

MR Shamshad is an advocate, the Supreme Court of India. The views expressed are personal

FRANCESCA ALBANESE | UN SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR ON PALESTINE



(UN) Member states must impose sanctions, arms embargo and suspend diplomatic/political relations with Israel till it ceases its assault

## Political parties need to queer the election pitch

The rainbow has been a symbol of the queer community. It is natural and beautiful, but also rare. It appears only when there is a perfect alignment of raindrops and rays of the sun. As this election comes close to conclusion, I wonder if the queer community is seen as special and beautiful like rainbows, or if it just gets lost in the torrential downpour of electoral agendas.

Traditionally, in constitutional democracies like India, the judiciary has been the ultimate protector of the rights of minorities. In the infamous *Suresh Kumar Koushal* (2013) judgment, some of the judges of the highest judiciary in India dismissed the queer community as a "minuscule minority" and referred Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code, which criminalises the community, to Parliament. Parliament never took this up for debate. However, the Supreme Court (SC) did ultimately correct this injustice by admitting the curative petition to its own judgment and eventually delivering the landmark *Navtej Singh Johar* judgment in 2018 that affirmed the human rights of the queer community. The Court had earlier recognised the human rights of transgender persons in the watershed *NALSA* (2014) judgment.

The Rights of Transgender Persons Bill, 2014, introduced as a private member bill by Tiruchi Siva, a Member of Parliament from the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK), had several provisions protecting the actual needs of the community and also implemented the provision for reservations in education and employment as directed by the SC in the *NALSA* judgment. Although that Bill had unanimous support across political parties, the 2019 version of the Bill that was introduced by the Union government was clearly in violation of international law and the SC judgment. Among other issues, it conflated the definition of transgender and intersex identities and criminalised begging by transgender people. At the same time, it failed to include any measure to improve their access to education or employment. While the government referred this Bill to a Standing Committee and tried to address some of the issues, the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act and the 2020 Rules notified for the same still fail to fulfil the actual needs of the community, and

the government has repeatedly ignored the critical comments from the community members, activists, and legal experts.

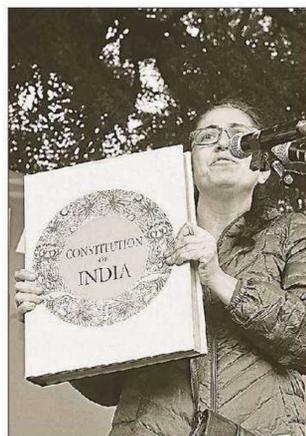
While the SC has affirmed the rights of those in homosexual relationships, the government is unwilling to allow marriage equality. Attempts to introduce a comprehensive Bill to stop discrimination against the LGBTQIA+ community have failed to materialise. While global surveys indicate that anywhere from 5-20% of the population of every country is likely to identify as part of the LGBTQIA+ community, we do not have any census data about the number of queer people in India.

There are obviously millions of queer people in our country, but majoritarian electoral politics has generally sidelined the community. Issues faced by the LGBTQIA+ have never been at the centre stage of the political debate. Many community members have also been indifferent to electoral politics. We had repeatedly approached the judiciary to protect our constitutional rights.

Even in the 2024 elections, some political parties have ignored any reference to LGBTQIA+ issues in their manifesto. While other parties have made conscious efforts to be inclusive, often, they see LGBTQIA+ as special issues and don't seem to connect them with the other issues in our society. The People's Manifesto 2024 adopted by the Vikalp Sangam, which is made up of over 80 movements and organisations in India, is unique in that it provides a framework for intersectional advocacy.

There is no hope for the queer community if we choose to be an isolated minority. We must recognise that our issues are intersectional. We need to rise above divisive politics of hatred and bigotry, and work together to protect the rainbow. The rights of LGBTQIA+, the diversity of our cultures and the entire ecosystem of nature. We in the LGBTQIA+ community hope that all political parties, civil society organisations, and others who are instrumental in defining the policy directions of India, will take the issues of the community seriously and make efforts at meaningful intersectional inclusion of our needs.

Delfina Kanchana Sundar is a LGBTQIA+ activist from Chennai, Tamil Nadu. The views expressed are personal



It is high time we took HV Kamath's warning seriously



Relatives and supporters of Israelis taken hostage by Palestinian militants in Gaza in the October 7 attacks demonstrate to call for their release in the central city of Tel Aviv on Sunday, amid the ongoing conflict in the Gaza Strip between Israel and the Palestinian militant Hamas group. AFP

# Hamas fires missiles at Israel for first time in four months

There were no immediate reports of casualties or damage in the first long-range rocket attack from Gaza since January

Agencies  
letters@hindustantimes.com

**DEIR AL-BALAH:** Hamas fired a barrage of rockets from Gaza that set off air raid sirens as far away as Tel Aviv for the first time in months on Sunday in a show of resilience more than seven months into Israel's massive air, sea and ground offensive.

There were no immediate reports of casualties or damage in what appeared to be the first long-range rocket attack from Gaza since January, Hamas' military wing claimed the attack.

Palestinian militants have sporadically fired rockets and mortar rounds at communities along the Gaza border, and the military arm of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad group later on Sunday said it fired rockets at nearby communities.

The Israeli military said eight projectiles crossed into Israel after being launched from the area of the southern Gaza city of



Israeli police use water cannon to disperse relatives and supporters of Israelis taken hostage by Hamas in Gaza on October 7, on Sunday. AFP

Rafah, where Israeli forces recently launched an incursion. It said "a number" of the projectiles were intercepted.

Earlier on Sunday, aid trucks entered Gaza from southern Israel under a new agreement to bypass the Rafah crossing with Egypt after Israeli forces seized the Palestinian site of it earlier this month. But it was not immediately clear if humanitarian

groups could access the aid despite of fighting.

Egypt refuses to reopen its side of the Rafah crossing until control of the Gaza side is handed back to Palestinians.

It agreed to temporarily divert traffic through Israel's Kerem Shalom crossing, Gaza's main cargo terminal, after a call between US President Joe Biden and Egyptian President Abdel-

Fattah el-Sissi.

The war between Israel and Hamas has killed nearly 36,000 Palestinians, according to Gaza's Health Ministry.

**Israel war cabinet to discuss new hostage deal**  
Meanwhile, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was convening his war cabinet later on Sunday, a senior official told

AFP, amid intense diplomacy to forge a Gaza truce and hostage release deal. In Brussels, the European Union's foreign policy chief Josep Borrell told journalists before meeting the Palestinian premier that a strong Palestinian Authority (PA) was in Israel's interest. EU members Ireland and Spain, and also Norway, have said they will recognise the State of Palestine from Tuesday, drawing furious Israeli condemnation.

"A functional Palestinian Authority is in Israel's interest too, because in order to make peace, we need a strong Palestinian Authority, not a weaker one," Borrell said. Palestinian prime minister Mohammed Mustafa, whose government is based in the occupied West Bank, said the "first priority" was to support people in Gaza, especially through a ceasefire, and then "rebuilding the institutions of the Palestinian Authority" there after Hamas seized it from the PA in 2007.

While Israel's main focus is to free the remaining hostages, Hamas has insisted on a permanent end to the fighting — a demand that Netanyahu has firmly rejected, maintaining that Israel's priority is securing the hostages' release without conceding to a ceasefire.

{ TEXAS, OKLAHOMA, ARKANSAS }

# Powerful storms kill 11, wreck homes in the US

Associated Press  
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**VALLEY VIEW:** Powerful storms killed at least 11 people and left a wide trail of destruction on Sunday across Texas, Oklahoma and Arkansas after obliterating homes and destroying a truck stop where drivers took shelter during the latest deadly weather to strike the central US.

Seven deaths were reported in Cooke County, Texas, near the Oklahoma border, where a tornado on Saturday night plowed through a rural area near a mobile home park, officials said. Storms also caused damage in Oklahoma, where guests at an outdoor wedding were injured. Tens of thousands of residents were without power across the region.

"It's just a trail of debris left. The devastation is pretty severe," Cooke County Sheriff Ray Sappington told The Associated Press.

The dead included two children, ages 2 and 5, the sheriff said. Three family members in Texas were found dead in one home near the small community of Valley View, Sappington said.

Hugo Parra, who lives in Farmers Branch, north of Dallas, said he rode out the storm with about 40 to 50 people in the bathroom of a gas station. "A firefighter came to check



People walk through a Bridgeland neighbourhood as families begin cleaning up storm damage on Sunday, in Cypress, Texas. AP

on us and he said, 'You're very lucky,'" Parra said. "The best way to describe this is the wind tried to rip us out of the bathrooms."

Multiple people were transported to hospitals by ambulance and helicopter in Denton County, Texas, also north of Dallas. But officials did not immediately know the full extent of the injuries.

At least two people were reported killed in Arkansas, including a 26-year-old woman who was found dead outside a destroyed home in Olvey, a small community in Boone County, according to Daniel

Bolen, with the county's emergency management office.

Another person died in Benton County, Arkansas. Melody Kwok, a county communications director, said multiple other people were injured and that emergency workers were still responding to calls.

"We are still on search and rescue right now," she said. "This is a very active situation."

Officials also confirmed two deaths in Mayes County, Oklahoma. Details about the dead were not immediately available, said Mike Dunham, the county's deputy director of emergency management.

# Remal makes impact on Bangladesh



A man salvages a cart and other material as water flows on to the Kuakata beach on the coast of Bay of Bengal caused by the advancing Cyclone Remal in Barisal, Bangladesh, Sunday. Over 800,000 residents evacuated coastal villages for inland storm shelters ahead of the cyclone's landfall. AP

# 12 injured as Qatar flight to Dublin hits turbulence

Reuters  
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**DOHA:** Twelve people travelling on a Qatar Airways flight from Doha to Ireland were injured during a bout of turbulence, Dublin Airport said on Sunday, adding that the plane landed safely and as scheduled.

Flight QR017, a Boeing 787 Dreamliner, landed shortly before 1 pm Dublin time, the airport said.

"Upon landing, the aircraft was met by emergency services, including Airport Police and our Fire and Rescue department, due to 6 passengers and 6 crew (12 total) on board reporting injuries after the aircraft experienced turbulence while airborne over Turkey," Dublin Airport said in a statement.

Irish broadcaster RTE, citing passengers arriving at the air-

port, said the incident lasted less than 20 seconds and occurred during food and drinks service.

Qatar Airways said in a statement that a "small number" of passengers and crew sustained minor injuries during the flight and were receiving medical attention.

The airline did not directly comment on the turbulence, but said the matter is subject to an internal investigation.

The incident took place five days after a Singapore Airlines flight from London to Singapore was forced to land in Bangkok due to severe turbulence, which killed a 73-year-old British man and left 20 others in intensive care.

Turbulence-related airline accidents are the most common type, according to a 2021 study by the US National Transportation Safety Board.

# TRUMP VOWS TO FREE SILK ROAD DRUG KINGPIN

Agence France-Presse  
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**WASHINGTON:** Donald Trump appealed for support from the fringe Libertarian Party on Saturday, telling a rowdy crowd that if elected he would free from prison an American man who ran a website that sold millions of dollars in drugs.

The announcement came at a contentious speech — where the crowd often jeered and booed the ex-president — at the Libertarian National Convention in Washington, as he seeks support in the November US election against incumbent Joe Biden.

He also vowed to put a libertarian in his cabinet. In 2015, Ross Ulbricht was sentenced to life in prison after being convicted of masterminding the Silk Road "dark web" marketplace, which sold \$200 million in drugs to customers across the world.

Ulbricht, who ran Silk Road under the alias "Dread Pirate Roberts" and was also accused of commissioning five murders at a cost of \$650,000, was sentenced to two life sentences for narcotics distribution and criminal enterprise.

His case has become a famous cause in libertarian circles, who have decried the conviction as government overreach and against the principles of free markets.

Trump has previously vowed to impose the death penalty on drug traffickers.

While the promise to free Ulbricht brought cheers, Trump's speech was far from the usual lovefest he presides over at his rallies, which typically attract hardcore supporters.

The conservative faced boos as he tried to align with libertarians, who view his policies as beyond their minimal government scope.

# Presidential race in Iran heats up with 20 potential contenders

HT Correspondent  
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**NEW DELHI:** The official mourning period for Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi has ended, sparking a fierce battle for his succession. Up to 20 potential candidates have emerged, each needing approval from the 12-member Guardian Council.

The upcoming election on July 21, triggered by Raisi's death in a helicopter crash last Sunday, could reveal political rifts within the regime. Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei seeks to avoid such divisions, aiming for predictability and stability.

Despite the focus on personalities, ideology remains a key factor. Saeed Jalili, a hardliner and former nuclear negotiator, announced his candidacy on Sunday. Jalili had previously withdrawn from the race in favour of Raisi four years ago.

Former president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, known for his populist unpredictability, hinted at a potential run but is unlikely to be cleared to stand, The Guardian reported.

Tehran Mayor Alireza Zakani, aligned with Jalili's outlook, has not yet decided but is reportedly preparing a campaign. Traditional conservative candidates include Parviz Fattah, former head of the Mostazafan Foundation, and Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf, parliament speaker from 2020 to 2024.

With reformists largely sidelined, the main divide lies between traditional conservatives and the anti-Western Paydari Front, which opposes any compromise, including on the nuclear deal. Presidential registration opens this Thursday and lasts four days, with up to 10 candidates potentially joining the first round, although only four stood in 2021.

Uncertainty surrounds the potential candidacy of Ali Larijani, a centrist and former parliament speaker. He denied reports of his candidacy but remains a significant figure, supported by former president Hassan Rouhani. His participation would signal a desire for a president with a genuine mandate.

If the race becomes too unpredictable, interim president Muhammad Mokhber might be asked to run. Despite his business ties and handling of ineffective Covid vaccines, he remains a trusted figure. Parviz Fattah, head of the Execution of Imam Khomeini's Order (EIKO), is also a potential candidate.

In parliament, Mousa Ghanzafarabadi, known for advocating strict hijab enforcement and sanctioned by the EU, was elected interim leader of the largest factions. Ghazanfarabadi played a role in the jailing of British-Iranian dual national Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe.

# Minaj cancels show in England after being held at airport

**AMSTERDAM:** American rapper Nicki Minaj on Saturday cancelled a show in Manchester, England, after she said she was held by police at Amsterdam Schiphol airport on allegations of possession of soft drugs. "Despite Nicki's best efforts to explore every possible avenue to make tonight's show happen, the events of today have made it impossible," the Co-op Live venue in Manchester said in a post on social media platform X. REUTERS

# China, Japan premiers in Seoul for rare summit

**VILNIUS:** South Korean and Chinese leaders agreed on Sunday to start diplomatic and security dialogue and push a trade deal, when they met in Seoul ahead of a key trilateral summit with Japan. There are low expectations of any major announcements or breakthroughs at the trilateral meeting on Monday, but the leaders have expressed hopes it could help revitalise three-way diplomacy and ease regional tensions. AFP

# Macron promises to defend democracy on Germany state visit

**BERLIN:** Emmanuel Macron began on Sunday the first state visit to Germany by a French president in a quarter-century, bringing a plea to defend democracy against nationalism at upcoming European elections. Macron made an appearance at a democracy festival in Berlin and warned of a "form of fascism for authoritarianism which is growing" in the two major EU nations, emphasising the need to remain vigilant against such tendencies. AFP

{ SCIENCE } THE MISSION WILL MEASURE HEAT RADIATED BY EARTH INTO SPACE

# Nasa launches climate satellite to study earth's poles, rising sea levels



Nasa's PREFIRE mission in New Zealand. ROCKET LAB / NASA

**Asian News International**  
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**MAHIA:** The first of a pair of climate satellites designed to study heat emissions at Earth's poles for Nasa is in orbit after lifting atop Rocket Lab's Electron rocket from the company's Launch Complex 1 in Mahia, New Zealand at 7:41 pm NZST (local time) on Saturday. Nasa revealed in a statement.

The agency's PREFIRE (Polar Radiant Energy in the Far-Infrared Experiment) mission consists of two shoebox-size cube satellites, or CubeSats, that will measure the amount of heat Earth radiates into space from two of the coldest, most remote regions on the planet. Data from

the PREFIRE mission will help researchers better predict how Earth's ice, seas, and weather will change in a warming world.

"Nasa's innovative PREFIRE mission will fill a gap in our understanding of the Earth system — providing our scientists a detailed picture of how Earth's polar regions influence how much energy our planet absorbs and releases," said Karen St Germain, director of Nasa's Earth Science Division in Washington.

"This will improve prediction of sea ice loss, ice sheet melt, and sea level rise, creating a better understanding of how our planet's system will change in the coming years — crucial information to farmers tracking changes in weather and water,

fishing fleets working in changing seas, and coastal communities building resilience," he added.

Ground controllers successfully established communications with the CubeSat at 8:48 EDT. The second PREFIRE CubeSat will set off on its own Electron rocket from Launch Complex 1 in the coming days.

Following a 30-day checkout period during which engineers and scientists will make sure both CubeSats are working normally, the mission is expected to operate for 10 months, according to Nasa. At the heart of the PREFIRE mission is Earth's energy budget — the balance between incoming heat energy from the Sun and the outgoing heat given

off by the planet. The difference between the two is what determines the planet's temperature and climate. A lot of the heat radiated from the Arctic and Antarctica is emitted as far-infrared radiation, but there is currently no detailed measurement of this type of energy.

The water vapour content of the atmosphere, along with the presence, structure, and composition of clouds, influences the amount of far-infrared radiation that escapes into space from Earth's poles. The mission's CubeSats each carry an instrument called a thermal infrared spectrometer, which use specially shaped mirrors and sensors to measure infrared wavelengths.

# Centre plans to scale up interest-free loans to states

It will leverage a pandemic-era fix to help states drive reforms and capex

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**NEW DELHI:** The Union government plans to significantly scale up interest-free loans given to states, two people familiar with the matter said, leveraging a pandemic-era fix to help states drive reforms and capital expenditure.

The full-year budget for FY25, due in July, is expected to dial up the allocation, the people cited above said on condition of anonymity.

"The upcoming full-year budget could see some revisions in certain allocations made in February, driven by the higher-than-anticipated RBI dividend payout and other factors. The Centre's interest-free loans scheme for states could see higher allocations," one of the two people said.

In FY21, the Centre launched the Special Assistance to States for Capital Investment scheme



About ₹75,000 crore, or 58% of the allocation for FY25, will be linked to outcomes and reforms carried out by the states. **MINT**

with 50-year interest-free loans to help states battle covid waves. Allocations to the scheme have seen a rise in the past few years, from ₹12,000 crore in FY21 to ₹1.3 lakh crore in FY24 under budget estimates and ₹1.05 trillion under revised estimates.

In FY24, the budgeted allocation to the scheme had ₹27,000 crore linked to specific reforms by states, which was increased to ₹75,000 crore in FY25, on the back of a total outlay of ₹1.3 trillion.

To avail these loans, states must meet several conditions, including reforms in housing

sector, incentives for scrapping old government vehicles and ambulances, reforms in urban planning and urban finance, increasing housing stock for police personnel, and setting up libraries with digital infrastructure at panchayat and ward levels for children and young adults.

About ₹75,000 crore, or 58% of the allocation for FY25, will be linked to outcomes and reforms carried out by the states, and the remaining ₹55,000 crore will also come with "simple conditions", Union finance secretary T.V. Somanathan had earlier told

**Mint:** "The portion of the interest-free loans disbursed to states under the condition of implementation of milestones is likely to be increased in the upcoming budget as the Centre wants to nudge the states to carry out reforms," the second person said. "The overall allocations to the scheme could see a 20-25% hike from the vote-on-account budget."

A finance ministry spokesperson didn't respond to emailed queries.

States account for 20-25% of the overall infrastructure spending, a key focus area for the government, and the easy loans have helped states stimulate capital spending and catalyze the economy after the pandemic.

"The interest-free capex loans to states is an ingenious scheme to fund targeted investments across infrastructural segments," said Debopam Chaudhuri, chief economist at Piramal Enterprises. "The strict sanction norms help with efficient capital deployment. Augmenting the outlay for this scheme with additional RBI dividend this year can be a prudent way to monetize states and support their growth."

# Ex-Cognizant staff on FB work sue for damages

Varun Sood

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**BENGALURU:** The ghost of content moderation is back to haunt Cognizant Technology Solutions Corp., over three years after the company ended its contract with Meta Inc.

At least 14 former staffers have separately sued Cognizant in a Florida court this year, accusing the Nasdaq-listed technology services company of willfully concealing the mental health harm from content moderation work for Facebook, owned by Meta. All employees have sought a jury trial and damages of over \$75,000 each.

This is the first time Cognizant is facing lawsuits over its Facebook contract, which ended in 2020.

Significantly, almost all compare the company's practice with how tobacco firms failed to disclose the health-related problems of cigarettes in the past.

The lawsuits come at a time Cognizant has trailed its peers and seen a CEO change. Last January, the board sacked CEO Brian Humphries and hired former Infosys Ltd executive S. Ravi Kumar in his place.

"Cognizant misrepresented to Plaintiff and other applicants the extreme nature, high volume and severity of the content they would be reviewing. Cognizant



This is the first time Cognizant is facing lawsuits over its Facebook contract. **MINT**

also misrepresented the risk of psychological harm it knew the work of content moderation of this nature posed to Plaintiff and the other applicants," said Derek Tyrone Anderson in his complaint filed in January.

"Like the tobacco companies, Cognizant took on the duty to disclose by promising to share information regarding the injurious nature of content moderation with new hires, including Plaintiffs. Cognizant breached that duty when operational leadership, including Operations Leader Terry Oliver and the supervisors who reported to Oliver, deliberately misrepresented that information to Plaintiff," said Lameka Dotson in her complaint.

Mint has seen copies of all complaints.

The petitioners say they are suffering from post-traumatic

stress disorder, as their work entailed watching and manually removing vile content, including murders, rapes and abuses. They say Cognizant failed to provide them a safe work environment.

Printy Law Firm, a Tampa, Florida-headquartered law firm, represents all 14 complainants.

An email sent to Gary Printy, Partner at Printy Law Firm, on 18 May seeking comment remained unanswered. Dennis Waggoner, partner at Hill Ward Henderson, the law firm representing Cognizant, did not offer comment. An email sent to Cognizant remained unanswered.

"When individuals file lawsuits a few years after an event, it could mean one of the two things. First, individuals have more information on the event and hence they see merit in the case. The other thing is that the aggrieved employees believe they have precedence over a development which they can leverage," a former Cognizant executive said on the condition of anonymity.

"The outcome of these cases could have a bearing on other content moderation work done by Cognizant for YouTube," the executive added.

Cognizant counts YouTube's parent Alphabet as one of its large customers, estimated to account for over \$600 million in annual revenue.

# FORMER TCS BOSS RAJESH GOPINATHAN JOINS NSE BOARD

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**MUMBAI:** Rajesh Gopinathan, former managing director & chief executive officer, Tata Consultancy Services and professor IIT Bombay, has joined the board of the National Stock Exchange (NSE), making him the second former head of a technology company to be appointed after Venet Nayar, former vice chairman & CEO of HCL Technologies, joined the NSE board in September 2021 as non-independent director.

Gopinathan's appointment comes at a time when the bourse is looking to shift its data centre from its existing premises with colocation becoming the dominant mode of trading after the pandemic, due to a surge in derivatives and cash volumes.

"His over 25 years of experience in the global technology industry, a part of which was spent heading one of the world's largest tech services firms (TCS), will come in handy for the exchange, whose top priorities include shifting its data centre within a year to a year-and-a-half," said a person on condition of anonymity.

Gopinathan has joined as a public interest director with effect from 23 April for three years.

NSE shareholders approved the reappointment of Nayar at its 31st annual general meeting in August last year, which is pending Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) approval, as per the exchange's corporate governance report for the fourth quarter of FY24 released last month. Nayar was appointed to the NSE board on 20 September 2021 after Sebi's approval.

NSE proposes to shift its data centre to a new place "some time next year", NSE's Group CFO Yatrik Vin told investors at the earnings call on 6 May.

Ashishkumar Chauhan, MD & CEO of the bourse, added that the exchange was increasing capacity within the building (Bandra Kurla Complex in Mumbai).

# Treaty on genetic resources at WIPO is a 'significant win' for India

Rajeev Jayaswal

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**NEW DELHI:** A new international treaty on genetic resources at the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) is a "significant win" for India and the Global South as it will help protecting traditional knowledge of these countries, the commerce ministry said in a statement on Sunday.

On Friday, after 25 years of negotiations, a treaty relating to genetic resources (GR) and associated traditional knowledge (ATK) was finalised at the

WIPO headquarters in Geneva, a ministry spokesperson said. The pact provides additional safeguards to India's genetic resources and traditional knowledge and protects them from misappropriation by developed countries and multinational firms, he added.

The agreement was reached after final deliberations in a conference lasting two weeks from May 13 and 24 that involved 192 countries and 86 observers, he said. The WIPO treaty on intellectual property, GRs and ATK is a significant win for countries of the Global

South and for India, which is a mega biodiversity hot spot with an abundance of traditional knowledge and wisdom, the ministry said.

For the first time, the system of knowledge and wisdom that have supported economies, societies and cultures for centuries are now inscribed into the global IP system. For the first time, the connection between local communities and their GRs and ATK are recognised by the global IP community, it said. "These are historic achievements long championed by India as a provider of traditional

## THE PACT PROVIDES MORE SAFEGUARDS TO INDIA'S GENETIC RESOURCES AND TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE

knowledge and wisdom and repository of biodiversity," it added.

"The treaty will not only safeguard and protect biodiversity but will increase transparency in the patent system and

strengthen innovation," the statement said. "Through this, the IP system can continue to incentivise innovation while evolving in a more inclusive way, responding to the needs of all countries and their communities."

With the majority of the developed countries on board, who generate IP and use these resources and knowledge for research and innovation, this treaty agreed upon by more than 150 countries paves the way for bridging conflicting paradigms within the IP system and protection of biodiversity, it

said. The treaty on ratification and entry into force will require contracting parties to put in place mandatory disclosure obligations for patent applicants to disclose the country of origin or source of the genetic resources when the claimed invention is based on GR or ATK. This will offer added protection to Indian GRs and ATK, which while protected in the country, are prone to misappropriation in some nations that do not have disclosure obligations.

"Therefore, by creating global standards on disclosure of origin obligations, this treaty cre-

ates an unprecedented framework within the IP system for provider countries of GR and ATK," the ministry said.

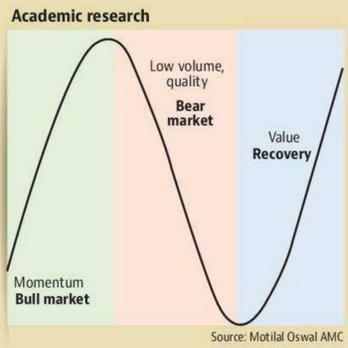
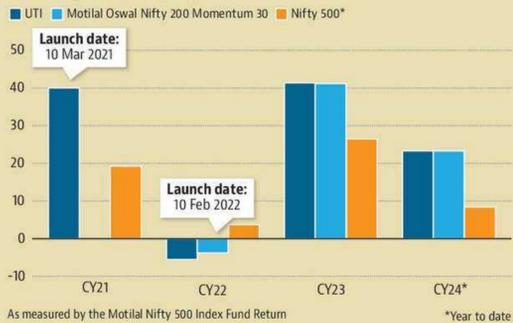
At present, only 35 countries have some form of disclosure obligations, most of which are not mandatory and do not have appropriate sanctions or remedies in place for effective implementation. This treaty will require contracting parties, including the developed world, to bring changes in their existing legal framework for enforcing disclosure of origin obligations on patent applicants, the ministry said.

## How momentum investing gained ground post-covid

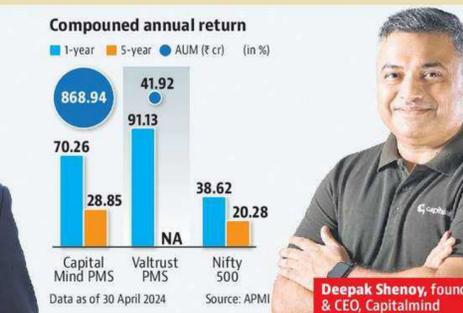
Momentum strategy can be appealing for investors looking for high churning portfolio, with high-risk appetite and a tolerance for volatility.

Compiled by Neil Borate & Anil Poste  
neil.b@livemint.com

Year-on-year return (in %)



Arihant Bardia, founder & CIO, Valtrust



**Momentum investing**

- Buying rising stocks betting that they'll rise further
- Works best in bull markets
- Underperforms in bear markets

**Thesis**  
Bull market alpha can outweigh bear negative alpha

Graphic: Pranay Bhardwaj/Mint

## INDIA IN TRADE DEFICIT WITH NINE OF TOP 10 TRADING PARTNERS

Press Trust of India

feedback@livemint.com

**NEW DELHI:** India has recorded a trade deficit, the difference between imports and exports, with nine of its top 10 trading partners, including China, Russia, Singapore, and Korea, in the financial year 2023-24, according to official data.

The data also showed that the deficit with China, Russia, Korea, and Hong Kong increased in the last fiscal compared to FY23, while the trade gap with the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Russia, Indonesia, and Iraq narrowed.

The trade deficit with China rose to \$85 billion, Russia to \$57.2 billion, Korea to \$14.71 billion and Hong Kong to \$12.2 billion in FY24 against \$83.2 billion, \$43 billion, \$14.57 billion and \$8.38 billion, respectively, in FY23. China has emerged as India's largest trading partner with \$118.4 billion of two-way commerce in 2023-24, edging past the US. The bilateral trade between India and the US stood at \$118.28 billion in FY24. Washington was the top trading partner of New Delhi during FY22 and FY23. India has a free trade agreement with four of its top trading partners - Singapore, the UAE, Korea and Indonesia (as part of the Asian bloc).

# Top builders set sights on larger, ultra-luxury homes

Madhurima Nandy

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**BENGALURU:** Buoyed by splendid sales of luxury priced ₹2-4 crore, top real estate developers are now laying the next big foundation: super-luxury homes costing ₹10 crore and above.

These homes, aimed at the ultra-rich, offer larger and more exclusive residences, with five to six bedrooms or more, balconies with each room and top-of-the-line clubhouses. Most importantly, these projects are coming up at prime locations, in high-end real estate addresses in Gurugram and Mumbai, as well as in Goa and Hyderabad. And they are backed by strong developer brands such as DLF Ltd,



DLF Golf Links, Gurugram, where all three projects—Aralias, Magnolias and The Camellias—are located.

Prestige Group, K Raheja Corp Homes, Godrej Properties and M3M Group.

The resurgence in India's luxury residential real estate, with homes priced at ₹2-4 crore and above, has been evident in recent years, as buyers upgraded their

homes and sales gained pace. The sales of luxury homes in India, priced ₹4 crore and above, jumped sharply to 12,935 units in 2023, from 7,395 in 2022, according to property advisory CBRE.

segment has seen big demand too, leading to both primary and secondary sales. This has also prompted developers to go out and launch higher-priced homes.

Bengaluru-based Prestige Group will soon launch a project in south Mumbai's posh Worli area, with four- and five-bedroom apartments sized 3,500-7,000 sq. ft. The still unnamed project will start to sell at about ₹1.1 lakh per sq. ft.

It had recently launched the first residential tower at its 'Prestige Ocean Towers' project in the financial capital's Marine Lines, where it sold 64 out of 75 four-bedroom homes overlooking the Arabian Sea for ₹20-25 crore each. It plans to launch the second tower soon, at a higher

price. "There are three categories of luxury home buyers today—business families, C-suite executives and first-generation startup entrepreneurs," said Anand Ramachandran, senior vice-president, business expansion, west, Prestige Group. "Luxury consumers want larger homes, a prime location and, in Mumbai, balconies with a view."

Gurugram-based M3M Group's recently launched 'M3M Altitude' project on Golf Course Extension Road will have a 2 million sq. ft sky club, featuring a wide range of amenities for residents, and will be connected with the residential units through a glass air bridge. M3M says the sky club will be the tallest in Gurugram.

## { THE CROSSWORDS }

### CRYPTIC CLUES

- ACROSS**
- Set meal and free bed at hotel (5,5)
  - Nine about to die in the Southern states (5)
  - Given command (7)
  - They break up public meetings or rites perhaps (7)
  - Girl in dire necessity (5)
  - Chews a sort of nut (6)
  - There's no telling if this is to be kept (6)
  - Shelter from snow (5)
  - Grows vegetables (7)
  - Offensive rumour about a retired doctor (7)
  - Rosie's willow form (5)
  - Does coping with dirty habits make him thirsty? (3,7)

### DOWN

- An agitated Sioux with a worried look (7)
- A loyal subject in Belgium (5)
- Words get muddled at day's end when tired (6)
- Dated and dilapidated Model T contains one (3-4)
- It's always in poetry that is spine-chilling (5)
- He has his own ideas on hoarding (10)
- Orders or edicts in a mess (10)
- Thrift is needed from company with money trouble (7)
- In the way of standard procedure (7)
- It follows a gale at sea too (2,4)
- He's landed in Scotland (5)
- Name a girl has received or had changed (5)

### YESTERDAY'S SOLUTIONS (16869)

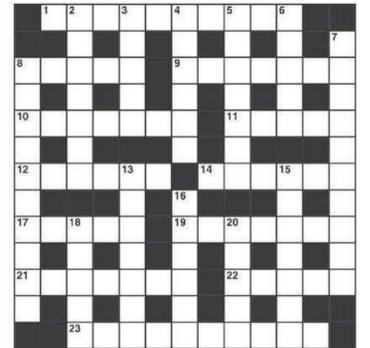
**CRYPTIC**

U	N	F	U	R	L	S	A	L	O	O	N
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H	O	L	S	T	E	R					
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**QUICK**

C	R	A	B	B	A	B	S	U	R	D
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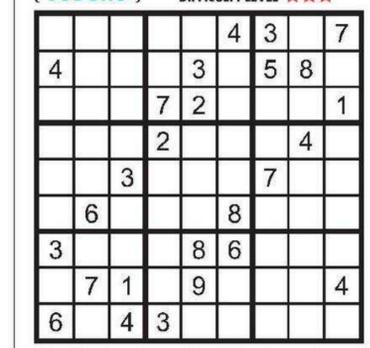
## PUZZLE 16870 © Gemini Crosswords 2018 All rights reserved



### QUICK CLUES

- ACROSS**
- Offensively vulgar (2,3,5)
  - Spanish equivalent of Mister (5)
  - In a brisk tempo (7)
  - Lacking moderation (7)
  - Thoroughly proficient (5)
  - Confidential warning (3-3)
  - Maintain (4,2)
  - Abid (5)
  - Supplied beforehand (7)
  - Twice as much (7)
  - Be vaguely aware of (5)
  - Too shy to speak (6-4)
- DOWN**
- Without pausing (7)
  - Bird's nest built high up (5)
  - Merchant (6)
  - Save from a wreck (7)
  - Sharp-eyed bird (5)
  - Spokesman (10)
  - Fondness for sugary food (5,5)
  - Sad and abandoned (7)
  - Act of contrition (7)
  - A horse-drawn carriage (6)
  - Disregard contemptuously (5)
  - Go to see (5)

## { SUDOKU } DIFFICULTY LEVEL ★★★★★



Fill in all the squares in the grid so that each row, column and each of the 9x9 squares contains all the digits from 1 to 9.

## { WEATHER }

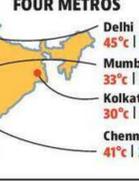
TEMPERATURE HIGH • LOW



## ALMANAC

Today is 27th May 2024  
 • 18 Dhu Qada, 1445  
 • 04 Jyestha, Krishna  
 Paksha 04  
 • Samvat 2081  
 \*Sunset: Monday at 07:12 p.m.  
 Sunrise: Tuesday at 08:24 a.m.  
 Moonrise: Monday at 11:04 p.m.

## TEMPERATURE IN FOUR METROS



SPORT

# Alcaraz off the blocks with straight-set win

The Spaniard dispels concerns about a forearm injury with his commanding display; Osaka also enters second round

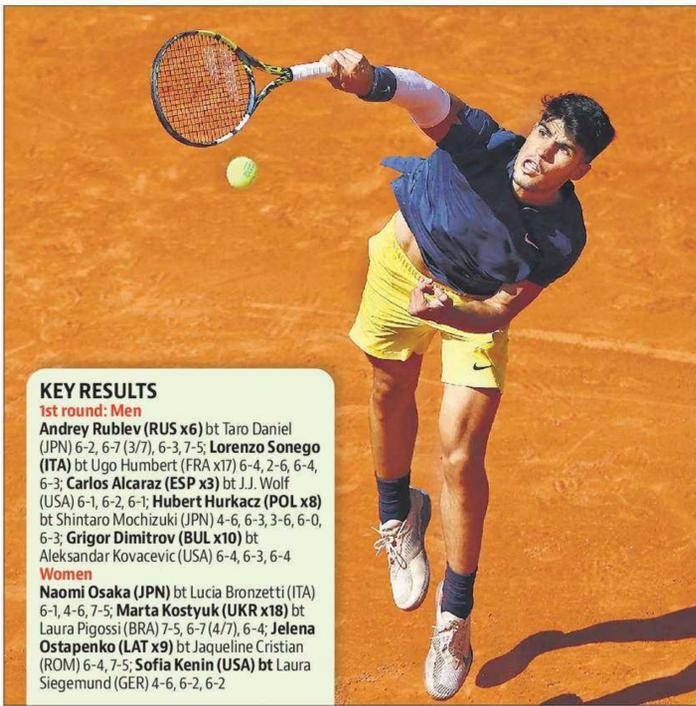
HT Correspondent  
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MUMBAI: Having not played competitively for over a month due to a right forearm injury, there were doubts over Carlos Alcaraz's preparation heading into this French Open. But the world No.3 dispelled all concerns with a commanding 6-1, 6-2, 6-1 first-round victory against America's JJ Wolf at Court Philippe-Chatrier on Sunday.

The 21-year-old looked a bit tentative at the start and was broken in the first game by his 107th-ranked opponent, who had reached the main draw as a 'lucky loser' from qualifying. But it was one-way traffic from thereon as Alcaraz brought out his bag of tricks to entertain the Parisian crowd. Although his right arm was taped, the Spaniard didn't look in any discomfort throughout the match.

After winning the Indian Wells title in March, Alcaraz had only competed at the Madrid Open and lost in the quarter-finals to Andrey Rublev. "I don't need too many matches to be at my best," said Alcaraz after entering the Roland Garros second round. "I only played four times in Madrid. Of course, I'd have loved to have played more but I don't need many to be at 100%. I have practised with a lot of top players in Paris this week and the forearm is feeling better and better."

In the women's singles section, four-time Grand Slam champion and former world No.1 Naomi Osaka claimed her first French



KEY RESULTS

1st round: Men

**Andrey Rublev (RUS x6)** bt Taro Daniel (JPN) 6-2, 6-7 (3/7), 6-3, 7-5; **Lorenzo Sonego (ITA)** bt Ugo Humbert (FRA x17) 6-4, 2-6, 6-4, 6-3; **Carlos Alcaraz (ESP x3)** bt JJ Wolf (USA) 6-1, 6-2, 6-1; **Hubert Hurkacz (POL x8)** bt Shintaro Mochizuki (JPN) 4-6, 6-3, 3-6, 6-0, 6-3; **Grigor Dimitrov (BUL x10)** bt Aleksandar Kovacevic (USA) 6-4, 6-3, 6-4

Women

**Naomi Osaka (JPN)** bt Lucia Bronzetti (ITA) 6-1, 4-6, 7-5; **Marta Kostyuk (UKR x18)** bt Laura Pigossi (BRA) 7-5, 6-7 (4/7), 6-4; **Jelena Ostapenko (LAT x9)** bt Jaqueline Cristian (ROM) 6-4, 7-5; **Sofia Kenin (USA)** bt Laura Siegemund (GER) 4-6, 6-2, 6-2

Spain's Carlos Alcaraz in action against JJ Wolf of US on Sunday.

REUTERS

Open victory in three years. She dropped the second set before closing out a 6-1, 4-6, 7-5 win over Italy's 48th-ranked Lucia Bronzetti in the first match on Chatrier. It was the 26-year-old's first win at a Grand Slam since the 2022 Australian Open.

Osaka is likely to face top seed and defending champion Iga Swiatek in the second round.

Nagal, Nadal in focus

On a Monday headlined by the much-anticipated Rafael Nadal versus Alexander Zverev clash on

Chatrier, India's Sumit Nagal will need an inspired performance against Russia's world No.18 Karen Khachanov in his first-round contest on Court 7 (around 4pm IST).

The 95th-ranked Nagal, who feels more at home on clay, has won all his Challenger titles outside India on that surface but will be making his French Open main draw debut. Reaching the second round of this Australian Open going past 31st seed Alexander

Bublik, Nagal has come into Paris with mixed results on clay. He

shone at the Monte Carlo Masters as a qualifier, defeating world No. 38 Matteo Arnaldi in the first round before taking a set off No. 7 Holger Rune.

Nagal then suffered first-round exits in the Bordeaux Challenger and the ATP Geneva Open, where he had a hitting session with top-ranked Novak Djokovic.

Nadal too will be hoping to find some inspiration on a court he believes is magical for him. He is up against world No.4 Alexander Zverev first up.

# Ahead of Paris, Neeraj to skip Czech event as a precaution

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NEW DELHI: Neeraj Chopra appears to be treading cautiously as India's biggest Paris hope builds up for the July-August Olympic Games.

The reigning Olympic javelin champion said that he had pulled out of the Golden Spike meet in Ostrava, Czech Republic on Tuesday after feeling muscle discomfort during training.

The 26-year-old though allayed injury concerns in a statement on Sunday. "Following a recent throwing session, I decided not to compete in Ostrava as I felt something in my adductor (muscle). I have had problems with it in the past and pushing it at this stage can lead to injury," Chopra said on his Instagram account.

"Just to clarify, I am not injured but I don't want to take any risk during the Olympic year so had to take this decision. Once I feel it's fully recovered, I will get back to competitions," he said. Adductor muscles are



Neeraj Chopra felt muscle discomfort during training.

PTI

attached along the femur. They also help in the rotation and flexion of the thigh, vital functions that must go smoothly for a javelin thrower to be at the best. Chopra's statement puts to rest concerns after organisers of the Ostrava meet, a World Athletics Continental Tour Gold event, said Chopra had pulled out due to an adductor muscle injury. Indian fans though would be anxious that Chopra stays

healthy and his body is able to take the workload required to be at his best for the Games. The Olympic javelin qualification round is on August 6 and the final two days later.

Chopra has appeared to be managing his adductor muscle this season.

He opened his 2024 season with 88.36m to finish second at the Doha Diamond League on May 10. He then competed in

India for the first time since being crowned Olympic champion with victory at the Federation Cup in Bhubaneswar on May 15. However, his winning throw was a modest 82.27m, on his fourth try.

He was seen speaking to his German coach and biomechanics expert Klaus Bartonietz and physiotherapist Ishaan Marwaha before skipping the last two attempts. Chopra didn't go all out as his throws — 82m, foul, 81.29m and 82.27m — show. He blamed the summer heat for his not being in top shape.

"There's nothing much to talk about by my throws," he told the media. "The conditions are quite different from Turkey where I train. The competition was good, but the body didn't feel that nice. I competed only recently in Doha, so rest and recovery didn't go as planned. I decided not to go for the last two throws irrespective of the result because there's a competition coming up soon."

Chopra's first meet in Europe could now be the Paavo Nurmi Games in Finland on June 18.

## LECLERC BREAKS MONACO JINX WITH HOME WIN

MONACO: Ferrari's Charles Leclerc won the Monaco Grand Prix on Sunday to become the first home winner of Formula One's showcase race since Louis Chiron raced around the city streets in 1931. It was the first time the 26-year-old had stood on the Monaco podium in six attempts and came after two standing starts from pole position in a race halted when first lap collisions took out a fifth of the field.

McLaren's Oscar Piastri finished second while Ferrari's Carlos Sainz was third. Red Bull's championship leader Max Verstappen started and finished sixth, only the third time in eight races this season that the triple world champion has been beaten.

REUTERS

# More athletes run away from Delhi meet to evade dope tests

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avishek.roy@htlive.com

NEW DELHI: More athletes fearing dope testers kept away from participating on the concluding day of the Delhi Summer Athletic meet at the Jawahar Lal Nehru Stadium here on Sunday.

After an exodus of participants on the first day of the meet on Friday — no events were held on Saturday due to the Lok Sabha polls — more athletes pulled out across events on Sunday as the National Anti Doping Agency (NADA) officials arrived again to collect samples. "The number of athletes withdrawing from events is quite high. After the presence of NADA on the first day, it seems several

athletes stayed away today," said an athletics official who didn't wish to be named.

On Friday, many athletes either "Did Not Start" or "Did Not Finish" in almost every event. The first day's impact was evident on Sunday. Some events like women's steeplechase (three competitors), women's hammer throw (one competitor) and men's pole vault (one competitor) could not be conducted. The men's hammer saw only one participant despite seven entries. The others were marked as "Did Not Start (DNS)".

Devang recorded a modest throw of 63.67m. The lone participant in women's hammer did not report, having after collected her BIB number. Officials delayed both

events by 30 minutes to give time for the throwers to report but to no avail. There was no medallist in men's triple jump as two jumpers withdrew and three registered 'no mark'. In discus, only half of the eight who entered took part.

In men's 800m, six of the 19 participants did not start. The biggest exodus was in men's 5,000m and boys U-18 1,000m. In 5,000m only six of the 20 athletes competed, while the 1,000m race saw 14 DNS and three DNF in a field of 25. In women's 5,000m, five of the nine athletes pulled out.

The result of the U18 shot put bronze medallist who evaded the testers has been withheld. The boys' discus result has been "withheld" due to overage complaints.

# From piggy banks to portfolios: The case for financial literacy in schools

Saving is short-term, but investing is long-term. Investing is where the real magic happens. It's how you grow your wealth for big life goals

India has always been big on saving money. We'd spend less than we earned and save for the future. But maybe we didn't learn to invest well. Just check your forefathers' bank deposits, and you'll see.

Remember the good old days when guests handed out a shagun before they left? As kids, we'd be jumping with joy, rushing to stuff this good luck into our gullaks (piggy banks). Every now and then, we'd give the gullak a shake to feel how heavy it had become. And when it was full, kaboom! It was time for some serious shopping—remote-controlled cars or probably a cycle!

Some mothers continued the same thing as adults. They'd stash cash in secret spots—like rice containers—for emergencies! Yes, the cash came in handy when times got tough, but looking back, it didn't make us rich.

**THE SAVINGS CULTURE VERSUS THE INVESTMENT HABIT**  
Parents often pass down the 'saving mentality' to their kids. They learn to earn and save but it usually stops there. Some parents link pocket money to chores, teaching kids the value of working for money. But they don't talk about what to do with that money, usually just circling around saving for short-term purchases, like buying toys or treats. For instance, during Diwali, we'd earn money to help with cleaning, which we'd spend on firecrackers. We got the earning part, but what about the whole investing thing? Not so much.

Teaching kids to save money at a young age is like laying the foundation for a house. It's crucial for financial stability. But if we skip teaching them about investing, we give them a solid foundation without showing them how to build the rest of the house—the walls, the roof and the rooms that make it complete.

**THE IMPACT OF INVESTMENT EDUCATION**

Everyone remembers Sushil Kumar, the first KBC contestant to bag the coveted ₹ 5 crore prize! But the story takes a sharp turn. Kumar found himself bankrupt in just a few years—selling milk for survival. How did this happen? Despite his newfound wealth, Kumar lacked the crucial knowledge of investing. Without a solid financial education, he squandered his fortune.

Today, kids start earning at a young age through content creation, gaming, sports, talent shows and so on. But are they equipped to handle their finances wisely? Figuring out how to save and invest money wisely can help kids grow up to be responsible adults. And this could help the whole country stay away from debt in the future and become stronger.

It is crucial therefore, that financial literacy be taught early on. As early as at the school level. This way, they can learn how to handle money smartly right from the start.

This is where platforms like StockGro step in; making investment education easy and fun through a simulated and collaborative learning experience. They also offer beginner-friendly resources that simplify investment concepts and serve as the perfect launchpad for the youth to dip their toes into risk-free investing. Such platforms drive home the message that financial literacy isn't just about budgeting; it's more about investing, risk management and the magic of compound interest.

Idle savings aren't just missing out on growth opportunities—they're leaks from the economy. They don't contribute to GDP and hinder economic growth by reducing consumption and stifling investment.

Albert Einstein once called compound interest the eighth wonder of the world, and for good reason. If you invested ₹ 1 lakh in Mutual Funds in 2024, in 10 years, it would become ₹ 5 lakh, assuming 17% annual returns. That's the power of compounding at work, making your money work for you while you sleep.

We must empower our children not only to navigate the financial puzzle but also to contribute meaningfully to national growth.

**LEADING BY EXAMPLE: INTERNATIONAL MODELS OF FINANCIAL LITERACY**

Countries with robust financial literacy programmes serve as global benchmarks, showcasing the positive impact of early education on economic prosperity and societal well-being. Let's explore Denmark's success story as a model for India. Denmark sets a compelling example with its mandatory financial education programme for students aged between 13 to 15, covering essential topics like budgeting, saving, banking and consumer rights. Implemented in 2015, this initiative has propelled Denmark to an impressive 71% financial literacy rate, ranking among the highest globally.

The ripple effect is that Denmark boasts a high standard of living. This is reflected in its per capita gross national product, which ranks among the highest globally. To put things into perspective, as of

HINDUSTAN TIMES MEDIA MARKETING INITIATIVE



Danish Money Week further reinforces financial literacy by engaging 20,000 students across 700 schools annually. Through classroom visits by financial professionals, students gain first-hand insights into the importance of financial knowledge and its real-world applications.

2024, the GDP per capita of Denmark stands at \$68.9 thousand. On the flip side, India's GDP per capita is only \$2.73 thousand, less than half of Indonesia's \$5.27 thousand. Thus, India still has a lot of ground to cover. Ambareen Musa, CEO of Yabi, the UN Task Force for Digital Finance, states in one of her articles that, "Students who received financial education in Denmark were 21% more likely to have a savings account and 32% more likely to actively manage their savings compared to their counterparts without such education." Like Denmark, India too could integrate financial literacy to foster good financial habits right from secondary school.

**THE BOTTOMLINE**  
Financial literacy is more than just managing money—it's about empowering individuals to make informed decisions, leading to personal freedom and economic stability. When people are financially literate, they're less likely to fall into debt and more likely to contribute positively to the economy, driving sustainable growth and prosperity—the goal of StockGro's Be Financially Free (#BFF) initiative.

Unfortunately, in our pursuit of careers in medicine and engineering, financial literacy often takes a back seat. But its importance cannot be emphasised enough. By teaching financial literacy in schools, we're setting the stage for a generation of financially savvy citizens. This isn't just about preparing students for real-world financial challenges, it's also about fostering an entrepreneurial mindset and instilling global economic citizenship. Let's champion financial education in schools, envisioning a future where every graduate is academically proficient and financially empowered.

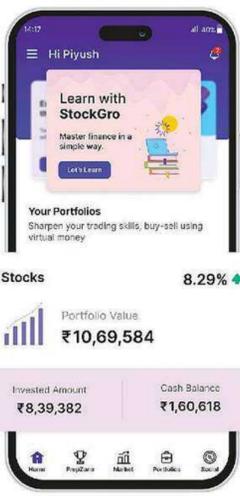
Disclaimer: The views expressed herein represent the perspective of the founder.



Ajay Lakhota  
Founder and CEO,  
StockGro



SCAN THE QR TO UNLOCK FINANCIAL FREEDOM WITH STOCKGRO



## ROLL OF HONOUR



Hindustan Times  
The Safest Lap  
A public awareness campaign by Fortis lafarme in association with chiefo, LifeCell

YOUR LAP IS YOUR BABY'S WORLD, BUT NOT IN A CAR.

Scan to ensure your child's safety

## Walk in Chepauk for Knights of Kolkata

Starc strikes early blows to smother SRH's ultra-aggressive batting and set up an eight-wicket win for KKR in the IPL final

Rasesh Mandani  
rasesh.mandani@htlive.com

**CHENNAI:** This wasn't a tall run-chase like 2014. No tactical masterstroke like Manvinder Bisla of 2012 fame. But Kolkata Knight Riders' IPL 2024 title win on Sunday would still taste like 'mishi do!' because the title No.3 came after a decade.

The transformation led by mentor Gautam Gambhir's return to the Kolkata franchise. Gambhir was captain when KKR last won. This time it was skipper Shreyas Iyer's turn — he stayed unbeaten along with Venkatesh Iyer (52\*, 26b) in their eight-wicket win at the MA Chidambaram Stadium on Sunday as Sunrisers Hyderabad went down tamely after posting the lowest first innings score in an IPL final — 113.

SRH's road to the playoffs and their gung-ho approach was set up hugely with the efforts of their dynamic opening southpaws Travis Head and Abhishek Sharma — Travishek as the stadium announcer yelled to get the neutral Chennai fans going. Mitchell Starc took two balls to get rid of his compatriot Head earlier in the week in Qualifier 1. Here, he knocked back Abhishek Sharma's (2) stumps the fifth ball with arguably the most eye-catching delivery of the competition.

Right in the first over of the contest, the Australia left-arter — his ₹24.5 crore price tag will no longer feel a burden — landed body blows on the super-aggressive SRH batting line-up for two knockout matches in a row.

Abhishek, playing his first IPL final, was nervous after skipper Pat Cummins chose to bat. There was some juice on offer, off the pitch. Starc angled one in from over the wicket and got it to leave the left-hander, so late he had zero reaction time. It's a kind of fast bowler's delivery more common in Test cricket. When bowlers get it right in T20s, it creates a spectacle — capacity crowd up in spirits to watch lighted stumps shattering as they suck the life out of one dressing room and lift up the other.

Backing up his senior bowling partner, Vaibhav Arora produced a classic red-ball dismissal — pitched on leg at pace from over the wicket and angling away from Head to catch the edge to the keeper. The man walking back for a first-ball duck had



Kolkata Knight Riders's players celebrate their win over Sunrisers Hyderabad in the final of the Indian Premier League at the MA Chidambaram Stadium in Chennai on Sunday.

SCORECARD	
<b>Sunrisers Hyderabad</b>	24-1, Rana 4-1-24-2, Narine 4-0-16-1, Russell 2-3-0-19-3, Chakravarthy 2-0-9-1.
A Sharma b Starc 2 (5)	
T Head c Gurbaz b Arora 0 (1)	
R Tripathi c Ramandeep b Starc 9 (13)	
A Markram c Starc b Russell 20 (23)	
N Reddy c Gurbaz b Rana 13 (10)	
H Klaasen b Rana 16 (17)	
S Ahmed c Narine b Varun 8 (7)	
A Samad c Gurbaz b Russell 4 (4)	
P Cummins c Starc b Russell 24 (19)	
J Unadkat lbw b Narine 4 (11)	
B Kumar not out 0 (1)	
<b>Extras</b> (b 5, lb 2, w 6) 13	
<b>Total</b> (all out, 18.3 ovs) 113	
<b>FoW:</b> 1-2, 2-6, 3-21, 4-47, 5-62, 6-71, 7-77, 8-90, 9-113	
<b>Bowling:</b> Starc 3-0-14-2, Arora 3-0-	
<b>Knights Riders</b>	39 (32)
R Gurbaz lbw Shahbaz 39 (32)	
S Narine c Shahbaz b Cummins 6 (2)	
V Iyer not out 52 (26)	
S Iyer not out 6 (3)	
<b>Extras</b> (b 4, lb 2, w 5) 11	
<b>Total</b> (for 2 wks, 10.3 ovs) 114	
<b>FoW:</b> 1-11, 2-102	
<b>Bowling:</b> Kumar 2-0-25-0, Cummins 2-0-18-1, Natarajan 2-0-29-0, Shahbaz 2-3-0-22-1, Unadkat 1-0-9-0, Markram 1-0-5-0.	

made India's life miserable in the World Test Championship final and the ODI World Cup title clash. No final heroics for him this time. Not the way Head would have wanted his 567-run season to end.

Rahul Tripathi hung around for a while, but that wasn't his game. The constant messaging to their batters from the SRH camp was not to compromise on intent. "We are playing a particular style, won't work every time but

when it does, it will be damaging," Cummins said at the toss. Tripathi (9) attempted to flick another of Starc's hissing angled balls, only managing to top edge to Ramandeep Singh in front of square.

Arora's 17-run sixth over when Aiden Markram went after him, gave some element of respectability to the powerplay score — 40/3. But what was to follow was going to leave the orange section — the crowd was equally split between the teams — and SRH's Chennai-based owners largely disappointed.

SRH were four wickets down at the halfway mark, six-down in 12 overs and the batters could never arrest the slide. KKR bowlers had discovered the bowling mantra on a pitch where there was enough help off the surface for pacers, some grip for off-pace balls and bounce for the spin-

ners. The only way SRH could transfer pressure to their opponents was through some release shots. Nitish Reddy (13) tried to force the pace but Harshit Rana's 146 kph screamer got him caught behind. Markram (20) holed out trying to pull Andre Russell out of the park.

Such is KKR's collective bowling strength that there is no respite with spin. This has been Sunil Narine's season. He wasn't going to allow the match's grip to loosen and delivered another top-draw bowling performance (4-0-16-1).

Russell, in the playing eleven for the first time in an IPL final, also left his mark with a spell that read 2-3-0-19-3. Starc wasn't even required to bowl his final over as SRH folded up in 18.3 overs. But it was the Aussie pace ace's thrilling opening spell (3-0-14-2) that gave KKR a huge head start.

## WORLD CUP BOUND



The first batch of Indian cricketers, including skipper Rohit Sharma, on Saturday left for the US ahead of the T20 World Cup beginning on June 2. Apart from Rohit, Jasprit Bumrah, Suryakumar Yadav, head coach Rahul Dravid and batting coach Vikram Rathour and few other players left from

Mumbai airport. Other players in the travelling contingent include Ravindra Jadeja, Shivam Dube, Mohammed Siraj, Arshdeep Singh, Khaleel Ahmed, Kuldeep Yadav and Axar Patel among others. Virat Kohli, who was part of the IPL teams that reached the playoffs, is yet to leave.

## Dipa first Indian gymnast to win gold at Asian Sr C'ships

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**MUMBAI:** Overcoming the disappointment of missing out on the Paris Olympics quota earlier in the week, Dipa Karmakar became the first Indian gymnast to capture a gold medal at the Asian Senior Championships after topping the women's vault in Tashkent.

In her favoured event, Rio Olympian Dipa took the top spot with an average of 13.566 in the final ahead of North Koreans Kim Son Hyang (13.466) and Jo Kyong Byol (12.966) who finished with silver and bronze.

No Indian had won a gold in the history of this prestigious Asian event that was first held in 1996. Dipa herself had won a bronze in the vault event in the 2015 edition in Hiroshima. Pranati Nayak also has a couple of bronze medals (2019 and 2022, both vault) and so does Ashish Kumar (2006, floor exercise).

Dipa, however, had finished a lowly 16th in the all-round category of this tournament with a score of 46.166 and thus failed to secure a quota for the Paris



Dipa Karmakar with coach Bisheshwar Nandi in Tashkent.

Games. India, therefore, has no quota in gymnastics for this year's Olympics. Philippines' Emma Malabayo earned that quota with a third-place finish in the all-around competition where China's Hu Jiafei and Qin Xinyi won gold and silver, respectively. None of the Chinese gymnasts — or Japanese, for that matter — competed in the eight-women vault final.

Still, this is a significant medal in the 30-year-old Dipa's trailblazing career that has met several roadblocks over the last few years.

After a memorable fourth-place finish in vault at the 2016 Rio Olympics, Dipa's progress has been hit by injuries. She also served a 21-month doping suspension that ended last year.

She then topped the selected trials for last year's Asian Games but was dropped from the squad. She bounced back by winning the national all-around title earlier this year, and also finished a creditable fourth in the vault event of the FIG Apparatus World Cup in Doha in April.

## Deepika falls to Lim, misses bronze

**YECHON:** Deepika Kumari lost to world No 2 Lim Sihyeon and No 3 Alejandra Valencia in the semi-final and the bronze medal playoff at the second leg of the World Cup. The rising 20-year-old from South Korea, Lim, prevailed 6-2 (28-26, 28-28, 28-27, 27-27) in the semifinal, notching back-to-back wins over the former world No 1 Indian in less than a month.

## Jamwal, Dev move up in Paris qualifiers

**BANGKOK:** Indian boxers continued their dominant run at the second World Boxing Qualifiers for Paris Olympics as Abhinash Jamwal (63.5kg) and Nishant Dev (71kg) won their bouts. Jamwal, who has replaced Shiva Thapa, beat Andrius Lavrenovas of Lithuania 5-0. Dev also secured a dominant 5-0 unanimous verdict win against Armando Bighafa of Guinea-Bissau.

## Sindhu loses to Wang, finishes runner-up in Malaysia Masters

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**NEW DELHI:** Leading 11-3 in the decider, PV Sindhu was well on her way to her first title in almost two years. The former world champion was aggressive in her approach, was winning points at the net and displaying the agility one hasn't seen from her in recent times.

But China's Wang Zhi Yi wasn't done yet. Returning to the court after the mid-game break, both shuttlers engaged a scintillating 56-shot rally that sucked every ounce of energy from both. The world No.7 made some desperate lunges to keep the shuttle in play which did the trick as the second seed claimed what proved to be the most crucial point of the contest.

That rally — the first point after change of ends that gave Sindhu's younger Chinese rival advantage in terms of drift on the court — turned the course of the contest as Wang began to chip away at the deficit, reeling off five points in a row, before going on to level



PV Sindhu in action during the final on Sunday.

scores at 13-all. Wang maintained the momentum as Sindhu struggled for control, winning the decider to claim the match 16-21, 21-5, 21-16 in an hour and 19 minutes, clinching the \$420,000 Malaysia Masters title in Kuala Lumpur on Sunday.

This was Wang's second win over Sindhu, seeded fifth here, in four meetings. It was her third title of the year after winning the Asia Championships and Indone-

sia Masters. She also helped China win the Uber Cup earlier this month.

For world No.15 Sindhu, the wait for her first title since winning the 2022 Commonwealth Games gold in Birmingham continues after she reached her first final in 14 months. Despite the loss, the two-time Olympic medalist showed glimpses of her past level, playing her most natural style of aggressive badminton.

Sindhu was clearly the better player in the first game, attacking the net regularly which caught out the Chinese. Her variation of strokes, backed by boosts of confidence from coach Agus Dwi Santoso from the court-side, saw her race away with the game.

But the reigning Asian champion turned the tables on Sindhu in the second and eventually came out on top.

"It's sad that I didn't get the result that I expected. I should have pulled it off, maintaining the lead (11-3 in third game), but there were really good rallies. She also came back. Overall, it's been a very good match," said Sindhu, 28, twice winner of the Malaysia Masters. "It's a bit disappointing, but a lot of positives to take from this match and the whole tournament. I am happy that I at least came to the final. I played well. These matches will definitely give me a lot of confidence. I could have won, just not one of those days."

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