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English Medium
11 June | 5:30 PM

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12 जून | सुबह 8 बजे

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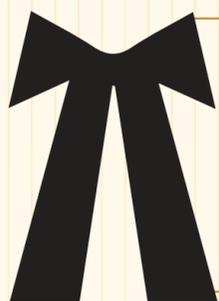
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NEWS » PAGE 10

THE ULTIMATE WEAPON

The spectre of nuclear conflict, once again

The world needs leaders of consequence

EDITORIAL » PAGE 6

ESCAPE FROM UNREST

Attacks force labourers out of Manipur

NEWS » PAGE 10

Seven babies killed in Delhi hospital fire

Five more babies receiving treatment; owner, doctor on duty arrested; police say hospital's licence had expired and it allowed for only five beds

Alisha Dutta
NEW DELHI

Seven newborn babies were charred to death after a fire broke out in a children's hospital at Vivek Vihar in east Delhi on Saturday night. One of the dead infants was 25 days old, while the other six were just 15 days old. Five babies are undergoing treatment.

The police said the hospital's licence had expired. The owner of the hospital, along with the doctor on duty, was arrested on Sunday evening after they went missing for over 12 hours. They have been booked under Sections 336 (negligence), 304 A (culpable homicide), and 34 (common intention) of the Indian Penal Code.

A magisterial inquiry has been set up to look into the causes of the fire and formulate strategies to pre-



Harrowing tragedy: The police inspect the children's hospital that was gutted at Vivek Vihar in New Delhi on Sunday. R.V. MOORTHY

vent such occurrences.

The private hospital, New Born Baby Care Hospital, is owned by Naveen Khichi, who holds an MD in paediatric medicine, and his wife, Jagriti, a dentist.

Apart from the seven who died, five babies admitted to the facility were put at risk by the flames.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (Shahdara) Surendra Choudhury told *The*

Hindu that the building had no fire extinguishers or emergency doors.

"The licence of the hospital had expired in March 2024. Though the licence was issued for only five beds, there were 12 beds when we inspected the site," he said.

CONTINUED ON
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RELATED REPORTS
» PAGE 2

Knight Riders' night out



Back with a bang: Players of the Kolkata Knight Riders celebrate their third IPL title after registering a thumping eight-wicket win over the Sunrisers Hyderabad in Chennai on Sunday. R. RAGU (REPORT: PAGE 15)

Rajkot inferno toll rises to 33; over 15 persons still missing

Mahesh Langa
AHMEDABAD

At least 33 people were killed in the fire that broke out on Saturday evening at TRP Gaming Zone in Rajkot. More than 15 are still missing in what the Gujarat High Court called a "man-made disaster", taking *suo motu* cognisance of the matter and posting it for a

hearing on Monday.

Neither the State government nor the local administration has given any figures about the casualties or number of missing people since Saturday night. There is also no official data on the total number of people present inside the building when the fire broke out. However, local media and sources have

confirmed that the death toll has climbed to 33.

The victims included five people from one family, as well as Vivek and Khushali Dusara, a couple who got engaged just a few days ago, and are missing at the game zone, along with their sister-in-law.

CONTINUED ON
» PAGE 10

Severe cyclonic storm Remal makes landfall; one lakh evacuated in Bengal

Shiv Sahay Singh
KOLKATA

The severe cyclonic storm Remal started its landfall process between Sagar Island in West Bengal and Khepupara in Bangladesh around 9.15 p.m. on Sunday, as it intensified and moved northwards. By 11.30 p.m., the eye of the cyclone touched the land.

To prevent loss of life, the West Bengal administration had evacuated people from low-lying and coastal areas of South 24 Parganas, North 24 Parganas and Purba Medinipur to storm shelters. By 3 p.m., over one lakh people were shifted from coastal and vulnerable areas.

The storm has resulted in disruptions in air, rail, and road transportation in Kolkata and other parts of south Bengal.

Eastern and Southeastern Railways cancelled



The India Meteorological Department has issued a red alert cyclone warning for the West Bengal coastline. DEBASISH BHADURI

several trains for Sunday and Monday. Ferry services in Kolkata and the Sundarbans had been suspended. The Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose International Airport suspended flight operations for 21 hours from Sunday noon, affecting 394 flights in both international and domestic sectors. The Syama Prasad Mookerjee Port in Kolkata suspended cargo and container handling operations

for 12 hours from Sunday evening.

Earlier, Prime Minister Narendra Modi chaired a meeting to review response and preparedness for the cyclonic storm. Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee urged people to remain indoors.

Governor C.V. Ananda Bose also called an emergency meeting at the Raj Bhavan to ascertain cyclone preparedness. Kolkata

and adjoining areas received heavy rainfall and gusty winds. Gale winds with speeds of 80 kmph to 100 kmph hit the coastal areas of Digha; Haldia in East Medinipur; and Sagar, Fraserganj, Dhamakhali, Kakdwip and other coastal areas of South 24 Parganas.

Issuing a red alert cyclone warning for the State coastline, the India Meteorological Department said Remal will have a maximum sustained wind speed of 110-120 kmph, gusting to 135 kmph.

A red alert for heavy (7-11 cm) to very heavy rain (12-20 cm) was issued for a few places over North 24 Parganas, South 24 Parganas, East Midnapore, Kolkata, Howrah and Hooghly districts.

CONTINUED ON
» PAGE 10

SEVERAL SEEK SHELTER
» PAGE 14

IN BRIEF



Army chief's term extended by a month

NEW DELHI

In an unusual move, the Appointments Committee of Cabinet on Sunday extended the tenure of the Chief of the Army Staff, General Manoj Pande, by one month. He was to retire on May 31. » PAGE 10

EDUCATION PLUS » PAGE 5

Hamas launches attack on Tel Aviv for the first time in months

Associated Press
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 over seven months into Israel's massive air, sea and ground offensive.

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

sam Brigades, took responsibility for 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 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 Rafah, where Israeli forces recently launched an incursion. It said "a number"

of the projectiles were intercepted.

Meanwhile, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was to convene his war cabinet on Sunday to discuss the latest efforts towards a Gaza truce and hostage release deal.

Earlier in the day, aid trucks entered Gaza from southern Israel under a new agreement to bypass the Rafah crossing.

PUNISHING HAMAS
» PAGE 6

WAR CABINET
» PAGE 14



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'Won't spare culprits': Saxena orders probe into infant deaths

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Saying that the guilty will be "brought to book", Lieutenant-Governor V.K. Saxena on Sunday ordered Delhi Chief Secretary Naresh Kumar to institute an inquiry into the hospital fire tragedy in East Delhi's Vivek Vihar.

Delhi Health Minister Saurabh Bharadwaj also directed the Chief Secretary and Health Secretary Deepak Kumar to "give names and designations of the officers" responsible for the tragedy. The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights, too, formed a team to investigate into it.

Murmu expresses grief Meanwhile, President Droupadi Murmu took to X, praying for strength to the bereaved parents. "I pray for the speedy recovery of other children injured in this incident," she added. Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal also condoned the death of the children.

Expressing grief over it, Mr. Saxena in a post on X said, "Have asked the Chief Secretary to institute an inquiry into the tragic incident of fire in the children's hospital. Also instructed the CP [Com-

Delhi Health Minister Saurabh Bharadwaj seeks names of officers 'responsible' for the tragedy

missioner of Police] to ensure all that is needful."

His order came after Mr. Bharadwaj alleged that the Health Secretary was not "responding to his phone calls and messages". He said the directions with regard to the incident were "sent via email" to the officer "with a copy marked to the Chief Secretary".

Mr. Bharadwaj also ordered the free treatment of the rescued children under his government's Farishtey scheme, and that speedy relief be provided to the bereaved families.

BJP slams DFS Meanwhile, the BJP questioned the working of the Delhi Fire Services (DFS).

"Its functioning has remained unchecked despite repeated fire incidents in the Capital. Like other Delhi government departments, it has become a centre of corruption," Delhi BJP chief Virendra Sachdeva alleged.

Delhi Congress chief Devender Yadav called for an impartial investigation into the incident.

Hospital kept us in dark about blaze, say inconsolable parents

The kin of victims accuse authorities of failing to ensure safety of children after charging 'hefty' amount for their treatment, say they came to know about tragedy from news reports on TV, ask how the hospital could store so many oxygen cylinders

Alisha Dutta
NEW DELHI

The silence of East Delhi Advance NICU in Vivek Vihar was shattered by the piercing wail of Md. Anzaar on Sunday morning, when he got to know that his newborn daughter was not admitted to the child care unit there, but had been shifted to the Guru Teg Bahadur Hospital mortuary.

Mr. Anzaar and his wife Noorjahan Bibi are among those parents who lost their children to a fire tragedy at New Born Baby Care Hospital on Saturday night.

All children injured in the incident were immediately admitted to the East Delhi Advance NICU for treatment, but seven of them succumbed to their injuries.

"They killed our daughter," told Mr. Anzaar to his wife over the phone. He said his daughter was admitted to the ill-fated hospital after she developed some infection caused by unclean water, resulting in low platelet count.

"They had told me yesterday that my daughter is



In grief: Family members of the children who died in a blaze at a hospital in east Delhi's Vivek Vihar on Sunday. PTI/R.V. MOORTHY

doing fine and would be discharged on Sunday," said Mr. Anzaar, a Bhajanpura resident who works as a daily wagger.

He said the hospital charged them ₹12,000 per day for the treatment of their newborn daughter. "Yet, they failed to provide safety to my child. How could they store in their hospital so many oxygen cylinders [that burst leading to the incident]? How could they abandon our child like this?" he said.

Mr. Anzaar said the hospital authorities did not inform them about the inci-

dent. "We learnt about it from television news."

As he proceeded towards the GTB mortuary, he was quickly surrounded by other grieving parents. One of them, Md. Asif, said his son was suffering from breathing issues.

Lucky escape

"The doctors had told me that he would be discharged on Sunday. I wish I had taken him home sooner rather than later," said Mr. Asif, as his wife Sitara Khatun wept uncontrollably over the phone when she was informed about

their child's death. "We had admitted him there for him to get better but they took all our money and killed him," she said.

Meanwhile, at the East Delhi Advance NICU Hospital, Mithilesh Kumar and Richa Devi kept running from the reception to the enquiry desk to know about the condition of their son. The couple had conceived twins, after being married for 15 years. They were in tears as they learnt that their son was alive. "We had lost our infant girl six days back, right after she was born, due to

a doctor's negligence. We would have lost everything had our child died in the fire incident," said Mr. Kumar.

In another corner of the hospital lobby, Madhu Raj was found worried about his son. Mr. Raj's wife had developed post-delivery complications and was bedridden. He was preparing meal for his wife when he came to know about his son, who survived the tragedy. "I have not yet informed my wife [about the incident]. I will tell her only after I place our child in her lap," he said.

Timings DELHI

MONDAY, MAY 27
RISE 05:26 SET 19:13
RISE 23:05 SET 08:25

TUESDAY, MAY 28
RISE 05:25 SET 19:13
RISE 23:49 SET 09:31

WEDNESDAY, MAY 29
RISE 05:25 SET 19:14
RISE 00:00 SET 10:38

Delhi Weather max min
Delhi City 45 27
Safdarjang 45 27
Palam 46 29

Delhi Palam Today
46°C Heat wave to prevail. Morning will be slight warm. The weather will be very hot and uneasy during the day. Night also will be uneasy.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow
47°C Severe heat wave to continue. Morning will be uneasy. The day will be very hot and uneasy. Night will be slight warm.

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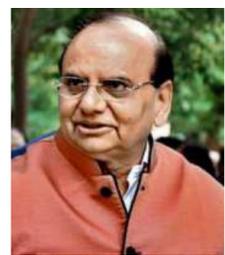
L-G completes 2 years in office, terms his tenure 'challenging'

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Lieutenant-Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena on Sunday completed two years in office and said his tenure has been "challenging".

"In a city regressing due to various reasons, while we could achieve much visibly, there was much more that got stalled. There is far more that needs to be addressed and healed," he said in a post of X.

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) and the Centre-appointed L-G have been at loggerheads over several



L-G V.K. Saxena. FILE PHOTO

issues in the past, with the Delhi's ruling party accusing Mr. Saxena of stalling several projects.

A recent low in their already-rocky relationship

came on Sunday during the Lok Sabha polling in the city, when Delhi Minister Atishi accused him of instructing the police to "slow down voting" in the areas considered strongholds of the Opposition's INDIA bloc. Mr. Saxena denied the charge, terming it "false and unwarranted".

Earlier this month, the L-G had recommended a probe by the National investigation Agency (NIA) against Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal for allegedly receiving political funding from the proscribed terror outfit, Sikhs for Justice.

Fire at Krishna Nagar building leaves three dead, one injured

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Three persons died and another received serious injuries after a fire broke out at a four-storeyed residential building in east Delhi's Krishna Nagar on Sunday, according to officials of the Delhi Fire Services (DFS).

The police have booked the owner of the building under Indian Penal Code Sections 285 (negligent conduct with respect to fire or combustible matter), 304A (causing death by negligence), 337 (caus-

The blaze started in the residential building's parking space, damaging several vehicles

ing hurt by act endangering life or personal safety of others), and 427 (mischievous causing damage).

According to officials, a charred body of a 66-year-old woman, identified as Promila Shad, was recovered from the first floor of the building, while two others, identified as 18-year-old Keshav Sharma

and 39-year-old Anju Sharma, were rushed to a hospital but were declared brought dead by the doctors there.

Nine others were rescued, an official added. Meanwhile, DFS chief Atul Garg said a call regarding the blaze was received around 2.35 a.m. "The flames were doused by 7.20 a.m. It was found that the two-wheelers parked in the building's parking space caught the fire first."

Five fire tenders were rushed to the spot. Fourteen vehicles and two bicycles were reduced to ashes.

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NGT takes note of The Hindu report on Yamuna floodplains

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has taken suo motu cognisance of a report published in *The Hindu* highlighting that the demarcation of the Yamuna floodplains in Delhi – a basic step to help identify and protect its sensitive ecosystem from encroachment – remains incomplete nine years after it had ordered the authorities to carry out the task.

The next hearing in the matter has been fixed for August 7.

"The news item indicates the violation of the Water Prevention and Control of Pollution Act, 1974, and the Environment Protection Act, 1986. The news item raises substantial issue relating to compliance of the environmental norms," the NGT Bench headed by its chairperson, Prakash Shrivastava, noted on May 21.

The NGT said the report states that nine years after it had ordered the identification of encroachments, the process was not initiat-



A boy looks for coins amongst the religious offerings thrown on the Yamuna riverbed. AFP

ed even after the 2023 floods. "The article states as per the latest satellite images, illegal permanent constructions have only increased since the NGT's landmark judgment in 2015," the Bench said.

The report was part of a five-part series published by *The Hindu* on different aspects of what plagues the floodplains and why Delhi continues to face floods. Published in April, it highlighted that nine months after Delhi witnessed the worst flood in its history, forcing over 25,000 people to live in relief camps, nothing much has changed on the ground.

At 45.4 degrees Celsius, city logs hottest day of season

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The national capital recorded its hottest day of the season on Sunday, with the maximum temperature settling at 45.4 degrees Celsius, which is five degrees above normal.

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has issued a red alert till May 30 and said there will be no respite from the heatwave conditions for the next five days.

While the Safadarjung station – whose reading is considered the official marking for Delhi – recorded a maximum temperature of 45.4 degrees Celsius, the weather station at Mungeshpur recorded the highest maximum temperature of 48.3 degrees Celsius, followed by Najafgarh at 48.1 degrees Celsius.

The forecast for next week reads "mainly clear sky with heatwave conditions at most places". Maximum and minimum temperatures are likely to be around 46 and 28 degrees Celsius, respectively".

SHUBHRA RANJAN

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INBRIEF



Hoarding collapse: ad firm owner's custody extended

A Mumbai court on Sunday extended till May 29 the police custody of Bhavesh Bhide, director of the advertising firm that had installed a hoarding that collapsed in Mumbai's Ghatkopar area and claimed 17 lives. M/S Ego Media Pvt Ltd, the advertising firm of Mr. Bhide, managed the giant hoarding that collapsed on a petrol pump during a duststorm and rain on May 13. As Mr. Bhide absconded after the incident, the police registered a case against him on the charge of culpable homicide not amounting to murder under Section 304 of the Indian Penal Code. He was arrested in Udaipur, Rajasthan, on May 16 and brought to the city. PTI

'Suspended for refusing to do illegal bidding of Minister'

After the Chief Minister Eknath Shinde-led Mahayuti government in Maharashtra recently suspended the health chief of the Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC), the sacked official has hit back with a letter to Mr. Shinde in which he claimed he was suspended for his refusal to do the "illicit bidding" of a Minister in the State government. Dr. Bhagwan Pawar, who was Pune's District Health Officer during the COVID-19 pandemic, was recently sacked on the grounds of having committed financial irregularities and on charges of alleged sexual harassment of women colleagues.

BRS urges FCI to seek ED probe into paddy sale

The Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) has demanded that the Food Corporation of India (FCI) lodge a complaint with the Enforcement Directorate and CBI into "a ₹1,100-crore scam in the global tenders" called for the disposal of 35 lakh tonnes of paddy and procurement of fine rice. It said the same four agencies/companies got both tenders from/to the State Civil Supplies Corporation.

The Hindu Bureau HYDERABAD

The Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) has demanded that the Food Corporation of India (FCI) lodge a complaint with the Enforcement Directorate and CBI into "a ₹1,100-crore scam in the global tenders" called for the disposal of 35 lakh tonnes of paddy and procurement of fine rice. It said the same four agencies/companies got both tenders from/to the State Civil Supplies Corporation.

Raut claims Modi, Shah worked to 'defeat' Gadkari, irks BJP, Cong.

Shoumojit Banerjee PUNE

An allegation made by the Shiv Sena (UBT) that the top brass of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), including Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah, and Maharashtra Deputy CM Devendra Fadnavis, actively worked to "defeat" BJP leader Nitin Gadkari in the Nagpur Lok Sabha contest has drawn jeers not only from the ruling BJP but also irked the Congress party, the Sena (UBT)'s ally in the Opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) coalition.

Shiv Sena (UBT) spokesperson Sanjay Raut, in the party mouthpiece, *Saamana*, claimed that Mr. Fadnavis threw "large sums of money" to ensure Mr. Gadkari's "defeat" in the Lok Sabha election.

"To ensure Gadkari's defeat in Nagpur, Modi, Shah and Fadnavis came together and made attempts. When it became evident that Mr. Gadkari was not going to get defeated, Mr. Fadnavis had no option but to campaign for him," Mr. Raut alleged.

The Sena (UBT) leader's allegations were rubbished by the Maharashtra BJP lea-

dership as "ludicrous". The allegation also irked Congress leader Vikas Thakre, who had contested against Mr. Gadkari in the Lok Sabha election as an MVA candidate.

"Speak with proof" Implicit in Mr. Raut's allegation was that Mr. Thakre may have benefited from the funds being distributed by Mr. Fadnavis. "Sanjay Raut should speak with proof instead of making such statements. This is my ninth election and I do not need anyone's 'funds' to defeat Gadkari," the Congress candidate said.



In limbo: Shopkeepers at Nizamuddin, New Delhi, await social security even after receiving the PM SVANidhi loan. SHASHI SHEKHAR KASHYAP

halt for two years now. Delhi has approximately over six lakh street vendors, as per union records.

A Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) official on condition of anonymity said, "There are several factors for this, including the unification of MCD and lack of a standing committee in the civic body. The MCD has hired a company to conduct the surveys, but since it's supposed to be done through biometrics, they are awaiting permission from UIDAI."

Poll politics Ahead of the Lok Sabha poll, leading national parties such as the Bharatiya Janata Party, Indian National Congress, and Aam Aadmi Party raised the issues of street vendors.

They have made street vendors poll promises of security, respect, and finding a lasting solution to their problems of harassment by the police and authorities.

In February this year, members from the Delhi Congress met a delegation of street vendors, assuring them that if they were elected, they would implement the Street Vendors Act, 2014, which was passed by the Centre under their governance.

In March, Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressed an audience of street vendors in the Capital, saying that there were lakhs of vendors working hard to earn a living for their families. "Inke thela dukaan bhale hi chhote ho, lekin inke sapne bade hote hai (Their shops might be

In Tiruppur, a tale of communal harmony as Muslims donate land for Hindu temple

The Hindu Bureau TIRUPPUR

A temple of Lord Ganesha, constructed on three cents of land donated by the 'Jamaath' of the locality, was consecrated at Ottapalayam in Tamil Nadu's Tiruppur district on Sunday.

The long-standing Hindu-Muslim brotherhood in the locality was further cemented by the gesture of the Muslims, the residents said. The consecration was marked by members of the Muslim community arriving in a procession and making the traditional *seer-*



Muslims being welcomed during the consecration of a Ganesha temple at Ottapalayam in Tiruppur district, Tamil Nadu, on Sunday.

varisai offering of fruits, flowers and other items on seven plates.

The members of the RMJ Rose Garden Muslim Jamaat mosque had donat-

BJP candidate in Odisha arrested for vandalising EVM

Satvasundar Barik BHUBANESWAR

Prashant Jagdev, Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) candidate from Odisha's Khordha Assembly constituency, has been arrested for allegedly vandalising an Electronic Voting Machine (EVM) during polling on Saturday.

Elections to Lok Sabha and Assembly seats are taking place simultaneously in Odisha in four phases.

Mr. Jagdev, the sitting MLA from Chilika Assembly constituency, is no stranger to controversy. In 2022, he had allegedly tried to run over BJP cadres with his SUV when he was in the Bi-Ju Janata Dal. Several cases in connection with manhandling government officials and political opponents are pending against him, officials said.

The latest incident took place when Mr. Jagadev came to booth no. 114 of Kaunripatana under Bolagarh block in Khordha to vote and misbehaved with officials on poll duty.

He has been booked under various sections of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) for outraging the modesty of a poll official and voluntarily causing hurt, and the offence of undue influence at

elections, among other charges. According to the police, Mr. Jagdev was seen manhandling a woman polling staff in the webcasting system at booth. The charges levelled against him were opposed by his supporters who demanded that the CCTV footage of the incident be made public. A court later sent him to judicial custody, and at present, he is lodged at the Khorda jail, officials said.

Meanwhile, the office of the Chief Electoral Officer has directed the Angul District Collector to inquire about the alleged attack on BJP workers by BJD MLA Susanta Kumar Behera in Chhendipada Assembly constituency and submit an action taken report.

There are 21 Lok Sabha constituencies in the State, and a 147-member Assembly. Polling for the first three phases were held on May 13, May 20, May 25, respectively. The last phase will be held on June 1.

The land, worth ₹6 lakh, was donated after learning that Hindus in the locality were unable to find suitable space for a Ganesha temple

mingling with the elders in the procession. The Muslim members, who were welcomed with garlands, went up to the fire pit and made the offerings to the priests. The Jamaath members also organised an *an-nadhanam* for the consecration ceremony.

Delhi's vendors struggle to stay on the street as lasting solutions remain on paper

SPOTLIGHT

Satvika Mahajan

At the break of dawn, Shyam, 52, leaves his one-bedroom shanty in Laxmi Bai Nagar, Central Delhi, to buy vegetables from the Ghazipur wholesale market. By 7 a.m., he returns to set up his vegetable cart for the day. He is one of the many registered street vendors who have applied for the Prime Minister Street Vendor's AtmaNirbhar Nidhi (PM SVANidhi), a government initiative providing them collateral-free working capital loans.

Four years after the interest-free scheme was launched, initially to get vendors going after they lost employment due to COVID-19 lockdowns, Shyam sees his fellow street vendors go through the ordeal of first getting the loan and then paying it off. He has now decided against availing of it, because he is unsure when he will be evicted from his spot on the street, threatening his income.

The scheme offers a loan of up to ₹10,000 under the first tranche. If vendors pay it back within 12

months, up to ₹20,000 is offered for the next 18 months under the second tranche and up to ₹50,000 for the next 36 months under the third tranche.

"First, when the Street Vendors Act came [in 2014], I thought I would be allowed to live my life with dignity, but it was never implemented seriously," he says. The Act was meant "to protect the rights of urban street vendors and to regulate street vending activities". Now with the loan scheme, it's the same cycle, complains Shyam.

The Act covers any person engaged in vending goods or services to people in public spaces, especially on pavements or from a temporary built-up structure, or by moving from place to place. Fruit and vegetable sellers who pushed their carts around localities; roadside stalls selling tea, pakoras, and *paan* in shacks; those selling second-hand clothes or books; and traditionally held weekly markets were all covered, among others.

All street vendors were supposed to be provided licences to continue their work under the Act. However, the surveys to provide licences have been on



In limbo: Shopkeepers at Nizamuddin, New Delhi, await social security even after receiving the PM SVANidhi loan. SHASHI SHEKHAR KASHYAP



In limbo: Shopkeepers at Nizamuddin, New Delhi, await social security even after receiving the PM SVANidhi loan. SHASHI SHEKHAR KASHYAP

small, but their dreams are big), he said.

AAP also reached out to street vendors ahead of the election, promising to carry out the stalled surveys of vendors by the MCD, and facilitating vending zones in the Capital.

Shakeel Ahmed Siddiqui, the general secretary of the Delhi Pradesh Rehri Patri Khomcha Hawkers Union, a trade union of street vendors affiliated to the Centre of Indian Trade Unions, says these promises look good on paper, but every party needs to look closely at the on-ground conditions before they make promises, let alone bring about change.

During the G-20 meetings, several vendors were removed by urban local bodies (ULBs) from their

spaces in the name of cleaning up streets.

Stories from the streets Siddiqui explains the loans have done the bare minimum. Street vendors receive almost no protection from the authorities and are often at the receiving end of anti-encroachment drives. "Street vendors contribute to the country's Gross Domestic Product heavily. Farmers and factories depend on us to get their products into the market, and households run through our services, but we are treated like second-class citizens."

Nizamuddin, 60, sets up his clothing vend in the busy Jama Masjid market, located next to the Kasturba Gandhi Hospital. He mostly sells menswear, making

₹1,000-₹1,500 a day, depending on the customers and the time of the year.

Only a few months after receiving the loan from the SVANidhi scheme, his vend was razed in an anti-encroachment drive. It has been almost five months and they have not let him set up his stall again. "I have somehow managed to pay off the loan in small segments by asking friends and relatives for money, but how long can I keep this up," Nizamuddin asks, rhetorically, stroking his long grey beard. "I thought I would not have to face these issues after I received the loan, since it is an indicator that I have all the paperwork necessary to vend, but even after struggling for formal recognition, I have faced this."

He is an elected member of the Town Vending Committee (TVC) from the area in which he had his stall. Yet, he says the TVC, meant to give vendors a voice within their ULBs, has not held any meeting in over a year now.

Support systems Unions such as the Rehri Patri Khomcha Hawkers Union, Self Employed Women's Association, and Na-

tional Association of Street Vendors of India work as the backbone of many street vendors, who are often unlettered. Many work to connect the government with street vendors, educating vendors about laws and rights that support them, and conveying vendors' tribulations to the government. They help vendors with legal aid and provide an umbrella to meet and find viable solutions to their problems.

Urban activist and researcher Aravind Unni says the scheme has worked on some level, especially after COVID-19, when monetary issues needed to be addressed. However, he feels the scheme is just an add-on to the 2014 Act, and until that is implemented, true change will not be seen on the ground.

The Urban Development Ministry has the power to make decisions for street vendors. "There needs to be a push to decentralise decision-making with training and capacity-building so that it can trickle down to those working on the ground, such as ULBs or TVCs," says Unni.

LINK TO FULL STORY
» <https://bit.ly/4d4b4yf>

Delhi magistrates 'overlook' violations during arrest: report

Soibam Rocky Singh
NEW DELHI

A first-of-its-kind study on the functioning of magistrate courts in the Capital during the "first production" of an arrested person and subsequent remand proceedings has revealed that judges predominantly focus on procedural paperwork, often overlooking violations related to the arrest.

Article 22(2) states that every arrested person must be produced before a magistrate within 24 hours — this is called "first production".

The "ethnographic" study by National Law University's Project 39A is significant given that over 53.90 lakh people were arrested across India in 2022 alone, as per the National Crime Records Bureau.

Recently, the Supreme Court released *NewsClick* founder Prabir Purkayastha due to illegality committed at the time of his arrest and initial remand in police custody. In its May 15 order, the apex court noted that the arrest memo nowhere conveyed the grounds on which Mr. Purkayastha was arrested.

Arrest memo

According to the report, there is no standard format for an arrest memo across different States. Arrest memo is a document prepared by the police that at the time of arrest or immediately on bringing the arrested person back to the police station.

In Delhi courts, the arrest memo filed by police most commonly includes the date, time, and place of arrest as well as case-related information, including the First Information Report (FIR) number, police station details, and criminal provisions invoked.

The Project 39A report stated that there is no separate column for the age of the accused in the arrest memo, even though it is vital to verify that the arrested person is an adult when he or she is produced before the judge for the first time.

The report, co-authored by Jinee Lokaneeta and Zeba Sikora, observed that most magistrates are attentive to and relatively more engaged with ensuring procedural compliance during first production hearings than during subsequent remand hearings.

"A few magistrates would interact directly with the accused, but these exchanges were largely limited to procedural necessities, such as cross-checking the name of the accused etc.," the report said. "Follow-up questions to the accused were rare. In most first production cases, the accused did not have any legal representation, and nothing was done about this by the magistrate," the report added.

It further stated that magistrates do not recognise the non-preparation of the arrest memo at the time of the arrest as a serious violation of the accused's constitutional rights.

Yet to get Centre's reply on Prajwal's passport: Karnataka

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah had sent a letter to Narendra Modi on May 1 and followed it up with another letter on May 22, Karnataka Home Minister says in response to Jaishankar's remark

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Karnataka Home Minister G. Parameshwara on Sunday said the State had not received any official response from the Centre on its request seeking cancellation of the diplomatic passport of Hassan MP Prajwal Revanna, who is facing multiple allegations of sexual abuse and fled the country on April 27.

Replying to a query on External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar's remark that the State government's request to cancel the diplomatic passport of Mr. Prajwal Revanna was received on May 22, Mr. Parameshwara hit out at the Centre, asking what had happened



It is good that the Centre is taking action. But Jaishankar's remark that we have sent a letter only now and not earlier, is not right

G. PARAMESHWARA
Karnataka Home Minister

to the letter of Chief Minister Siddaramaiah to Prime Minister Narendra Modi on May 1. The Chief Minister wrote a second letter to Mr. Modi on May 22 appealing once again for cancellation of Mr. Prajwal Revanna's passport, he pointed out.

Speaking to presspersons here, Mr. Parameshwara said: "As far as I know, we have not received any information

from the Centre. I have seen that the External Affairs Minister has told the media that they are taking action and in a couple of days, they will cancel diplomatic passport, but we have not got any written communication."

The government has set up the Special Investigation Team (SIT) to probe the charges against Mr. Prajwal Revanna.

Referring to the action proposed by the Centre, Mr. Parameshwara said: "It is good that they are taking action. But Mr. Jaishankar's remark that we have sent a letter only now and not earlier, is not right."

The Chief Minister said in the letter that Mr. Prajwal Revanna fled on April 27 to Germany using his diplomatic passport shortly after news of his heinous action emerged and just a few hours before the FIR was filed against him.

On JD(S) leader H.D. Kumaraswamy's demand that punishment should be given for the real culprits behind the pen drive leak case, Mr. Parameshwara said: "We are doing it and for that purpose only SIT has been formed."

Digital evidence being gathered to zero in on A.P. poll violence accused

Rajulapudi Srinivas
VIJAYAWADA

The Special Investigation Team (SIT) constituted to inquire into the election-related violence in Andhra Pradesh is making all-out efforts to arrest all the accused involved, says Vineet Brijlal, SIT head and Inspector-General of Police, Special Investigation Bureau.

"The SIT has directed

booking of two more cases, and the total number of cases has gone up to 35 in Palnadu, Anantapur and Tirupati districts. We are coordinating with the Deputy Inspectors-General and Superintendents of Police concerned to arrest the culprits," Mr. Vineet Brijlal told *The Hindu* on Sunday.

Hundreds of troublemakers had burnt vehicles, threw stones, attacked

their rivals, damaged electronic voting machines at a few places, and resorted to violence on May 13, when polling was held, and the day after, he said.

"As many as 800 people were involved in the violent incidents during three days. About 550 accused have been arrested so far, and a hunt is on to catch the remaining offenders," Mr. Brijlal said.

In the attack on Pulivara

Maniprasad (Nani), Chandragiri TDP contestant, 13 accused were arrested, Mr. Brijlal said, and added that "the situation is under control now".

"We are gathering digital and scientific evidence in all the cases. A few accused have escaped to Mysuru, Bengaluru and other places. Officers are tracking their movements," Mr. Brijlal said.

Kerala Opposition to stage protest over liquor policy

The Hindu Bureau
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The Congress-led UDF in Kerala appeared to lay the ground for a tumultuous Assembly session in June by accusing the LDF government of soliciting

bribes from bar owners to promulgate a "permissive liquor policy" to help them reap huge profits.

It has demanded the resignation of Excise Minister M.B. Rajesh and Tourism Minister Mohammed Riyas.

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Dated : Monday, 27th May 2024

EDUCATION PLUS

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Aruna Sankaranarayanan

When I was a doctoral student in the U.S., I had a friend, who was also from India. Though I struggled initially, I started calling my professors by their first names, just like the other students in my department. My Indian friend persisted in calling her professors 'sir' or 'ma'am'.

But she often spoke disparagingly of them, saying "X sir is an idiot" or "Y ma'am doesn't know a thing." When I asked why she didn't refer to them by their names, she said it was disrespectful!

I often recall this incident, as I teach a continuing education course, where the participants are mainly in-service teachers, keen to upskill themselves. One of my requests to them is to call me by my first name without affixing a title. While many do so, a few are diffident, and a small subset reluctant to do so, despite repeated requests. But I don't blame them.

In India, we have a strong cultural trope that puts teachers on a pedestal and reveres or even deifies them. But, as the anecdote above illustrates, does our construct of 'respect' embrace only superficial facets, or does it extend to actually holding a person in deep regard?

In the context of education, what are the consequences of holding someone in high esteem for a

No 'ma'am,' please

In India, we tend to put our teachers on a pedestal but how many truly respect them? And, in the context of education, how does the concept of respect fit in with a participatory approach?



participatory approach?

Implications

The reason I persist in coaxing all participants to call me by my first name isn't purely rhetorical. This simple act also has pedagogical implications regarding the participants' relationship to knowledge, how they perceive their own learning, and how they view me.

As they are all adult learners, I prefer to think of myself as a facilitator with some degree of knowledge

and expertise in the areas we are discussing. But that does not make me an authority or the ultimate arbiter of truth.

Additionally, expertise is usually accompanied by blind spots, and, every once in a while, we need to re-examine models and theories within a field through fresh eyes.

Further, calling me ma'am creates a psychological distance between me, the facilitator, and participants. Rather than being a 'sage on the stage', I

view my role as being aligned with that of my participants.

We are all lifelong learners, seeking to enhance our knowledge and collective wisdom. Just as I have experiences and knowledge to draw on, the participants have deep wells of insights, anecdotes, and examples to share that can either buttress or challenge some of the claims made in the discussions.

For us to have truly meaningful exchanges, participants need to feel empo-

wered to question, challenge, or critique arguments put forth in class, either by me or by other participants. They also need to question the readings. Just as we assume that the teacher has the last word, textbooks too are often perceived as the fount of truth.

To be effective learners, participants have to take ownership of their learning and not view the facilitator as someone directing — or worse dictating — their learning journey.

My role, perhaps, is to nudge each one to question many of the assump-

tions and preconceptions they might bring, and to help them define their own learning trajectories as they progress in directions that are meaningful and relevant to their unique contexts.

But, I too am journeying with them, refining my own views, unpacking my presuppositions, and deepening my understanding.

Do my participants respect me? Sure, they do, just as I respect each of them, their perspectives and questions. When respect is earned, it is usually bi-directional. It is hard to hold someone in high es-

teem if that person doesn't respect you as an individual.

Every student and teacher, regardless of age or level of education, deserves to be respected. What is the point of education if it doesn't emphasise our common humanity?

Finally, when participants express dissenting viewpoints or ask tough

questions, everyone stands to gain. Often, the enriching exchanges we have in class leave me energised and enthused. I only hope that the participants look forward to the next session as eagerly as I do. My only request: No 'ma'am,' please.

The writer is visiting faculty, Azim Premji University.

BRIC RGC B

RAJIV GANDHI CENTRE FOR BIOTECHNOLOGY

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Absolute numbers

ECI should do everything to reinforce people's faith in the democratic process

A total of 58 Lok Sabha seats in eight States and Union Territories voted on Saturday in the sixth and penultimate phase of the general election 2024. With this, polling has been completed in 28 States and Union Territories, in 486 constituencies. Voting is also over for 105 Assembly constituencies of Odisha. The last phase of polling will be on June 1 for the remaining 57 seats and counting of votes will take place on June 4. Sporadic incidents of violence were reported from West Bengal which also reported the highest polling percentage at 79.47. In Jammu and Kashmir, the Anantnag-Rajouri seat recorded a turnout of 54.30%, an impressive high. Urban apathy continued in the seven seats of Delhi which went to the polls with just 57.67% of the electorate turning out to vote. The searing heat wave prevailing in north India did not help matters. The Election Commission of India (ECI) released, for the first time in this general election, the absolute number of votes cast in each constituency for the first five phases. The ECI came out with the data a day after the Supreme Court of India refused to direct the commission to disclose details of Form 17 C, which contains this data at the booth level and is handed out to all the polling agents of the candidates.

The ECI has alleged, inappropriately, there to be a "pattern of false narratives and mischievous design to vitiate electoral process". It is true that concerns have been raised by several actors about the electoral process, and it is possible that a part of it could be due to ignorance or even out of mischief. A mature and appropriate response expected of the body that is tasked with overseeing the largest democratic exercise on the planet is to provide information to the public that removes such concerns. The commission opposed the disclosure of Form 17C in the Supreme Court — all the while insinuating at a conspiracy to vitiate the electoral process. Complaints brought to its attention by anyone should be addressed in a manner that behoves a robust democracy. It is indeed the duty of the ECI to ensure that the electoral process is not vitiated, and the best way to achieve it is to ensure the maximum transparency that is administratively possible. The ECI has done well by publishing the data on the absolute number of voters, and it could proactively look for more measures that could reinforce public faith in the process and in its own integrity.

Punishing Hamas

Netanyahu is rendering Israel's global standing weaker

The International Court of Justice's ruling, that Israel must immediately stop its military offensive in Rafah, the southern-most city of Gaza, is the latest setback for the Jewish nation in a war that grinds on with heavy civilian casualties and no end in sight. In January, while hearing a genocide case against Israel that was filed by South Africa, the United Nations' top court had asked Tel Aviv to take measures to prevent acts of genocide in Gaza. The court refused to order a ceasefire then, but has now come to the conclusion that Israel's Rafah offensive could lead to a complete or partial destruction of the Palestinian population in the city. The court has also asked Israel to keep the Rafah crossing with Egypt open for aid delivery and allow UN investigators to gather evidence about alleged war crimes, besides demanding an immediate release of all hostages. The ICJ ruling comes days after the Chief Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, Karim Khan, claimed that Israeli and Hamas leaders had committed war crimes and crimes against humanity in Gaza, and sought arrest warrants against Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, its Defence Minister Yoav Gallant and Hamas leaders Yahya Sinwar, Mohammed Deif and Ismail Haniyeh. Israel appears to be unperturbed by these developments. Immediately after the ICJ issued its ruling, Israeli fighter jets pounded Rafah. The ICJ rulings are binding, but the court lacks the mechanisms to implement them.

More than seven months after the war began, which was triggered by Hamas's October 7 cross border attack on Israel in which at least 1,200 people were killed, Tel Aviv seems to be fighting in the dark. When it launched the war, Mr. Netanyahu said he would crush Hamas and release hostages. Today, Israel is fighting Hamas even in northern and central Gaza where it had earlier declared victory. At least 120 hostages, most of them feared dead, are still in Hamas's captivity. The war is marked not just by the incompetence of the Israeli Defence Forces. Its disproportionate use of force on Gaza has made the strip into a graveyard, which has turned international public opinion against Israel. Last week's decision by Norway, Ireland and Spain to recognise the state of Palestine shows how the line of thinking is changing even in the West. Mr. Netanyahu appears to be irrationally adamant today. His only focus is on a war that has done little to bolster Israel's security. Israel has not met its military objectives; its deterrence has been broken twice, peace with Arabs stands shattered, it stands isolated in the world, there could be an arrest warrant against its leaders and there is a ruling by the ICJ against the way it is conducting the war. By seeking to punish the entire Palestinian population in Gaza for what Hamas did, Mr. Netanyahu is rendering Israel's standing weaker and the international support for the Palestinian cause to grow stronger.

The spectre of nuclear conflict, once again

After every major war or conflict, questions tend to be raised as to whether the ruling elites at the time had failed to see the writing on the wall and, hence, did not prepare for the possibility of a major conflict, or face up to the threat that lay ahead. Today, as some nations engage in sabre-rattling and hold out the threat not merely of war but also of using the 'ultimate weapon', it is important to raise this question yet again. The truth is, perhaps, hidden between layers of rhetoric that prominent leaders or their spokesmen indulge in from time to time. There is, yet, time for nations to sit-up and take notice as also discuss and discern hidden meanings behind the volley of rhetoric being seen.

What the leaders of France and Russia say
Many leaders, at least in the West, have taken due note of French President Emmanuel Macron's so-called 'apocalyptic vision' and what the future, hence, looks like. There is also more than a hint in Mr. Macron's remarks of the danger of nuclear 'annihilation', and unlike many previous outpourings of the French President, many Europeans this time are sitting-up and taking notice. Russia's so called 'mis-adventure' seems to be the starting point of the French President's 'doomsday' scenario, since he believes that the Ukraine war has changed Russia and that the Russian President Vladimir Putin's 'nuclear threats' should not be ignored. As these remarks emanate from one of Europe's most prominent leaders, the main thrust is on the impact that this would have on European security.

The French President is not inhibited on this occasion on his use of the term 'French Nuclear Deterrent' which has outgrown its previous '*force de frappe*' metaphor. Today, France is in possession of what would be among the largest nuclear arsenals in the world, and hence, the French President's utterances carry considerable weight. Against this backdrop and evidence of increasing Russian belligerence in the Ukraine Theatre, a possible use of nuclear weapons in Ukraine is no longer in the realm of fantasy. It does give rise to the spectre of a potential nuclear exchange. The French President is said to be planning to put forward his case on the nuclear aspect at a meeting of the European Political Community to be held in July this year.

It is not for the first time since the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962, that the spectre of a nuclear conflict is coming to haunt the globe. The absence of leaders of consequence across the world, essentially those who have significant influence on world affairs, is aggravating the situation, making it more frightening. As it is, most parts of the world are going through extreme economic turbulence, leading to widespread problems. The nuclear fuse, which earlier tended to be long, appears of late to have



M.K. Narayanan

is a former Director, Intelligence Bureau, a former National Security Adviser, and a former Governor of West Bengal

The absence of leaders of consequence, essentially those who have significant influence on world affairs, is aggravating the situation

shrunk. With a new array of weapons available to many nuclear weapon powers, this spells trouble. The absence of regular exchanges among nuclear weapon powers, notwithstanding the several protocols that are in place, is further cause for concern. Erstwhile nuclear guarantees, thus, appear to be fraying at the edges.

Aggravating this situation further are certain remarks attributed to Mr. Putin during the annual Victory Day Parade in Moscow on May 9 this year. In his address, the Russian President observed that 'his nuclear forces were always on alert and that Moscow would not tolerate any Western threats'. He also added that 'while Russia would do everything to prevent a global clash, at the same time we will not allow anyone to threaten us ... our strategic forces are always on alert'.

Well prior to this, in November 2023, Russia had revoked its ratification of a major international agreement, viz., the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) which is intended to prevent all forms of nuclear explosions, either for civilian or military purposes. The claim made by Russia, that revoking the ban was intended to balance the nuclear playing field with the United States, (which had never ratified it), is specious at best.

The international community's response to this, not unexpectedly, has been extremely hostile, with several countries expressing concern that this step reversed the shift towards greater confidence in the nuclear arms regime. Meantime across the world, countries such as China are going ahead with enhancing their nuclear profile. China has very recently completed sea trials for its aircraft supercarrier fitted with electromagnetic catapults for launching aircraft. It is well on its way to complete building a fourth aircraft carrier.

The discussion at Hoover

Even as Europe and parts of the world seem to be haunted by the spectre of a possible nuclear armageddon, totally unconnected with this was an academic discussion on nuclear matters at the Hoover Institution, Stanford University, U.S., which was attended by delegates from the U.S. and India (this writer was a delegate). The discussions centered around the U.S.-India civil nuclear Deal (2005-08) and how it had brought about a fundamental change in attitude, not only on nuclear matters but also on the entire gamut of relations between the U.S. and India. What the discussions seemed to imply was that there are many more things available in heaven than we are aware of. There were no references in the meeting to the nuclear stand-off in Europe, but the message emanating from the discussions seemed to imply that the methodology employed during the nuclear deal negotiations had relevance to many current disputes.

When India and the U.S. undertook to

negotiate a nuclear deal, they stood at opposite poles of the nuclear order. India had not signed on to the Nuclear Proliferation Treaty (NPT), a foundational treaty governing global nuclear rules. It had also refused to sign the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT). India had carried out five nuclear tests in 1998, leading to the imposition of sanctions on India's nuclear programme.

Consequent on the U.S.-India nuclear deal, most of the roadblocks that prevented India from joining the global nuclear regime were lifted. In the process, both sides made significant concessions. India agreed to separate its nuclear programme into civilian and military nuclear programmes, in return for linking permanent safeguards for permanent fuel supplies. India agreed to adhere to certain of the export control regulations. It accepted a voluntary moratorium on nuclear testing. The U.S., in turn, amended its domestic laws, and the U.S. Congress made possible the passage of legislative provision through enactment of the Hyde Act and the 123 Agreements. The U.S. also took the lead in approaching the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) to ease nuclear restrictions on India. The U.S. and India thereafter coordinated their efforts to obtain an India Specific Safeguards Agreement from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). This gave India a status similar to that of a nuclear weapon state under the Non Proliferation Treaty.

The key to improving ties

The message from the discussions at the Hoover Institution seemed to be that the deal had even more significance than being merely an arrangement about revising India's nuclear status. Over the years since the deal was finalised in 2008, India-U.S. relations had attained new heights.

From technology denial, India had become a major technology partner of the U.S. Many of the mental cobwebs that previously existed had been removed and India and the U.S. had achieved a new plateau as far as economic and defence relations were concerned. India had also become an essential partner of the U.S. on many regional and global issues.

The discussions unambiguously seemed to reinforce the view that overcoming the psychological divide was critical to improving relations and relationships between countries. Breaching the impregnable wall of disbelief, leading to a subsequent transformation would inevitably have a beneficial impact. From India's standpoint, given that the India-U.S. nuclear deal originated from India's desire to obtain high grade uranium from outside to complement its energy requirements, the deal confirms that nuclear energy could be a major resource for peaceful purposes.

A door to a housing scheme, tribals find hard to open

India is home to numerous Adivasi groups, with 75 identified as Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) across States. According to official data, they comprise around 14.6 lakh households. These tribes reside in scattered, remote, and often inaccessible areas, characterised by their reliance on methods and tools for their livelihood that predate the advent of agriculture, low literacy rates, economic backwardness, and stagnant populations.

Recognising their backwardness, the Government of India announced the Pradhan Mantri PVTG Development Mission in 2023-24 to improve the socio-economic conditions of PVTGs. In line with this initiative, the Pradhan Mantri Janjati Adivasi Nyaya Maha Abhiyan (PM-JANMAN) was launched in November 2023, with a budget of ₹24,000 crore.

The PM JANMAN seeks to provide essential services to PVTGs, which includes safe housing, clean drinking water, and sanitation through 11 critical interventions. The PVTGs and frontline officials face challenges in using a mobile application to register for the 'Housing scheme', the biggest Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) scheme in the PM JANMAN which aims to reach 4.90 lakh PVTG households by 2026. Its objective is to ensure that every PVTG household has access to secure and habitable housing, safeguarding them from environmental challenges and providing them with a sense of security. Households under the scheme are entitled to receive ₹2.39 lakh each in three instalments.

The fallout of data mismatch

Data collection (registration) in DBTs is a key factor that dictates the delivery of entitlements to citizens. This is evident in instances such as the widespread wrongful deletions of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) workers and the suspension of Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM KISAN) entitlements, often due to mismatches between the details entered during registration and Aadhaar records.

We recorded the registration process and interviewed community members and frontline



Chakradhar Buddha

is affiliated to 'LibTech India', a centre based in Collaborative Research and Dissemination (CORD)



Rahul Mukkera

is affiliated to 'LibTech India', a centre based in Collaborative Research and Dissemination (CORD)

If set right, the PM JANMAN will be yet another opportunity to transform the lives of India's Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups

officials involved in implementing the scheme in Andhra Pradesh, Jharkhand, and Odisha. The findings show that PM JANMAN Housing encounters inclusivity and accessibility challenges for PVTGs and frontline officials.

App use and confusion

The Government of India has provided an 'Awaas' mobile app to block/panchayat-level officials to register PVTG households for the PM JANMAN Housing scheme. The app gathers beneficiaries data in three primary areas — it records the geographical location of households, noting their block, panchayat, and village; it captures household profiles, incorporating geo-tagging for planned construction locations, and then collects bank account details for cash transfers.

Having a jobcard is mandatory for PM JANMAN Housing registration. However, the widespread deletion of over eight crore MGNREGA workers in the past two years — some are from PVTGs — has led to their ineligibility to register for the scheme. Additionally, numerous beneficiaries have reported cases of someone else registering with their jobcards, further exacerbating the issue.

A notable aspect of the mobile app provided for registration is the pre-populated list of villages. However, we found discrepancies in the number of villages populated in the app and MGNREGA jobcards, leading to confusion among beneficiaries and officials. For instance, the app's dropdown has 22 villages while the MGNREGA Management Information System (MIS) has 31 villages for 'Vanjari' Panchayat in Alluri Sitharama Raju (ASR) district in Andhra Pradesh.

The app requires the names of the family members as in Aadhaar but does not provide guidance on what name should be provided in the absence of Aadhaar. Moreover, the app does not capture any explicit information about PVTGs, including in the social category field which has a default 'ST' [Scheduled Tribe] option. This results in non-PVTGs registrations as well. These ineligible registrations have prompted local officials asking PVTGs to submit certification from *sarpanches/mukhiyas* in some areas. In

villages where PVTGs and non-PVTGs coexist, we have come across instances of non-PVTG *sarpanches/mukhiyas* acting against the interests of PVTGs in providing certification. We also discovered that the geo-tagging option is causing chaos due to network issues.

The app prompts the enumerator to choose from three options — Cooperative Bank; Commercial Bank, or Regional Rural Bank. Upon selection, a dropdown list of banks corresponding to the chosen category appears. For example, selecting 'Commercial Bank' presents over 300 options. Additionally, upon choosing a specific option, such as 'State Bank of India', for registration in Andhra Pradesh, the dropdown shows over 500 options for its branches. This cumbersome process introduces unnecessary complexity for both PVTGs and officials.

Leaving out a key bank

Despite the Government of India's initiative to establish an India Post Payments Bank (IPPB) to improve banking services, especially in areas with limited banking infrastructure, the app does not include the IPPB in the list of banks. This omission is puzzling, since the Union Government has repeatedly emphasised the role of IPPB in facilitating financial inclusion.

Streamlining the registration process, updating the mobile app, and incorporating the IPPB as an option are essential steps to facilitate a greater participation of PVTGs in the scheme. Proactive measures to reinstate deleted jobcards and also community engagement initiatives such as involving *gram sabhas*, can improve the effectiveness of the scheme.

Despite numerous initiatives aimed at addressing their vulnerabilities, the narrative of PVTGs in independent India persistently echoes the words of Adivasi rights activist B.D. Sharma, who described the plight of Adivasis as an "unbroken history of broken promises". If set right, the PM JANMAN presents yet another opportunity to transform the lives of PVTGs, albeit a small step, in enabling them to access the benefits from India's growth story.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Irremissible

Ensuring the safety of people against fire hazards in public utilities is the sole responsibility of government officials who have the remit to its oversight, control and prevention. The

catastrophic fire, in 1997, at the Uphaar theatre in Delhi was due to the gross dereliction of duty by the fire department and supervising municipal officials. The Rajkot incident is similar. Apportioning the entire blame on the owners

has been the routine. In doing so, the supervisory authority never gets pulled up, only to lead to another tragedy waiting to happen. If games are played unfairly, the umpire is the cause.
R. Narayanan,
Navi Mumbai

The fire accident pricks the conscience of every person who seeks human well-being. It is quite vacuous to be shedding crocodile tears after every mishap, which often happens due to the nonchalant attitude of the

officials concerned.
Prabhakaran Vallath,
Vatakara, Kozhikode, Kerala

Urban apathy

Urban Indians choosing to stay away from voting has been aptly termed as urban apathy. In a democratic

polity, our lawmakers are often seen to fail in their duty towards the well-being of citizens. Urban India seems to forget that even a single vote makes a lot of difference.
Prabhu Raj R.,
Bengaluru

The great significance of the ICC's step

On May 20, the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC), Karim Khan, made public his application to a pre-trial chamber of the ICC to issue arrest warrants against five individuals linked to the conflict in Gaza. The five are Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Israeli Defence Minister Yoav Gallant, and three Hamas leaders, including Yahya Sinwar, the leader of the outfit. The announcement caused a furor, which could have possible adverse consequences for the ICC. But in all the bluster and fury, it is important to ask what the legal basis for this request is, and the implications.

The ICC was established by the Rome Statute, a treaty negotiated more than 20 years ago, to ensure legal redress for grave international crimes, including genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity. The ICC builds on the legal legacies and jurisprudence of international courts before it, including the ad hoc United Nations tribunals for Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia, in order to address individual criminal responsibility. It is not a determination of culpability of a nation or group, but rather of individuals.

The nature of crimes

The Prosecutor alleges in his statement that Hamas officials are responsible for an array of war crimes and crimes against humanity including murder, extermination, taking hostages, rape and sexual violence, torture, cruel treatment, outrages upon personal dignity, and other inhumane acts. These are allegations that stem from Hamas' attacks against Israel on October 7, 2023. The Prosecutor's case against the Israeli officials are that since October 8, 2023, they bear responsibility for war crimes and crimes against humanity such as persecution, extermination and/or murder including deaths caused by starvation, starvation of civilians as a method of warfare,



Priya Pillai

is an international lawyer

wilfully causing great suffering, or serious injury to body or health, wilfully killing, intentionally directing attacks against a civilian population, and other inhumane acts. These applications for warrants are supported by an independent panel of experts.

Based on the Rome Statute and the procedures of the ICC, the judges of the pre-trial chamber must now make a decision regarding whether to issue the arrest warrants requested. This determination is based on the evidence that the Prosecutor submits to the judges. To issue the warrants, the judges must be satisfied that there are "reasonable grounds to believe" that the individuals have committed a crime, within the jurisdiction of the court.

An argument against the Prosecutor's actions is that Israel is not a state party to the Rome Statute and so the ICC cannot exercise jurisdiction over it. This is incorrect. There are other situations where the ICC has exercised jurisdiction over a non-state party. For instance, in Bangladesh/Myanmar, the court held that even though Myanmar is not a state party, the court has jurisdiction by virtue of particular crimes committed on the territory of a state party (Bangladesh). Another example is the arrest warrant issued against President Vladimir Putin, when Russia is not a state party. According to the ICC statute, the court has jurisdiction over crimes committed in the territory of a state party or a state which has accepted its jurisdiction, and Ukraine falls under this category. The court asserted jurisdiction which would apply to occupied and annexed territories. It is worth noting that this decision was met with acclaim by many states in the West, in contrast to the current situation regarding Israel.

Specifically addressing the jurisdiction of the court in this instance, a pre-trial chamber in 2021 affirmed that the ICC can exercise criminal jurisdiction in

the Situation in the State of Palestine, and that this scope includes Gaza, the West Bank, and East Jerusalem. This would include any actions on and since October 7 last year.

Obligation to cooperate

An immediate consequence of a positive decision on these warrants relates to obligations on all states that have ratified the Rome Statute to cooperate on matters, including arrest. When arrest warrants by the ICC were issued in relation to Omar al-Bashir of Sudan, states failed to follow through on their obligations. When Mr. Bashir was in South Africa for a summit, legal proceedings were brought to initiate the arrest in the country. However, South Africa decided not to arrest Mr. Bashir, a decision that was excoriated by the Supreme Court of Appeal of South Africa as well as judges of the ICC. While this was a failure to arrest, it is worth noting that the arrest warrant hampers scope of activity and remains an obligation for over a hundred states that are a party to the Rome Statute.

It is also important to note that there are separate, distinct proceedings before another court in the Hague, the International Court of Justice (ICJ). There, South Africa is alleging violations of the Genocide Convention by Israel with regard to its actions in Gaza. The ICJ has already issued decisions indicating provisional measures, akin to injunctions in domestic law. Proceedings at the ICJ are to determine the legal responsibility of a state and are not about individual criminal responsibility.

The decision by the ICC Prosecutor is of great significance. International law is being severely tested in this crisis. While this step may not be an immediate panacea, it signals that there is value in the rule of law, in the idea that no one should be able to commit international crimes with impunity, and that accountability should not be a mere mirage.

The popularity of Dakhni

Humour, sarcasm, and bluntness have suffused the political campaign

STATE OF PLAY

Syed Mohammed
syed.mohammed@thehindu.co.in



The campaign to the Lok Sabha elections in Telangana, especially in Hyderabad, was full of quips and comebacks in the Dakhni language. Dakhni shares the Perso-Arabic script with Urdu and Farsi and is inalienable to the Deccan plateau, particularly Hyderabad. Dakhni people and speakers are spread across the plateau and speak variants of the language in Telangana, Maharashtra, and Karnataka. There is evidence that Dakhni people speak the language in Kerala and Tamil Nadu as well. Though invariably mischaracterised as Hyderabadis, what Hyderabadis speak is simply a variant of Dakhni.

During the campaign, the *siyasi jalsas*, as political public meetings are called, have been filled with humour, sarcasm, and bluntness, which are all hallmarks of the Dakhni language. When Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Hyderabad recently, political expediency naturally led him to adopt the Dakhni lexicon. At the beginning of his speech, he said, "Congress...Nakko, BRS...Nakko, AIMIM...Nakko".

But the trading barbs in the language had started days before Mr. Modi's 'nakko' reference. Asaduddin Owaisi from the All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM) had said as a riposte to Mr. Modi's claim of being a "brother" to Muslim women, "Nakko re baawa, tere jaisa bhai nakko humaaaku (Oh goodness, no, we don't need a brother like you)".

The mixing of Dakhni and

political rhetoric ahead of the elections also came as a nod to Dakhni poets and poetry. The poems of Mohammed Ghouse 'Khamakha', Mohammed Himayatullah, Moin Amar Bamboo, and Hari Singh were adapted for caustic, yet humorous political use. Khamakha's 'Nai Bole To Sunte Nai (You just don't listen)' and Himayatullah's 'Kya Hai Ki Kya Nai Ki? (What is, what isn't, who knows?)', for instance, were repurposed for the *jalsas*. Mr. Owaisi reworded a poem by Khamakha thus: 'Karne ke jo kaamaan hai/ Woh jaise ke waise hai/ Nai karne ke kaamaan karre/ Nai bole to sunte nai (The things need doing/ remain just the way they are/ The things that you shouldn't be doing, you do/ You just don't listen)'. He also reworded Hari Singh's 'Hao Re?' to say: "Saari janta ku haula banaara, hao re? Hindu, Musalmaan ku ladaara, hau re! (You're making a fool of the public, eh? You're instigating Muslims and Hindus, eh!)". The words *hao* (yes) and *nakko* were used by all the parties.

With several loan words from Telugu, Kannada and Marathi, Dakhni was, and continues to be, a language of the common man since the mediaeval age. Richard M. Eaton notes that this was why the Sufis who arrived in the Deccan chose to use Dakhni as a literary medium. Some Sufis belonging to the Chishti Sufi order, and living in Bijapur in

Karnataka, chose to interact with the locals, both Muslims and Hindus, in Dakhni because it was the "only vernacular of Bijapur with which both Muslims and Hindus – at least those integrated with the city – were familiar," he says. He also observes that Dakhni, as compared to Persian, which he describes as "elitist", could reach a larger number of people. To this day, private libraries of some dargahs in the Deccan contain mediaeval manuscripts and books written in Dakhni.

In 2005, Dakhni received a fillip after the comedy film, *The Angrez*, was released. The film shows the misadventures of a motley group of friends from Hyderabad who are out to exact vengeance on the *angrez* (foreigner), in this case an NRI, who has ostensibly offended them. While the movie became popular, created Dakhni stars, and spawned a genre of films, it caricatured Dakhni the language and the Dakhnis, especially in the old city of Hyderabad.

More recently, social media, especially Instagram, has been flooded with content in Dakhni. Several content creators indulge in linguistic hyperbole. Much like *The Angrez*, this too has bordered on caricaturing the language.

However, Dakhni rappers such as Pasha Bhai from Bengaluru have brought the language into the spotlight, asserting their love for the mother tongue and seeking its rightful place as a marker of identity. In Hyderabad, history and heritage enthusiasts have run campaigns seeking to distinguish Dakhni from Urdu – contrast to those who maintain that the former is a crude dialect of the latter. With Dakhni being used widely during political campaigns, it is clear that it is here to stay.

Parties choose middle-aged to older men to fight 2024 polls

Of the 8,337 candidates who are fighting the 2024 polls, around 10% (797) are women

DATA POINT

The Hindu Data Team

In the ongoing elections to the Lok Sabha, a majority of the candidates across political parties are middle-aged or older men, shows an analysis of data by the Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR). This was seen in previous elections too.

The Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), and the Congress have fielded the highest number of candidates this election. While the BSP has fielded 486 candidates, the BJP has fielded 440, and the Congress 327. Of them, only 2% of the BJP's candidates, 7% of the Congress's candidates, and about 13% of the BSP's candidates are aged 25-35 years.

Also, only 16% of the BJP's candidates, 13% of the Congress's candidates, and 8% of the BSP's candidates are women. Overall, including all the political parties and independents, of the 8,337 candidates who are fighting the elections, about 10% (797) are women. **Chart 1** shows the party-wise number of female candidates and the share of women in the total number of candidates fielded. Only select parties based on their past winning performances have been depicted. The bigger the circle, the higher the number of total candidates fielded.

While no party has fielded more than 40% women candidates, some have come close or even exceeded the 33.3% mark, which the Women's Reservation Bill promises. The Samajwadi Party (with 20% of its candidates being women), the All India Trinamool Congress (25%), the Biju Janata Dal, (33.3%) and the Rashtriya Janata Dal (29%) stand out among the parties which have fielded a considerable number of candidates. The All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (3%) and the Communist Party of India (7%) are

among the parties which have fielded a considerable number of candidates. The share of women is relatively low among them, however.

According to ADR data, none of the parties have fielded a third-gender candidate. Among independents, just two candidates – Sunaina Kinnar from Dhanbad and Durga Mousi from Damoh – were recorded as third-gender candidates fighting this election.

Chart 2 shows the party-wise number of total candidates and the share of those aged 25-35 among them in percentage. The fact that almost two-thirds of the chart from the top is vacant shows that young candidates are few and far between. However, some parties have relied on younger candidates quite heavily this election; a closer look shows an interesting pattern. Parties such as the Viduthalai Chiruthaigal Katchi (VCK), the All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen, the Rashtriya Samaj Paksha, the Bharat Adivasi Party, the Republican Party of India (Athawale), and the Revolutionary Socialist Party have given a relatively high share of tickets to the youth.

All these parties have fielded these candidates in places far away from their sphere of influence. For instance, the VCK, which stands a good chance of winning two seats in Tamil Nadu, has fielded its leader, Thol Thirumaavalavan, and D. Ravikumar – both aged above 60 – in those seats. The average age of its candidates in the 11 other seats in other States, where its winning chances are extremely poor, sharply drops to 40.

Chart 3 and **Chart 4** show the share of candidates aged 35-55 and above 55, respectively. About 55% of the BJP's candidates are above 55 years of age, while the figure for the Congress is 47%. In the Bharat Rashtra Samithi, 71% are aged above 55, in the Shiromani Akali Dal, 69% are aged above 55, and in the Janata Dal (United), the figure is 75%.



Preeti Kaur, the oldest female candidate from the BJP, holds a roadshow in Patiala. PTI

A country for older men

The data were sourced from the Association for Democratic Reforms. All horizontal axes are in log scale

Chart 1: Party-wise number of female candidates and the share of women in the total number of candidates

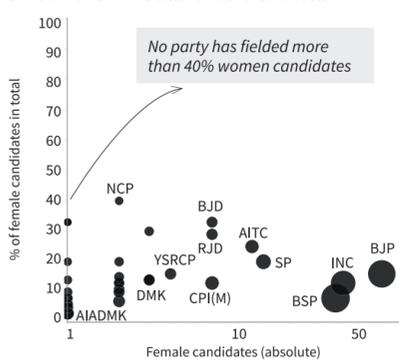


Chart 3: Party-wise number of total candidates and the share of those aged 35-55 among them in percentage

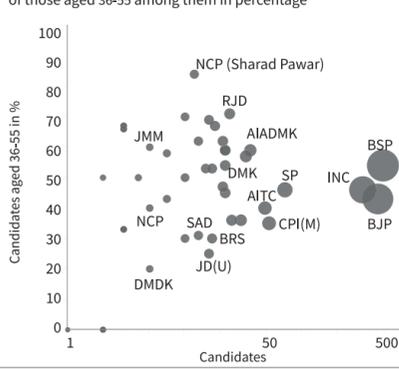


Chart 2: Party-wise number of total candidates and the share of those aged 25-35 among them in percentage

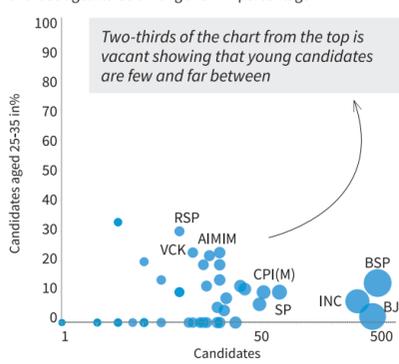
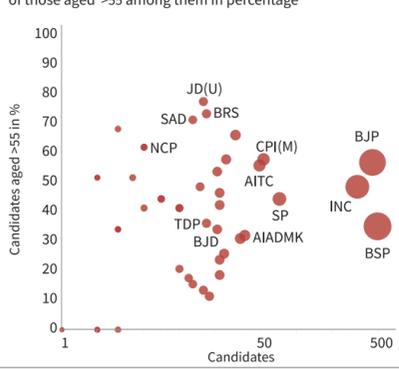


Chart 4: Party-wise number of total candidates and the share of those aged >55 among them in percentage



FROM THE ARCHIVES

The Hindu

FIFTY YEARS AGO MAY 27, 1974

IAEA inspection of Indian atomic plants

New York, May 26: Sources close to the International Atomic Energy Agency at Vienna have said that India has always been 'absolutely correct' with inspectors visiting the parts of its nuclear operation that are subject to international inspection.

At the same time these sources, quoted by "The New York Times" in a Vienna dispatch, allege that India has divided some plants – one half open to inspection, and another half closed to visitors.

The transfer agreement with Canada provides for an inspection system but it specifically excludes outside controls on materials from within India. This exclusion left the Indians free to use their own supply of uranium.

According to the Agency sources, India does have some reactor installations that are subject to inspection under safeguard agreements covering transfer of material for them from the United States and Canada but it has also others that are off limits. They say that the Canadian-supplied thermal reactor in Trombay is included among the latter and the source of plutonium used in the May 18 explosion by India came from this.

The International Atomic Energy Commission is an autonomous inter-governmental organisation reporting to the United Nations.

While the Agency officially denied it had any advance proof that India was about to detonate a nuclear device, sources close to the Agency are quoted by "The New York Times" as saying its officials had been convinced for some time that India was preparing to set off a nuclear explosion "but were powerless to do anything about it". This was because India was not a signatory to the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty and the plutonium used in the recent explosion was "produced in a reactor that is off limits for inspection."

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO MAY 27, 1924

Coonoor

Coonoor, May 25: The station will have the honour of welcoming for the first time His Excellency Lord Geschen and Lady Geschen here on 28th instant. The visit is of importance as it is reported that the Government were not satisfied with the Jam Factory on account of its loss last year.

Text & Context

THE HINDU

NEWS IN NUMBERS

The Palestinians killed in the Gaza Strip since October 7

35,984 In more than seven months of war between Israel and Palestine, at least 80,643 people have been wounded in the Gaza Strip. AFP

The number of motor accident claims pending nationwide

10.46 In lakh. The Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority said that motor accident claims worth ₹80,455 crore are pending across the country. PTI

The number of war prisoners freed by the Houthi group

113 Yemen's Houthi group freed more than 100 detainees in Sanaa on Sunday, calling the move a "unilateral humanitarian initiative" to pardon prisoners and return them to their families. REUTERS

India in trade deficit with nine of top 10 trading partners

238.3 In \$ billion. India's trade deficit with China, Russia, Korea, and Hong Kong increased in the last fiscal compared to 2022-23. PTI

The UN raises Papua New Guinea landslide death toll

670 persons. A massive landslide in Port Moresby has displaced more than 1,000 people. UN estimates that more than 150 houses are now buried. AFP
COMPILED BY THE HINDU DATA TEAM

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An overview of Europe's AI convention

What is the scope of the Framework Convention on Artificial Intelligence and Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law? What is the difference between a framework convention and a protocol? How does the convention address national security concerns?

EXPLAINER

Krishna Ravi Srinivas

The story so far:

The global governance of Artificial Intelligence (AI) is becoming more complex even as countries try to govern AI within their borders in various ways, ranging from acts of law to executive orders. Many experts have articulated a global treaty to this effect, but the obstacles in its path are daunting.

What is Europe's AI convention?

Although there are many ethical guidelines, 'soft law' tools, and governance principles enshrined in many documents, none of them are binding or are likely to result in a global treaty. There is also no ongoing negotiation for an AI treaty at the global level anywhere. Against this background, the Council of Europe (COE) took a big step by adopting the Framework Convention on Artificial Intelligence and Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law, also known as the 'AI convention', on May 17. The COE is an intergovernmental organisation formed in 1949, with currently 46 members. The agreement is a comprehensive convention covering AI governance and links to human rights, democracy, and the responsible use of AI. The framework convention will be opened for signature on September 5.

What is a framework convention?

A 'framework convention' is a legally binding treaty that specifies the broader commitments and objectives under the convention, and sets mechanisms to achieve them. The task of setting specific targets is left to subsequent agreements. Those agreements that are negotiated under the framework convention will be called protocols. For example, the Convention on Biological Diversity is a framework convention while the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety is a



ISTOCKPHOTO

protocol under it that deals with living modified organisms.

The framework convention approach is useful because it allows flexibility even as it encodes the core principles and processes by which the objectives are to be realised. Parties to the convention have the discretion to decide the ways in which to achieve the objectives, depending on their capacities and priorities. The AI convention can catalyse the negotiation of similar conventions at the regional level in other places. Then again, as the U.S. is also a member of the COE, the convention can indirectly affect AI governance in the U.S. as well, which matters because the country is currently a hotbed of AI innovation.

What is the scope of the convention?

Article 1 of the convention states: "The

provisions of this Convention aim to ensure that activities within the lifecycle of artificial intelligence systems are fully consistent with human rights, democracy and the rule of law".

Article 3 states: "The scope of this Convention covers the activities within the lifecycle of artificial intelligence systems that have the potential to interfere with human rights, democracy, and the rule of law as follows: a. Each Party shall apply this Convention to the activities within the lifecycle of artificial intelligence systems undertaken by public authorities or private actors acting on their behalf. b. Each Party shall address risks and impacts arising from activities within the lifecycle of artificial intelligence systems by private actors... in a manner conforming with the object and purpose of this Convention."

Does it address national security?

The exemptions in Articles 3.2, 3.3, and 3.4 are broad and pertain to the protection of national security interests, research, development and testing, and national defence, respectively. As a result, military applications of AI are not covered by the AI convention. While this is a matter of concern, it's a pragmatic move given the lack of consensus on regulating such applications. In fact, the exemptions in Articles 3.2 and 3.3 – while broad – don't completely rule out the convention's applicability vis-a-vis national security and testing, respectively.

Finally, the 'General Obligations' in the convention pertain to the protection of human rights (Article 4), the integrity of democratic processes, and respect for the rule of law (Article 5). While disinformation and deep fakes haven't been addressed specifically, parties to the convention are expected to take steps against them under Article 5. In fact, the convention indicates (in Article 22) that parties can go beyond the commitments and obligations specified.

Why do we need the AI convention?

The AI convention doesn't create new and/or substantive human rights specific to AI. Instead, it asserts that existing human and fundamental rights that are protected by international and national laws will need to stay protected during the application of AI systems as well. The obligations are primarily directed towards governments, which are expected to install effective remedies (Article 14) and procedural safeguards (Article 15). In all, the convention takes a comprehensive approach to mitigating risks from the use of AI systems for human rights and democracy. There are bound to be challenges to implementing it, particularly at a time when AI regulation regimes are yet to be fully established and technology continues to outpace policy.

Krishna Ravi Srinivas is Adjunct Professor of Law, NALSAR University of Law, Hyderabad, and Associate Faculty Fellow, CeRAI, IIT Madras.

THE GIST

The Council of Europe (COE) took a big step by adopting the Framework Convention on Artificial Intelligence and Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law, also known as the 'AI convention', on May 17.

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The AI convention doesn't create new and/or substantive human rights specific to AI. Instead, it asserts that existing human and fundamental rights that are protected by international and national laws will need to stay protected during the application of AI systems as well.

What is the current status with respect to spice exports?

Why is Ethylene Oxide used for sterilisation of Indian spices? What is the method that the EU prefers?

M. Soundariya Preetha

The story so far:

Last month, Hong Kong and Singapore recalled certain spice mix products of the MDH and Everest Group allegedly over the presence of a higher than prescribed level of the sterilising agent Ethylene Oxide (ETO). The Indian authorities have now initiated several measures to ensure that Indian spices comply with food safety standards of the importing countries.

Where does contamination occur?

Ganeshan Varadarajan, promoter of Lifespace, says that India does not use ETO as a pesticide but only as a sterilising agent to reduce microbial load in finished (spice) goods. Most of the agro products, including spices, are heaped in mandies (auction yards for farmers) where they are contaminated by human, bird, reptile and insect contact. Many of the large factories receive material from the mandies, which is then fed on automated lines. It leaves

them with high microbial levels and forces them to opt for ETO sterilisation. However, the contamination levels can be reduced early through the processes adopted for value addition. Consumers should start looking at the quality of products and not just the price, he says.

How big are Indian spice exports?

A quick export estimate data available with the Spices Board India shows that India enjoys a significant share in the global market for spices and spice products. In 2023-2024, India exported spices worth \$4.4 billion (nearly 14 lakh tonnes), which is 12.3% higher than the financial year 2022-2023. Data shared by the United Planters Association of Southern India reveals that chilli, spice oils and oleoresins, curry powder and paste, cumin, mint products, cardamom and pepper are some of the largest exported spices and spice products in the financial year 2022-2023. In terms of production, garlic, ginger and chilli were the top three spices produced in FY23.

China, Bangladesh, west Asian countries and the U.S. are important markets for Indian spices.

What has been impact of the recall?

An office bearer of the Federation of Indian Spice Stakeholders pointed out that Singapore and Hong Kong had not banned the Indian products, but only recalled them. Exports have resumed to these countries and hence there may not be much impact in the coming months because of this issue. India's share in total spice production globally is about 70%.

Countries have different standards for ETO and maximum (pesticide) residue levels (MRL). The European Union has stringent norms for both ETO and MRLs while Japan largely sources only organic products. The industry has been talking to the Indian government demanding discussions with the EU to relax the norms in order to boost Indian spice exports to the EU market.

A section of chilli growers in Telangana said the issue is not likely to affect farmers

much as most of them do not export directly. Further, Indian food exports have faced several challenges in the past too because of stringent norms of the buying countries. A planter pointed out that cardamom and black pepper are cultivated as inter crops with tea, coffee or rubber. The MRL is stringent for these main crops and hence the two spices are able to meet the norms. Manufacturers of spice mixes and pastes should look at sourcing genuine Indian grown spices rather than using imported spices. Further, they should be cautious when they import spices from other countries and export value added products, said a cardamom grower in Kerala. A turmeric exporter based out of Erode in Tamil Nadu says that while ETO is permitted by the U.S., the EU seeks steaming as the method for sterilisation. But while the cost of using ETO as a sterilising agent is ₹5 per kg, for steaming it is ₹20-₹25 a kg. "The Indian government should lay down achievable guidelines and tell the buying countries about it," he says.

What has the Spices Board done?

Following the recall by Hong Kong and Singapore, the Spices Board issued a detailed protocol to all manufacturing exporters to prevent ETO contamination. The Board also said it was starting mandatory testing of spice consignments to Singapore and Hong Kong for ETO. It has also taken up with the international food standards body the need for ETO usage limit as it varies for each country.

THE GIST

Last month, Hong Kong and Singapore recalled certain spice mix products of the MDH and Everest Group allegedly over the presence of a higher than prescribed level of the sterilising agent Ethylene Oxide (ETO).

A quick export estimate data available with the Spices Board India shows that India enjoys a significant share in the global market for spices and spice products.

Following the recall by Hong Kong and Singapore, the Spices Board issued a detailed protocol to all manufacturing exporters to prevent ETO contamination.

CACHE



In troubled waters: OpenAI CEO Sam Altman speaks during the Microsoft Build conference at Microsoft headquarters in Redmond, Washington, on May 21. AFP

How the cracks in OpenAI's foundation reignited mistrust in Sam Altman

A string of researchers working on AI policy and governance in the tech company have quit in succession. For a company that started as a non-profit, OpenAI's lack of transparency has emerged as a more serious issue than its lackadaisical approach to the future of AI safety

Poulomi Chatterjee

In November last year, over the two-day snafu when OpenAI chief Sam Altman was fired and reinstated, his perception was dramatically different. Mr. Altman, who had led the company into spearheading an artificial intelligence changeover with the release of ChatGPT couldn't seem more adored. OpenAI employees had collectively flooded X with tweets saying, "I love OpenAI" in what was seen as an uprising against the decision of the OpenAI board. However, in the week gone by, much of the goodwill towards Mr. Altman seems to have changed. And the board's statement that called Mr. Altman "not consistently candid", while announcing his firing, has returned in a boomerang effect.

Concerns over AI safety

OpenAI's rough week started with the departure of Ilya Sutskever, the co-founder and former chief scientist at the company. Mr. Sutskever, who was a key member of the team that had built ChatGPT had surprisingly backed the three board members who had voted to fire Altman. The speculation was that Mr. Altman's views on AI safety was very different from the board's which was worrying given the momentum of AI development. Since Mr. Altman's reinstatement, Mr. Sutskever has practically vanished into oblivion.

AI safety seemingly was of importance to Mr. Sutskever who formed the 'superalignment team' in the company last year in July. Mr. Sutskever co-lead the team, with Jan Leike, with the goal of shepherding superintelligence so it stayed on track with its reins firmly in human

hands by 2027. Aside from alignment, the team would also be "improving the safety of current models like ChatGPT, as well as understanding and mitigating other risks from AI such as misuse, economic disruption, disinformation, bias and discrimination, addiction and overreliance, and others," the statement for the announcement read.

And for an ambition this lofty, the company said it would commit "20% of the compute we've secured to date over the next four years" for the initiative.

Last week, Mr. Sutskever waved goodbye to the company he founded. Two days later, Mr. Leike, a longtime researcher at OpenAI, announced his resignation as well saying he had reached a dead end after continuous disagreements with "OpenAI leadership about the company's core priorities." Signalling that the promised share of compute wasn't granted to the team, Mr. Leike expressed concern that in the recent past "safety culture and processes have taken a backseat to shiny products." Shortly after, the team which still had more than 25 people was disbanded.

A Fortune report shared that there was no specification around when and how the 20% compute would be distributed – was it equally over the four-year period or 20% every year or an arbitrary amount each year that would total to 20%? Regardless, it was enough reason for Mr. Sutskever and Mr. Leike to quit.

String of resignations

Even as rumblings of discord had just started, a few more researchers working on AI policy and governance quit soon after. Cullen O'Keefe quit his role as research lead on policy in April. Daniel Kokotajlo who had been working on the

risks around AI models quit and responded on a forum saying he "quit OpenAI due to losing confidence that it would behave responsibly around the time of AGI."

Gretchen Kruege, another policy researcher, shared that she had resigned from the company on May 14. "One of the ways tech companies in general can disempower those seeking to hold them accountable is to sow division among those raising concerns or challenging their power. I care deeply about preventing this," her post read on X.

Severe non-disparagement policies

For a company that started as a non-profit, OpenAI's lack of transparency has emerged as a more serious issue than its lackadaisical approach to future AI safety.

On May 17, Vox reported that former employees had been under duress to sign lengthy exit documents that restricted them from ever speaking negatively about the company if they wanted to retain their vested equity in the company. Leaked emails showed that employees asking for more time to review the documents or seek legal counsel weren't given any leeway. "The General Release and Separation Agreement requires your signature within 7 days," a reply said for someone who had requested another week. Mr. Altman professed on X that he had been ignorant to this clause and apologised for it. The backlash to the severe tactics forced the company to backtrack and take the non-disparagement clause down.

But this might not be the end of the saga.

Jacob Hilton, a researcher at the Alignment Research Center, who quit

OpenAI a year ago tweeted on X saying tech companies are responsible for protecting researchers who speak about the tech in public interest because of how powerful it is. Mr. Hilton, who had also signed the NDA lest he lose equity said while he had received a call from OpenAI management about the change in policy, he would feel more secure if they legally enforced "non-retaliation" against ex-employees by "preventing them from selling their equity, rendering it effectively worthless for an unknown period of time."

"I invite OpenAI to reach out directly to former employees to clarify that they will always be provided equal access to liquidity, in a legally enforceable way. Until they do this, the public should not expect candour from former employees," he tweeted.

ScarJo vs OpenAI

Hollywood actor Scarlett Johansson's accusations against Mr. Altman deepened public mistrust further. Post OpenAI's latest demo of ChatGPT last week, murmurs started that the voice of the AI assistant Sky was eerily close to Ms. Johansson's voice in the sci-fi film Her. Ms. Johansson released a statement saying Mr. Altman had reached out to her twice requesting to use her voice for Sky to which she had refused. Even more damning was Mr. Altman's own tweet on X when the demo released, simply saying "her."

While Mr. Altman provided proof later that the actress who did voice Sky wasn't directed to imitate Johansson, collective evidence shows that the cracks in OpenAI's foundation run deep and that Mr. Altman and his company are not in fact "consistently candid."



KNOW YOUR ENGLISH

He is not a very discreet individual

He is quite a lexiphantic speaker. Nobody understands his long-winded lectures

S. Upendran

What is the difference in meaning between 'discreet' and 'discrete'?

(K.V. Suresh, Vijayawada)
The two words are homophones – in other words, they are pronounced the same way – but they have very different meanings. The first syllable rhymes with 'miss', 'kiss' and 'hiss', and the second with 'meet', 'heat' and 'seat'. The words are pronounced 'dis-KREET' with the stress on the second syllable. Both come from the Latin 'discretus', a word which had two different meanings – 'distinct' and 'separate'. Nowadays, the word 'discreet' is mostly used to mean 'cautious'; a discreet person is someone who is very careful or very tactful about what he says and does. He chooses to remain silent rather than shoot his mouth off about something. He tries not to draw attention to himself or become a source of embarrassment to others.

My boss discreetly suggested that I should resign before charges were filed.

'Discrete' is mostly used nowadays to mean 'separate' or 'distinct'; something that has an identity of its own.

My favourite author's novels can be divided into discrete categories.

How is the word 'lexiphantic' pronounced? (Satish Kumar, Chennai)

This word of Greek origin consists of four syllables. The first rhymes with 'vex', 'rex' and 'checks', and the following vowel sounds like the 'a' in 'china'. The 'phan' in the third is pronounced like the word 'fan'. The word is pronounced 'lek-si-FAN-ic' with the stress on the third syllable. In Greek 'lexis' means 'words' or 'speech' and 'phainein' means 'show'; and according to scholars, this word was coined by the playwright Lucian of Samosata, in the first century.

'Lexiphantes' is not only the name of the main character, but also the title of the satire written by Lucian. In it, the hero makes attempts to flaunt his non-existent knowledge by using big words and lengthy sentences in his daily conversation. Today, 'lexiphantic' is used to refer to those individuals who wish to impress others by using big or bombastic words while speaking or writing.

I was never able to read his novels – he was, in my opinion, a lexiphantic writer.

What is the meaning of 'change the channel'? (C. Banumathi, Trichy)

This is an informal expression which can be used in contexts other than when we are watching television. When you are talking about something, and the listener asks you to 'change the channel', what he is requesting you to do is to talk about something else. In other words, he wishes you to change the topic of conversation.

You've talked about politics long enough. Please change the channel. upendrankye@gmail.com

THE DAILY QUIZ

Please send in your answers to dailyquiz@thehindu.co.in

May 27 marks the 60th death anniversary of Jawaharlal Nehru. A quiz on the life and times of one of India's foremost political leaders

V. V. Ramanan

QUESTION 1

It is known that Nehru passed away in New Delhi. But in which city was he born and on what date (which is now celebrated as Children's Day)?

QUESTION 2

Who were the parents of Jawaharlal Nehru and how many siblings did he have?

QUESTION 3

With which country was the 'Panchsheel' or 'Five Principles of Peaceful Co-existence' formally enunciated under Nehru's leadership in April 1954?

formally enunciated under Nehru's leadership in April 1954?

QUESTION 4

Who was the interim Prime Minister of India for a 13-day tenure following Jawaharlal Nehru's demise?

QUESTION 5

In which prison did Nehru begin to write his autobiography between June 1934 and February 1935?

QUESTION 6

Which President's son wrote the definitive, three-volume 'Jawaharlal Nehru: A Biography'?



Visual question: Name the 'samadhi' of Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru where the former President of India Pranab Mukherjee is paying his tributes. FILE PHOTO

Questions and Answers to the May 24 edition of the daily quiz:

1. The Ancient Roman word for dark (or saturated) black became the source for the name of this country. **Ans: Nigeria**
 2. The English word derived from 'ater' used to describe acts of cruelty. **Ans: Atrocity**
 3. X is the name of a dark ink that likely originated in China around the third millennium BC. **Ans: India ink**
 4. Name the 16th century reform movement in Europe in which, among other acts, the reformists decried the wearing of bright colours. **Ans: Protestant Reformation**
 5. When a jaguar has a dominant allele containing the melanocortin 1 receptor gene with some deletions, it is called this name. **Ans: Black panther**
- Visual: Until 2019, this was the blackest substance known to humankind. **Ans: Vantablack**
Early Birds: K.N. Viswanathan| Jagrati Shukla| Saheni George

Word of the day

Countermand:

a contrary command cancelling or reversing a previous command; cancel officially

Synonyms: lift, overturn, vacate, reverse, revoke, annul, repeal, rescind

Usage: Orders to blow up the bridge were countermanded.

Pronunciation: bit.ly/countermandpro

International Phonetic Alphabet: /kauntə'mɑ:nd/

For feedback and suggestions for Text & Context, please write to letters@thehindu.co.in with the subject 'Text & Context'

From Page One

Seven babies killed in Delhi hospital fire

He added that Akash, the doctor on duty, only had a degree in Ayurvedic medicine and was not qualified to provide neonatal intensive care.

A senior Delhi Police official told The Hindu that while the cause of the fire is yet to be ascertained, preliminary assessment suggests that it might have been due to a short circuit, with the presence of excessive number of oxygen cylinders exacerbating the situation.

The police control room received a call around 11.30 p.m. on Saturday, informing it of the fire. A senior police officer told The Hindu that though the police reached the hospital shortly after the call, no staff members were present at the spot.

Shortly afterwards, the Delhi Fire Services (DFS) also reached the spot with nine fire tenders. DFS chief Atul Garg told The Hindu that the fire spread to an adjacent boutique, the indoors and rooftop of a bank next to the hospital, an optical shop, an ambulance, and a scooter near the building before it could be put out.

Another DFS official said the fire had damaged the residential buildings next to it.

Jyotjeet Sabarwal, who heads the disaster management wing of the Bhagat Singh Sewa Dal, an NGO, told The Hindu that while the DFS was instrumental in controlling the fire, the rescue was led and carried out by local residents.

"We climbed up a ladder and broke the glass of the first floor of the building, where all 12 newborn babies were kept. When we broke in, we saw that everything around the children had caught fire — their clothes, diapers and the cot-like units where each baby was kept," he said. While all 12 children were rescued, the seven babies who were placed in the cots closer to the front of the building were completely charred, he added.

A medical officer working in the East Delhi Advance NICU Hospital told The Hindu that the newborn babies, wrapped in dupattas and towels, were rushed from the blazing hospital in cabs and scooters. "While six of them were declared brought dead, two of them were put on a ventilator, out of which one passed away on Sunday morning," the officer added. The medical officer said that the New Born Baby Care hospital usually treated premature babies or those who had incurred some infection, so the babies were already in a feeble condition.

Sitara Khatun, whose baby died in the fire, told The Hindu that he was supposed to have been released by the hospital on Sunday morning. Instead, the child's body is now in the GTB mortuary. "When my husband visited my child on Saturday, the doctor told him that he was doing fine and that they would release him on Sunday morning. I wish he had brought him back on Saturday, then I wouldn't have to live to see this," she said, weeping uncontrollably. Another parent whose baby is now being treated at the East Delhi Advance NICU Hospital, said that he had not received any information from the management of the New Born Baby Care Hospital regarding the tragedy.

Rajkot inferno toll climbs to 33

Families are awaiting confirmation that their 'missing' loved ones have died, with DNA samples sent to the Gandhinagar Forensic Science Laboratory.

Witnesses and relatives of the victims said that there was no equipment available to fight the fire, and no fire alarm, raising serious questions about the role of local authorities who allowed the sprawling amusement park to function without any checks. "This game zone came up four years ago. Why no authority or official was bothered to check whether it had the necessary compliances?" an angry Rajkot resident asked.

"The unfortunate incident is a result of the BJP government's utter failure to enforce the laws due to corruption from top to bottom in the State administration," said Gujarat Congress chief Shaktisinh Gohil. The police have lodged an FIR against six people, and two have been arrested. "We have registered the FIR against six people under IPC Sections 304, 308, 336, 338, 114, out of which two people have been arrested. The crime branch team is working to arrest others. Our effort is to complete the investigation as soon as possible and file a charge sheet in the case," Rajkot Police Commissioner Raju Bhargava said.

Remal makes landfall; one lakh evacuated

Extremely heavy rain (over 20 cm) at one or two places is very likely over North 24 Parganas and South 24 Parganas and East Midnapore districts. A red alert has been issued for fishermen, advising them not to venture into the sea till Monday.

Somenath Dutta, Director of the Regional Meteorological Centre at Alipore in Kolkata, told media persons that though Remal was likely to wreak havoc along the West Bengal coastline, the damage would be less than what Amphan caused, ravaging south Bengal in May 2020.

At Hingalganj in North 24 Parganas, the local panchayat urged people to join in immediate embankment repairs. With the funds under the MGNREGS being stopped, the embankments in the Sundarbans have not been repaired for the past two years.

Fourteen teams of the National Disaster Response Force and teams of the State Disaster Response Force have been deployed in coastal areas. The Navy has readied two ships.

Wary Jharkhand labourers return home from Manipur

Labourers are returning *en masse* out of fear after one person was killed and two were injured in an attack; this is the first attack on non-locals reported since the ethnic conflict began in the State

Abhinav Lakshman
NEW DELHI

Labourers from Jharkhand, most of them Adivasis, who had left their home towns to work in conflict-ridden Manipur earlier this year for a better life have now started returning *en masse* after one of them was shot dead, while two were injured by armed miscreants in Imphal last week.

This is the first such attack on non-locals in Manipur reported since the ethnic conflict in the State began. Such targeting of non-locals has been among the reasons cited by the Union government to routinely extend the ban on seven valley-based Meitei extremist groups in the State.

Chief Minister N. Biren Singh had in 2022 presented data to the Assembly saying 20 non-locals had been killed by militants from 2017 to mid-2022.

Another non-local, from Assam, was shot in the leg in Thoubal district on Saturday over allegations of rape against a co-worker with the police registering cases for both alleged rape



Standing strong: A village volunteer stands guard at a bunker set up in conflict-hit Manipur. PTI

and shooting.

Shriram Hansda, 42, was killed in the attack by armed miscreants on May 18. Two other labourers were injured in the attack and taken to a hospital in Imphal. Shriram, an Adivasi from Godda district's Bisaha village, is survived by his wife and four children.

His nephew, Pradeep Hansda, said a water supply company in Imphal had in January hired his uncle and others from Godda district for pipe-laying work. "We knew some people who had been working there. They said they were getting threats but also insisted on continuing to work there because the [pay] rates were

very high," Mr. Pradeep said.

Robin, one of Shriram's colleagues, said, "Around 15 to 20 of us had got work there earlier this year. But after this incident, all of us have returned. I am just going to Imphal to see the injured workers," Mr. Robin said.

According to district officials in Godda, on May 18, some men knocked at the door of the rented house the labourers were living in, saying their car had broken down. Shriram and two others had gone out to help them and suddenly were faced with bullets being fired at them, those in touch with the family in Godda said. The Manipur

Police said they have arrested Sairom Birjit Singh for Shriram's murder and are conducting further raids. Mr. Singh is a member of the Kangleipak Communist Party, one of the Meitei extremist groups that has been routinely banned by the government.

Uncertain future

"There is not much regular work in the village anyway... While working in Manipur, Shriram was able to send at least ₹18,000 to ₹19,000 home every month," Mr. Pradeep said. He said Shriram's wife Pooja was now staring at an uncertain future.

The Godda District Collector said officials had reached out to Shriram's family to help them.

"Some officials who visited our home and collected documents like Aadhaar did say that we might get some benefits from the governments. So far, we have not received anything," Mr. Pradeep said.

Godda is among the Lok Sabha seats in Jharkhand that are going to the polls on June 1.

Tenure of Army chief General Manoj Pande extended by a month

Dinakar Peri
NEW DELHI



General Manoj Pande

In an unusual move, the Appointments Committee of the Cabinet on Sunday extended the tenure of the Chief of the Army Staff (COAS), General Manoj Pande, by one month. He was to retire on May 31 on turning 62.

Normally, for service chiefs, the term of office is until the age of 62 or three years, whichever is earlier.

There is only one instance in the past, when in 1975, the then Army chief, General G.G. Bewoor, was given a one-year extension by the Indira Gandhi government. The next in line as per seniority then was Lieutenant-General Prem Bhagat, who retired from service after a few months. General Bewoor served as the Army chief from January 16, 1973 to May 31, 1975, and was succeeded by General T. N. Raina.

The Cabinet Committee on Sunday approved the extension in service of General Pande up to June 30 under Rule 16 A (4) of the Army Rules 1954, the Defence Ministry said in a statement.

General Pande was appointed the COAS on April 30, 2022. He was commis-

In the first such instance, the Indira Gandhi govt. had extended the tenure of then Army chief General G.G. Bewoor by one year in 1975

sioned into the Army in December 1982 in the Corps of Engineers (The Bombay Sappers).

The current Vice-Chief of the Army Staff, Lieutenant-General Upendra Dwivedi, is the next in line for the top post based on the principle of seniority.

He was commissioned into 18 Jammu and Kashmir Rifles in 1984, a unit he later commanded.

The senior-most after him is Lieutenant-General Ajay Kumar Singh, currently the Southern Army Commander.

He was commissioned into 7/11 Gorkha Rifles in December 1984.

Block international spoofed calls, Centre directs telecom firms

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

The government has directed telecom operators to block all incoming international spoofed calls that display Indian mobile numbers, an official statement said on Sunday.

It has been reported that fraudsters were making international spoofed calls displaying Indian mobile numbers to Indian citizens and committing cybercrime and financial frauds, the Department of Telecom (DoT) said. Such calls appeared to be originating within India but were being made by cybercriminals from abroad by manipulating the calling line identity, and had been misused in recent cases of fake digital arrests, 'FedEx scams', false claims of drugs or narcotics in courier, impersonations as government and police officials, disconnections of

mobile numbers by DoT or Telecom Regulatory Authority of India officials, and so on. "DoT and Telecom Service Providers (TSPs) have devised a system to identify and block such international spoofed calls from reaching any Indian telecom subscriber. Now directions have been issued to the TSPs for blocking such incoming international spoofed calls," the statement said.

Incoming international spoofed calls with Indian landline numbers were already being blocked by the TSPs, according to the directions issued by the DoT. "Despite best efforts, there may still be some fraudsters who succeed through other means. For such calls, you can help everybody by reporting such suspected fraud communications at the Chakshu facility on Sanchar Saathi," the statement said.

12 pilgrims dead as truck overturns on bus in U.P.

Press Trust of India
SHAHJAHANPUR

Twelve people headed to the Purnagiri temple in Uttar Pradesh were killed when a dumper truck overturned on their bus in Shahjahanpur district, the police said on Sunday. Nine pilgrims were seriously injured and were admitted to the Government Medical College here, a senior official said.

Shahjahanpur Superintendent of Police Ashok Kumar Meena said the accident took place when the bus carrying 59 passengers from Sitapur had halted at a roadside eatery. The truck carrying gravel lost control and fell on the bus, unloading the content on the pilgrims, he said.

Mainstream film industry had nothing to do with Kapadia's win: Resul Pookutty

The Hindu Bureau

Academy Award-winning sound designer Resul Pookutty on Sunday said the mainstream film industry had nothing to do with the achievement of director Payal Kapadia, who won the Grand Prix award at the 2024 Cannes Film Festival for her film *All We Imagine as Light*.

Mr. Pookutty, in a Facebook post, talked about the role of the Film and Television Institute of India (FTII) in nurturing talent such as Ms. Kapadia. He emphasised that Ms. Kapadia's win was not just a personal victory but also a testament to the resilience and dedication of the FTII alumni.

Mr. Pookutty pointed to the lack of support from the mainstream Indian



Payal Kapadia at the Cannes Film Festival on Saturday after winning the Grand Prix award for her film *All We Imagine as Light*. AP

film industry and government delegations typically sent to Cannes.

"The only reason they won is also not because we had inspiring teachers, there were some but not all. The only reason for this National glory is all the inspiring films we saw at FTII and the atmosphere of that place nurtured by all the

One-way street

The table shows India's trade deficit/surplus in the financial year 2023-24, with the country's top 10 trading partners. Except the U.S., India has a trade deficit with all other partners



2023-24, edging past the U.S.

The bilateral trade between India and the U.S. stood at \$118.28 billion in 2023-24. Washington was the top trading partner of New Delhi during 2021-22 and 2022-23. 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). India has a trade surplus of

\$36.74 billion with the U.S. in 2023-24. America is one of the few countries with which India has a trade surplus. The surplus is also there with the U.K., Belgium, Italy, France and Bangladesh. India's total trade deficit in the last fiscal narrowed to \$238.3 billion as against \$264.9 billion in the previous fiscal.

According to trade experts, a deficit is not always bad, if a country is import-

ing raw materials. However, it puts pressure on the domestic currency.

"A rising trade deficit can cause the country's currency to depreciate because more foreign currency is needed for imports. This depreciation makes imports more expensive, worsening the deficit," Economic think tank Global Trade Research Initiative Founder Ajay Srivastava said.

Three miners feared dead in rathole mine in Assam

The Hindu Bureau
GUWAHATI

Three miners, one of them from Bhojpur in Nepal, were feared dead inside an illegal rathole coal mine after a landslide struck the Patkai Hills in eastern Assam's Tinsukia district around midnight on Saturday.

"We received a report that three workers are missing from the area. Necessary action is being taken," Tinsukia District Commissioner Swapnil Paul said.

Police and officials of the North Eastern Coalfields, who reached the spot, said that efforts were under way to rescue the trapped miners if they were alive or to retrieve their bodies.

ELECTIONS 2024



Gurgaon special booths see 10% jump in voting

The 52 polling booths, specially set up inside high-rise housing societies in Gurgaon, with a very low voter turnout in the last Lok Sabha election, recorded a jump of over 10% in polling this year. Of the total 61,248 voters registered at these booths, 32,987, or 53.62% of

them, voted this year on May 25. The average voter turnout in these polling stations was 40-45% in the Lok Sabha election of 2019. Of these booths, Sare Crescent Parc in Sector 92 and Mapsko Casa Bella in Sector 82, both in Badshahpur constituency, figured among the top five booths in terms of polling percentage, with a turnout of 69.75% and 65.35%, respectively. The booth in Kendriya Vihar, in Gurgaon constituency, recorded the lowest turnout of 38.71%.



A woman casting her vote at a polling station in Gurgaon on Saturday. SHIV KUMAR PUSHAKAR

May Modi be CM again: Nitish's faux pas at rally

Janata Dal (United) president and Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar on Sunday wished another term as "Chief Minister" for Narendra Modi, who had ruled Gujarat prior to becoming Prime Minister. Mr. Kumar made the faux pas at an election rally on the outskirts of Patna. Leaders

sharing the dais with him included BJP MP Ravi Shankar Prasad. "It is my wish that Narendra Modi becomes a CM again (*Phir se mukhya mantri banein*)," he said. Mr. Kumar's confidant, Sanjay Kumar Jha, a Rajya Sabha MP and JD(U) national general secretary, was seen getting up and pointing out to his party chief that the word was '*pradhan mantri*' or Prime Minister. "Of course, he is the Prime Minister," snapped the Bihar Chief Minister, unmindful of his slip of tongue. PTI



They [Opposition] deprived you of development work and allowed gangsters to take control over resources here
YOGI ADITYANATH
Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister

Modi has lost self-confidence, claims Akhilesh

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has lost self-confidence and has been faltering in speeches on realising that the BJP will not retain power, Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav said on Sunday. "The country's 140 crore people will make the BJP yearn for even 140 seats," he said. PTI



He [PM] makes big claims that the economy is growing at a rapid pace. I want to ask if it is growing so fast then... why is there no progress in people's lives
PRIYANKA GANDHI VADRA
Congress leader



Campaign trail: Kangana Ranaut, the BJP candidate for Mandi, during a campaign roadshow for the Lok Sabha election at Bhuntar on Saturday. PTI

With Assembly bypolls, it's a new template in Himachal

Vikas Vasudeva
SHIMLA

With Himachal Pradesh gearing up for the Lok Sabha election, the stakes for the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which won all four seats in 2014 and 2019, are even higher as the task appears to be daunting amid simultaneous byelections to six Assembly seats.

The elections are poised to be a direct fight between the BJP and the Congress.

The Congress-ruled State saw political turbulence in February, with six of its MLAs turning rebels. The rebels are now contesting as BJP candidates in the byelections necessitated by their disqualification from the Assembly for defying a party whip. For the Congress, the Lok Sabha election is a fight to boost its electoral prospects nationally. A win in the byelections is critical for the survival and stability of the State government.

As an intense campaign gains momentum for the June 1 elections, the BJP appears to be leaving nothing to chance in the home State of its national president, J.P. Nadda. The party swept all four Lok Sabha seats — Shimla, Kangra, Hamirpur, and Mandi — in 2019 with a vote share of over 69%. The victory came on the back of a turnout of over 70%, the highest ever in the State.

The Congress campaign is led by Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu, who is seeking votes on the performance of its year-and-a-half-old government and aggressively attacking the BJP for its alleged attempt to destabilise and topple the democratically elected Congress government in the State, besides the Centre's indifferent attitude towards Himachal Pradesh.

Countering the BJP's charges over unkept promises, the Congress has been saying that immediately after coming to power, its government started to deliver on its poll guarantee. It is highlighting the restoration of the old pension scheme, benefiting 1.36 lakh government employees; the Rajiv Gandhi start-up scheme for generating employment; announcement of monthly financial assistance of ₹1,500 to women in the 18-60 age group; and stern action against corruption as key accomplishments.

To garner support, the BJP leaders, led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, are showcasing the dilution of Article 370 and the construction of Ram Mandir, besides building a narrative around nationalism with the promise of a "strong and resilient" government. The party has been highlighting its pledge for a Uniform Civil Code.

Apart from the party's achievements, the BJP is alleging "failure" of the Congress government in the State to fulfil its election guarantees.

The key candidates for Lok Sabha seats include the BJP's actor-turned-politician Kangana Ranaut, who is locked in a keen battle against the Congress's Vikramaditya Singh, son of the late Virbhadra Singh, former Chief Minister, in Mandi. Former Union Minister Anand Sharma is the Congress candidate from Kangra, pitted against Rajeev Bhardwaj of the BJP.

Union Minister Anurag Thakur is facing the Satpal Raizada of the Congress in Hamirpur. The Congress has pitted its Kasauli MLA Vinod Sultanpuri from Shimla against the BJP's Suresh Kashyap, MP.

As polls reach Purvanchal, slings and arrows fly thick and fast

13 constituencies are going to the polls in last phase; while BJP says the Opposition is planning to bring in religion-based quotas, Samajwadi Party pushes for OBC, Dalit unity in social justice pitch; Modi vows to change the image of eastern U.P.

OVERVIEW

Mayank Kumar
LUCKNOW

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Varanasi is among the 13 constituencies in Uttar Pradesh going to the polls in the seventh and final phase of the Lok Sabha election.

As campaigning heats up in the political battleground of Purvanchal, or eastern Uttar Pradesh, top leaders are not hesitating to bring controversial issues to the forefront.

Mr. Modi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah, and Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath led the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party's offensive, alleging that the Opposition INDIA alliance is appealing for "vote jihad".

They alleged that the Opposition wanted to rewrite the Constitution to provide reservation based on religion, and to turn the country's majority community into second-class citizens.

Apart from Varanasi, the constituencies going to the polls on June 1 are Maharajganj, Gorakhpur, Kushi Nagar, Deoria, Bansaogaon, Ghosi, Salempur, Ballia, Ghazipur, Chandauli, Mirzapur, and Robertsganj.

In the 2019 Lok Sabha election, the BJP and its al-



Battle lines drawn: Prime Minister Narendra Modi at a public meeting in Mirzapur, and, right, Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav during an election rally in support of the party candidate from Ballia, Sanatan Pandey, on Sunday. ANI



ly Apna Dal won 11 of these seats, while the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), which was then in alliance with the Samajwadi Party (SP), won two.

Key contests

In the 2024 election, Pan-kaj Chaudhary of the BJP is facing Virendra Chaudhary from the Congress in Maharajganj.

In the prestigious Gorakhpur constituency, once synonymous with Mr. Adityanath, BJP MP Ravi Kishan is taking on SP candidate Kajal Nishad.

The Nishad community, which is in the Other Backward Classes (OBC) category, has a sizeable presence in the constituency, and the SP is trying to repeat its success in the 2018 bypoll, when its Nishad candidate

Praveen Kumar Nishad had emerged victorious against the BJP's Upendra Dutt Shukla. The SP has been pitching aggressively in the region for a caste census, pushing for a broader unity of OBC and Dalit social groups.

The prestigious constituency of Varanasi will witness Ajay Rai of the Congress challenging Mr. Modi again. In 2019, the Prime Minister emerged victorious by over 4,78,000 votes, defeating Shalini Yadav of the SP, while Mr. Rai came third.

In Ballia, once associated with former Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar, the BJP has fielded his son Neeraj Shekhar to take on Sanatan Pandey of the SP. In 2019, Mr. Pandey lost by just 15,000-odd votes.

In Ghazipur, another key eastern Uttar Pradesh constituency which has a long history of social conflict, BSP MP Afzal Ansari is contesting on SP ticket against Paras Nath Rai of the BJP and Umesh Singh of the BSP.

PM's campaign

In his campaign, Mr. Modi said that the BJP would change the image of Purvanchal, adding that the dream of *Viksit Bharat* would be fulfilled through eastern Uttar Pradesh.

He alleged that Opposition parties remained silent when their South Indian allies abused and humiliated the people of Uttar Pradesh.

"Purvanchal is the growth engine of not only U.P. but also of entire In-

dia. Phenomenal work is done in the past decade but more work will be done which will change the picture of the region completely," the Prime Minister added.

The Opposition parties pushed a social justice pitch, claiming that the BJP would be defeated across the region. "We are going to completely wipe out the BJP from Purvanchal. The way the PDA (Backwards, Dalits and Minorities) family is supporting, it seems that the INDIA alliance is going to win all seats in the remaining phase," SP president Akhilesh Yadav, said ridiculing the "400 paar" slogan of the BJP.

"I can say with confidence that they will fail to cross 140 seats," said Mr. Yadav.

BJP attacking roots of our democracy, says Rahul

The Hindu Bureau
CHANDIGARH

With less than a week left for the final phase of the Lok Sabha election, the campaign has hit top gear in Himachal Pradesh as key leaders have been making a beeline for the hill State.

The State will go to the polls on June 1.

On Sunday, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi said that in the Lok Sabha election, the fight was not just about electing an MP or forming a government, but rather a struggle to save the country's democracy.

Alleging that the Bharatiya Janata Party was attacking the roots of Indian democracy, he declared that the people now had the opportunity to elect a government that would stand firm in protecting the Constitution and strengthening democracy. "Your every vote for the Congress candidates will further strengthen the foundation of the Constitution," he said at Nahan in Sirmour district.

Mr. Gandhi accused the BJP-led Union government of not helping the people of Himachal Pradesh when a relentless monsoon brought the hill State to its knees last year, causing extensive damage to life and property.

Though the rain had affected over 22,000 families, the Union government had yet to release ₹9,000 crore worth of relief funds to the State, the Congress leader said.

Written off as spent force, Cong. claws itself back into fight

NEWS ANALYSIS

Sandeep Phukan
NEW DELHI

The Congress is used to political obituaries being written about it after every electoral setback since 2014, but its losses in the Assembly elections in Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, and Rajasthan last December made even its most optimistic supporters despondent.

The party lost the Hindi heartland States in those elections that were described as the semi-finals ahead of the big final of the Lok Sabha election. The victory in Telangana was a mere consolation.

Since December, most political analysts have been quick to conclude that the Lok Sabha election would be a mere formality, and that a third term for Prime Minister Narendra Modi was inevitable.

"Unlike many political commentators, I cannot predict the future. What I am confident of is that this is a much closer election than what is being propagated by the media. We are

going to fight an excellent election and we are going to win the election," former party president Rahul Gandhi said at the launch of his party's manifesto on April 5.

Irrespective of the final outcome, the Congress has shown a willingness to put up a strong fight by framing the 2024 battle as one between those "who want to destroy the Constitution and democracy and those who want to protect it".

The arrests of Opposition leaders by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) and the Income Tax Department's curbs on the Congress's bank accounts were cited as examples of democracy being under threat, denying the Opposition a level playing field in the election.

The Congress used the Bharatiya Janata Party's slogan of "400 paar", its ambition for more than 400 seats in the Lok Sabha, to launch a counter-offensive. It argued that once the BJP gets a tally of above 400, it will change the Constitution to end reservation for the Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs). On its part, the Con-



Back in currency: Congress strategists believe that their slogan 'reservation under threat' has gained popularity. AFP

Irrespective of the final outcome, the Congress has shown a willingness to put up a strong fight

gress promised higher quotas for the Other Backward Classes (OBCs) and the Economically Weaker Sections (EWS) by vowing to remove the 50% cap on reservation after conducting a caste-based census.

"The Census that was due in 2021 has still not been done. It has been delayed by three years. Why? It is because they want to end reservation. They don't want us to know the population of SCs and

STs," Congress communications chief Jairam Ramesh said at a press conference on April 25.

As the campaign progressed, Congress strategists believed that their slogan "reservation under threat" had taken roots among the people; Mr. Gandhi then started addressing his rallies with a copy of the Constitution in his hand. Such persistent attack forced the BJP to respond with its counter-allegation, that all reservations would be given only to Muslims if the Opposition INDIA bloc came to power.

'Tempo' of attack

The Congress's uncharacteristic aggression was

most visible in its response to the Prime Minister's charge that Mr. Gandhi had "gone silent" and stopped abusing "Adani-Ambani" after receiving "Tempo-loads of black money" from the two businessmen. "Has Tempo [van] loads of money reached the Congress? What deal has been arrived at, that abusing Ambani-Adani has stopped overnight?" Mr. Modi asked.

Hitting back at Mr. Modi, Mr. Gandhi released a video in which he asked whether receiving money in Tempo goods carriages was "a personal experience", and asserted that the Prime Minister had got "a little scared".

"Do one thing — send the CBI, ED to them and carry out a thorough investigation and don't be scared," Mr. Gandhi dared Mr. Modi in a video statement, released within hours of the Prime Minister's election speech at Telangana.

The low turnout in the first phase saw the BJP recalibrate its campaign, with an emphasis on *mangalsutra*, mutton, *machhli* and even *mujra* — all eu-

phemisms to corner the Congress over Muslim appeasement — in the Prime Minister's speeches. Mr. Modi's allegations that the Congress was giving away Hindu wealth and caste quotas to Muslims started at Barmer, after the first murmurs were heard of the Congress and the INDIA bloc doing better than expected.

The Congress responded to each of the allegations, but stayed but within the template of its 25 guarantees, with most leaders including Mr. Gandhi sticking to the economic pitch in their speeches.

Now, as the seven-phase election enters its final phase, each side is claiming to have delivered the winning punch. Besides an aggressive campaign, electoral victories are also a matter of leadership and a robust organisation, both areas where the BJP scores over the Congress.

So, a third term for Mr. Modi is a clear possibility; but the Opposition, which was written off only five months ago, has certainly managed to create a perception that it is still in the fight.

IN BRIEF



Nadda, Shah lash out at INDIA bloc leaders at Bihar rally

BJP president J.P. Nadda and Union Home Minister Amit Shah addressed five election rallies in Bihar on Sunday in support of the National Democratic Alliance candidates. Mr. Shah addressed meetings in Karakat and Sasaram Lok Sabha constituencies, whereas Mr. Nadda campaigned in Ara, Jehanabad, and Nalanda. They slammed the regime of the Rashtriya Janata Dal and accused the INDIA bloc leaders of giving reservation to Muslims. Mr. Shah said Prime Minister Narendra Modi had decided that his government would not allow the reservation for the Scheduled Castes, the Scheduled Tribes and the Other Backward Classes to be touched.

Pune accident: Cong. youth wing holds essay competition

Keeping up the pressure on Maharashtra's ruling Mahayuti government to ensure justice in the Pune accident case, the Congress's youth wing on Sunday organised an essay writing competition near the accident spot, where a 17-year-old, under the influence of alcohol, killed two persons while driving an unregistered Porsche. The competition was a riposte to the initial decision of the Juvenile Justice Board to grant bail to the minor less than 15 hours after the accident on May 19, asking the teenager to write a 300-word essay on road accidents in its bail order. A Youth Congress leader said the more than 100 entries would be sent to the Home Minister and the Pune Commissioner of Police.

INDIA bloc has support of 'jihadis in Pakistan': Modi

PM accuses the Samajwadi Party and the Congress of appealing for 'vote jihad' in the country, says the Opposition INDIA bloc was targeting him for speaking against reservation based on religion

Mayank Kumar
LUCKNOW

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday said "jihadis in Pakistan" were offering prayers in support of the Opposition INDIA bloc parties in the ongoing Lok Sabha election, while accusing the Samajwadi Party (SP) and the Congress of appealing for "vote jihad" in India.

"In Pakistan, prayers are held for the INDIA alliance of Samajwadi Party and Congress. Jihadis across the border are supporting them. The SP and the Congress are making an appeal for 'vote jihad' here," Mr. Modi said at an election rally at Deoria in the Purvanchal region of Uttar Pradesh.

The Prime Minister said the Opposition alliance was aiming at reinstating Article 370 in Kashmir, adding that he was being targeted and abused for opposing reservation on the basis of religion.

"This [INDIA bloc] group is saying that when they come to power, they will bring back Article 370 in Kashmir. Their agenda is not the development of In-



Prime Minister Narendra Modi being garlanded by BJP workers at a rally in Deoria on Sunday. PTI

dia, rather they want to take back India by several decades," Mr. Modi said.

In Deoria, Shashank Mani Tripathi of the BJP is taking on Akhilesh Pratap Singh of the Congress.

Reservation claims

Mr. Modi further targeted the SP and the Congress on the matter of reservation for the Other Backward Classes, the Scheduled Castes, and the Scheduled Tribes, reiterating that the Opposition parties wanted to snatch the constitutionally guaranteed reservation for these social groups. "The people who

drafted the Constitution said there would be no reservation based on religion. But the Congress and the SP want to snatch the reservation of Backward Classes, SCs, STs, and give it based on religion," he alleged.

"I want to bring to your notice that in 2012, the SP stated that Muslims should get reservation equal to that of Dalits. This INDIA bloc wants to change the Constitution for this. When I ask them [about reservation], they abuse Modi," the Prime Minister alleged.

Mr. Modi questioned the Opposition parties for de-

clining the invitation to the Ram Temple consecration ceremony, adding that it showed their hatred towards Lord Ram.

"These parties [Congress and SP] rejected the invitation for the consecration ceremony. After 500 years, the dream of a grand Ram Temple is fulfilled in Ayodhya. When the people of India built such a grand temple and forgave all their [Congress] mistakes by inviting them for the consecration ceremony, these people insulted Lord Ram by rejecting the invitation," the Prime Minister said.

Will implement UCC, simultaneous polls in next term, says Shah

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Sunday said a Uniform Civil Code for the entire country will be implemented within the next five years after extensive consultations with all stakeholders, if the BJP returns to power at the Centre.

In a wide-ranging interview with PTI, Mr. Shah said the Modi government, in its next term, will also implement "One Nation, One Election" as the time has come for elections to be held simultaneously in the country.

"The UCC is a responsibility left to us by the makers of our Constitution. The guiding principles decided for us by the Constituent Assembly include the Uniform Civil Code. Legal scholars like K.M. Munshi, Rajendra Babu, and Ambedkarji had said that there should not be laws based on religion in a secular country," Mr. Shah said.

The UCC has been on the BJP's agenda for a long time, and recently it was enacted in the BJP-ruled Uttarakhand.

"I believe that the Uniform Civil Code is a huge social, legal, and religious reform. The law made by the Uttarakhand govern-



Amit Shah

ment should undergo social and legal scrutiny," he said.

In its manifesto for the ongoing Lok Sabha election, the BJP has said that Article 44 of the Constitution lists Uniform Civil Code as one of the Directive Principles of State Policy.

Bringing down costs

The BJP leader further said simultaneous elections would bring down costs.

Asked if it could be done within the next five years, Mr. Shah said it would be done in this period only. "Five years are a sufficient period," he said.

"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," he said.

Modi insulted Bihar with his 'mujra' remark, says Kharge

Press Trust of India
SASARAM

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge on Sunday hit out at Prime Minister Narendra Modi for his "mujra" remark against Opposition leaders and said that he "insulted Bihar" by making such a comment.

Mr. Kharge, during a day-long tour of Bihar where he addressed an election rally in Sasaram and addressed a congregation in Patna city, said, "Modiji insulted Bihar by using this word... This is not how a PM should talk."

His reaction came after Mr. Modi vowed to thwart alleged attempts to rob Dalits and backward classes of reservation by the INDIA bloc, which he accused of being "enslaved" and performing "mujra" for its



Mallikarjun Kharge

Muslim vote bank.

Mr. Kharge said the BJP was spreading communal hatred to divert the attention of the people from issues that matter. "Neither the PM nor other BJP leaders will talk about issues such as growing unemployment or price rise. They are dividing this country on the lines of religion and caste," he said.

He said the Election Commission must take action against those who make such hate speeches.

As stars land in Karakat, Pawan does the hero act

Amit Bhelari
KARAKAT

Bhojpuri singer and actor Pawan Singh, who had earlier refused to contest the Lok Sabha election from the Asansol seat offered by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), has now made it a tough fight for BJP ally and former Union Minister Upendra Kushwaha in the Karakat Lok Sabha constituency.

Contesting as an Independent candidate, Mr. Singh is making big promises in his campaign. On May 22, the BJP expelled him from the party for contesting against Mr. Kushwaha, president of the Rashtriya Lok Morcha (RLM) and member of the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance in Bihar.

With Mr. Singh's entry, the contest at Karakat in Rohtas district of Bihar has become triangular, as the Opposition alliance has fielded Rajaram Singh of the Communist Party of In-

dia (Marxist-Leninist) as its candidate. Mr. Pawan Singh is banking on his own fan following, with popular faces from the Bhojpuri film industry campaigning in his support.

At a Jan Samvad held at Gorari village in the Karakat Assembly segment on Saturday, large numbers of people gathered to see Bhojpuri stars such as Pakhi Hegde, Manoj Tiger, and Astha Singh on the stage. More than political interaction, their campaign was a live stage show, with the stars seeking votes in favour of Mr. Pawan Singh.

Much of the audience was under voting age; youth who had come from a nearby village to take photos and videos of the stars on their mobile phones.

Caste calculus

The Karakat Lok Sabha constituency has more than three lakh Yadav voters, and another three



Star campaigner: Bhojpuri star and Independent candidate Pawan Singh campaigning in Gorari village. PTI

lakh Kushwaha and Kurmi voters. Rajputs like Mr. Pawan Singh account for two lakh voters. The Vaishya community has another two lakh voters. There are one lakh Brahmin voters and 50,000 Bhumihar voters. Realising the importance of the caste factor, the Bhojpuri actors and singers performing on the stage did not hesitate to reveal their own castes, to send a message that Mr. Pa-

wan Singh has support from all communities. When Mr. Singh came on the stage, he said that he does not do politics on the basis of caste.

The voters acknowledged that they were mostly there for the entertainment. "He is power star Pawan Singh and I am his biggest fan. However running a country and performing on the stage are different things. Voters are

wise enough to take their call," said Pratik Singh, from Budhwah village.

"Like others, I have also come here to see the Bhojpuri artists because I like their songs and acting," said Upendra Yadav, a resident of Gorari village.

Though the direct contest is between Mr. Kushwaha and Mr. Rajaram Singh, who is also a Kushwaha by caste, no one can deny the presence of Mr. Pawan Singh in the constituency.

"Very few people have heard the name of this constituency before and today the entire nation is talking about it because of Pawan Singh. I have decided that once I become MP of Karakat, I will purchase land for a house and will stay here along with the people of Karakat. I have also decided that when I become MP for Karakat, I will not use the salary of an MP and will donate it for the wedding of my sisters and daughters in this constituency," Mr.

Pawan Singh said, addressing an election rally in Karakat.

Tough challenge

The importance of this seat can be gauged from the fact that Prime Minister Narendra Modi campaigned here on Saturday, followed by Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Sunday.

Asked about the tough challenge being put up by the Bhojpuri star, Mr. Kushwaha was dismissive. "I do not reply to such questions which have no meaning at all. This is a completely baseless question. However, I am more than 100% confident of winning the Karakat seat, and people of this constituency have already made up their mind," he told *The Hindu*.

In 2019, the Karakat seat was won by Janata Dal(U) candidate Mahabali Singh.

Karakat will vote in the final phase of the election on June 1.

THE CROSSWORD+ 14185
(set by Dr. X)

To solve this puzzle online, get across to our crossword site. @ <https://qrgo.page.link/jjpTn>

SCAN TO PLAY

Across

- 1 Protest as money-grabbing politician backs gangster (8)
- 5 Pastel blue sheets (6)
- 10 Polish or Greek character enthralled by knocking back draughts (5,2)
- 11 Old train crashed round province in North America (7)
- 12 Anal disorder involving fistula at centre of the buttocks (5)

Down

- 1 Covering crime in lock-up endlessly (6)
- 2 Half-time over, fantastic end to tourney (6)
- 3 Brief programme about elegant rescue devices (9)
- 4 Parodies Spooner! Man, it is funny (14)
- 6 Weapon concealed by rebel at hideout (5)
- 7 Huge blunder in revolutionary outbreak by current leader of China (8)
- 8 Pampered nationalist in caricature by journalist (8)
- 9 Night we got high, drinking booze heartily with everyone collapsing (5,2,3,4)
- 15 Self-centred person, one involved in a con game perhaps (9)
- 16 Pioneers new chemical compound (8)
- 17 Draw small brown shed (5-3)
- 19 Lie back, proceed to eat ice cream (6)
- 20 Help to accumulate runs and declare (6)
- 22 Jack Daniels heartily consumed by emcee (5)

SUDOKU

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

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★☆☆☆☆

Solution to previous puzzle

C	A	T	E	G	O	R	Y	H	A	M	M	E	R
U	A	R	O	C	D	A	E						
T	A	B	L	E	A	U		U	N	D	I	N	E
O	O	Y	G	T	T	I	P						
F	L	U	S	H	A	T	S	O	F	F	T	O	
F	R	O	N	I	N	G	C	O	S	T	S		
U	I	N	D	G	H	T	E						
S	E	M	I	D	E	T	A	C	H	E	D		
H	E	R	I	T	O	R							
E	L	A	S	T	I	M	E	R	K	U	R	D	S
R	R	A	T	I	B	N	M	U					
I	N	T	O	T	A	L							
N	E	H	E	R	T	A	N	E					
G	A	D	G	E	T	A	S	S	E	N	T	E	D

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

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

Mahaperiyava, the saviour

The Omniscient's various avatars on earth occurred with the purpose to establish dharma and guide mankind on the right way to live on earth. Additionally, erudite expositions on scriptures by preceptors, saints and savants provide models for one to lead a purposeful and sin-free life. The third avenue is interacting with saints among us, enabling one to rise above base emotions while being part of the material world. One such lofty soul is Jagadguru Sri Chandrasekharendra Saraswati Mahaswamigal, the 68th Pontiff of Kanchi Peetam, said Suchitra Balasubramanian.

Born as Swaminathan, in the Tamil month of Vaikasa, in Villupuram district, he mastered the holy books quickly and rose to the highest position in the Math early in life. The pressures of modern life made many turn to the Pontiff for guidance on balancing their material quest and spiritual yearnings. Mahaperiyava was an embodiment of spiritual equipoise and wisdom. From offering solace to the sick to leading by example on the need to be kind to all living things, he was unparalleled, with the result that he was looked upon as Kaliyuga saviour. A devotee once noticed red ants swarming over the Pontiff's feet and horrified at the pain he must be undergoing. He urged the Math head to squash them. The latter said, "Why kill someone who is only doing what has to be done to stay alive?"

FAITH

Mahaperiyava, the saviour

MONEYWISE

Fair deal for elders

COVERNOTE

Health insurance terms get easier for senior citizens; getting coverage may continue to be difficult and costly, though

K. Nitva Kalyani

The CEO of a leading general insurance company once told me that even life insurance is optional, but everyone in the country needs a health insurance policy.

Of course, the sad thing is that we continue to talk only about the lucky 11% or so who are willing to, or can afford to buy commercial insurance.

It is a no-brainer that healthcare requirements can zoom as one ages, and so the expenses. The sad corollary is that that's when it gets more difficult to get health insurance because, in a cynical way, the insurer too is careful of his risks.

That's why we keep saying in CoverNote that you should start your insurance early. It is true for life insurance, it's true for annuities or pension plans and it's certainly true for health insurance, where you can build up your track record, work off your waiting period for different treatments, and even shore up your sum insured as you go through claim-free years. There have been some regulatory moves to make



health insurance more available to senior citizens. Under the Health Insurance Regulations, 2016, IRDAI had asked insurance companies to offer hospitalisation insurance at least up to 65 years. Companies were free to offer cover to older customers, and many did so.

Insurers wary

On the ground, however, it was not easy going to actually get a policy due to underwriting caution by the insurers. IRDAI has removed this age cap with effect from April 1, 2024.

This is a theoretical benefit as the underwriting decision is still with the underwriter - the insurance company. It may open up the market and smart marketers may find ways to explore this market and introduce more products and finer underwriting. It's not going to be any easier to actually get a policy because pre-existing disease exclusions, higher premiums and stringent terms and conditions will all definitely be part of the package. But there has been relief on that front too. Just a few days before this announcement, the regulator had eased things up a bit. The waiting period for pre-existing diseases was reduced to three years, while it was at least four years in many companies.

Another measure was reducing the moratorium for rejecting any claim on the basis of non-disclosure or misrepresentation to five years from eight years. But years look like decades when you are older.

Starting your health policy at a younger age means you won't need to wait to make claims at older ages when the need is higher.

(The writer is a business journalist specialising in insurance & corporate history)

Send queries on personal finance and investing to the moneywise@thehindu.co.in ID. Our experts in personal finance will respond to select queries, but will not give specific recommendations for investment in a particular mutual fund, share or fixed deposit.

ILLUSTRATION: SOUMYADIP SINHA



Travel cover, a must-have

A travel insurance makes sure that not only your medical expenses like hospitalisation and doctor fees are taken care of, but also the cost of emergency medical evacuation

TRIP TIP

Manas Kapoor

Planning a vacation abroad? You must have zeroed in on the destination, the budget, and may have a detailed itinerary. Understandably, vacations are all about excitement and exploring, but that doesn't mean that something won't go amiss along the way. So, among everything else, don't miss out on the one thing that has your back during your journey - your travel insurance.

Many countries have made that mandatory when you apply for a visa. But a majority of people buy travel insurance just for the sake of compliance without actually doing much research. Falling ill or losing valuables might not be on your itinerary, but it's far more common than you can imagine. In fact, in many European cities, pickpocketing and theft are highly prevalent in crowded tourist areas. Many people lose their wallets, phones and passports while traveling. Now, think of the immense financial strain such an incident can put you through. A travel insurance plan can come to your rescue in such situations.

Medical emergency

A medical emergency in a foreign country can be a nightmare. After all, you may not be familiar with the local healthcare system. Moreover, the cost of treatment can drain all your funds that you may



There are specific plans that provide policyholders with PED coverage up to a certain limit or up to the sum insured

have with you in the foreign land, and then some more. A travel insurance makes sure that not only your medical expenses like hospitalisation and doctor fees are taken care of, but also the cost of emergency medical evacuation, if needed.

Conditions like diabetes or hypertension are increasingly becoming common among all age groups which might just add to the risk. Fortunately, travel insurance policies cover the cost of treatment if the policyholder finds himself/herself in an emergency medical situation while travelling even if that situation arises due to pre-existing diseases (PEDs). Notably though, this cover is only available for life-threatening situations and will pay the medical expenses for treatment required to bring the patient out of danger and to stability. There are specific plans that provide policyholders with PED coverage up to a certain limit or up to the sum insured.

If the policyholder is suffering from any chronic disease like diabetes or high blood pressure, or if he/she has been diagnosed with any medical condition in the last 48 months, then those conditions are categorised as pre-existing

diseases. Also, any ailment for which the policyholder is undergoing treatment is a PED.

These ailments are covered in health plans after the initial waiting period of up to 3 years. However, since a travel insurance is a short-duration policy, the waiting period makes no sense and hence these PEDs traditionally were excluded from the coverage.

However, now there are certain insurance plans that cover these ailments as well. These plans provide coverage without any medical tests or documents while buying policy. However, one should really compare and understand what is the limit for the PED and whether there is any excluded diseases that are not covered by the policy.

'Disclose PEDs'

It is of paramount importance to disclose the PED to your insurer while purchasing a travel insurance policy. Many people commit this mistake and assume that nothing will go wrong during a short trip and hence do not declare the PED while purchasing a travel policy. But if the policyholder fails to do so, the claim could be outrightly rejected. This is because the insurance provider has the right to assess the risk adequately and accurately before offering a policy to the individual at a specific premium.

So while purchasing the policy, make sure you list down any ongoing medical conditions which may lead to life-threatening situations, or which may require medication or treat-

ment on a regular basis. In these circumstances, buying a policy with PED coverage would be a good idea as well. And for that, declaring the PED is anyway a pre-requisite.

Medical condition is a critical reason to opt for travel insurance, but there is a lot more to these insurance plans.

A travel insurance policy also provides protection against trip cancellations and interruptions which may have been caused due to any of the listed reasons like an illness, a death in the family, or even airline issues.

Without a travel insurance, you may have lost the non-refundable deposits you may have made for flights, accommodations, and tours. On the other hand, the travel insurance covers you for these expenses.

It also covers you against travel-related risks such as trip delays and missed flight, and even flight cancellations.

Moreover, travel insurance also protects you against lost or stolen belongings, including luggage and passports during your trip. Being stranded in a foreign country without your belongings can be a nightmare. By opting for a comprehensive travel insurance, you ensure that you will be reimbursed for the cost of replacing these items. And you can continue your journey with minimal disruption. Some policies even offer you cash advances in case of an emergency.

(The writer is Business Head, Travel Insurance, Policybazaar.com)

Rebalance portfolio to manage risk

THINKINVESTOR

A decline in equity investments towards the end of the time horizon for a life goal will allow limited time to recover the losses; the more the equity allocation, the greater the risk

Venkatash Bangaruswamy

A major process relating to self-management of your investments is portfolio rebalancing. In this article, we explain why rebalancing is important. We also offer a simple rule to rebalance your portfolio through the time horizon for a life goal.

Managing risk

Every goal-based portfolio should have a combination of equity and bond investments. Your equity investment should be in large-cap ETFs and your bond investment in bank recurring deposits. Asset allocation refers to the proportion of equity and bond investments in your portfolio. Your equity investments will carry unrealised gains (or losses). So, the proportion of equity in the portfolio will vary very year. If unrealised gains from equity is greater than the returns on bank deposits, the equity allocation will be higher than in the previous year. This may require you to adjust the asset allocation to reduce the risk associated with equity investments. This process is called rebalancing.

You must also be mindful of your portfolio's risk as you approach the end of the time horizon for a life goal. The more the equity allocation, the greater the risk. This is because a decline in your equity investments towards the end of the time horizon for a life goal would allow limited time to recover the losses. You should cut your equity allocation as your approach the last five years of the time horizon for a life goal. This means you must sell some of your equity investments and move into bonds, another reason to rebalance your portfolio.

Conclusion

The rebalancing rule to manage risk relating to unrealised gains is simple. Suppose you expect a 12% annual pre-tax return on equity. If gains on your equity investments are greater than 12% in any year, you should take out returns above 12%. Assume you have 10 lakh in equity and your annual unrealised gain is 14%. You should redeem units worth 2% of 10 lakh and invest the amount in fixed deposits. What about rebalancing to reduce risk as your approach the end of the time horizon for a life goal? Your peak equity allocation should not be more than 70% five years before the end of the time horizon for a life goal. You must thereafter cut your equity allocation (say, 10% annually) so that you hold not more than 30% at the end of the time horizon for a life goal.

(The author offers training programmes for individuals to manage their personal investments)

Bank Fixed Deposit Rates

Bank Name	Interest Rates (%)			
	Highest Slab	1-year Tenure	3-year Tenure	5-year Tenure
Small Finance Banks				
AU Small Finance Bank	8.00	6.50	7.50	7.25
Equitas Small Finance Bank	8.50	8.20	8.00	7.25
ESAF Small Finance Bank	8.25	6.00	6.75	6.25
Jana Small Finance Bank	8.50	8.50	7.25	7.25
NorthEast Small Finance Bank	8.50	7.75	8.00	6.25
Suryoday Small Finance Bank	8.65	6.85	8.60	8.25
Ujjivan Small Finance Bank	8.50	8.25	7.20	7.20
Unity Small Finance Bank	9.00	7.85	8.15	8.15
Utkarsh Small Finance Bank	8.50	8.00	8.50	7.75
Private Sector Banks				
Axis Bank	7.20	6.70	7.10	7.00
Bandhan Bank	7.85	7.85	7.25	5.85
City Union Bank	7.25	7.00	6.50	6.25
CSB Bank	7.75	5.00	5.75	5.75
DBS Bank	7.50	7.00	6.50	6.50
DCB Bank	8.05	7.10	7.55	7.40
Federal Bank	7.40	6.80	7.00	6.60
HDFC Bank	7.25	6.60	7.00	7.00
ICI Bank	7.20	6.70	7.00	7.00
IDFC First Bank	7.90	6.50	7.25	7.00

Bank Name	Interest Rates (%)			
	Highest Slab	1-year Tenure	3-year Tenure	5-year Tenure
Public Sector Banks				
IndusInd Bank	7.75	7.75	7.25	7.25
Jammu & Kashmir Bank	7.05	7.05	6.50	6.50
Karur Vysya Bank	7.50	7.00	7.00	7.00
Karnataka Bank	7.40	7.10	6.50	6.50
Kotak Mahindra Bank	7.40	7.10	7.00	6.20
RBL Bank	8.00	7.50	7.50	7.10
SBM Bank India	8.25	7.10	7.60	7.75
South Indian Bank	7.40	6.70	6.70	6.00
Tamilnad Mercantile Bank	7.50	7.00	6.50	6.50
YES Bank	7.75	7.25	7.25	7.25
Public Sector Banks				
Bank of Baroda	7.25	6.85	7.25	6.50
Bank of India	7.25	6.80	6.50	6.00
Bank of Maharashtra	7.10	6.75	6.50	6.50
Canara Bank	7.25	6.85	6.80	6.70
Central Bank of India	7.25	6.75	6.50	6.25
Indian Bank	7.25	6.10	6.25	6.25
Indian Overseas Bank	7.30	6.90	6.50	6.50
Punjab National Bank	7.25	6.75	7.00	6.50
Punjab & Sind Bank	7.25	6.20	6.00	6.00
State Bank of India	7.10	6.80	6.75	6.50
Union Bank of India	7.25	6.75	6.50	6.50

Home Loan Interest Rates

Name of Lender	Loan Amount (Rs.)		
	Upto 30 lakh	Above 30 lakh & upto 75 lakh	Above 75 lakh
Public Sector Banks			
State Bank of India	8.50-9.85	8.50-9.85	8.50-9.85
Bank of Baroda	9.15-10.65	9.15-10.65	9.15-10.90
Bank of India	8.35-10.75	8.35-10.90	8.35-10.90
Union Bank of India	8.35-10.75	8.35-10.90	8.35-10.90
Punjab National Bank	8.45-10.25	8.40-10.15	8.40-10.15
Bank of Maharashtra	8.45-10.30	8.45-10.30	8.45-10.30
UCO Bank	8.45-10.30	8.45-10.30	8.45-10.30
Bank of India	8.40-10.85	8.40-10.85	8.40-10.85
Canara Bank	8.50-11.25	8.45-11.25	8.40-11.15
Bank of Maharashtra	8.35-11.15	8.35-11.15	8.35-11.15
Punjab and Sind Bank	8.50-10.00	8.50-10.00	8.50-10.00
Indian Overseas Bank	8.40-10.60	8.40-10.60	8.40-10.60
Central Bank of India	8.45-9.80	8.45-9.80	8.45-9.80
Private Sector Banks			
Kotak Mahindra Bank	8.70*	8.70*	8.70*
ICI Bank	8.75*	8.75*	8.75*
Axis Bank	8.75-13.30	8.75-13.30	8.75-9.65
HSBC Bank	8.50*	8.50*	8.50*
South Indian Bank	8.70-11.70	8.70-11.70	8.70-11.70
Karur Vysya Bank	9.00-11.05	9.00-11.05	9.00-11.05

Name of Lender	Loan Amount (Rs.)		
	Upto 30 lakh	Above 30 lakh & upto 75 lakh	Above 75 lakh
Housing Finance Companies (HFCs)			
Karnataka Bank	8.50-10.62	8.50-10.62	8.50-10.62
Federal Bank	8.80*	8.80*	8.80*
Dhanlaxmi Bank	9.35-10.50	9.35-10.50	9.35-10.50
Tamilnad Mercantile Bank	8.60-9.95	8.60-9.95	8.60-9.95
Bandhan Bank	9.16-15.00	9.16-13.33	9.16-13.33
RBL Bank	8.90*	8.90*	8.90*
CSB Bank	10.73-12.58	10.73-12.58	10.73-12.58
HDFC Bank Ltd.	8.75*	8.75*	8.75*
City Union Bank	8.25-9.50	8.50-10.00	8.75-10.50
Housing Finance Companies (HFCs)			
LIC Housing Finance	8.50-10.35	8.50-10.55	8.50-10.75
Bajaj Housing Finance	8.50*	8.50*	8.50*
Tata Capital	8.75*	8.75*	8.75*
PNB Housing Finance	8.50-14.50	8.50-14.50	8.50-11.45
GIC Housing Finance	8.80*	8.80*	8.80*
SMFG India Home Finance	10.00*	10.00*	10.00*
Aditya Birla Capital	8.60*	8.60*	8.60*
ICI Home Finance	9.20*	9.20*	9.20*
Godrej Housing Finance	8.55*	8.55*	8.55*

*Onwards Rates as on May 22 Source:Paisabazaar.com

TRUST IN PROCESS

Proud of the players for sticking with our approach: Helmut



R. RAGU

SRH assistant coach Simon Helmut said he was proud of the way his side played in this edition. "We finished 10th last year, and if you had told us at the start of the season that we would finish second, we would have been pleased. I am proud of the players for sticking with the approach that has allowed us to reach the final."

IN ELITE COMPANY

Shreyas becomes fifth Indian captain to lift the IPL Trophy



K.R. DEEPAK

Kolkata Knight Riders' Shreyas Iyer, on Sunday, became the fifth Indian skipper — after Chennai Super Kings' M.S. Dhoni (2010, 11, 18, 21 and 23), Knight Riders' Gautam Gambhir (2012 and 14), Mumbai Indians' Rohit Sharma (2013, 15, 17, 19 and 20) and Gujarat Titans' Hardik Pandya (2022) — to lift the IPL Trophy.

ALLROUND DISPLAY

Narine walks away with MVP award after fabulous season



K.R. DEEPAK

The IPL 2024 awards: **Emerging player:** Nitish Reddy; **Electric striker of the season:** Jake-Fraser McGurk; **Super Sixes:** Abhishek Sharma (42); **Fours:** Travis Head; **Catch of the season:** Ramandeep Singh; **Fairplay:** Sunrisers; **Orange Cap:** Virat Kohli; **Purple:** Harshal Patel; **Most Valuable Player:** Sunil Narine.

PROCESSION

Sunrisers Hyderabad registers lowest score in an IPL final



R. RAGU

Sunrisers Hyderabad recorded the lowest score in an IPL final (113 in 18.3 overs) during its IPL 2024 title match against Kolkata Knight Riders at the M.A. Chidambaram Stadium. The previous low was 125 for nine by Chennai Super Kings against Mumbai Indians during the 2013 final.



Over the moon: Skipper Shreyas and his teammates cannot hide their delight after Knight Riders lifted the coveted IPL trophy for a third time. Incidentally, the Kolkata side won its maiden title in Chennai in 2012. K.R. DEEPAK

It's Knight Riders' cup of joy as Sunrisers fall flat

The Shreyas-led side's brilliant bowling reduces Cummins' men to a record low in a summit clash; Venkatesh's blistering half-century takes the team home with eight wickets and 57 balls remaining

IPL-17 FINAL

N. Sudarshan
CHENNAI

Mike Tyson is supposed to have said, according to sporting folklore, that "everyone has a plan... until they get punched in the face."

Sunrisers Hyderabad had a plan, until Kolkata Knight Riders landed a knockout punch to win its third Indian Premier League title with an eight-wicket victory at the M.A. Chidambaram Stadium here on Sunday.

SRH won the toss and batted first, betting on its now-patented target-set-

ting ability and the belief that there would be no dew to hamper its bowlers like in Qualifier 2 versus Rajasthan Royals. But so lethal was the KKR bowling pack, led by Mitchell Starc (3-0-14-2), that SRH's best-laid plans fell hopelessly flat.

Pat Cummins' men chose the worst day to make their lowest total of the season, a paltry 113. Shreyas & Co. batted with whirlwind intent, allowing SRH not even a sniff, to chase down the score with more than nine overs to spare. KKR's first IPL triumph was also at Chepauk, way back in 2012, with the now mentor Gautam Gambhir at the helm.

Sunil Narine hit the first ball he faced, from Cum-

mins, into the stands at deep mid-wicket. He perished the very next delivery, but it made his team's intentions clear. In the third over, Venkatesh Iyer smashed Bhuvneshwar Kumar for two humongous sixes down the ground.

The left-hander would continue in the same vein, carting T. Natarajan for three fours and a six in the sixth over. At the other end, Rahmanullah Gurbaz played a steady hand (39, 32b, 5x4, 2x6) before Venkatesh (52, 26b, 4x4, 3x6), like he had in Qualifier 1, carried his side home.

Earlier, Starc proved yet again that he was a man for the big occasion. In the very first over, he ended Abhishek Sharma's nervous

five-ball stay with a peach of a delivery that pitched on middle-stump and rattled the top of off.

Vaibhav Arora, who swung the ball both ways, struck the second big blow, forcing Travis Head to edge behind for a duck (his third in four innings). When the in-form Rahul Tripathi top-edged a flick to Raman-deep Singh in front of square to give Starc his second scalp, SRH was reeling at 21 for three.

Aiden Markram hung around for a bit (20, 23b, 3x4), hitting Arora for two fours in the final over of the PowerPlay to take SRH to 40 for three. But the recovery proved a mirage, as wickets fell at regular intervals. Nitish Kumar Reddy

was caught behind off an express delivery from Harshit Rana and Markram holed out to long-on off Andre Russell.

Shahbaz Ahmed, the hero against RR, tried a sweep but was out caught at short-fine. With no option left, Abdul Samad was summoned as the Impact Player in place of Head (Impact Player in place of Head) c Gurbaz b Russell 4 (4b), Pat Cummins c Starc b Russell 24 (19b, 2x4, 1x6), Jaydev Unadkat lbw b Narine 4 (11b), Bhuvneshwar Kumar (not out) 0 (1b); Extras (b-5, lb-2, w-6): 13; Total (in 18.3 overs): 113.

Cummins, batting at No. 9, was SRH's top-scorer (24, 19b, 2x4, 1x6). To be sure, the Australian is no mug with the bat, but if he is the leading batter in a side comprising Abhishek, Head, Heinrich Klaasen and Markram, it does paint a grim picture. And so it did.

SCOREBOARD

SUNRISERS HYDERABAD

Abhishek Sharma b Starc 2 (5b), Travis Head c Gurbaz b Vaibhav 0 (1b), Rahul Tripathi c Ramandeep b Starc 9 (13b, 1x4), Aiden Markram c Starc b Russell 20 (23b, 3x4), Nitish Kumar c Gurbaz b Harshit 13 (10b, 1x4, 1x6), Heinrich Klaasen b Harshit 16 (17b, 1x4), Shahbaz Ahmed c Narine b Varun 8 (7b, 1x6), Abdul Samad (Impact Player in place of Head) c Gurbaz b Russell 4 (4b), Pat Cummins c Starc b Russell 24 (19b, 2x4, 1x6), Jaydev Unadkat lbw b Narine 4 (11b), Bhuvneshwar Kumar (not out) 0 (1b); Extras (b-5, lb-2, w-6): 13; Total (in 18.3 overs): 113.

FALL OF WICKETS

1-2 (Abhishek, 0.5 overs), 2-6 (Head, 1.6), 3-21 (Tripathi, 4.2), 4-47 (Nitish, 6.6), 5-62 (Markram, 10.2), 6-71 (Shahbaz, 11.5), 7-77 (Samad, 12.4), 8-90 (Klaasen,

14.1), 9-113 (Unadkat, 17.5).

KNIGHT RIDERS BOWLING
Starc 3-0-14-2, Vaibhav 3-0-24-1, Harshit 4-1-24-2, Narine 4-0-16-1, Russell 2-3-0-19-3, Varun 2-0-9-1.

KOLKATA KNIGHT RIDERS

Rahmanullah Gurbaz lbw b Shahbaz 39 (32b, 5x4, 2x6), Sunil Narine c Shahbaz b Cummins 6 (2b, 1x6), Venkatesh Iyer (not out) 52 (26b, 4x4, 3x6), Shreyas Iyer (not out) 6 (3b, 1x4); Extras (b-4, lb-2, w-5): 11; Total (for two wkts. in 10.3 overs): 114.

FALL OF WICKETS

1-11 (Narine, 1.2), 2-102 (Gurbaz, 8.5).

SUNRISERS BOWLING

Bhuvneshwar 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.

Toss: SRH; **PoM:** Starc. KKR won by eight wickets with 57 deliveries to spare.

Honours board

2008	Rajasthan Royals
2009	Deccan Chargers
2010	Chennai Super Kings
2011	Chennai Super Kings
2012	Kolkata Knight Riders
2013	Mumbai Indians
2014	Kolkata Knight Riders
2015	Mumbai Indians
2016	Sunrisers Hyderabad
2017	Mumbai Indians
2018	Chennai Super Kings
2019	Mumbai Indians
2020	Mumbai Indians
2021	Chennai Super Kings
2022	Gujarat Titans
2023	Chennai Super Kings
2024	Kolkata Knight Riders



Thrills and spills: Abhishek was castled by a Starc beauty in the first over while Harshit piled on the agony for Sunrisers with two wickets. Raman-deep, right, held on to a skier from Tripathi before Venkatesh sealed the deal with an aggressive knock. K.R. DEEPAK & R. RAGU

Alcaraz makes confident start, Osaka overcomes Bronzetti

The Spaniard registers his first win since coming back from the right forearm injury that sidelined him for almost a month; Sonego stuns No. 17 Humbert, the highest-ranked Frenchman in the tournament

FRENCH OPEN

Associated Press
PARIS

Carlos Alcaraz made a confident start at the French Open on Sunday, overwhelming J.J. Wolf 6-1, 6-2, 6-1.

It was the Spaniard's first win since coming back from the right forearm injury that sidelined him for almost a month. "I'm almost at 100% of my abilities," Alcaraz said. "After the match, I didn't feel anything."

In the women's draw, Naomi Osaka marked her seventh appearance in Paris with a 1-6, 6-4, 7-5 first-round victory over Lucia Bronzetti.

"There were moments I played pretty well, but I was pretty nervous and got really tight," said the No. 134-ranked Osaka of her hard-fought victory during an on-court interview.

Osaka secured her first victory in a Grand Slam tournament since 2022. She made her comeback in January after a maternity leave. Osaka advanced to what could be a matchup against No. 1 Iga Swiatek, the three-time French Open winner and defending champion.

Elsewhere, No. 30 Dayan Yastremska eliminated Ajla Tomljanovic while Lesia Tsurenko forfeited after playing less



Hard-fought win: Osaka secured her first victory in a Grand Slam tournament since 2022. GETTY IMAGES

than a set against Donna Vekic because of a back problem.

In the men's draw, No. 6 Andrey Rublev defeated

Taro Daniel 6-2, 6-7(3), 6-3, 7-5. Rublev showed some frustration during his match, throwing his racket at one stage. Lorenzo So-

nego stunned No. 17 Ugo Humbert 6-4, 2-6, 6-4, 6-3. Humbert was the highest-ranked Frenchman in the tournament. Hubert Hur-

TOP RESULTS

First round:

Men: 6-Rublev (Rus) bt Daniel (Jpn) 6-2, 6-7(3), 6-3, 7-5; Sonego (Ita) bt 17-Humbert (Fra) 6-4, 2-6, 6-4, 6-3; 3-Alcaraz (Esp) bt Wolf (USA) 6-1, 6-2, 6-1; 10-Dimitrov (Bul) bt Kovacevic (USA) 6-4, 6-3, 6-4.

Women: Osaka (Jpn) bt Bronzetti (Ita) 6-1, 4-6, 7-5; Bouzkova (Cze) bt 29-Kudermetova (Rus) 6-2, 6-4; 30-Yastremska (Ukr) bt Tomljanovic (Aus) 3-6, 6-3, 6-3; 9-Ostapenko (Lat) bt Cristian (Rou) 6-4, 7-5; Kenin (USA) bt Siegemund (Ger) 4-6, 6-2, 6-2; 21-Garcia (Fra) bt Lys (Ger) 4-6, 7-5, 6-2.

Monday's Picks

Men

2-Sinner vs Eubanks
4-Zverev vs Nadal
5-Medvedev vs Koepfer
9-Tsitipis vs Fucsovics
18-Khachanov vs Nagal

Women

1-Swiatek vs Jeanjean
5-Vondrousova vs Masarova
6-Sakkari vs Gracheva
11-Collins vs Dolehide
15-Svitolina vs Pliskova

kacz beat Shintaro Mochizuki 4-6, 6-3, 3-6, 6-0, 6-3, and Grigor Dimitrov routed Aleksandar Kovacevic in three sets.

Play was interrupted for a little more than an hour on all 18 clay courts because of rain, except for the two largest equipped with retractable roofs.

Age barrier for Nadal? Three 40-something trailblazers



Ready: Nadal will be keen on adding to his Grand Slam tally. AFP

Agence France-Presse PARIS

Rafael Nadal has not "100% closed the door" on extending his career despite his 38th birthday fast approaching and with his ranking having slipped to an injury-impacted 275 in the world.

Whether or not he adds to his 22 Grand Slam titles at the French Open, where is a 14-time champion, remains to be seen but plenty of players have continued to defy time.

AFP Sport looks at three men who blazed a trail that Nadal could yet still follow: **Roger Federer** – Nadal's rival and close friend Federer played until he was 41, closing the door on his career at a teary Laver Cup in London in 2022. In an emotional moment court-side, Nadal even grasped the hand of the great Swiss whose collection of 20 Grand Slams has since been exceeded by Novak Djokovic's 24 and the 22 of Nadal.

The last of Federer's Majors came at the 2018 Australian Open when he 36

years, five months and seven days old.

Ken Rosewall – Australia's Rosewall remains the oldest man to win a Grand Slam title, capturing his eighth Major at the 1972 Australian Open when he was 37.

Rosewall was 39 when he lost the 1974 finals at Wimbledon and the US Open to Jimmy Connors.

He eventually retired from the sport in 1980 just before his 46th birthday at an indoor tournament in Melbourne while his last two titles were won when he was 43 in Tokyo and Hong Kong.

Jimmy Connors – The flamboyant and combative Connors won eight Grand Slam titles in his career, only retiring in 1996 at the age of 43.

His longevity allowed him to claim 109 titles which is still a men's record. The American also made his mark in 1991 when he went all the way to the US Open semifinals at the age of 39 despite entering the tournament on a wildcard and with a ranking of 174.

McCoy replaces Holder in WI squad

Press Trust of India
ST JOHN'S (ANTIGUA)

The West Indies on Sunday named Obed McCoy as Jason Holder's replacement for the upcoming T20 World Cup, with the latter being ruled out due to an injury which he sustained while playing the County Championship.

"Jason's absence will undoubtedly be felt both on and off the field. We look forward to having a fully fit Jason with us again soon," lead selector Desmond Haynes said.

Chase and Motie script a convincing win for WI

Agence France-Presse
KINGSTON

Roston Chase struck a magnificent 38-ball 67 as West Indies beat South Africa by 16 runs at Sabina Park to take an unassailable 2-0 lead in the three-match T20I series.

Chase led a strong batting performance from the home side who made 207 for seven and while South Africa made a fast start it was unable to get close to the target.

The scores: West Indies 207/7 in 20 overs (Roston Chase 67) bt South Africa 191/7 in 20 overs (Quinton de Kock 41, Motie 3/22). **Toss:** West Indies.

India should continue to win in Australia, says Gavaskar

S. Prasanna Venkatesan
CHENNAI

Discussing the upcoming Border-Gavaskar Trophy, Australia great Matthew Hayden said here on Saturday that the Australian team is in a transition period and vulnerable at the top, with the need for a new opening batter to replace David Warner.

Vulnerable

"Well, it's a time in Australian cricket where it's a transition period. And so, we're vulnerable at the top. I was very forthright in saying this; Steve Smith should never have been the opening batter for Australia. And I still believe that's the case.

"So, we are on the lookout for, I believe, another opening batter to replace the great David Warner, who's had an exceptional career.

"He really, I feel, built on the legacy that JL (Justin Langer) and I created in



Three stars: Hayden, Harbhajan, and Gavaskar at the launch event to promote Australia-India Summer of Cricket. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

our period. He went better. Whereas our strike rate was 65 to 70, Dave Warner was 80 and sometimes more," he said during the panel discussion on India-Australia cricket with the legendary Sunil Gavaskar and former India off-spinner Harbhajan Singh at the launch of the Australia-India Summer of Cricket, organised by the Australian Consulate in partnership with Cricket Australia (CA) and the Centre for Australia-India Relations.

"It's really a battle of the top order. And Australian cricket has put itself in a position where it's kind of got no further games to really anticipate what it's going to look like ahead of the Border-Gavaskar Trophy," he added.

India is set to play five Tests at the Perth Stadium, Adelaide Oval, Gabba, Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG), and Sydney Cricket Ground (SCG) from Nov. 22 to Jan. 7.

Asked for his wish list

for the series, Gavaskar said: "My wish list is, obviously, India should continue to win in Australia – twice they've won now, and so for the third time as well.

"Hope it's a good, close series with the matches going into the fifth day. A lot of Test matches finish in three-and-a-half, four days. A five-day Test would be fantastic for everybody concerned, where Australia and India keep on dominating for four days alternately, and maybe on the fifth day the team that has really got that greater desire goes out and wins. And all five Test matches should have a result.

"On an individual level, maybe for Virat Kohli, that he becomes the third overseas player who's scored a Test century in all the Australian venues. I think he doesn't have one at the Gabba. So if he gets a century at the Gabba, that means he joins me and Alastair Cook."

Y.B. Sarangi
KOLKATA

Dipa Karmakar landed a gold medal in vault to become the first Indian gymnast to win the continental title in the Asian women's artistic gymnastics championships in Tashkent on Sunday.

The 30-year-old Dipa, who was eighth with 12.650 in the qualification, scored an identical 13.566 in her two attempts for an overall 13.566 in the final. She was followed by North Koreans Kim Son Hyang (13.466, after a penalty of 0.100) and Jo Kyong Byol (12.966).

It was Dipa's second medal in the championships after her bronze (14.725) in Hiroshima in 2015. Ashish Kumar (floor exercise, bronze, Surat, 2006) and Pranati Nayak (vault, bronze medals in Ulaanbaatar, 2019, and Doha, 2022) are the other Indians to claim Asian championships medals.



Remarkable: It was Dipa's second medal in the championships after her bronze in Hiroshima in 2015. @MEDIA_SAI

It was a remarkable performance by Dipa, who struggled through injuries, two knee surgeries and a 21-month suspension for a doping violation.

For someone who missed out on crucial opportunities to qualify for the Paris Olympics, first due to her suspension and then due to a decision not to send the team for one of

the four Apparatus World Cups, the Asian gold was a big consolation.

Elated

"I can't say how happy I am. This performance has come after surgeries and suspension. No other (Indian) gymnast has done this. So, this medal is really special," Dipa told *The Hindu*.

"I must thank (my coach Bishweshwar) Nandi sir. He has been with me through all my difficult times."

Dipa, who made history when she finished fourth in the 2016 Rio Olympics vault final and narrowly missed out on a medal, said: "Of course, not being able to qualify for the Olympics was disappointing. But now I want to enjoy this moment."

Slim chances

Nandi said Dipa's chances of qualifying through the Asian championships, where only one Olympic slot was available for the best all-around performer (and third-placed Filipino Emma Malabuyo took it), was slim.

Dipa finished 16th in the all-around qualification and 14th in the final.

"Dipa overcame odds to achieve this. She is heading towards the end of her career. I will speak to her father and see whether she will continue," said Nandi.

Boxers Abhinash and Nishant advance in Olympic qualifiers

Press Trust of India
BANGKOK

Indian boxers continued their good run on day three of the second World Boxing Qualifiers for Paris Olympics as Abhinash Jamwal (63.5kg) and Nishant Dev (71kg) comfortably won here on Sunday.

Abhinash, who had replaced Olympian Shiva Thapa in the second qualifiers, was at his best against Andrius Lavrenovas of Lithuania in his first-round

bout.

The Himachal Pradesh boxer was clinical with his punches in the opening round and dominated the ring further as his confidence rose higher to earn a unanimous 5-0 verdict from the judges.

Later, World championship bronze medallist Nishant also secured a dominant 5-0 win over Armando Bighafa of Guinea-Bissau. Nishant never looked under any kind of pressure as he controlled the bout

from the very first minute and continued with his flurry of punches in the second round too to put the opponent completely on the back foot and get a unanimous verdict.

On Monday, Ankushita Boro will start her 60kg campaign against Namun Monkhor of Mongolia while Laura will face Kelyn Cassidy of Ireland in the 80kg round of 32.

India has so far earned three Paris Olympic berths at the 2022 Asian Games.



Taking it all in: Kroos and his family embracing Real fans' love after the side's last home match of the season. AFP

Kroos bids emotional farewell to Bernabeu

Reuters
MADRID

Toni Kroos bade an emotional farewell to Real Madrid fans at a sold-out Santiago Bernabeu on Saturday as the German midfielder played his final home game after a remarkable decade with the Spanish giant.

A goalless draw with Real Betis was largely irrelevant with Real confirmed as LaLiga champion and all the European qualification

and relegation spots decided, so the evening was about celebrating the 34-year-old Kroos.

One of Real's most successful ever players after making 464 appearances and helping it win more than 20 major trophies including four European Cups, Kroos announced that he will retire after this year's European Championship on home soil.

In the 85th minute, Kroos broke down in tears when, after receiving

another standing ovation as he was substituted, he embraced his three children who were crying on the sidelines.

The results: LaLiga: Real Betis 0 drew with Real Madrid 0; Getafe 1 (Alvarez 48) lost to Mallorca 2 (Muriqui 90, Maffeo 90+3); Celta Vigo 2 (Aspas 49-pen, Douvikas 62) drew with (Dominguez 5-og, Mari 60-pen); Las Palmas 1 (Cardona 71) drew with Alaves 1 (Vicente 50). **Serie A:** AC Milan 3 (Leao 22, Giroud 27, Calabria 77) drew with Salernitana 3 (Simy 64, 89, Sambia 87).

Ferrari's Leclerc ends Monaco jinx in style; Verstappen sixth

The local boy wins his first race in the city after six attempts; Piastri finishes runner-up while Sainz claims the third spot; the Red Bull driver's championship lead diminishes from 48 to 31 after getting beaten only the third time in eight races

FORMULA ONE

Reuters
MONACO

Ferrari's Charles Leclerc celebrated a dream Monaco Grand Prix victory 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 runner-up, 7.1 seconds behind after 78 laps without a chance to overtake on a circuit that often produces processional races, and Ferrari's Carlos Sainz was third.

"It's the race that made



Historic: Leclerc became the first home winner in Monaco since Chiron in 1931. GETTY IMAGES

me dream of becoming a Formula One driver one day."

Red Bull's championship leader and 2023 Monaco winner Max Verstap-

pen started and finished sixth, only the third time in eight races this season that the triple world champion has been beaten. McLaren's Lando Norris was

fourth and George Russell fifth for Mercedes. Leclerc's success, and first win since the 2022 Austrian Grand Prix, trimmed Verstappen's champion-

ship lead to 31 points from 48.

Leclerc had twice before started from pole in Monaco, in 2021 and 2022, but failed to convert the huge advantage into a top-three finish on streets he has known all his life.

The results: 1: Leclerc (Ferrari) 2h:23m:15.554s; 2: Piastri (McLaren) +7.152; 3: Sainz (Ferrari) 7.585; 4: Norris (McLaren) 8.650; 5: Russell (Mercedes) 13.309; 6: Verstappen (Red Bull) 13.853; 7: Hamilton (Mercedes) 14.908; **+1 lap:** 8: Tsunoda (RB); 9: Albon (Williams); 10: Gasly (Alpine); **+2 laps:** 11: Alonso (Aston Martin); 12: Ricciardo (RB); 13: Bottas (Stake F1); 14: Stroll (Aston Martin); 15: Sargeant (Williams); 16: Zhou (Stake F1); **DNF:** Ocon (Alpine); Perez (Red Bull); Hulkenberg (Haas); Magnussen (Haas);

Standings:
Drivers: 1. Verstappen 169; 2. Leclerc 138; 3. Norris 113; 4. Sainz 108; 5. Perez 107.

Constructors: 1. Red Bull 276; 2. Ferrari 252; 3. McLaren 184; 4. Mercedes 96; 5. Aston Martin 44.

Indian men's side goes down to Belgium in shootout

PRO LEAGUE

Press Trust of India
ANTWERP (BELGIUM)

The Indian men's hockey team lost to reigning Olympic champion Belgium in shootout after the two sides were locked 2-2 in regulation time in the FIH Pro League here on Saturday.

India, ranked sixth in

the world, lost 1-3 in the shootout to take one point. World No. 3 Belgium secured two points, including the bonus point for winning the shootout.

Taking lead

Arajeet Singh Hundal put India in the lead in the 11th minute with a fine field goal before Felix Denayer (30th minute) restored parity just a few seconds before half-time off a pen-

alty corner.

Florent Van Aubel put the host ahead for the first time in the match with a 50th minute goal from a penalty corner but Sukhjeet Singh (57th) equalised three minutes before the end of regulation time.

In the shootout, only Sukhjeet Singh scored for India, while Vivek Sagar Prasad, Abhishek and Arajeet Singh Hundal missed.

Indian women's hockey team remains winless

Press Trust of India
ANTWERP (BELGIUM)

The Indian women's hockey team continued its winless streak in the Belgium leg of the FIH Pro League, slumping to 0-3 defeat against Argentina here on Sunday.

Celina di Santo (1st mi-

nute), Maria Campoy (39th) and Maria Granatto (47th) scored for Argentina in India's final match of the Belgium leg.

India began stringing a few passes together and got into the game.

It forced Argentine goalkeeper Clara Barberi into action after a low drive into

the circle from Udita found Lairemsiami, who failed to score from close range.

Argentina regained control of the proceedings in the second quarter, earning a slurry of penalty corners but an alert duo of Bichu Devi Kharibam and Salima Tete helped keep the ball out of the nets.

Argentina pressed hard in the rest of the quarter but the Indian defence held firm to keep the scoreline 0-1 heading into the second half.

Breakthrough

Argentina made a breakthrough in the 39th minute, as Campoy picked up

the ball on the left wing and bulldozed into the circle, dodging a few challenges to double the lead.

Argentina earned a penalty corner as soon as the final quarter began and Granatto directed Agustina Gorzelany's flick over Savita into goal to increase its lead.

THE HINDU GROUP

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IN BRIEF



Leverkusen lifts German Cup, claims a first double

Granit Xhaka scored as a 10-man Bayer Leverkusen beat Kaiserslautern 1-0 to lift the German Cup in Berlin on Saturday, winning the club's first double. Crowned Bundesliga champion in mid-April, Leverkusen was made to fight hard against its second-division opponents, after Odilon Kossounou was sent off just before half-time. Xhaka's 16th-minute goal was enough as Leverkusen bounced back from Wednesday's Europa League final loss to Atalanta – which ended its season-long unbeaten run of 51 games and hopes of a treble.



PSG wins French Cup in Mbappe's last appearance

Paris Saint-Germain beat Lyon 2-1 in Saturday's French Cup final to win the trophy in Kylian Mbappe's farewell appearance for the club. **The result:** Lyon 1 (O'Brien 55) lost to Paris Saint-Germain 2 (Dembele 22, Ruiz 34).



PGA Tour golfer Murray passes away aged 30

US golfer Grayson Murray, who won his second PGA Tour title at the Sony Open in January, passed away on Saturday aged 30, the Tour said in a statement. Murray had withdrawn from the Charles Schwab Challenge with an unspecified illness during Friday's second round in Texas.

Deepika loses her semifinal and bronze medal matches

India's Deepika Kumari lost her semifinal and bronze matches to finish outside the podium in the recurve women's individual competition of the Archery World Cup Stage-2 at Yecheon (South Korea) on Sunday. Deepika, who was beaten 6-0 by reigning World champion Lim Sihyeon in the final and finished with a silver medal in Stage-1 in Shanghai, again went down 6-2 to the top-ranked Korean in the semifinals. Later, the experienced Indian fell archer to Worlds silver medallist and Olympic team bronze medallist Alejandra Valencia of Mexico 6-4 in the bronze medal contest. India finished Stage-2 without a recurve medal.

Ravindu Laksiri and Rathika Suthanthira Seelan triumph

Top seeds Ravindu Laksiri of Sri Lanka and Rathika Suthanthira Seelan won the men's and women's titles in the HCL \$6,000 PSA Challenger squash tournament in Indore on Sunday. Both won their matches in straight games against Om Semwal and Pooja Arthi respectively.

The results (finals): Men: Ravindu Laksiri (SL) bt Om Semwal 11-6, 11-6, 11-4; **Women:** Rathika Suthanthira Seelan bt Pooja Arthi 11-4, 11-6, 11-3.

Aryan-Adhithya pair wins title in Jamaica

Aryan Shah and Adhithya Ganesan of USA beat Max Benaim and Daniel Vishnick of Britain 6-1, 6-4 in the doubles final of the \$15,000 ITF men's tennis tournament in Kingston, Jamaica on Saturday. It was a maiden title in the professional circuit for the 18-year-old Aryan who had made the singles and doubles final last week in the same place. Meanwhile, the commendable run of National champion Siddharth Vishwakarma was stopped in the final of the \$25,000 event in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, as he was beaten 6-2, 6-2 by Philip Henning of South Africa.

Sindhu stutters in the final against Wang

The Indian ace fritters away a 11-3 lead in the decider after going toe to toe with the Chinese opponent for most part of the contest in a marathon three-setter

BADMINTON

Press Trust of India
KUALA LUMPUR

Star Indian shuttler P.V. Sindhu blew away a massive 11-3 lead in the deciding game of the Malaysia Masters final against Wang Zhi Yi, missing out on a great opportunity to end her title drought here on Sunday. The trophy was well within her reach but Sindhu suffered a shocking meltdown after the final change of ends to go down 21-16, 5-21, 16-21 against the Chinese World No.7 in 79 minutes.

Sindhu used a combination of poise and power to dominate the proceedings against the reigning Asian champion for most part of the match but all fell apart after the break in the decider as the trophy slipped out of her hands. **Keenly contested** The final lived up to the expectations as the two traded blows right from the start, looking to play at a high pace. Sindhu managed a 6-4 lead only for Wang to claw back with two points.

The Indian showed great defence and kept putting the pressure on Wang,



Coming up short: Sindhu missed a golden opportunity to win a title after dominating for most part. FILE PHOTO

who too aimed to inject pace in the rallies and disposed of anything in the hitting zone.

But the Chinese overdid things as a cross-court net flick and another return went wide.

The rallies got tighter and fast-paced but Sindhu managed to hold an 11-9 lead at the break.

Sindhu left Wang crammed for space with her returns to move to 13-9. The angled returns, the defensive lifts and trademark

smashes became more regular as Sindhu dominated the proceedings to jump to a 17-10 lead.

Wang made it 16-19. However, Sindhu grabbed four game points when Wang went long and sealed it comfortably.

In the decider, Sindhu took a 11-3 lead at the interval

Wang scripted a sensational turnaround after the break as she won two punishing rallies, which included 55 and 56 shots.

Wang grabbed six championship points with another precise return at the backline.

World No.1 Viktor Axelsen captured the Malaysia Masters crown edging out Lee Zii Jia 21-6, 20-22, 21-13; **Women's Singles:** Wang Zhi Yi (Chn) bt P.V. Sindhu 16-21, 21-5, 21-16.

The results (finals, Indians unless specified):

Men's Singles: Viktor Axelsen (Dut) bt Lee Jia (Mal) 21-6, 20-22, 21-13; **Women's Singles:** Wang Zhi Yi (Chn) bt P.V. Sindhu 16-21, 21-5, 21-16.

Chebet breaks 10,000m world record, Kerr beats Ingebrigtsen

DIAMOND LEAGUE

Agence France-Presse
EUGENE (USA)

Kenya's Beatrice Chebet shattered the 10,000m world record and World champion Sha'Carri Richardson won her first 100m of the Olympic season, clocking 10.83sec, at the Eugene Diamond League on Saturday.

The victory, in which she improved on the previous record of 29.01.03 set by Ethiopian Letesenbet Gidey in 2021, immediately stamped her a favourite in Paris, even though it was her first elite race at the distance on the track.

Richardson, who won the world title last August in her personal-best of 10.65sec, was coming off a pair of sluggish 200m performances in China.

But she signaled her in-



Chebet. AP

tentions with the second-fastest time of the year behind American Jacious Sears's 10.77 in April and came out on top.

There was a marquee matchup in the meet's signature Bowerman Mile, where 1,500m World champion Josh Kerr held off Olympic gold medallist Jakob Ingebrigtsen by 26-hundredths of a second

Britain's Kerr clocked 3:45.34 to seize the win in the pair's first meeting since Kerr stunned the Norwegian at the Worlds in Budapest in August.

In other events, American Christian Coleman, the 2019 World champion, won the men's 100m in 9.95sec, coming out of the blocks strong then holding off Kenyan Ferdinand Omanyala, who was second in 9.98.

Kenneth Bednarek tuned up for the US trials with a dominant win in the 200m in 19.89sec.

France's Cyrena Samba-Mayela won in the 100m hurdles, matching her national record of 12.52.

Grant Holloway of the USA won the 110m hurdles in a world leading 13.03sec.

Kenyan Daniel Manteiko booked his trip to Paris with a victory in the men's 10,000 in world-leading 26:50.81.

Srihari claims silver in Mare Nostrum swimming

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

Ace India swimmer Srihari Nataraj clinched a silver medal in the 50m backstroke event at the 30th Mare Nostrum swimming tour at the Canet-en-Rousillon, France, on Saturday. Nataraj, who competed at the Tokyo Olympics, clocked 25.50s to claim the second spot on the podium behind Hungary's Adam Jaszó, who touched the pad at 25.46s. Scott Gibson of Great Britain finished third with a timing of 25.64s.

Nataraj's personal best in the event is 25.11s.

The 50m backstroke is a non-Olympic event. No In-



Second best: Srihari clocked 25.50s. @MEDIA_SAI

dian swimmer has made the cut for the Paris Games till now.

Sajan Prakash and Nataraj had made history in 2021 when they became the first two Indian swimmers to achieve the 'A'

qualification mark for the Tokyo Olympics.

The Mare Nostrum Tour, which began on Saturday, is a nine-day competition conducted across three cities – Monaco, Barcelona and Canet.



Moment to savour: Tavish and Parthsarathi Mundhe won a double each. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Tavish and Parthsarathi emerge victorious

Sports Bureau

Tavish Pahwa outplayed top seed Prateek Sheoran 6-4, 6-0 in the final of the Ramesh Desai memorial National sub-junior tennis championships at Kolhapur on Sunday.

Coached by Todd Clark, it was a commendable effort by Tavish to win a double in the under-16 event, as he had earlier claimed the doubles title with

Sports Bureau

Hruthik Katakam. The girls title was bagged by Parthsarathi Mundhe as she raced past Ranjhana Sangram for the loss of four games. It was also a second crown for her as she had won the doubles title with Akansha Ghosh.

The results (finals): U-16, boys: Tavish Pahwa bt Prateek Sheoran 6-4, 6-0; **Girls:** Parthsarathi Mundhe bt Ranjhana Sangram 6-1, 6-3.

Aryaveer and Subash in the summit clash

Sports Bureau

Aryaveer Dewan pipped Shiven Agarwal 11-6, 6-11, 11-9, 10-12, 15-13 in the under-17 boys' semifinals of the HCL Indian Open junior squash tournament in Indore on Sunday.

Other results (semifinals):

Boys: Under-19: Yuvraj Wadhvani bt KS Arhant 9-11, 11-6, 6-11, 11-1, 11-2; Tavneet Singh bt Ansh Tripathi 11-7, 11-6, 11-3. **U-17:** Subhash Choudhary bt Erwin Kros 8-11, 8-11, 11-2, 11-5, 11-6. **U-15:** Savir Sood bt Lokesh Subramani 8-11, 11-13, 11-3, 11-6, 13-11; Hridhaan Shah bt Saharsh Shahra 11-6, 8-11, 11-4, 7-11, 11-1. **U-13:** Shreshth Iyer bt Jackrich

Kumar 11-6, 11-5, 9-11, 11-7; Dhruv Bopana bt Fareed Andrabi 13-11, 11-5, 14-12. **U-11:** Amarya Bajaj bt Vihaan Chandhok 11-6, 11-9, 11-8; Dhairya Gogia bt Mohammed Toheedtanveer 12-10, 11-7, 11-6. **Girls: U-19:** Anahat Singh bt Yashi Jain 11-1, 11-2, 11-3; Reiva Nimbalkar bt Aryaa Dwivedi 6-11, 11-7, 12-10, 11-7. **U-17:** Navya Sundararajan bt Rudra Singh 11-9, 8-11, 11-6, 11-13, 11-4; Unnati Tripathi bt Akanksha Gupta 11-9, 11-8, 14-12. **U-15:** Riyansika Verma bt Devashree Arora 8-11, 11-9, 11-9, 4-11, 11-5. **U-13:** M Goushika bt Anika Kalanki 11-9, 11-9, 11-9; Divya Parasrampuriah bt Gauri Jaiswal 11-8, -11, 11-7, 12-10. **U-11:** Kareena Sashikumar bt Shanaya Parasrampuriah 11-9, 11-3, 11-4; Divyansh Jain bt Isha Shelke 11-8, 11-0, 11-0.



Safety first: Neeraj says he does not want to risk injury in the year of Olympics. FILE PHOTO K.R. DEEPAK

Not injured, withdrew as a precautionary move, clarifies Neeraj

OSTRAVA GOLDEN SPIKE

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

Olympic javelin champion Neeraj Chopra on Sunday clarified that he is not injured but has pulled out of the Ostrava Golden Spike meet in the Czech Republic on May 28 as a precautionary measure after he felt "something" on his adductor muscles during a recent training session.

Neeraj said he would not want to risk injury in an Olympic year and hence decided to skip the prestigious meet.

"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," Neeraj wrote on his Instagram. "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 added.

Neeraj's clarification came just hours after the organisers of the meet said he has decided to skip the event due to an injury he sustained while training two weeks ago.

Carlsen leads a strong field featuring the world's best

NORWAY CHESS

Sports Bureau

The Norway Chess tournament opens at Stavanger, Norway, on Monday.

The championship features some of the world's strongest players in both the open and women's sections.

World No. 1 and five-time World champion Magnus Carlsen of the host nation leads the field.

The world No. 2 and 3, Fabiano Caruana and Hikaru Nakamura, both of the United States, are also in the fray.

Reigning World champion Ding Liren of China is another major attraction.

R. Praggnanandhaa, who is ranked 14th in the world, is the Indian representative.

His elder sister R. Vaishali is playing in the women's event, along with fellow-Indian Koneru Humpy. World champion Ju Wenjun of China is the top seed.

Equal prize money The tournament, which carries equal prize money in the open and women's sections, will conclude on June 7.

The pairings for first round: **Open:** Magnus Carlsen (Nor) v Fabiano Caruana (USA). Hikaru Nakamura (USA) v Ding Liren (Chn). R. Praggnanandhaa v Alireza Firouzja (Fra). **Women:** Ju Wenjun (Chn) v Lei Tingjie (Chn); Koneru Humpy v Anna Muzychuk (Ukr). R. Vaishali v Pia Cramling (Swe).

LIVE TELECAST

NBA: Conference Finals, Sports 18-1 (SD & HD) & JioCinema, 5.30 a.m.

Roland Garros: Sony Sports Ten 2, 5 (SD & HD) & LIV, 2.30 p.m. onwards.

Shyaam Nikhil's fascinating saga to become India's 85th Grandmaster

It was a sustained and dedicated effort, over dozen years, by the 32-year-old player who had overcome close misses and heartbreaks before achieving the elusive third and final GM norm earlier this month



SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

S. Prasanna Venkatesan

Just like Robert the Bruce, the King of Scotland, was inspired by a spider persistently attempting to spin a web in a cave, India's 85th and latest chess Grandmaster (GM) Shyaam Nikhil, at one point in his 12-year wait for his third and final GM norm, was inspired by a crab on the Sri Lankan seashore.

Drawing inspiration

"I take inspiration from whatever I look around. For example, I won the Commonwealth Chess Championship in Sri Lanka in 2022. The initial stages weren't so good for me – I drew and then lost my second round. And then I started to win some rounds.

"So, one day I was standing on the seashore. I was just looking at the waves and I saw these crabs on the shore. There was this crab trying to dig and keep something. Though waves came and closed it (the hole), it resumed digging and kept on doing it even after the waves receded.

"It felt like that I was getting a message from that. I felt this way: 'Just keep doing your work. Whatever the disturbances or external things, don't take those into consideration.'

"So, I draw inspiration from all the incidents I look around, and this way I keep myself motivated all the time," said Shyaam over a Zoom call.

He also mentioned that he had a lot of people around him 'radiating' positivity. For instance, his parents have made him feel motivated by narrating stories of how they had overcome their own struggles.

"See, there's 12 years of struggle for a norm. It's not an easy thing to cope up with," said Shyaam.

Elusive

Shyaam, 32, had become an International Master (IM) at 18 in 2010. He had secured the first two GM norms in successive months in 2011 and surpassed the 2500-mark in the Elo rating in 2012. But it was then that the third and final GM norm started becoming elusive.

It became so elusive that he, who was initially very confident of claiming it, somehow wanted to get done with it.

With time, someone casually suggesting in wonder that he had been

taking so long for one norm became inconvenient.

Even his mother's appreciative WhatsApp messages during the course of the Dubai Police Global Chess Challenge, where he finally managed to get his third GM norm this month, made him feel that his mother was expecting him to achieve the norm and thus created pressure for him.

"My mom doesn't sleep. She waits all night expecting my result. She just looks at the evaluation bar online and she knows what is happening in the game.

"So, after I finish every round, she used to send me a message, like a sticker which would read 'Super.' Every day and night, there were conversations like this. So, till the end, the 'Super' continued and I managed to finish my norm there.

"See, actually, it creates some pressure. It is a support, but you can feel that expectation that she is waiting for my result. And if I lose, it is more painful. Rather than the game, the emotional connect is a bit more painful. There were many moments like this. Because the misses were so many, right?"

There were indeed a few agonisingly close misses. Before the Dubai event, there was a tournament in France where he missed the norm by half-a-point. In the Dubai Open, where he surpassed the 2500 Elo mark in 2012, he couldn't manage a win needed in one of the rounds.

He said the miss in the 2020 Delhi Open was particularly heartbreaking. "I was playing against Russian GM Pavel Ponkratov. If I had won that game, I would have got my GM title and also finished second in the tournament. The prize money was quite large (₹4 lakh). So much was at stake.

"I had a completely winning position. Then, there were so many people around the table. I'm not saying it's a distraction. But it usually happens when there is so much tension on the board.

"It's not like cricket. Only when the crucial moments are there, people will be around. I really don't know what happened and what went wrong, I lost the game on time. That was more painful."

Had he won, he would have become India's 66th GM. If he had succeeded in 2012, he would have been the country's 28th GM.

There was this one time in India in 2014 when he had in fact secured his final GM norm, but it wasn't counted due to a technicality.

"I needed a foreign norm. Like, it's not necessarily to be played abroad. The majority of your opponents should be from foreign countries. Out of nine rounds, you must meet at least 4-5 foreigners."

Shyaam, who hails from Nagercoil, was without the financial means to support his participation in foreign tournaments until he was employed by ICF in 2017. His father was working with the State Express Transport Corporation (SETC) and his mother's a homemaker.

"I have two younger brothers. The initial stages (in chess) weren't so clear at all. I used to play only the district tournaments. After that, I started to get selected and played at the State level, which in itself was a difficult thing when I started.

"I had to travel some 12 to 14 hours to reach Chennai. So, it wasn't easy at the earlier stages. My father used to come with me. After a while, I shifted my home to Madurai for training. And then to Chennai. After finishing school, I went back to Nagercoil for college.

"After 2012, we got to know there were many European tournaments. And there were some exposure trips. The government will send you on an exposure trip. Sometimes I got the chance. Other than that, I wasn't able to go since I didn't have that bank statement. You need to show enough funds in your account, which I didn't have. I was getting prize money and all. But that wasn't sufficient to go abroad. If you go abroad, you can play some 3-4 tournaments in a row, which I couldn't afford at that time.

"Only after joining Railways, I was able to play abroad. Since I'm a government employee, they gave an NOC. With all these documents, it was easy to get a visa and travel abroad and play, which was a turning point in my life. Because of that, I got to improve a lot in the rating."

Manual training

Growing up in a generation when the internet and chess engines weren't as prevalent as they are today, Shyaam had to largely train manually by playing.

"When I reached 2375 Elo rating, I didn't even have a computer. I won a

tournament in Jaipur with a prize money of some ₹77,000 or something like that. With that prize money, my parents got me a desktop.

"And at that time, there were chess engines like Fritz. It's now considered to be very weak. There was no Stockfish.

"The internet was also not that popular. There were internet centres. Online chess was not that popular. In the initial stages, it was completely on-board practice. In Madurai, I was training with Ghouse Kamarudeen in his academy.

"There were so many other chess players there who are currently not playing. They've left chess, but at that time, they were very supportive. We were there from nine in the morning to six in the evening, playing tournaments, games, and solving positions. It was all about chess, full-time.

"There wasn't much access to databases and all. We had a notebook for openings and used to write the moves from the ECO (Encyclopedia of Chess Openings). We also had to write all the variations in the notebook and used to memorise those as well. The playing also helped a lot. Like, we used to play from morning till evening. Even after going home, if I closed my eyes, I would see the chessboard."

Reading it up

He has benefited by reading Mikhail Tal's, Garry Kasparov's, and Bobby Fischer's books.

"I've read *My Great Predecessors* by Kasparov. When I made my first GM norm, I needed a win with black (pieces) against a GM from Poland. He hadn't even lost a single game in the tournament with white pieces. He had drawn some games, but he'd never lost.

"He played the English opening. I had seen Kasparov's game with a similar pawn structure, which helped me win that round.

"I have studied *My 60 Memorable Games* by Fischer. I'm now looking into a recent book on how to play unconventional chess."

With the GM title having been ticked off, Shyaam feels like he is "beginning" his chess career. He mentioned that he has managed to enter the "elite zone" and now has the goal of improving his Elo rating to 2600 to reach the 'Super GM' level.

THE GIST

Shyaam, who had become an International Master in 2010, secured the first two GM norms in 2011 and surpassed the 2500-mark in the Elo rating in 2012

Growing up in a generation when the internet and chess engines weren't as prevalent as they are today, he had to largely train manually by playing

The Grandmaster feels he is "beginning" his chess career and has managed to enter the "elite zone"

This century, heatwaves are moving slower and lasting longer

Scientists analysed the upper atmosphere's air circulation patterns to see how the moving air could affect the big blobs of heat that render heatwaves; they found that over the years, the jet stream — a fast, narrow current of air that flows from west to east high up in the troposphere — has become weaker

Rohini Subrahmanyam

Growing up in the 1990s in India meant having seen an ad for a glucose-based drink on television in which the sun literally sucks the life-force out of children with a giant straw as they are playing. This ad has started to hit closer to reality. India has increasingly been in the grip of more frequent and intense heat waves, with outdoor workers especially struggling with the rising mercury.

A recent study published in *Science Advances* showed that it wasn't just India: the whole world is grappling with slower and longer heatwaves.

Temperature and circulation

Heatwaves have a terrible impact on human and animal life, with increased risk of wildfires, damaged crops, and worse health. Analysing temperatures around the world from 1979 to 2020, Wei Zhang, a climate scientist at Utah State University, and his colleagues studied how they have changed over time.

On average, they found, heatwaves have slowed down nearly 8 km/day each decade and lasted longer by about four days — the effects being particularly drastic in North America and Eurasia. Heatwaves have also increased in frequency, from about 75 events averaged over 1979-1983 to about 98 over 2016-2020. "In thinking about heatwaves and how they would change in the future, there are two pieces of the puzzle that climate scientists think about," Rachel White, an atmospheric scientist at the University of British Columbia, said. "One of them is thermodynamics: it's just about the temperature. As temperatures are getting warmer, heatwaves are going to get warmer. The second piece is the dynamics: the atmospheric circulation patterns that cause heatwaves."

There are still some open questions around how those might change in a warming world.

The heat moves

Previous studies have mostly focused on how frequent heatwaves are or how hot it gets during one. In this study, the researchers classified contiguous heatwaves as events with extremely high temperatures, covering more than a million square kilometres, and lasting for longer than three days. They then tracked the movement of these huge masses of hot air over space and time, studying how far and how fast they were moving — one of the first groups of scientists to do so.

Instead of just focusing on the frequency and the intensity of heatwaves, the study also checked how fast they were propagating and how long they lasted. By



Taking cover: Women cover their faces to protect from heat at Bikaner in Rajasthan on April 19. REUTERS

looking at how heatwaves move over time and space, Dr. White believes the study has bridged the gap between the thermodynamic and dynamic pieces of the heatwaves puzzle a little more than before.

"This study is looking at heatwaves like an object that can move and can travel and propagate, which you would miss if you were just looking at one point," she said. "If you just look at one point, you can be like, 'oh, the heatwave lasted for 5 days'. But the object itself lasted for longer, it just moved. That's what they are doing here, tracking them as they are moving, which is cool."

The guiding hand falters

But what could be causing them to move so sluggish? The scientists analysed the upper atmosphere's air circulation patterns, to see how the moving air could affect these big blobs of heat. They found that over the years, the jet stream — a fast, narrow current of air that flows from west to east high up in the troposphere — has become weaker.

The jet stream guides atmospheric waves, waves that are caused by the earth's rotation and which influence the earth's surface temperature. As the jet stream weakens, these waves also move more slowly, leading to more persistent weather events, and more spells of high and slow-moving heat.



Given that heatwaves have such a huge impact on human health and the environment, we need to think about climate adaptation

WEI ZHANG
Climate scientist, Utah State University

To check if human activity had played a role in this outcome, the researchers ran simulations with temperature data from 1979 to 2020, but included scenarios with and without human greenhouse gas emissions. They found that though natural climate variability and natural events also influenced how heatwaves had changed, human activity and greenhouse gas emissions have played a dominant role in rendering the slower-moving and longer-lasting heat.

Dr. White said the next steps would be to further tease apart the role of atmospheric air circulation patterns in contributing to heatwave dynamics on the ground. Country-specific changes in heatwaves over time would also be some of the missing pieces of the puzzle she would like to see. "I think there's just a lot that can be done with this dataset, now that they have created it," she said.

Dr. Zhang does plan to delve deeper into regional differences as part of the

group's next steps, while also working on climate adaptation strategies. "Given that heatwaves have such a huge impact on human health and the environment, we need to think about climate adaptation," he said.

Mitigation strategies

In densely populated urban areas, some strategies to better mitigate changes in heatwaves would be to plant more trees and increase green infrastructure — an undertaking Dr. Zhang has himself been involved in. Together with Tree Utah, an NGO, he has been engaging people in planting and taking care of trees. He has also been teaching a class on Climate Adaptation Science at Utah State University, where he helps students learn and apply climate adaptation strategies, with projects like working with farmers on alternative crops.

"This paper is another form of evidence that climate change is altering these extreme weather events," Dr. Zhang said. Adding to the already long list of studies, like how the intensity of hurricanes has increased or how there is extreme precipitation, this study, in Dr. Zhang's words, "is another signal of how climate change could influence our daily lives, our health, our environment — by changing the behaviour of heatwaves." (Rohini Subrahmanyam is a freelance journalist)

THE GIST

Heatwaves have increased in frequency, from about 75 events averaged over 1979-1983 to about 98 over 2016-2020

The jet stream guides atmospheric waves that are caused by the earth's rotation and which influence the earth's surface temperature

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Though natural climate variability and natural events also influenced how heatwaves had changed, human activity and greenhouse gas emissions have played a dominant role in rendering the slower-moving and longer-lasting heat

BIG SHOT



Japan's new whaling mothership, the *Kangei Maru*, arrives at Ariake pier in Tokyo. The nearly 9,300-tonne ship, which is the country's first domestically built whaling ship, set sail on its maiden hunting voyage on May 21, heralding a new era for the controversial practice defended by the government as an integral part of national culture. AFP

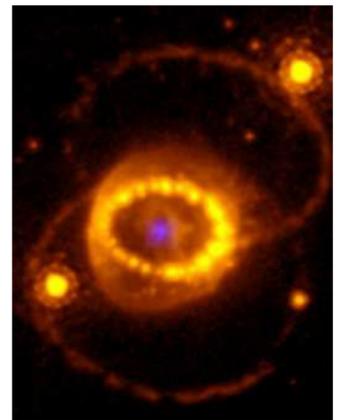
WHAT IS IT?

Astronomical transients: burning bright in the blink of an eye

Vasudevan Mukunth

In astronomy, a 'transient' is any celestial object whose brightness changes in short spans of time. There are many kinds of astronomical transients, all of them united by phenomena that are violent in some measure. Astronomers study transients to understand where their violence comes from and what that can tell us about non-transient events. On May 21, in fact, the Indian-American astronomer Shrinivas Kulkarni was awarded the Shaw Prize for Astronomy in 2024 for his work on the physics of astronomical transients.

One of the most well-known such transients is supernovae — when the outer layers of large stars blow up while their cores implode because the stars have run out of elements to fuse. Many a supernova has been known to become so bright that it emits light more intensely than the stars in the rest of its host galaxy combined. Another famous transient is the active galactic nucleus (AGN). The centres of massive galaxies host supermassive black holes. Sometimes, these black holes actively feast on matter in their orbit. Interactions between the black holes and the matter in this process cause the latter to acquire energy and glow with a changing brightness. In 2007, astronomers discovered a mysterious new transient called a fast radio burst (FRB). We have since found



Moment of shine: The aftermath of supernova 1987A. Supernovae are one of the most well-known astronomical transients. AP

hundreds of FRBs even though they're hard to spot: they can emit more than 10-times as much energy as the Sun in a few milliseconds. We don't know what causes them.

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