

# THE ASIAN AGE

LONDON MONDAY 20 MAY 2024



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**BJP will win only 1 seat in UP, says Rahul at Prayagraj rally with Akhilesh Yadav**



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### WINDOWS

#### 'Hard landing' for Iran Prez copter; rescue underway

**Dubai:** A helicopter carrying Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi suffered a "hard landing" on Sunday, Iranian state media reported, without elaborating. Some began urging the public to pray for Mr Raisi and the others on board as rescue crews sped through a misty, rural forest where his helicopter was believed to be. Mr Raisi was travelling in Iran's East Azerbaijan province. State TV said the incident happened near Jolfa, a city on the border with the nation of Azerbaijan, some 600 kilometres northwest of the Iranian capital, Tehran. Later, the TV put it further east near the village of Uzi, but details remained contradictory. One government official used the word "crash" to describe the incident, but he acknowledged to an Iranian newspaper that he had yet to reach the site himself. **Full report on Page 6**



Julianne Moore poses during the premiere of the film *Horizon: An American Saga* at the 77th Cannes Film Festival on Sunday. — AP

#### At 44.4°C, Delhi sees hottest day of season

**New Delhi:** The national capital witnessed the hottest day of the season on Sunday, with the mercury soaring to a scorching 44.4 degrees Celsius. Delhi has seen a steady rise in temperature in recent days, culminating in the highest temperature recorded this summer. **Full report on Page 2**

### COUNTERPOINT



Why can't the EC set up a polling booth in the cellar of our apartment?

#### Maliwal case: Police seize devices from CM's house

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, MAY 19

A Delhi police team reached the official residence of chief minister Arvind Kejriwal on Sunday in connection with its investigation into the alleged assault on AAP Rajya Sabha MP Swati Maliwal. The police team collected electronic devices, including a CCTV digital video recorder (DVR), in its effort to acquire the footage of the May 13 alleged assault on AAP Rajya Sabha MP when Bibhav Kumar, Mr Kejriwal's close aide, allegedly attacked her at the CM's residence.

Ms Maliwal has alleged that the CCTV footage of the CM's residence was being tampered with. However, the AAP alleged that stories are being planted to tarnish the party's image during the ongoing Lok Sabha elections.

AAP leader Saurabh Bharadwaj said the police have already seized the DVR. "On Saturday, they seized the DVR of cameras installed at the entry gates and boundary walls. On Sunday, they seized the DVR of cameras installed in other parts of the house. The police are planting stories that the CCTV (camera) footage has been deleted, but they have already seized it," he claimed.

The Delhi police booked Mr Kejriwal's aide for molestation and attempted homicide after Ms Maliwal's complaint. He was arrested on Saturday and produced in court, which remanded him in five-day police custody.

While pronouncing the order on the Delhi **Turn on Page 4**



Delhi chief minister and AAP convenor Arvind Kejriwal and party MP Sanjay Singh during a protest march in New Delhi on Sunday. — PTI

#### BJP has launched 'Operation Jhaadu' to crush us: Kejriwal

End theatrics, speak on Maliwal case: BJP to Delhi CM

AVINASH PRABHAKAR and BHASHKAR HARI SHARMA NEW DELHI, MAY 19

Amid a full-blown political war over the Swati Maliwal "assault" case, Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal on Sunday marched towards the BJP office and claimed that the saffron party has launched "Operation Jhaadu" to crush the AAP and vowed to counter it. The BJP hit back at the AAP, saying instead of indulging in "theatrics", Mr Kejriwal should break his "silence" on the alleged assault on the AAP Rajya Sabha MP by his aide Bibhav Kumar.

Addressing AAP workers and leaders ahead of the party's proposed protest march to the BJP headquarters in the national capital, the Delhi chief minister claimed that the BJP sees the AAP as a threat and therefore wants to crush it. He cautioned the party cadres that there will be bigger challenges ahead and asked the party to be prepared to face them.

#### Maliwal: AAP once fought for Nirbhaya, now backs Bibhav

**New Delhi, May 19:** AAP Rajya Sabha MP Swati Maliwal, who has been accused by her party of being part of a conspiracy to frame Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal in a false case, on Sunday said her party colleagues once sought justice for Nirbhaya but today they are supporting a person accused of assaulting her.

She said if AAP leader and former deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia, who is in jail in connection with the Delhi excise police case, had been here "maybe things wouldn't have been so bad for me!" Ms Maliwal has alleged that Mr Kejriwal's aide Bibhav Kumar assaulted her.

**THE DELHI CM** claimed that the BJP sees the AAP as a threat and therefore wants to crush it. He cautioned the party cadres that there will be bigger challenges ahead and asked the party to be prepared to face them.

"The Prime Minister has made up his mind to completely destroy and crush the AAP, for which he has started an operation called Operation

Jhaadu," said Mr Kejriwal, adding, "How did I know about this? There are many people who go to meet the Prime Minister and many of them know us too. So, after meeting him (Prime Minister Narendra Modi), they tell us, and almost everyone has the same version, that the first thing he talks about is that these AAP people are growing very fast. Before the AAP grows too big and becomes a challenge for the BJP in the **Turn on Page 4**

#### Says 'scared' TMC abused RK Mission, ISKON PM accuses Mamata of targeting Hindu monks

RAJIB CHOWDHURI KOLKATA, MAY 19

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday attacked West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee for "defaming and threatening" Hindu religious organisations — ISKON, Ramakrishna Mission and Bharat Sevashram Sangha — and their monks "under the pressure of Muslim hardliners" to appease her vote bank in the Lok Sabha elections.

Addressing a BJP poll campaign rally at Bishnupur in Bankura, Mr Modi alleged: "The Trinamul Congress has got so scared of its defeat that it has started abusing our great community of saints. Today ISKON, Ramakrishna Mission and Bharat Sevashram Sangha are world famous for their service and welfare. But the Bengal CM claims they are harming our country. It is my direct complaint that she is defaming and cursing our great monks and organisations under the pressure of Muslim hardliners to get votes."



Prime Minister Narendra Modi during a rally in Purulia, West Bengal, on Sunday. — PTI

**ADDRESSING A BJP** poll campaign rally at Bishnupur in Bankura, the PM alleged: "The Trinamul Congress has got so scared of its defeat that it has started abusing our great community of saints"

Earlier in Purulia, the PM claimed: "The TMC government has crossed all limits in scaring and threatening people. ISKON, the Ramakrishna Mission and Bharat Sevashram Sangha brighten the name of Bharat globally. But the Bengal CM is openly

threatening and warning them. These organisations have their members and followers all over the world who are pained by such remarks."

Mr Modi, who raised the same issue later at another rally in Midnapore, added: "The Bengal government pointed fingers at these organisations and issued threats in their names. It dares to do it only to appease their vote bank. This is the level the TMC has stooped to. It doesn't care about the feelings and sentiments of lakhs of Bengali people. The country will **Turn on Page 4**

#### Modi hits out at Cong, Rahul for 'anti-industry' and 'Maoist' views

AGE CORRESPONDENT with agency inputs NEW DELHI/JAMSHEDPUR, MAY 19

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday lashed out at the Congress and its former president Rahul Gandhi, asserting that any industrialist will think 50 times before investing in states ruled by the party. The shehzada (Mr Gandhi) speaks the Maoist language". Addressing an election

rally in Jharkhand's Jamshepur, Mr Modi also accused the grand old party of patronising dynastic politics and considering some Lok Sabha seats their "ancestral properties".

Taking a jibe at Mr Gandhi, Mr Modi said, "The language used by the Congress shehzada will make any industrialist think 50 times before investing in states ruled by the party. The shehzada is using language spo-

ken by Maoists and is extorting money through innovative methods."

The Prime Minister's allegations came against the backdrop of Mr Gandhi's recent comments, referring to a speech by Mr Modi in which he had claimed that the Congress received money from top industrialists. The former Congress president, in New Delhi on Saturday, had said, "I'm ready to **Turn on Page 4**

#### Amethi, Rae Bareilly among 49 LS seats to vote today

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, MAY 19

Voters in 49 parliamentary constituencies across eight states and UTs will cast their ballots to elect the new government on Monday.

In the fifth phase of the ongoing general election, 14 Uttar Pradesh constituencies, including Rae Bareilly, Amethi and Lucknow, will go to polls. Voters from 13 constituencies in Maharashtra, seven in West Bengal, five each in Bihar and Odisha, three in Jharkhand and one each in Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh

will cast their ballots. In the previous Lok Sabha elections, Sonia Gandhi, then the Congress chief, secured victory in Rae Bareilly, while her son Rahul Gandhi was defeated in Amethi by Union minister Smriti Irani.

In Uttar Pradesh's Lucknow, Rajnath Singh is vying for a third consecutive term. The electoral fate of other prominent leaders, including Piyush Goyal (Mumbai North) and Omar Abdullah (Baramulla), will be sealed in ballot boxes on Monday. **More on Page 3**

#### Cong accuses Shah of 'fear-mongering'

Jairam: INDIA will provide stable govt 'HM set off market volatility'

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, MAY 19

The Congress on Sunday accused Union home minister Amit Shah of "fear-mongering" over his recent stock market comment. Mr Shah had in an interview with a TV channel said the stock market shouldn't be linked with the ongoing elections, but that a stable government does help it to perform better. He also suggested the market will shoot up after June 4 as a result of the BJP and its allies sweeping the Lok Sabha elections.

In a statement, AICC general secretary Jairam Ramesh said there was no

basis for the "fear-mongering incited by the outgoing home minister about the INDIA government in the financial markets". The record of the Congress Party in providing strong and inclusive economic growth speaks for itself, he said. "It is a matter of record that economic growth and investment were much higher under Dr Manmohan Singh than under the Narendra Modi government. Private investment and the share of manufacturing as a percentage were much greater under Dr Singh than in the past decade," he said.

In this context, the most important contribution of

**AICC GENERAL** secretary Jairam Ramesh said there was no basis for the "fear-mongering incited by the outgoing home minister about the INDIA government in the financial markets"

the INDIA government will be to "remove the current environment of distrust and fear, and create a healthy ecosystem where private enterprises, regulatory authorities, the tax authorities and government will work in a spirit of mutual cooperation and respect, as we wrote in our Nyay Patra manifesto", he said. "We also stated 'regula-

tory oversight will be based on clearly enunciated laws and rules that will be applied fairly and without discrimination," the AICC general secretary in-charge of communications said.

"Our manifesto also promises to implement a clear, transparent and predictable tax regime. We will replace the current GST with a GST 2.0 that will be a single, moderate rate (with a few exceptions). We will enact a Direct Taxes Code and maintain stable personal income tax rates throughout the next five years," Mr Ramesh said.

"We will eliminate the **Turn on Page 4**

#### Bibi faces Cabinet revolt as 27 killed in Israel's Gaza airstrike

**Deir Al-Balah, Gaza Strip:** An Israeli airstrike killed 27 people in central Gaza, mostly women and children, and fighting raged across the north on Sunday as Israel's leaders aired divisions over who should govern Gaza after the war, now in its eighth month.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has faced criticism from his own War Cabinet, with his main political rival, Benny Gantz, threatening to leave the government if a plan is not formulated by June 8 that includes an



Benny Gantz

international administration for postwar Gaza. US national security adviser Jake Sullivan was expected to meet with top Israeli leaders on Sunday to discuss an ambitious US plan for Saudi Arabia to recognise Israel and help the Palestinian

Authority to govern Gaza in exchange for a path to eventual statehood.

Mr Netanyahu, who is opposed to Palestinian statehood, has rejected those proposals, saying Israel will maintain open-ended security control over Gaza and partner with local Palestinians unaffiliated with Hamas or the Western-backed Palestinian Authority. Mr Gantz' withdrawal would not bring down Mr Netanyahu's coalition government. — AP **More on Page 6**



US President Joe Biden greets law enforcement officials before boarding Air Force One at Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport in Atlanta on Sunday. — AFP

#### Take stringent action: Centre after 2 terror attacks in J&K

YUSUF JAMEEL SRINAGAR, MAY 19

The Centre is reported to be concerned over Saturday night's back-to-back terror attacks, which left a BJP worker dead and a tourist couple from Jaipur injured in southern Shopian and Anantnag districts and has asked the Jammu and Kashmir administration to take steps to bring the perpetrators to justice and ensure no such incidents reoccur.

The bloody incidents took place a day after Union home minister Amit Shah's unexpected visit to Srinagar, during which he discussed various "important issues" including security preparedness and logistics for the upcoming annual Amarnath yatra.

Both Anantnag and Shopian are part of the Anantnag-Rajouri-Poonch Lok Sabha constituency, where polling is scheduled to be held in the sixth phase of the ongoing general election on May 25. The voting was to take place on May 7, but the Election Commission deferred it till May 25 owing to connectivity issues.

The attacks in Shopian's Hurrpur and Anantnag's Yannar area came amid the campaigning in the Anantnag-Rajouri-Poonch constituency. **More on Page 4**



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**IN BRIEF**

**3 held for thrashing 26-yr-old to death**

**New Delhi:** Two people were arrested and a juvenile was detained for allegedly thrashing a 26-year-old man to death in Uttam Nagar here, the police said on Sunday. While the reason behind the attack is yet to be ascertained, the police suspect old enmity between the accused and the victim, they said. "A PCR call was received on Saturday regarding a man who received serious injuries after he was thrashed," a senior police officer said. When the police reached the spot, the PCR team had already taken Karan to the Safdarjung Hospital. Karan was declared dead on arrival, he said. A family member of the victim told the reporters that the accused dragged Karan out of the house and thrashed him. "The accused first hit him with sticks mercilessly and kicked him. They jumped on his chest when he was gasping for life and fled," he said. Following this, the police registered a case under section 302 (murder) of the IPC against the three accused and arrested them, the police said. Efforts are being made to arrest the remaining accused as well. During the investigation, the police found that Karan was involved in 10 other criminal cases, they said.

**DTC bus catches fire in Hauz Khas**

**New Delhi:** An electric bus of the Delhi transport corporation (DTC) gutted in a fire in the Hauz Khas area here on Sunday morning, officials of the Delhi fire services said. No casualties were reported in the incident, the DTC officials said. "The driver and the bus conductor acted immediately and asked all the passengers to get down, which averted a major incident," an official of the DFS said. Officials said that they received information at around 11:10 am. Three fire tenders were pressed into service near the Padmini Enclave area. It took about an hour for the firefighters to douse the flames, officials said. However, the reason behind the fire is yet to be ascertained. Bus number 502 was on route from Old Delhi towards Mehrauli.

**Poll body's Sankalp Patra to boost voting**

**New Delhi:** The Delhi poll body's initiative to boost electoral participation has witnessed nearly 16 lakh signed commitments pledging to vote in the general elections, it said on Sunday. Launched recently, the 'Sankalp Patra' initiative has been spearheaded by the chief electoral officer's (CEO) office and targeted schools under the Municipal Corporation of Delhi and the New Delhi Municipal Council. "The Sankalp Patra, a pledge form, was distributed to students who, in turn, brought those to their parents to sign, committing to vote," the poll body said in a statement.

**TEEN LIVES AFTER WILSON DISEASE, HEPATITIS A**

**New Delhi:** A 13-year-old female child who was suffering from rare genetic disease 'Wilson Disease' and later diagnosed with Hepatitis A has got a new life after her mother donated a portion of liver at a hospital here. The child, Radha, was diagnosed with rare Wilson's disease with the accumulation of copper in her liver at Sir Ganga Ram hospital. However, she successfully traversed the challenging rare disease. But later, she was diagnosed with Hepatitis A leading to acute on chronic liver failure. Doctors at the hospital advised the family for liver transplant but her situation made the complex procedure more risky as severe bleeding event left her in a hepatic coma and on ventilator support. However, her mother decided to donate a portion of her liver to save the daughter. The two-hour long procedure of transplant under Dr Ushant Dhir, chairman of liver transplant and hepatobiliary surgery, at hospital saved the child. She opened her eyes on the 2nd day after the liver transplant. The hospital said she has recovered very well and now is ready to go back to school after summer vacation.

**■ If Sisodia had been here it wouldn't have been bad for me: Maliwal**  
**'AAP once fought for Nirbhaya, is now supporting an accused'**

**AGE CORRESPONDENT**  
**NEW DELHI, MAY 19**

After the AAP accused Rajya Sabha MP Swati Maliwal of "being the face of a conspiracy hatched by the BJP" in connection with her allegations that chief minister Arvind Kejriwal's aide Bibhav Kumar assaulted her, she on Sunday said her party colleagues once sought justice for Nirbhaya but today they are supporting a person accused of assaulting her. Ms Maliwal said if AAP leader and former deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia, who is in jail, had been here "maybe things wouldn't have been so bad for me!" Ms Maliwal has alleged that chief minister Arvind Kejriwal's aide Bibhav Kumar assaulted her on May 13 when she went to the CM's residence to meet him. The AAP has thrashed her allegations and claimed Ms Maliwal was acting at the behest of



Swati Maliwal

the BJP to frame Mr Kejriwal in a fake case. Ms Maliwal, who has been associated with the AAP since its inception more than 10 years ago, said there was a time when "we all used to come out on the streets to get justice for Nirbhaya". "Today, 12 years later, we have come out on the streets to save the accused (Bibhav Kumar) who made the CCTV footage disappear and formatted the phone. I wish they had used this much force for Sisodia ji. Had he been here, maybe things wouldn't have been so bad for me!" she wrote.

Meanwhile, extending his support to Ms Maliwal, former Madhya Pradesh chief minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan said "AAP has become 'Ahankari Aadmi Party'. Arvind Kejriwal should answer why he is not speaking if a woman who is a Rajya Sabha member from your party has been assaulted by your people. She was not just verbally assaulted but physically assaulted too. Instead of giving justice to your MP, you are trying to save the accused. Mr Kejriwal you should remember this is India, where 'Mahabharat' happened when Draupadi was insulted and the entire lineage was finished. Neither you nor your party will survive." Addressing a press conference at the BJP headquarters, party MP Manoj Tiwari, who is seeking re-election from North East Delhi, alleged that Mr Kejriwal held the protest to protect Mr Kumar.

**Stories are being planted to tarnish party image: AAP**

**AGE CORRESPONDENT**  
**NEW DELHI, MAY 19**

After the Delhi police seized the DVR of CCTV cameras installed inside chief minister Arvind Kejriwal's residence in connection with its probe into the alleged assault on Rajya Sabha MP Swati Maliwal, the AAP on Sunday alleged that stories are being planted to tarnish the party's image ahead of the elections. Saurabh Bharadwaj said the police has already seized the DVR (digital video recorder) of CCTV cameras. "The police are planting stories that the CCTV (camera) footage has been deleted but they have already seized it," he claimed.



Women walk as mirage appears on the Kartvy Path on a hot summer day in New Delhi on Sunday. — PTI

**Delhi sizzles at 44.4°C, 'red alert' issued due to heatwave**

**AGE CORRESPONDENT**  
**NEW DELHI, MAY 19**

The national capital recorded 44.4°C on Sunday, with the weather office issuing a 'red alert' due to severe heatwave conditions in the city. Delhi has seen a steady rise in temperature in recent days, culminating in the highest temperature recorded this summer on Sunday. Saturday's temperature was 43.6°C, up from 42.5°C on Friday. The Safdarjung observatory, Delhi's main weather station, recorded a high of 44.4°C, four notches above the normal on Sunday, while the minimum temperature was at 28.2°C, two degrees above the normal range.

**Delhi's outdoor workers, low-income households bear brunt of deadly heat**

**New Delhi, May 19:** Sitting under a tree, Suman Mandal strenuously fans her two-year-old son on a hot summer afternoon near a construction site in Southeast Delhi's Sewa Nagar.

The mercury has soared to 46°C and Mandal, 37, and her two children - the other aged four - are visibly sluggish. "It is very difficult to work in this heat. But I cannot skip work or I will lose income," she said, adding the heat also takes a toll on her children. Wearing a checkered scarf to shield himself from the searing sun, Sanjay Verma, 49, zigzags across South Delhi for eight hours, delivering food. He says the crippling heat is slowing him down. "I take a break and drink water every 30 minutes, otherwise I will faint or drop dead."

As parts of India grapple with extreme heat outdoor workers, the elderly and children are particularly affected. People are less productive during hot weather and children struggle to learn.

While experts say spells of extreme heat have become more frequent and severe due to climate change, a new analysis shows Delhi logged a high of 40°C or above on more than 150 days in eight of the last 10 years. Only one year (2007) saw the mercury exceeding 40°C for more than 150 days in the previous two decades.

The International Institute for Environment and Development's (IIED) analysis of temperatures in the world's 20 biggest capital cities also shows Delhi reached or surpassed 40°C on 1,557 days in the last 10 years. — PTI

"extreme care for vulnerable people" due to the heatwave. There is a very high likelihood of developing heat-related illness and heat stroke in people of all ages, and a significant health concern for vulnerable individuals such as infants, the elderly, and those with chronic diseases. "Avoid heat exposure and keep cool. Avoid dehydration," the IMD said. The weather department has suggested drinking sufficient water and using ORS or homemade drinks such as lassi, torani (rice water), lemon water and buttermilk to stay hydrated.

According to the IMD, several areas in Delhi were hotter as compared to cities in neighbouring Rajasthan, a state which has the Thar Desert and is known for having temperatures breaching the 50-degree Celsius mark. While experts say spells of extreme heat have become more frequent and severe due to climate change, a new analysis shows Delhi logged a high of 40°C or above on more than 150 days in eight of the last 10 years. Only one year (2007) saw the mercury exceeding 40°C for more than 150 days in the previous two decades.

**People are determined to re-elect me: Manoj Tiwari**

**AGE CORRESPONDENT**  
**NEW DELHI, MAY 19**

As the campaigning for the 2024 Lok Sabha polls gathers pace, BJP's Northeast Delhi MP Manoj Tiwari vows to continue his winning streak as an MP and also assured that Narendra Modi will be the Prime Minister for the third consecutive time. Mr Tiwari, who won his seat in 2014 and 2019, talks to **Shashi Bhushan and Bhaskar Hari Sharma** about development he has done in Northeast constituency and how he would tackle anti incumbency as the singer turned politician is the lone candidate of BJP who has been given ticket for the third time in Delhi.



BJP leaders Manoj Tiwari and Madhavi Latha at the party headquarters in New Delhi on Sunday. — PTI

**INDIA alliance has fielded Kanhaiya Kumar against you who is young and belongs from the same Purvanchali community just like you. Do you see it as a challenge?**

It is disrespect to the Purvanchali to call Kanhaiya as a Purvanchali. A person who backed divisive slogans, who called the Indian Army rapists, who supported the terrorists who attacked the Indian Parliament, should not be linked with the Purvanchali community. Bihar rejected him in 2019. He contested from Begusarai and even the CPI cadre did not vote for him. It is indisputable that he is notorious and is known for all the wrong reasons. Even the workers of the AAP and the Congress have distance themselves from their parties. The former Delhi Congress president Arvind Singh Lovely resigned over the party fielding Mr Kumar and joined progressive party like BJP. A debate is going

**The Opposition parties have accused you of ignoring the constituency and not doing any work in the area. How do you react to that?**

Projects worth ₹14,600 crore have been taken up in my area in the last 10 years. I got ₹61 crore sanctioned in 2014, during President's rule for the completion of the Signature Bridge. Seelampur-Shastri Park flyover fixed the traffic mess in the area, National Highway 709B, which passes through Northeast Delhi is being constructed, the area has been connected with the Metro network up to Shiv Vihar, a work that entailed investment of ₹3,200 crore, the work on Metro Phase IV from Maupur to Mukundpur is going on. In the next year, the entire area will be transformed

**You were twice elected as an MP from the Northeast Delhi and this is the third time. Do you see any anti-incumbency and how is the public responding to your campaign?**

People from my constituency are organising public meetings on their own to support me. Ever since the party announced my candidature on March 2, I have held 500 public meetings. Around 300 such meetings have been organised by the people themselves. Before the Congress named Kanhaiya Kumar as its candidate against me, people used to wonder who would be my competitor. But, ever since his name has been announced, the people are determined to re-elect me.

The Congress-AAP

**BJP rattled by 2024 defeat: Kejriwal**

**AGE CORRESPONDENT**  
**NEW DELHI, MAY 19**

Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal on Sunday claimed the BJP is rattled since the INDIA bloc would come to power at the Centre after the Lok Sabha polls and the AAP, a constituent of the alliance, would ensure full statehood for the national capital. Addressing a poll meeting in Kalkaji in support of the party's South Delhi Lok Sabha seat candidate Sahi Ram Pahalwan, he said, "The BJP is rattled by the fact that it will suffer defeat when Lok Sabha poll results are declared on June 4."



Madhya Pradesh chief minister Mohan Yadav being garlanded during a public meeting in support of BJP candidate from New Delhi constituency Bansuri Swaraj for the Lok Sabha polls in New Delhi on Sunday. — PTI

Asserting that the INDIA bloc will come to power on June 4, Mr Kejriwal said, "The AAP will be a part of the government. We will ensure full statehood for Delhi. There are good government schools and hospitals in Delhi but the law-and-order system is in a bad state." At another poll meeting in Ambedkar Nagar, the AAP national convener said, "I have travelled across the country in the last few days and people are fed up with unemployment. But the Prime Minister is thinking about whom to send to jail. They will arrest all AAP leaders. Have we chosen a PM or a thanedar?"

**2 teens among 4 nabbed for youth's murder in N-E Delhi**

**AGE CORRESPONDENT**  
**NEW DELHI, MAY 19**

The Delhi police has nabbed four people, including two juveniles, for allegedly killing a 20-year-old youth in Seelampur area, officials said on Sunday. The deceased Iqbal had frequent arguments with the accused, who have been identified as Mohammad Adil Ansari (19), Faisal (18), and two teenagers aged 15 and 17, they added.

"The accused and the victim are from same locality, Gautam Puri of Seelampur area. Victim Iqbal would often ask them (accused) to stop loitering around. Even about a week ago, Adil had a spat with Iqbal on the street over a petty issue," DCP Joy Tirkey said. "Adil and his associates planned to teach Iqbal a lesson. On Friday, they accosted him on the street and stabbed him to death," the DCP added.

**Kin of 3 deceased sanitation workers get ₹30L relief**

**AGE CORRESPONDENT**  
**NEW DELHI, MAY 19**

The Delhi high court has directed the city authorities to pay ₹30 lakh compensation each to the families of three sanitation workers who died during manual scavenging in 2017. The high court allowed the petition by the family members seeking higher ex-gratia in accordance with a Supreme Court order in 2023, which increased the compensa-

tion payable to the dependents of the victims who lost their lives in manual scavenging to ₹30 lakh from the existing ₹10 lakh. In the petition, the family members said that the three sanitation workers died in August 2017 while cleaning a drain in Lajpat Nagar. The plea said the deceased were engaged by a Delhi Jal Board sub-contractor. The petitioners said that after they died, a compensation of ₹10 lakh was awarded to the family

members. However, they prayed that the amount be increased to ₹30 lakh. Justice Sachin Datta said: "It can be seen that the directions issued by the Supreme Court were expressly made applicable to all the statutory bodies including corporations, railways, cantonments as well as the agencies under its control...Moreover, the Union and state governments were directed to ensure that rehabilitation measures were taken with respect to sewage workers,

including the family of those who have lost their lives. Specifically, it was directed that the compensation of ₹10 lakh that was given to the family members of the deceased workers be enhanced to ₹30 lakh." The high court said necessarily, the ameliorative directions, strictures and the embargo imposed by the apex court are applicable to the Delhi Jal Board as also to any agency that may be engaged by the board within any part of

Delhi in connection with the work relating to the collection of sewage or carrying out connected works. "Any disregard or violation thereto would invite strict consequences" as envisaged in the apex court verdict, it said. Considering the reasoning given by the apex court, it would be a travesty if the entitlement of the family members of the deceased scavenging workers is confined to ₹10 lakh, the high court said.

**SC notice to govt on conman plea to be shifted from Mandoli prison**

**New Delhi, May 19:** The Supreme Court has sought response from the Delhi government on a plea filed by alleged conman Suresh Chandrasekhar seeking a direction to authorities to shift him from the Mandoli jail to any other prison except those in Punjab and Delhi. A division bench of Justices Bela Trivedi and Pankaj Mishra issued notice to the AAP government.



Suresh Chandrasekhar

"Having regard to the allegations made in the writ petition, let the notice be issued to the respondent, returnable on July 19, 2024," the bench said. Senior advocate Paramjeet Singh Patwalia, appearing for Chandrasekhar, submitted that the petitioner has been put under surveillance with two cameras in order to pressure him to withdraw his complaints.

**'Decrease in road accident fatalities in city till May 15'**

**AGE CORRESPONDENT**  
**NEW DELHI, MAY 19**

Slight decrease in road accident fatalities has been witnessed in Delhi in the first five months of this year, according to the data released by the Delhi police.

The data stated that up till May 15, a total of 518 people lost their lives in 511 accidents. This marks a decrease from the 552 deaths recorded in 544 crashes during the same period last year.

"We have identified different locations like National Highway-24, NH-8, Ring Road, Rohtak Road, GT Road, and Mathura Road are among the top ten roads in Delhi where the highest number of fatal crashes have occurred this year so far. With this information, we can implement targeted enforcement measures to enhance road safety and ensure compliance with traffic regulations, ulti-

**SEVERAL EDUCATIONAL programs in partnership with schools, colleges, and awareness campaigns such as Raahgiri are being conducted regularly to teach people about road safety norms and safe driving practices**

mately aiming to reduce fatalities on these roads," a senior police officer said. Police further said that in addition to law enforcement measures, the Delhi traffic police has prioritised community engagement and collaboration to foster a culture of road safety. "Several educational programs in partnership with schools, colleges, and awareness campaigns such as Raahgiri are being conducted regularly to teach people about road safety norms and safe driving practices," said the officer.

## SHORT TAKES

### Jhargram MP joins TMC at election rally

**Kolkata:** Outgoing Jhargram MP Kunal Hembram, who earlier announced his exit from the BJP getting no ticket in the Lok Sabha election, joined the Trinamul Congress amid Prime Minister Narendra Modi's poll campaign in West Bengal on Sunday. Mr Hembram, who tendered his resignation to the BJP on March 8 citing "personal reasons", took up the TMC flag from party national general secretary and Diamond Harbour MP Abhishek Banerjee at his rally in Nayagram of Jhargram in the afternoon. The TMC posted on X-handle, "In the presence of our Nat'l GS, Shri @abhishekitc, BJP's outgoing MP from Jhargram, Kunal Hembram, proudly took up the TMC flag. We wholeheartedly welcome him to the Trinamul Congress family. Together, we are committed to fighting for the welfare of our Ma, Mati, Manush!"

### 3 NC workers hurt in stabbing incident

**Mendhar, Jammu:** Three National Conference (NC) workers were injured when unidentified persons attacked them with knives at an election rally in Mendhar in Jammu and Kashmir's Poonch district on Sunday, officials said. NC president Farooq Abdullah was present at the rally organised by the party in support of its Anantnag-Rajouri Lok Sabha seat candidate Mian Altaf in Mendhar. The rally continued without any disruption. Officials said there was a clash between two groups over some issue during the rally. Taking advantage of the melee, the attackers managed to escape, the officials said. Police has registered a case and is trying to nab the culprits, they said. NC leader Javed A. Rana termed the incident a "security lapse". — PTI

### Modi's campaign in Punjab from May 23

**Chandigarh:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi will start his poll campaign in Punjab with his first rally in Patiala on Thursday, according to the state BJP secretary. The Punjab BJP general secretary Rakesh Rathour on Sunday said the PM would address three public rallies in the state on May 23 and May 24. Mr Modi will hold his first campaign in Patiala on May 23, followed by rallies in Gurdaspur and Jalandhar the next day, Mr Rathour said. The BJP has fielded four-time MP Preet Kaur from the Patiala parliamentary seat. Sushil Rinku is the saffron party's candidate from Jalandhar, while former MLA Dinesh Babu has been fielded from the Gurdaspur seat. Polling for 13 in Punjab will be held on June 1 in the last phase of LS polls. — PTI

### FORMER DECCAN CHRONICLE CEO PASSES AWAY

**AGE CORRESPONDENT**  
KAKKANAD (KERALA), MAY 19

O. Thomas, former CEO of Deccan Chronicle Holdings Ltd, Hyderabad, passed away in Kakkanad in Ernakulam district on Sunday. He was 78. A prayer service will be held in his memory from 9 am to 12 pm on May 20 at his residence 2B-1, B block, Kent Hail Garden, Stadium Link Road, Kaloor, Kochi. His mortal remains will be taken to Secunderabad. In Secunderabad, his body will be kept at his residence House No 1-2-180/31, Sai Baba Officers Colony, 3rd Avenue Sainikpuri, Secunderabad 500084, on May 21 from 6 pm onwards for the people to pay their last respects. The prayer service on May 22 will begin at 12.30 pm, followed by a service from 1 pm to 2 pm at St. Mother Teresa Syro Malabar Church, Yellareddy Guda, Kapra, Secunderabad. The final memorial service will be at St. Sebastian Church, Defence Colony, Sainikpuri, Secunderabad at 2.30 pm on May 22. The burial will follow soon after the memorial mass at Valerian Cemetery by 3.30 pm where he will be laid to rest as per his last wishes. He is survived by his wife Susan Thomas.

### After snub at Adhir, several Kharge posters defaced in WB

**Kolkata, May 19:** A day after he snubbed West Bengal Congress chief Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury for questioning TMC supremo Mamata Banerjee's loyalty to the INDIA bloc, several posters and hoardings of Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge were defaced with ink in front of the party's state headquarters on Sunday.

Unidentified persons also wrote "agent of Trinamul Congress" on Mr Kharge's posters and hoardings.

Sources in the Congress said Mr Chowdhury, who is in his hometown Baharampur, expressed displeasure over the incident and asked party workers to lodge a police complaint, which was registered, and the defaced posters were also removed.

"The incident might have happened on Saturday night. This is the handiwork of the TMC which wants to create differences between senior Congress leaders and Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury," a party leader alleged.

Mr Kharge had on Saturday snubbed Mr Chowdhury while responding to a query on Mamata Banerjee's comment that if the INDIA bloc forms the government, she would support it from outside. — PTI



Congress leader Rahul Gandhi and Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav during a public meeting in Phulpur on Sunday. — PTI

### BJP will win only 1 seat in UP: Rahul at jt rally with Akhilesh

**Prayagraj, May 19:** Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Sunday said the BJP is winning only one seat in Uttar Pradesh. "Have you heard (Prime Minister) Narendra Modi is winning only one BJP seat of Kyoto (Varanasi) in Uttar Pradesh," said Mr Gandhi, while addressing a joint poll meeting with Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav in Prayagraj in support of INDIA bloc pick Ujjawal Raman Singh.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi had earlier said that he would turn Varanasi into Kyoto, a picturesque town in Japan. "The fight is to save the Constitution. The BJP and the RSS are attacking it, and I want to tell them

that no power can tear and throw the Constitution away," Mr Gandhi said, while waiving a copy of the Indian Constitution. Mr Gandhi reiterated the promises made by the Congress and appealed to vote for the party's candidate.

"We are going to make a law for an MSP of farm produce and we will also provide support to the unemployed youth," he added.

"We will throw the Agniveer scheme into the garbage and provide recruitment in the armed forces as it used to be done before," Mr Gandhi said.

Speaking before Mr Gandhi, Mr Yadav alleged that the BJP is after people's lives and the

Constitution. "The BJP put our lives in danger with the Covid vaccine and now wants to destroy the Constitution," Mr Yadav said.

Mr Yadav promised that jobs will be provided to the youth after the INDIA bloc government is formed. "We will take back the Agniveer scheme of recruitment in the armed force and will provide permanent jobs," the SP chief said.

Ujjawal Raman Singh is contesting from the Allahabad Lok Sabha seat on a Congress ticket. He is pitted against BJP's Neeraj Tripathi.

Polling in Allahabad is to be held on May 25 in the sixth phase of the Lok Sabha polls. — PTI

## Phase 5: 49 seats in 8 states will vote today

Union ministers Rajnath & Goyal, Omar in fray

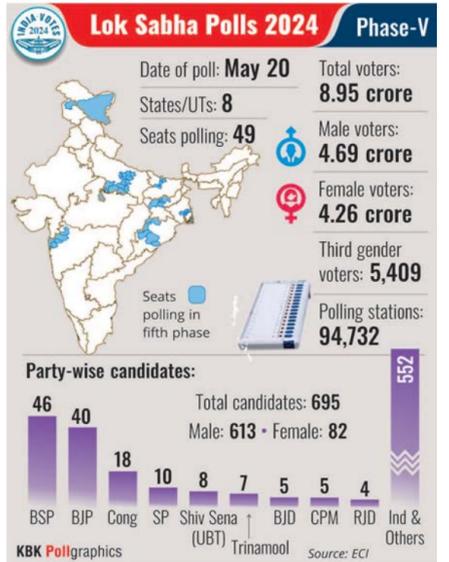
**AGE CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI, MAY 19

As the Lok Sabha elections move into the fifth phase, voters in 49 parliamentary constituencies across eight states will be casting their ballots on May 20 to elect the new government. 14 constituencies, including Rae Bareilly, Amethi and Lucknow, in the key state of Uttar Pradesh, will go to polls. Voters from 13 constituencies in Maharashtra, seven in West Bengal, five each in Bihar and Odisha, three in Jharkhand, and one each in Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh will cast their ballots.

Rae Bareilly and Amethi are strongholds of the Gandhi family. In the previous election, Sonia Gandhi, then the Congress chief, secured victory in Rae Bareilly, while her son Rahul Gandhi was defeated in Amethi by Union minister Smriti Irani.

In Lucknow, defence Minister Rajnath Singh is vying for a third consecutive term. He faces opposition from Ravidas Mehrotra of the Samajwadi Party and Sarwar Malik of the Bahujan Samaj Party.

The Kaiserganj seat, represented by the controversial MP and former Wrestling Federation of India president Brij



Bhushan Sharan Singh, is going to polls on Monday. The BJP has nominated Karan Bhushan Singh, the sitting MP's son, for this seat. He is competing against the SP's Bhagat Ram Mishra and the BSP's Narendra Pandey. National Conference vice-president Omar Abdullah will be contesting from the JKNC ticket from Baramulla. He will be up against Sajad Lone

of the Peoples Conference (PC). From Mumbai, Union minister Piyush Goyal's fate will also be sealed in the fifth phase on May 20. Mr Goyal will contest against Congress' Bhushan Patil. The Election Commission has reported that 695 candidates will be competing in the upcoming fifth phase of the Lok Sabha elections.

### Had no objection to make Shinde CM: Pawar on Raut claim

**PRASAD PATIL**  
MUMBAI, MAY 19

Contradicting Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Sanjay Raut, NCP (SP) chief Sharad Pawar has claimed that his party had no objection to make Eknath Shinde the chief minister of Maharashtra, but his name was never proposed by the Shiv Sena. Mr Raut said that Mr Shinde's name was finalised for the CM's post in 2019, but NCP leaders Ajit Pawar, Dilip Walse-Patil and others said they will not work under Mr Shinde.

"There was no proposal of Mr Shinde's name from the Shiv Sena. I am not aware of if they had held any internal discussions. We had no problem with Mr Shinde. Even today, we have cordial relationship with him, though we did not know him that well," Mr Pawar said in an interview given to a Marathi newspaper.

However, Mr Raut claimed that Ajit Pawar, Sunil Tatkare and Walse-Patil had refused to work under Shinde on the ground that he was "too junior" to them. He also claimed that the Maharashtra BJP leaders, including Devendra Fadnis, were against

**SANJAY RAUT** claimed that Ajit Pawar, Sunil Tatkare and Walse-Patil had refused to work under Eknath Shinde on the ground that he was "too junior" for them to work under him

making Mr Shinde chief minister.

"Maharashtra BJP leaders had informed Uddhav Thackeray that even if their party's central leadership accepted proposal to share the CM's post for two and half years, they would not accept Shinde as the CM," Mr Raut said.

The Shiv Sena (UBT) leader's claims were rejected by the BJP and the Ajit Pawar faction of NCP. BJP MLA Nitesh Rane alleged Mr Raut was trying to push his own name through Sharad Pawar for the CM's post.

NCP spokesperson Umesh Patil said Mr Raut had opposed Mr Shinde's name in 2019.

"Mr Raut is lying now. In fact, it was decided between Sharad Pawar and Raut that Uddhav Thackeray will be the CM for the first two and half years and the NCP was to get the CM post for the remaining two and half years," he said.

## Need not use force, Pak-occupied Kashmir to return on its own, says Rajnath 'People in PoK want to reunite with India'

**AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO**  
SAMBALPUR (ODISHA), MAY 19

The Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (PoK) belongs to India and it would soon reunite with the country. India will not use any force, but it will automatically return to us as the people there have started strongly pleading for returning to India's mainstream life, said defence minister Rajnath Singh.

Mr Singh, while campaigning for party's Sambalpur Lok Sabha candidate Dharmendra Pradhan and nominees of the seven Assembly constituencies, said the "shattered economy" of Pakistan and poor governance system there had made the life of PoK dwellers miserable and they were looking for salvation from Pakistan's regime.

"After the abrogation of Article 370, massive development work has been going on in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K). There has been significant development in the life of residents of J&K. People in PoK are keenly observing



Rajnath Singh and comparing their conditions with their counterparts in J&K. They have started demanding to get reunified with India," said Mr Singh. He added that India does

not need to use force of any sort, as the process of PoK reunification with this country will happen automatically.

Stating that the BJP believed in honouring its promises and it had delivered on whatever commitments it had made to the people of the country, Mr Singh said people's trust on the party has increased manifold because of its accomplishments.

"We believe in honouring our promises. Be it the abrogation of Article 370 or the construction of the grand Ram Temple at

Ayodhya, whatever promises were made by the BJP, have been fulfilled," said the defence minister.

Mr Singh took potshots at Odisha's ruling Biju Janata Dal (BJD) dubbing it as a "non-performer."

"The Congress ruled Odisha for 50 years and the BJD has been in power here in the state for 25 years. But Odisha has not developed much in the last 75 years as poverty is yet to be eradicated. I have been told that even the keys of Puri Jagannath temple's Ratna Bhandar are also missing," he said.



Trinamul Congress supremo Mamata Banerjee during a roadshow in West Bengal's Bankura on Sunday. — PTI

### BJP has suffered defeat in 1st 4 phases, says Akhilesh

**Lucknow, May 19:** Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav on Sunday claimed the BJP has suffered defeat in the first four phases of the Lok Sabha polls, and urged people to vote for the INDIA bloc in the fifth phase too.

The fifth phase of the LS polls will be held Monday.

In a statement, Mr Yadav accused the BJP of practising divisive politics. "Due to its wrong policies, inflation, unemployment and corruption are at their peak. They are facing trouble in meeting the expenses of

their families," he said. The former Uttar Pradesh CM alleged that the BJP has halted development works and ruined progress achieved during Samajwadi Party rule in the state.

Citing initiatives such as laptop distribution, free irrigation, the start of the dial 100 scheme for better handling of crimes and a women helpline number during his rule, Mr Yadav alleged that the BJP didn't have any roadmap of development and its government was indulged in corruption. — PTI

## Pahari, Gujjar & Shia vote split may spring surprises in J&K's Baramulla

**YUSUF JAMEEL**  
BARAMULLA, MAY 19

The split in the ethnic Pahari and Gujjar and the Shia Muslim vote may spring up some remarkable surprises in Baramulla — the Lok Sabha constituency spread over eighteen Assembly segments in the border districts of Baramulla, Kupwara and Bandipore and part of the Budgam district of Jammu and Kashmir.

Baramulla, which has a total of over 17.15 lakh voters including forty thousand first-time voters, will go to polls on Monday in the fifth of the seven phases of LS elections.

Though there are as many as 22 candidates in the fray, the constituency in reality is witnessing a triangular fight between the National Conference (NC) candidate and former chief minister Omar Abdullah, J&K People's



JK& National Conference chief Farooq Abdullah addresses a rally at Mendhar in Poonch on Sunday. — PTI

Conference (JKPC) chairman Sajad Ahmed Lone and Sheikh Abdur Rashid of the Awami Ittehad Party (AIP). The People's Democratic Party (PDP) has fielded former Rajya Sabha member Fayaz Ahmed Mir from Baramulla, but he appears to be running behind in the race among the chief contestants.

The BJP, which is not contesting on any of the

three Lok Sabha seats in the predominantly Muslim-dominated Kashmir Valley and Pir Panjal region of J&K, is campaigning for Mr Lone, who served as a minister from the saffron party's quota in the PDP-BJP coalition governments in the erstwhile J&K state. He has received support also from the vast sections of the J&K's one million Pahari speaking commu-

nity, apparently in reciprocation to the Narendra Modi government's granting Scheduled Tribe status to it through a legislation in February this year. However, Gujjars who together with nomadic Bakarwals comprise about 15 per cent of the erstwhile state's population are unhappy with the move, as it, they think, would dilute their reservation rights.

## Party lost faith in me, says Samir Ranjan Dash Setback to BJD as senior neta quits party, joins BJP

**AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO**  
BHUBANESWAR, MAY 19

In a major setback to the ruling party of Odisha, Veteran Biju Janata Dal (BJD) leader and Nimapara MLA Samir Ranjan Dash on Sunday quit his party and joined the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), dealing a blow to the regional party headed by chief minister Naveen Patnaik. Mr Dash was reportedly upset after he was not given a ticket by the BJD to contest the 2024 elections from the Nimapara constituency.

BJP Odisha unit president Manmohan Samal, party's Odisha in-charge Vijay Pal Singh Tomar and other leaders welcomed Mr Dash at the party headquarters here.

In a video statement, Mr Dash informed about his decision to quit the BJD and cited that he was



Samir Ranjan Dash

forced to resign as the leaders of the party lost faith in him.

Mr Dash tendered his resignation letter to BJD president and chief minister Naveen Patnaik.

Before he joined the BJP, Mr Dash said, "When the leaders do not trust you, it was not possible for me to stay and work in the BJD. As I have joined the BJP now, I can confidently say that the saffron party will win with a huge margin in Nimapara."

Mr Dash further said that it had been a routine for him to work with people for almost 18 hours a day and part of several agitations and programmes in the district.

"I have been working dedicatedly and will continue to serve people. Not only Nimapara, but some parts of Jagatsinghpur district will also be affected by my decision. The candidates of BJP, including Prabhathi Parida of Nimapara, will be benefited," said Mr Dash.

BJD leader Ranendra Pratap Swain said, "Samir Dash was denied a party ticket because of his shortcomings. His resignation from the BJD will have no impact at all on our voters."

Mr Dash was elected as MLA from the Nimapara Assembly segment under the Jagatsinghpur LS seat, thrice in 2009, 2014, and 2019 on a BJD ticket.

SHORT TAKES

**Modi's guarantees 'not delivered': TMC**

**Kolkata:** Alleging that Prime Minister Narendra Modi's guarantees on various issues had not been delivered, senior Trinamool Congress leader Amit Mitra on Sunday claimed that 83 per cent of jobless people in the country are youths. Mr Mitra reiterated his party's stand that the TMC is with INDIA alliance, stating that Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge's rebuff to senior party leader Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury and his retort is their internal matter. "Around 83 per cent of the jobless people in the country are young men and women," Mr Mitra, a former finance minister of West Bengal in Mamata Banerjee's cabinet, claimed at a press conference here. — PTI

**60-yr-old stripped for 'cow smuggling'**

**Garhwa:** A 60-year-old man was allegedly stripped and dragged after being tied to a motorcycle by three persons on suspicion of cow smuggling in Jharkhand's Garhwa district, police said on Sunday. The incident occurred near Amrora village, around 275 km from Jharkhand's capital Ranchi, when the man, identified as Surswati Ram was on his way to Banshidhar Nagar Untari with his cattle on Friday afternoon. Banshidhar Nagar Untari sub-divisional police officer (SDPO) Satyendra Narayan Singh said that an FIR has been lodged in this regard. "As per FIR, three persons, identified as Rahul Dubey, Rajesh Dubey and Kashinath Bhuiyan, were on a motorcycle. They intercepted the old man and accused him of being involved in cow smuggling," Mr Singh said. — PTI

**Cong accuses Shah of 'fear-mongering'**

**Continued from Page 1**  
 ■ Angel Tax' and all other exploitative tax schemes that inhibit investment in new micro, small companies and innovative start-ups," he said. Mr Ramesh further said that the Congress has made important announcements in its manifesto to deal with the Modi government's poor record on price rise, jobs and stagnant wages and its "utter failure" on the demand side of the economy. "We will implement all of these within established principles of fiscal responsibility. We remind market participants that Dr Singh's government ended its tenure with a fiscal deficit of 4.5 per cent of GDP (2013-14), much below the 5.8 per cent fiscal deficit in the Modi government's final year (2023-24)," he said. Tagging Mr Ramesh's statement and post on X, senior Congress leader Shashi Tharoor said: "Hear/hear! As a member of the @inIndia Manifesto Committee I am proud to confirm our party's commitment to economic growth with social justice, an end to tax terrorism that is driving wealth creators away from India, and a commitment to predictable and transparent economic and fiscal policies."

**PM accuses Mamata of targeting Hindu monks**

**Continued from Page 1**  
 ■ never tolerate such insult to our iconic saints. You have to punish the TMC with your votes so that they won't dare to insult our saints in future." His direct attack on the TMC supreme came a day after Ms Banerjee triggered a huge controversy by accusing a section of monks of the three religious institutions of asking people to vote for the BJP in ongoing the Lok Sabha polls. On Saturday the CM alleged at a TMC poll campaign rally at Gohat in Hooghly district: "All monks are not the same. Are all of us the same? No. There is a Maharaj in Berhampore. He is Kartik Maharaj. I heard about him for a long time. I used to respect Bharat Sevashram Sangha a lot. They have been in my list of those respected for a long time." She went on: "But the individual who talks of not allowing a TMC agent in the polls is not considered as a monk by me because he is harming the country by playing politics. I have identified who else are at it also. There is a Ramakrishna Mission in Asansol. Didn't I help them? When the CPI(M) had stopped food supply, I had extended my full support to them for their autonomy and existence. Mothers and sisters used to come to chop the vegetables but the CPI(M) did not even allow you to

function." The TMC chief then added: "So I know a few such, though not all. I donated 700 acres of land to ISKON to build a city in its name. ISKON also has a mission and temple. Instructions come from Delhi to them to preach to vote for the BJP. Why would the monks do such jobs?" She claimed: "All honour and respect the Ramakrishna Mission. There is a WhatsApp group of its members and disciples. I can love them and can be a disciple. But the Ramakrishna Mission do not cast votes. Why would I ask them to cast votes? Some people are violating, but not all. Remember, the house of Swami Vivekananda would not have existed if this daughter of yours would not have been alive." Countering Ms Banerjee's fierce opposition to the Citizenship Amendment Act's implementation in West Bengal amidst the polls, the PM, this time, underlined that the Centre has begun distributing citizenship certificates to members of the migrant communities who had applied for it. He also reminded Ms Banerjee's party of his pledge to act tough against corruption and warned it that action against the scamsters would only intensify after June 4. He further lashed out at the TMC for questioning the complaints of the tortured women of Sandeshkhali in North 24 Parganas.

**Centre concerned over terror strikes, asks J&K admin to act**

YUSUF JAMEEL SRINAGAR, MAY 19

The Centre is reported to be concerned about Saturday night's back-to-back terror attacks, which left a BJP worker dead and a tourist couple from Jaipur injured in southern Shopian and Anantnag districts, and has urged the Jammu and Kashmir administration to take steps to bring the perpetrators to justice.

The bloody incidents took place a day after Union home minister Amit Shah's unexpected visit to Srinagar during which he discussed various "important issues" including the security preparedness and logistics for the upcoming annual Amarnath yatra.

Both Anantnag and Shopian are part of the Anantnag-Rajouri-Poonch Lok Sabha constituency where polling is scheduled to be held in the sixth



People during the last rites of former sarpanch Aijaz Ahmed Sheikh, who was killed in a firing by a terrorist in Pulwama on Sunday. — PTI

phase of the seven-season elections on May 25. The voting was to take place on May 7, but the Election Commission deferred it till May 25 owing to connectivity issues set off by inclement weather.

The attacks on BJP worker and former Sarpanch Aejaz Ahmed Sheikh and a Muslim couple from Rajasthan - Tabrez Khan

and his wife Farha - in Shopian's Hurpur and Anantnag's Yannar area, respectively came in the thick of the campaigning in the Anantnag-Rajouri-Poonch constituency. The BJP called Mr Sheikh a 'brave soldier' of the party and held a protest against his killing in Srinagar on Sunday. In one of the two videos that

have gone viral, Mr Sheikh can be seen telling a reporter about Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Srinagar on March 7, when he was a sworn stone-pelter but he (PM) and his government's actions and policies vis-à-vis J&K have completely transformed his life and he now considers himself a proud Indian. In the second video, captured only a couple of days before his killing, Mr Sheikh again showers compliments and praise on Mr Modi and called him "messiah" of the people of Kashmir.

While the tourists from Jaipur, Tabrez and Farha, who along with their two children had gone to visit J&K, were injured in a firing by terrorists at Pahalgam in Anantnag district on Saturday night, the police sources said, adding that the couple was quickly evacuated to a nearby hospital.

**S-W monsoon makes onset over Nicobar Islands: IMD**

**New Delhi, May 19:** Southwest monsoon, the lifeline of India's farm-based economy, on Sunday made its onset over the Nicobar Islands, the southernmost region of the country, the India meteorological department (IMD) said here.

"Southwest monsoon has advanced into some parts of the Maldives, and the Comorin area and some parts of the South Bay of Bengal, Nicobar Islands and South Andaman Sea on Sunday," the weather office said.

The annual rainfall phenomenon is expected to reach Kerala by May 31. The date of monsoon onset over Kerala has varied widely over the last 150 years, the earliest being May 11 in 1918, and the most delayed being June 18 in 1972, according to IMD data.

The rain-bearing system arrived in the southern state on June 8 last year, May 29 in 2022, June 3 in 2021 and June 1 in 2020.

Last month, the IMD had forecast above-normal rain in the monsoon season in India with favourable La Nina conditions, cooling of equatorial Pacific Ocean, expected to set in by August-September. La Nina conditions help in a good monsoon season over India. Large parts of the country are battling heatwave with temperatures touching 48°C, shattering records in several states and severely impacting health and livelihoods. — PTI



Mahouts feed an elephant during a hot summer day at Hathhi Gaon in Jaipur on Sunday. — PTI

**3,300 personnel to take charge as CRPF exits**

**CISF set to take full charge of Parliament security from today**

**New Delhi, May 19:** More than 3,300 CISF personnel will take over the complete counter-terrorism and anti-sabotage security duties at the Parliament complex from Monday following the withdrawal of over 1,400 CRPF staff from the country's most important symbol of democracy, official sources said.

The Parliament duty group (PDG) of the CRPF wound up its entire administrative and operational paraphernalia — vehicles, weapons and commandos — from the complex on Friday and its commander, a deputy inspector general (DIG)-rank officer, handed over all the security points in the complex to the incoming CISF group, the sources said.

**FOLLOWING THIS incident,** a committee under the chairmanship of CRPF DG was set up to look into the overall security issues of the Parliament complex and make suitable recommendations

A total of 3,317 Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) personnel are being inducted for securing both the old and new Parliament buildings and the associated structures in this complex located in central Delhi after the government directed it to take over the task from the CRPF following the December 13 security breach incident of last year, a senior officer said.

In a major security breach on the anniversary of the 2001 Parliament terror attack, two persons jumped into the Lok Sabha chamber from the public gallery during zero hour on December 13, 2023, released yellow smoke from canisters and shouted slogans before being overpowered by MPs.

Outside the Parliament premises around the same time that day, two other persons sprayed coloured smoke from canisters while shouting slogans.

Following this incident, a committee under the chairmanship of CRPF DG was set up to look into the overall security issues of the Parliament complex and make suitable recommendations. — PTI

**AI Express flight to Kochi makes emergency landing**

179 fliers, 6 crew evacuated after fire in one of the engines

**Bengaluru, May 19:** An Air India Express flight from Bengaluru to Kochi made an emergency landing at Bengaluru after a fire was noticed in one of the engines, the Bangalore International Airport Limited said on Sunday.

All the passengers and crew were evacuated and no one was injured, Air India Express said in a statement.

According to sources, the fire was noticed minutes after the take off.

The crew members alerted the air traffic controller and a full scale emergency was declared.

Soon after emergency landing at Kempegowda International Airport (KIA) in Bengaluru, the fire was extinguished.

"A full-scale emergency was declared, and the fire was promptly extin-

guished upon landing. All 179 passengers and six crew members have been successfully evacuated from the aircraft, the Bangalore International Airport Limited (BIAL) spokesperson said.

Passengers onboard the flight recounted the panic situation when a fire was noticed in one of its engines.

"Everyone got scared and cried loudly," a woman, who is a senior citizen, told reporters at the airport.

She appreciated the responsibility displayed by the crew in evacuating them from the flight soon after the emergency landing at Kempegowda Airport.

Another elderly woman said there was loud screaming inside the aircraft after noticing the fire and everyone rushed

outside soon after landing.

An Air India Express spokesperson said that due to suspected flames from the right engine after takeoff, the Bengaluru — Kochi flight "elected" to return and carried out a precautionary landing at Bengaluru.

The ground services also reported flames, resulting in an evacuation.

"The crew accomplished an evacuation with no injuries to any guests.

We regret the inconvenience this has caused and are working to provide alternative arrangements for our guests to reach their destination as soon as possible," it said.

"A thorough investigation with the regulator shall be accomplished to establish the cause," it said. — PTI

**Cheetah strays out of KNP, reaches Gwalior**

**Gwalior (MP), May 19:** A female cheetah strayed out of the Kuno National Park (KNP) in Madhya Pradesh's Sheopur district and reached the neighbouring Gwalior on Sunday, an official said.

The KNP management has stepped up vigil, and the local forest department has alerted farmers in villages along the forest of Gwalior and Morena district, the official said. Female cheetah Veera has also hunted a goat in a village in Gwalior district, he said.

"Veera ventured out of KNP and has reached the forests of Gwalior and Morena districts. Forest officials and the KNP team are monitoring the cheetah's movements," divisional forest officer (DFO) Ankit Pandey said.

Farmers in villages adjoining the forest have been alerted and advised to keep a watch on their cattle, the official said, adding that efforts are on

**FARMERS IN villages** adjoining the forest have been alerted and advised to keep a watch on their cattle. Efforts are on to ensure the cheetah's return to the national park

to ensure the cheetah's return to the national park.

Earlier on May 4, male cheetah Pawan from the national park strayed into Karoli district in neighbouring Rajasthan and was rescued by the management.

Under the ambitious cheetah reintroduction project, eight Namibian cheetahs, comprising five females and three males, were released into enclosures at KNP on September 17, 2022. In February 2023, 12 more cheetahs were brought in from South Africa. There are now 27 cheetahs, including 14 cubs born on Indian soil. — PTI

**Dalit couple made to wear garland of shoes in MP**

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY BHOPAL, MAY 19

An elderly dalit couple has been allegedly beaten up and made to wear garlands of shoes in Madhya Pradesh's Ashok Nagar district, the police said on Sunday.

The couple's son had allegedly been involved in an eve-teasing incident, they said.

A case has been registered against 10 persons who were at large in connection with the incident of thrashing the couple which took place on Friday in Kilora village under Mungaoli police station.

The couple's son had been allegedly involved in eve-teasing the wife of one of the accused following which the dalit family left the village, Mungaoli police station in-charge Gabbar Singh Gurjar said.

The couple came to the village recently, he said. On Friday the accused allegedly tied the 65-year-old man dalit man and his wife aged 60 to a pole, beat them up and made them wear garlands of shoes, the official said.

Following a complaint by the victim woman, the police on Saturday registered a case against 10 persons under relevant sections of IPC as well as well as provisions of the SC and ST Act.

All the accused were absconding and efforts were on to trace them, the police added.

**Key Antarctica meetings to begin in Kochi from today**

**New Delhi, May 19:** The 46th Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting begins in Kochi on Monday under the shadow of the Ukraine-Russia conflict, an issue that has been affecting the discussions for the past two years. The 10-day deliberations among signatory nations to the Antarctic treaty are expected to focus on collaboration between parties on research and exchanging information on plans for sustainable management of resources in the icy continent.

Also on the agenda for the ATCM is the development of a framework for regulating tourism in Antarctica, given the pristine and delicate nature of the continent, and applications by Belarus and Canada for consultative status at the deliberations.

"We expect the Ukraine conflict to figure in the talks and we have to ensure that it doesn't affect the meeting," a senior official closely involved in the ATCM's organisation said. — PTI

**Modi hits out at Cong, Rahul for 'anti-industry' and 'Maoist' views**

Continued from Page 1

Earlier this month, the Congress announced Mr Gandhi's candidature for the Rae Bareilly seat, held by Mrs Gandhi for the last two decades. She recently moved to the Rajya Sabha.

Attacking the Opposition INDIA bloc, Mr Modi said that the Congress and JMM have nothing to do with the development of the country, as they are neck-deep in corruption.

"The Congress is the mother of corruption. It has been involved in numerous scams, including the coal and 2G scams... The JMM and the Congress are not concerned about industries... Jharkhand, despite its rich resources, is known for heaps of black money belonging to corrupt leaders. They did not even spare the Army and usurped its land. Former Jharkhand CM Hemant Soren is rotting in jail for corruption," Mr Modi said. The Prime Minister also assured people that he will recover the looted public money from corrupt leaders in the state and return it to the poor, to whom the funds belong.

He accused the Congress of denying basic amenities to people and alleged that the condition of 18,000 villages was similar to that of the 18th century during the party's previous regimes. "Modi gave Jan Dhan accounts to 52-crore people, pucca houses to 4-crore people, electricity to 18,000 villages, along with pure tap water, modernised railways and augmented infrastructure," he said.

The PM also alleged that the Jharkhand government was creating hurdles in the way of the proposed Dhalbhumgarh airport in East Singhbhum.

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**BJP has launched 'Operation Jhaadu' to crush us: Kejriwal**

Continued from Page 1

future, it should be crushed. Under this operation, big leaders of the party will be arrested..."

The AAP chief claimed that "the AAP will be brought to the road. Plans are afoot to force the party to vacate its office."

Sticking to his Saturday's ultimatum, Mr Kejriwal, along with his party's top leadership, marched towards the BJP office. However, the AAP's march was stopped midway, following which the Delhi chief minister and other Aam Aadmi Party leaders staged a sit-in protest on the road, raising slogans against the BJP and hailing

Mr Kejriwal. Speaking to the media at the protest site, AAP Rajya Sabha MP Sanjay Singh said, "We waited for half an hour on the road for the police to come and arrest us. But the BJP accepted its defeat."

The BJP's Delhi unit chief Virendra Sachdeva, however, asked how the AAP came to the conclusion that the saffron party was involved in the assault on Ms Maliwal.

"It's a new political drama by Mr Kejriwal... He is free to stage protests and dharnas, but he should at least once utter a word for Ms Maliwal, who has been closely associated with him

and his party for two decades."

Mr Sachdeva alleged that the AAP chief wants to send a senior lawyer to the Rajya Sabha and the "assault is connected to it".

"Mr Kejriwal should break his silence instead of his 'dramebazi (theatrics)' and answer specific questions," Shehzad Poonawalla, the national spokesperson of the BJP, said in a post on X, formerly known as Twitter.

He asked Mr Kejriwal if he had ordered the "attack" on Ms Maliwal at the chief minister's residence and gave patronage to Kumar because he knows his "dark secrets".

**Maliwal case: devices seized**

Continued from Page 1

to Mumbai and other parts of the national capital to collect evidence, which was not possible without the accused's custody.

Admittedly, the case is at a nascent stage. Allegations made in the FIR are corroborated in her (Mr Maliwal's) statement recorded by the magistrate on oath, and further, they are again corroborated in the medico-legal

case (MLC) of the victim or complainant," the court said.

The court directed Mr Kumar's medical examination every 24 hours and said the investigating agency will not subject the accused to "any torture". It also allowed Mr Kumar to meet his advocate and wife for half-an-hour each during police custody.

## THE ASIAN AGE

20 MAY 2024

### Why wait for SC? Reveal poll data, silence critics

The Election Commission of India, which has been facing several uncomfortable questions on its commitment to transparency in the conduct of the ongoing elections to the 18th Lok Sabha, should grab the opportunity provided by the Supreme Court which has raised the question as to what stops the poll body from uploading the details of the booth-wise poll data on its website and silence all accusations of partisan behaviour on its part. In the spirit of the query, it should go ahead and upload these details and thereby answer all questions with the regard to the sanctity of the election data.

The Supreme Court raised the poser while hearing a petition by the Association of Democratic Reforms (ADR), a non-governmental organisation, seeking the publication of the scanned legible copies of Form 17C (Part 1) which gives the exact number of votes polled in each polling station. Since the representatives of every authorised political party who was present in the booth would have a copy of the same, they can conduct the verification of the number of votes polled, and the EC can end all the speculation on that count.

**The refusal of the EC to publish the absolute number of votes in each booth and each constituency, instead of the percentage, defies logic. Publishing them is child's play.**

It is an indisputable fact that there was an inordinate delay on the part of the EC in publicly releasing the polling data of the first two phases of the election — 11 days in the case of the first phase and four days in the second.

Several political parties and election observers also noticed an unusual spike in the final numbers compared with the preliminary figures. Despite the best efforts of the EC and the conclusion reached by the Supreme Court on the unavailability of the electronic voting machines (EVMs), a section of the population still harbours scepticism about the electro-mechanical device and its infallibility. Many with reasonable expertise on the functioning of such devices even hold that manipulation is possible, but not probable. The EC's actions have not helped allay such misgivings.

The refusal of the EC to publish the absolute number of votes in each booth and each constituency, instead of the percentage, also defies logic. If the poll body has the total number of votes and the percentage, then publishing the actual numbers is child's play, but it has not chosen to do so despite political party leaders calling for it. It is unfortunate that the EC is giving rumour mills the grist by refusing to fulfill basic requirements of transparency.

The EC's contention that the petitions are intended to disturb the elections is untenable. The poll body is mandated by the Constitution and the law to conduct the elections in a free and fair manner and on a level playing field. Its refusal to act against senior politicians, including the Prime Minister who made a series of speeches seeking to pit communities and regions against one another, is regrettable; it is failing in its duty when it forces the voter to make their choice in a vitiated atmosphere. It is all the more inadmissible when it plays hide-and-seek with basic election data. It should not wait for the Supreme Court to come out with an order but instead publish it of its own accord and reassure the people of its commitment to democracy. Transparency in democracy is a work in progress; there are no full stops there.

### Onus on Israel to stop Gaza war

Israel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has been served a three-week ultimatum by Benny Gantz, a member of his war cabinet, to address several major issues and reach an agreement within the cabinet on the future of the Gaza war and after.

Considering Mr Netanyahu's rule will not be challenged even if Mr Gantz's National Unity Party leaves his government, it is on the cards that the offensive in Rafah, the Gaza Strip's last haven for Palestinian refugees and citizens, will intensify.

What Mr Netanyahu may, however, not have thought through fully before launching the retaliatory attacks for the Hamas strike on Israel on October 7 was, what would happen the day after the war is called off or is over?

The US and other governments, fundamentally committed to an independent Palestinian state that should include Gaza, may temporarily back the Palestinian Authority, which administers the West Bank, to help govern Gaza. Israel under Netanyahu is unlikely to agree, and it will also insist on total security control of Gaza in the future to stave off recurrence of the October 7 type of attack by Hamas.

A more immediate demand of all Israelis is that the forces get back around 128 hostages thought to be still alive and held by Hamas and that would not be possible unless a ceasefire is agreed upon. Pressured as he is by strident demands, including normalisation of relations with Saudi Arabia, Mr Netanyahu can continue to wield power with his war cabinet unhindered only if the war continues.

The dilemma caused by this situation of unrelenting war operations by Israel is that there can be no ceasefire and no talks about the future administration of the Gaza Strip and no return to normalcy for a couple of million Palestinians, a majority of whom are facing unbelievable privations while many of them are also on the brink of starvation.

It would suit the world if the war were to cease so talks begin on concrete plans for the future of Gaza and efforts to break Israeli resistance to a Palestinian state can also start. But all that remains distant thanks to Mr Netanyahu and his coalition government that still commands a majority in Parliament and insists on sustained Rafah operations to break Hamas.

#### THE ASIAN AGE

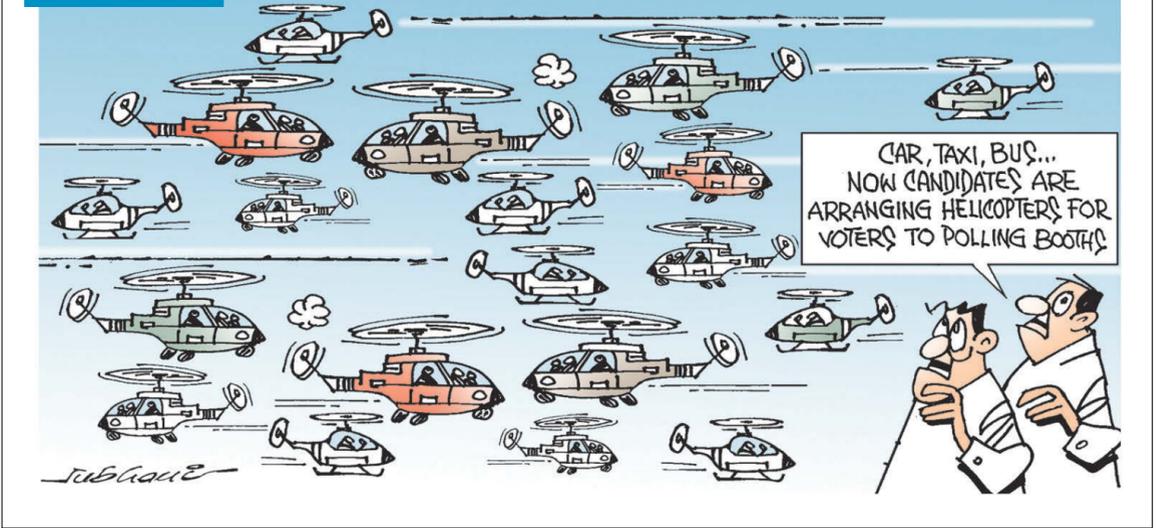
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Subhani



### Eat right to stay fighting fit, age well ICMR's way



Sanjeev Ahluwalia

The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) would not agree with the comment that "the secret of success in life is to eat what you like and let the food fight it out inside", and quite rightly so. The ICMR is unconcerned about success in life. Its mandate is to keep you healthy by eating right and remaining vigilant against trade malpractices like the mislabelling of packaged food. One such is the label "organic", which should be applied only if the product is both free of artificial preservatives and the contents organically grown. It's best to look for the "Jaivik Bharat" logo as certification.

Indeed, if possible, you should eschew reliance on all kinds of packaged food. Start from scratch by buying all the food ingredients yourself and cooking up a delicious, wholesome meal to recharge you, your family, and friends to move mountains without getting fat or lazy or sick with diabetes, hypertension or a failing heart and clogged arteries. Home cooked meals — steamed rather than fried, roasted rather than grilled, with moderately active, regular exercise — yoga being a popular international choice — along with walking or jogging or just doing all the housework yourself, can keep that belly flab at bay as you near middle age and delay the loss of muscle mass in your senior years.

To spread nutritional literacy in India, the National Institute of Nutrition — a Hyderabad-based entity of ICMR — has published the sombrely titled "Dietary Guidelines for Indians" (DGI) since 1998. The most recent version, published this month, comes after a long gap since 2011. So, how

ICMR points to the growing prevalence of packaged fast food and snacks and bottled drinks, which add unneeded salt or sugar to tickle the taste buds, at the expense of health outcomes

Dandi on the coast in Gujarat, thereby violating the salt tax laws. A taste for salt persists. ICMR points to the growing prevalence of packaged fast food and snacks and bottled drinks, which add unneeded salt or sugar to tickle the taste buds, at the expense of health outcomes. Sugar is an energy source. But so are cereals, millets, pulses, nuts, milk products, meat, eggs, and fish, from which enough energy is naturally available.

A delicate balance must be kept between the macro minerals — sodium and potassium. Cereals, pulses, vegetables, and milk are rich in the former while beans, lentils, banana, and nuts are loaded with the latter. More generally, minerals contain nutrients which nourish the body. Dried fish has the highest concentration of macro-mineral calcium followed by milk products at one-half as much, followed by seafood, with green leafy vegetables next in line. Iron, another macro-mineral, is highest in dried fish, followed by green leafy vegetables, pulses and nuts. For magnesium, go to nuts, millets, and pulses, and meats, in that order.

An eye-watering 56.4 per cent of the disease burden (mortality plus morbidity) is due to unhealthy diet and or lack of adequate exercise. Dietary balance is particularly important for children. Sadly, unhealthy dietary habits embed the disease burden early, which has to be managed lifelong. Forty per cent of one- to four-year-olds are anaemic and between 14 to 32 per cent are deficient in one or more of the required micronutrients (zinc, folate or iron and vitamins).

Twenty-four per cent of five- to nine-year-olds are similarly anaemic and deficient in micronutrients, as are 28 per cent of 10- to 19-year-olds. The public policy implication is that early dietary deficiencies permanently impair nearly 40 per cent of the workforce. A very heavy social cost for the economy and personal anguish for the individuals concerned.

As in earlier years, the DGI goes to great lengths to apply the science to food plans good for infants, children, young adults, women, pregnant women, lactating women, men, and seniors with plated descriptions of meals through the day, including options for both vegetarians and non-vegetarians. It will console non-vegetarians that the cover page itself features eggs and meat — termed in the DGI as "flesh foods" as per the practice among vegetarians. Vegans however will not touch eggs (or any other animal product, including milk) but ovo-vegetarians relish them. ICMR also advocates having two to three meals a day, consistent with age and body structure, with sufficient gaps in between to allow the body fluids and organs to absorb nutrition.

Tea and coffee during mealtimes are not recommended — much to the consternation of cultures, where tea is the lingua franca of bonhomie.

The bottom line, of course, is how many Indians can actually afford a balanced diet?

Is it nutritional illiteracy or just plain economics, which forces most families to eat badly? The Union government spends ₹2 trillion on an undiversified, cereal heavy, free food scheme for low-income families. Making the hand-outs resemble a bare-bones ICMR-balanced diet would be a start. Even better would be just costing the meals and transferring the money into the bank accounts of the 110 million beneficiaries.

The writer is adviser, Observer Research Foundation

#### LETTERS

##### POK JINGOISM

The wily Indian politician knows exactly which buttons to press in order to get the desired outcome. Indians are an emotive people. Therefore, it should come as no surprise that emotive appeals are made during the electoral campaigns, and issues which have absolutely no connection to the lives of the citizens are raised. PoK has become the latest such with promises of merging it with India in Mr Modi's third term. One expects rhetoric during campaigns but this is a little too much. This cannot happen without a war. The most that can be expected is more Nehru bashing.

Anthony Henriques  
Mumbai

##### AAP'S ALBATROSS

WITH THE AAM Aadmi Party set to march to the BJP's headquarters in Delhi to protest against the arrest of CM Arvind Kejriwal's aide Bibhav Kumar in an assault case, Swati Maliwal, an AAP MP, on Sunday hit out at the party, saying it was out on the street to "save the accused". Ms Maliwal has alleged that Kumar slapped her seven-eight times, "kicked in the chest, stomach and pelvis area", and threatened that she would be killed. What a shame, since she, Bibhav and Mr Kejriwal are old colleagues and she herself challenged guards to physically remove her. Rumour has it that she was being asked to vacate her RS seat in favour of Sanjay Singh, hence her visit to the CM's residence.

Sankar Paul  
Chakdaha, West Bengal

##### IPL GAME OF THRONES

LEADING CRICKET luminary K.L. Rahul was openly pulled up by Sanjiv Goenka the owner of the Lucknow Super Giants during the ongoing IPL season. The reason, Rahul had not been delivering results on a job for which he was being paid ₹17 crores. When sports gets monetised, marquee names, pedigree or past records do not matter. Sportsmen must realise that a star status may place them on a high pedestal but professional hazards that follow them are as likely as ever to topple them down.

R. Narayanan  
Navi Mumbai

₹500 for the best letter of the week goes to Deepak Singh (May 13). Email: asianage.letters@gmail.com.



Anita Anand

### Why I will vote for diversity: Freedom of faith and ideas vital in democracy

On May 25, I will be voting in the second-last phase of India's ongoing general election. It is with some trepidation, as it was in the last election. Voting in a democracy is a sign of faith and hope. And democracy means diversity.

A diverse nation recognises and values the differences of race, religion, colour, gender, national origin, disability, sexual orientation, age, size, education, geographic origin, and skill characteristics, among others. It refers to a composition of a group of people from many demographic backgrounds, identities, and the collective strength of their experiences, beliefs, values, skills, and perspectives.

I grew up in a diverse India. My father, at the age of 16, moved from Punjab to Bihar to study coal mining and then worked with a British-owned company. My mother joined him after they were married. My mother's side of the family were Arya Samaji, a breakaway sect from mainstream Hinduism. We did "havan" at home, sitting around a vessel of fire, with my mother reading out mantras which we repeated after her. I went to the chapel at school, learned and sang hymns. When my otherwise liberal grandfather would tell my father that my sisters and I would become Christians, my father would smile and say, there are worse things they could become. Indeed.

My school and college was run by the Sisters of Loreto, Catholic nuns from Ireland. There was

morning assembly, hymn singing, and when the Catholic girls went to chapel, we non-Christians (Hindus, Sikhs, Muslims, Jains) had Moral Science. We learned about right and wrong.

After graduation I went to work at a rural development project in Madhya Pradesh called Friends Rural Centre. Before I got there, I thought it was just a friendly place, hence the name. At the centre, I learned it was established as "an ideal site for witness to spiritual truth in education, health and agriculture", by an American Quaker in 1875 and the followers called each other "friends". At "prayer" meetings they sat in circles and mostly in silence. It was a revelation and a good learning for me.

During my graduate work at a university in the United States, I was attracted to and involved with the United Campus Ministry, a space for people of diverse faith backgrounds. The staff offered spiritual guidance, support, community and a safe space to students and staff to explore their beliefs, deepen their faith, and form lasting relationships with like-minded individuals. My affiliation with them brought me in touch with racism, sexism, feminism and same-gender attraction, all with the goal of creating inclusive societies. I found kindred spirits here and was given an opportunity to offer workshops on hunger and poverty and with the support of the university, to design and offer a course on world hunger.

My first real job was in Washington DC, with an arm of the United Methodist Church called the Board of Church and Society. In a fine building sharing a boundary with the legendary Supreme Court and facing Capitol Hill, my colleagues and I followed, analysed and interpreted US policy for the 11 million Methodists in the US, so they could advocate for humane policies with Senators and members of Congress. I worked with people from several denominations and was stimulated by the diversity of people and ideas I encountered.

The Arya Samaj's rejection of Hinduism's caste system, gods, goddesses, and superstitions kept me away from the narrow confines of the religion. Our worship and lives at home were in sync with the values of the Catholic education: to be good, do good and give to society.

This was further deepened with my experiences with the Quakers, the Campus Ministry and the Methodists. I chose to work with people and social change, to have meaning in my life and be a productive member of society.

I returned to India in the early 1990s, just as the country liberalised its policies to deal with an economic crisis resulting from a balance of payments deficit, due to excess reliance on imports and other external factors. Soon there was satellite channels and the Internet and then the social media. A new India opened to the world was emerging.

However, over the past decade, unspeakable

things began to happen. Religious and other minorities were persecuted and marginalised in the name of religion. The predominant Hindu party took seriously to Hindutva, a political ideology embracing the cultural reasoning of Hindu nationalism and a belief in establishing Hindu hegemony within India.

Inspired by European fascism, Hindutva believes in a standardised majority and cultural supremacy and the belief that India is defined by a common language, a common faith, and a common ethnic ancestry. Those of other ethnicities could be second-class citizens.

But India has long been a land of multiple languages, religions, cuisines and customs. The unity in diversity enshrined in the Constitution affirms this. In defining the population of India as only Hindu and the only language as Hindi ignores the fact that India's richness lies in its diversity and not homogeneity. The last two decades have shut down discussion, debate and freedom of ideas, faith and worship that are essential for a democracy.

I like to think of myself as a person of hope and faith. My exposure to various religious, people, ideas and preferences have enriched my life, not taken away from it. It's this what India really needs now. That is why I will vote for diversity on May 25.

The writer is a development and communications consultant

SHORT TAKES

**STOPPED COUP INVOLVING U.S. CITIZENS: DRC**

**Kinshasa, May 19:** The leader of an attempted coup on Sunday in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has been killed and some 50 people, including three American citizens arrested, a spokesman for the Central African country's Army said. Gunfire rang out around 4 am in the capital Kinshasa, a Reuters reporter said. Armed men attacked the presidency in the city centre, according to spokesman Sylvain Ekenge. Another attack took place at the nearby home of Vital Kamerhe, a member of Parliament tipped to become Speaker.

**SLOVAK PM'S STILL SERIOUS, SAYS DEPUTY**

**Banska Bystrica, May 19:** Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico is no longer in immediate danger but still in a serious condition, his deputy said on Sunday, four days after an assassination attempt that sent shockwaves through Europe. "The worst that we feared had passed, at least for the time being," Deputy PM Robert Kalinak said. The prime minister was shot on Wednesday in an attack that raised alarms over the polarised state of politics in the central European country of 5.4 million people.

**EX-PM IMRAN FACES FRESH GRAFT CHARGES**

**Islamabad, May 19:** Pakistan's accountability watchdog has levelled fresh corruption allegations against jailed former prime minister Imran Khan, accusing him of "illegally" possessing and selling seven high-value watches and 10 other precious gifts linked to the state gift repository when he was in power, media reports said. The National Accountability Bureau launched a probe against the 71-year-old Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf founder Khan and his wife Bushra Bibi over the alleged misuse of the Toshakhana.

**WILL QUELL NEW CALEDONIA RIOTS, ASSERTS FRANCE**

**Noumea, May 19:** French forces smashed through dozens of barricades in a bid to retake the main road to New Caledonia's airport and a top official said on Sunday that Paris would reclaim all of the Pacific territory from independence militants "whatever the cost". After six nights of violence that have left six dead and hundreds injured, French government high commissioner Louis Le Franc warned in a televised address that new raids on independence strongholds would be staged. "Republican order will be re-established whatever the cost," Le Franc said.

**LANKA QUESTIONS UN REPORT ON DISAPPEARANCES**

**Colombo, May 19:** Sri Lanka has questioned the timing and the mandate of a report issued by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) this week in which it asked the country's government to ensure accountability for enforced disappearances during the armed conflict with the LTTE. The report said Sri Lanka must take meaningful action to determine and disclose the fates and whereabouts of tens of thousands of people who have been subjected to enforced disappearance over the decades and hold those responsible to account.

**SAUDI KING UNDERGOES MEDICAL CHECKS**

**Dubai, May 19:** Saudi Arabia's 88-year-old King Salman will undergo medical checks on Sunday after suffering from a high temperature and joint pain, state media reported. King Salman will undergo the examinations at the Royal Clinics at Al Salam Palace in Jeddah, the state-run Saudi Press Agency reported. The treating medical team decided to conduct some examinations to diagnose his health condition and to check on his health, the statement said. It did not elaborate further. In April, the monarch entered a hospital for medical checks.

**Iran Prez's helicopter crashes in mountains**

Foreign minister on board, bad weather impeding rescue

**Dubai, May 19:** A helicopter carrying Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi and his foreign minister crashed on Sunday as it was crossing mountain terrain in heavy fog, an Iranian official told Reuters, and rescuers were struggling to reach the site of the incident.

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

Iranian state media said bad weather was the cause of the crash and was complicating rescue efforts. The chief of staff of Iran's Army ordered all the resources of the Army and the elite Revolutionary Guard to be put to use in search and rescue operations. "It is dark and it has started raining, but the search continues. Rescue teams have reached the area ... however, the rain has created mud, making the search difficult," a local reporter said.

State TV had earlier stopped all its regular programming to show prayers being held for Raisi across the country and, in a corner of the screen, live coverage of rescue teams deployed on foot in the mountainous area in heavy fog. The rescue teams were expected to reach the probable site of the crash later on Sunday evening.

The crash comes at a time of growing dissent within Iran over an array of political, social and economic crises. Iran's clerical rulers face global pressure over Tehran's disputed nuclear programme and its deepening military ties with Russia during the war in Ukraine.

Raisi, 63, was elected President in 2021, and since taking office has ordered a tightening of morality laws, overseen a bloody crackdown on anti-government protests and pushed hard in nuclear talks with world powers.

In Iran's political system, Raisi's 85-year-old mentor Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, supreme leader since 1989, has the final say on all policies. — Reuters

**IF FUEL RUNS OUT, aid doesn't get to the people where they need it, that famine, which we have talked about for so long, and which is looming, will not be looming anymore. It will be present.**

— MARTIN GRIFFITHS, UN's humanitarian chief



Palestinians rush to unload trucks transporting international humanitarian aid from the US-built Trident Pier near Nuseirat in the central Gaza Strip, on Sunday. — AFP

**YEMEN'S HOUTH REBELS LAUNCH A MISSILE THAT STRIKES AN OIL TANKER HEADED FOR CHINA**

Yemen's Houthi rebels hit an oil tanker in the Red Sea with a ballistic missile early on Saturday, damaging the Panama-flagged, Greek-owned vessel in their latest assault over the Israel-Hamas war in the Gaza Strip, officials said. The attack around 1 a.m. struck the oil tanker Wind, which recently docked in Russia and was bound for China, the US military's Central Command said.



IF FUEL RUNS OUT, aid doesn't get to the people where they need it, that famine, which we have talked about for so long, and which is looming, will not be looming anymore. It will be present.

— MARTIN GRIFFITHS, UN's humanitarian chief

**GANTZ ISSUES THREAT TO QUIT ISRAEL CABINET**

**Jerusalem, May 19:** Israeli war Cabinet minister Benny Gantz demanded on Saturday that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu commit to an agreed vision for the Gaza conflict that would include stipulating who might rule the territory after the war with Hamas.

Gantz told a press meet he wanted the war Cabinet to form a six-point plan by June 8. If his expectations are not met, he said, he will withdraw his centrist party from the conservative premier's broadened emergency coalition.

Gantz, a retired top Israeli general who opinion polls show is Netanyahu's most formidable political rival, gave no date for the prospective walkout but his challenge could increase strains on an increasingly unwieldy wartime government.

Netanyahu appears outflanked in his own inner war Cabinet, where he, Gantz and defence minister Yoav Gallant have votes. On Wednesday, Gallant demanded clarity on post-war plans and for Netanyahu to forswear Army reoccupation of Gaza.

If the PM were to do that, he would risk angering ultra-nationalist coalition parties that have called for Gaza to be annexed and settled. Losing them could topple Netanyahu, who before the war failed to enlist more centrist partners, given his trial on corruption charges he denies. — Reuters

**Israel's refugee camp strike death toll at 31**

**Gaza Strip, May 19:** Gaza's civil defence agency said on Sunday that an Israeli air strike targeting a house at a refugee camp in the centre of the Palestinian territory killed at least 31 people, updating an earlier toll.

"The civil defence crew were able to recover 31 martyrs and 20 wounded from a house belonging to the Hassan family, which was targeted by the Israeli occupation forces in the Nuseirat camp," Gaza civil defence agency spokesman Mahmud Bassal said.

He said rescue workers were continuing to search for missing people under the rubble. Earlier on Sunday the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital had said it had received the bodies of 20 people killed in the strike which witnesses said occurred

around 3:00 am local time. White House national security adviser Jake Sullivan met Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Sunday amid US calls for a more focused military campaign.

Sullivan was expected to press for Israel to go after Hamas militants in a targeted way. The Israeli Army when contacted by AFP asked for specific coordinates of the strike. Palestinian official news agency Wafa reported that the wounded included several children.

Palestinian militants and Israeli troops have clashed in north Gaza's Jabalia camp. Witnesses said several other houses were targeted in air strikes during the night across Gaza, and that strikes and artillery shelling also hit parts of Rafah. — AFP

**Will win today's vote of confidence: Prachanda**

**Kathmandu, May 19:** Nepal Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' has exuded confidence that he would win the trust vote in the House of Representatives on Monday, days after a coalition partner withdrew its support for his government.

Prachanda, 69, a former guerilla leader, belongs to the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist Centre), the third largest party in the House of Representatives (HoR). He will seek a vote of confidence in Parliament, the fourth within 18 months of taking office, amidst obstruction of the House proceedings by the Opposition Nepali Congress demanding a probe



into the alleged involvement of home minister Rabi Lamichhane in the misappropriation of cooperative funds. "There is no doubt that my government will survive the floor test," Prachanda said at a ruling party's programme in Kathmandu on Saturday. "The differences between the

ruling alliance and opposition parties will be sorted out through dialogue," he said. The Prime Minister is required to take a vote of confidence within 30 days if the party the Prime Minister is representing splits or if a member of the coalition government withdraws support.

The Janata Samajbadi Party (JSP) withdrew its support last week while quitting the coalition government. This will be Prime Minister Prachanda's fourth vote of confidence within one and a half years after he assumed the top executive position on December 25, 2022. — PTI

**Russia's east push on, both sides rain drones**

**Kyiv, May 19:** Russia said it shot down some 60 drones and several missiles over its territory while Ukraine in turn said it destroyed over 30 Russian drones.

Russian attacks on Ukraine's Kharkiv region on Sunday killed at least 11 people, said authorities in the border area facing a new offensive by Moscow's forces.

Six people — including a pregnant woman — were killed on the outskirts of Kharkiv city by a missile attack launched from Rus-

sia's territory of Belgorod, Ukrainian authorities said. Twenty-seven were wounded in the strike on a recreation centre, with one employee missing, the prosecutors office said.

Russian air defences shot down 57 Ukrainian drones over the southern Krasnodar region overnight, the Russian defence ministry said.

Local military officials said drone debris hit an oil refinery in the town of Slavyansk-on-Kuban, but there was no fire or damage. News outlet *Astra*

published videos appearing to show an explosion at the refinery as it was hit by a drone. The videos could not be independently verified.

Nine long-range ballistic missiles and a drone were destroyed over the Russia-occupied Crimean Peninsula, following Friday morning's massive Ukrainian drone attack that cut off power in the city of Sevastopol.

A further three drones were shot down over the Belgorod region, which borders Ukraine. — AP

**Graduate Route visa scrap plan revolt stares at Sunak**

**London, May 19:** Prime Minister Rishi Sunak is considering restrictions to the UK's post-study visa which allows graduates to stay on and work for up to two years after their degree course as part of efforts to curb soaring legal migration figures despite strong opposition from some of his ministers, a report claims on Sunday.

According to *The Observer* newspaper, Sunak is facing a Cabinet revolt over plans to scrap the Graduate Route scheme, the definitive factor for choosing UK universities among Indian students who have topped the tally of these post-study visas since it was launched in 2021.

Downing Street is said to be considering "further restricting or even ending" the route despite the independent Migration Advisory Committee (MAC) declaring it was not being abused and that it should continue as it helps United Kingdom universities make up for financial losses on the domestic front.

"Sunak is now finding himself caught between the demands of right-wingers with one eye on the Tory leadership and Conservative moderates who fear the consequences of a lurch to the right on the party's reputation and poll chances," claims the newspaper, while quoting sources close to ministers who oppose scrapping the visa. — PTI



International students in the UK now have the option to stay longer after graduation. — Agencies

**Infected blood: UK to repay thousands**

**London, May 19:** Britain will spend more than £10 billion (\$12.70 billion) compensating thousands of people who were treated with blood contaminated with HIV or hepatitis C in the 1970s and 1980s, the *Sunday Times* reported.

The infected blood scandal is widely seen as one of the worst treatment disasters in the history of the state-funded National Health Service. An estimated 30,000 people were given contaminated blood, with about 3,000 of those believed to have died. Many more lives have been affected by disease and some of those

infected have never been traced. Victims and their families are still calling for justice, compensation and answers over how it was allowed to happen despite warnings over the risks.

The blood and blood products, some of which were imported from the United States, were administered to people needing transfusions or as treatment for hemophilia. Ahead of the publication of an independent inquiry report on Monday, the *Sunday Times* said Prime Minister Rishi Sunak would make an official apology. — Reuters

**PAK EVACUATES STUDENTS FROM KYRGYZ CAPITAL**

**Islamabad, May 19:** More than 650 Pakistani students were being repatriated from Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan's foreign minister said on Sunday, after clashes broke out between locals and foreigners near student accommodation in the capital Bishkek.

Four Pakistani students were injured overnight on Friday when a riot erupted involving hundreds of students from different countries. Students were ordered by authorities to stay indoors, students told Pakistani media.

"Three special, commercial flights have been arranged," foreign minister Ishaq Dar said. "This was an attack on foreign students — not just Pakistanis. There were also Indian, Bangladeshi and Arab students." Around 130 students arrived on Saturday, with 540 more due on Sunday. — AFP

**Anti-dumping probe of plastics by Beijing**

**Beijing, May 19:** China's commerce ministry on Sunday launched an anti-dumping probe into POM copolymers, a type of engineering plastic, imported from the European Union, United States, Japan and Taiwan.

The plastics can partially replace metals such as copper and zinc and have various applications, including in auto parts, electronics, and medical equipment, the ministry said. The investigation should be completed in a year but could be extended for six months, it said.

The European Commission, which oversee EU trade policy, said it would carefully study the contents of the probe before deciding on any next step. "We expect China to ensure that this investigation is fully in line with all relevant WTO (World Trade Organisation) rules and obligations," a spokesperson said.

China's plastics probe comes amid a broader trade row with the United States and Europe. The United States on Tuesday unveiled steep tariff increases on Chinese electric vehicles (EVs), computer chips, medical products and other imports. On Friday, the European Union launched a trade investigation into Chinese tinplate steel, the latest in a string of EU trade and subsidy probes into Chinese exports.

The European Commission launched a probe last September to decide whether to impose punitive tariffs on cheaper Chinese EVs that it suspects of benefiting from state subsidies. Beijing argues the recent focus by the US and Europe on the risks to other economies from China's excess capacity is misguided. — Reuters

**CHINA TO BAIL OUT CRISIS-HIT REALTY SECTOR**

**Beijing, May 19:** China has finally announced steps to address the near collapse of its mammoth property sector by allocating billions of dollars to buy back unsold homes and repurchase idle lands to resurrect its bankrupt real estate sector.

The People's Bank of China has announced that it would establish a 300-billion-yuan (about \$42.25 billion) re-lending facility for the government-subsidized housing project. — PTI

**LAUNCH EVE: STIR AGAINST TAIWAN RULING PARTY**

**Taipei, May 19:** Hundreds of opposition supporters rallied in Taipei to protest four more years of Democratic Progressive Party rule on Sunday, the day before Taiwan inaugurates president-elect Lai Ching-te.

Lai will take the helm as Taiwan faces increasing diplomatic and military pressures from neighbouring China — which claims the self-ruled island as part of its territory. But his administration will also have to work with a fractious Parliament after voters in January revoked his party's majority. Taiwan's biggest opposition group, the Kuomintang — which has historically been regarded as friendlier to China — received one more seat than the DPP. — AFP

**2-YEAR HIATUS Setback to programme when a rocket caught fire in 2022**

**Blue Origin flies thrill seekers to space**

**Washington, May 19:** Jeff Bezos' space company Blue Origin launched its first crew of people from a site in Texas to the edge of space on Sunday since its suborbital New Shepard rocket was grounded in 2022, resuming its centre-piece space tourism business.

Six people seated in a capsule atop Blue Origin's New Shepard rocket were launched from the company's remote Van Horn, Texas launch facilities. The rocket separated from the capsule, and the crew cap-



Crew of the mission (L-R) Sylvain Chiron, Ken Hess, Ed Dwight, Gopi Thotakura, Mason Angel and Carol Schaller in Van Horn, Texas. — AFP

sule then ascended further beyond the boundary of Earth's atmosphere to 65.7 miles (105.7 km).

The gumdrop-shaped pod carrying the crew then returned to Earth, capping a brief mission. —

**THOTAKURA 1ST INDIAN ON MISSION**

**Washington, May 19:** Gopi Thotakura, an entrepreneur and a pilot, on Sunday became the first Indian to venture into space as a tourist aboard Amazon founder Jeff Bezos's Blue Origin's NS-25 mission. Thotakura's selection made him the first Indian space tourist and the second Indian to venture into space after the Indian Army's Wing Commander Rakesh Sharma in 1984.

According to Blue Origin, "Gopi is a pilot and aviator who learned how to fly before he could drive." He co-founded Preserve Life Corp, a global centre for holistic wellness and applied health near Hartshfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport. Besides flying jets commercially, he pilots bush, aerobatic, and seaplanes, as well as gliders and hot air balloons, and has served as an international medical jet pilot. — PTI

## quick BITES

INDICATORS	%
Sensex	73,917.03 0.34
Nifty 50	22,466.10 0.28
S&P 500*	5,303.27 0.12
Dollar (₹)	83.33 0.21
Pound Sterling (₹)	105.46 0.29
Euro (₹)	90.37 0.42
Gold (10gm) (₹)	73,750.39 0.05
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	83.40 0.16
IN 10-Yr bond yield	7.095 0.019
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	4.396 0.019

\* As of 8:30 PM IST

## Housing demand boosts Reloy's revenue in FY24

PropTech start-up Reloy, which helps builders in generating referral sales, has posted a 65 per cent growth in its revenue last fiscal to ₹21 crore on strong housing demand. The company's revenue stood at ₹12.7 crore in FY23. "Our growth is on account of higher referral sales and client acquisitions," Reloy founder and CEO Akhil Saraf said. Reloy has set a target to generate ₹3,500 cr worth of referral sales in FY25.



## DLF arm's office rental income hits ₹3,460 crore

DLF's joint venture firm DCCDL's rental income from office buildings increased 7 per cent annually to ₹3,460 crore in the last fiscal in 2023-24 from ₹3,232 crore in the preceding year, driven by rent appreciation and expansion of the asset portfolio. DLF Cyber City Developers Ltd (DCCDL) rental income from retail assets (malls and shopping centres) rose 18 per cent to ₹865 cr last fiscal from ₹735 cr in FY23.

## Nayara Energy's petrol sales increases 48%

Nayara Energy, a fuel retailer, posted a 48 per cent jump in petrol sales in the first quarter of 2024, while exports dropped as the firm met rising local demand for fuel. In Jan.-March quarter, Nayara sold 70 per cent of all petroleum products it produced at its Vadinar oil refinery in Indian market, it said. The firm posted 24 per cent y-o-y growth in domestic retail sales and a 12.5 per cent rise in institutional sales.



## Demand for zinc to rise in India on infra push

The demand for zinc is expected to double in India in the next five to 10 years on the back of huge investments in the infrastructure sector, including steel, international zinc association (IZA) said. "The market for primary and refined zinc in India is currently close to 800 to 1,000 tonne (per annum) and has a opportunity to increase with all the developments," IZA Global director Martin Van Leeuwen.

## Fleet additions by airlines set to ease travel constraints

**New Delhi, May 19:** High airfares remain a challenge that impacts India's leisure and business travellers, Thomas Cook India's executive chairman Madhavan Menon said.

He said that airline capacity continues to be a challenge despite an increase in scheduled flights.

"We hope to see the demand-supply constraints ease a bit with new aircraft being introduced into the network, but this will be over the long term," Menon said.

On the company's expansion plans, he informed that Thomas Cook India is working on expanding and strengthening its physical network with a combination of owned and franchise outlets and accelerating its digital footprint in the country. "With a focus on viable source markets, we continue our retail expansion with a combination of owned and franchise outlets, across metros/minimetros and regional India."

"Additionally, for our foreign exchange business, we have leveraged existing franchise outlets to set up foreign exchange counters within the same premises. This enables us to ramp up the scale of our distribution with speed," Thomas Cook India executive chairman added.

On the challenges faced by it in India, Menon said that while visa concerns on appointment slots or turnaround time are heightened during the



● **THE EASIER** visa regimes in terms of eVisas, Visa on Arrival and the announcements on free-visa entry for Indians help boost visitations by Indian consumers.

peak season, we have seen an improvement over the last year.

"High airfares remain a challenge that impacts India's leisure and business travellers. Airline capacity too continues to be a challenge, and this is despite an increase in scheduled flights," Menon said.

He asserted that the easier visa regimes in terms of eVisas, Visa on Arrival and the announcements on free-visa entry for Indians help boost visitations by Indian consumers.

The Thomas Cook India executive chairman shared that the upside is the announcement of free visa entry by destinations like Sri Lanka, Malaysia, and Thailand and also Schengen's recent multi-entry longer-term cascade visa regime should ease the bandwidth of the consular teams. — PTI

## SAHARA SLAMS MAKERS OF SCAM WEB SERIES, PLANS LEGAL ACTION

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MAY 19

Sahara India Pariwar has criticised the upcoming web series titled 'Scam 2010 - The Subrata Roy Saga'. The company termed the effort as an 'abusive and grossly condemnable act'.

The use of the word 'scam' in the title of the so-called web-series and linking it to Sahara seems prima-facie defamatory, and tends to lower down the image and reputation of Subrata Roy and Sahara India Pariwar.

The company said the behaviour of the makers of the webseries was offensive.

It was seeking advice to take legal action against the producer, director and all those involved in making the web series.

Sahara said the dispute between securities and exchange board of India (SEBI) and Sahara is still pending before the Supreme Court and any attempt to influence the proceedings of the said case would attract contempt of the Court, besides amounting to criminality.

Sahara India Pariwar has never been involved in any chit fund activity, it said.

The Sahara-SEBI issue was a dispute on the SEBI's jurisdiction on optionally fully convertible debentures (OFCD) bonds issued by Sahara, the company said in a statement.

## India's GDP growth in FY25 to be 7.1%: Ind-Ra

Services led by construction, electricity will continue momentum

**New Delhi, May 19:** India Ratings and Research expects the country's GDP growth rate for the March quarter at 6.7 per cent and around 6.9-7 per cent for the 2023-24 fiscal.

As regards the economic growth in the current fiscal, Sinha said the GDP is expected to expand at 7.1 per cent, its principal economist Sunil Kumar Sinha said.

The gross domestic product (GDP) numbers for the fourth quarter (January-March 2024) and the provisional estimates for the 2023-24 fiscal are scheduled to be released by the government on May 31.

The Indian economy grew 8.2 per cent in the June quarter, 8.1 per cent in the Sept. quarter and 8.4 per cent in the Dec. quarter of 2023-24.

"We are expecting the fourth quarter growth to



● **THE GDP** numbers for the fourth quarter (January-March 2024) and the provisional estimates for the 2023-24 fiscal are scheduled to be released by the government on May 31.

be 6.7 per cent and the overall GDP growth for FY24 to be around 6.9-7 per cent," Sinha said.

He said the growth rate in the first two quarters benefited from a low base, though the 8.4 per cent growth rate in the third (Oct.-Dec. 2023) quarter was surprising.

"When we analyse the data, then what is visible is the wedge between the GVA and GDP. A large impetus to Q3 GDP has come from higher tax col-

lection, but this phenomenon is unlikely to be repeated in the fourth quarter. The wedge between the GDP and GVA is unlikely to be repeated in fourth quarter," he noted.

While the gross value added (GVA) was 6.5 per cent in the third quarter, the GDP growth rate stood at 8.4 per cent. This wedge is on account of higher taxes collected during the quarter. In the first quarter, the GVA and GDP growth was 8.2 per cent,

while in the second quarter, the GVA was 7.7 per cent and GDP 8.1 per cent.

GDP is the total value of goods and services produced in a given period. GVA is GDP minus net taxes (gross tax collection minus subsidy).

The Reserve Bank monetary policy review in April, projected GDP growth for 2023-24 at 7 per cent.

"Even if we set aside the tax component, the momentum witnessed in the first and second quarters has continued in the subsequent quarters, and the likelihood is that momentum will continue in FY25," he added.

The services sector, he said, will continue the momentum, led by construction and electricity, while mining and industrial output will be laggard.

— PTI

## Container volumes set to grow 8% in FY25

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, MAY 19

After a flat growth in FY23, container volumes registered 10 per cent growth in FY24. Despite the risk of prolonged Red Sea crisis, container volumes are expected to grow by 8 per cent this fiscal.

According to Care Ratings, India saw a rising trend in containerisation from FY13 to FY21, during which container volumes in India grew at a robust CAGR of 9.5 per cent, out-

acing the global CAGR of 3.13 per cent, indicating a strengthening trend of containerisation in India.

However, global shortage of containers due to EXIM cargo imbalances caused by Covid-19 disruptions, the Russia-Ukraine war, and threats of hyperinflation led to surge in the Shanghai containerised freight index (SCFI) from October 2021 to February 2022, leading to a corresponding rise in container freight rates.

Container volumes in

● **INDIA SAW** a rising trend in containerisation from FY13 to FY21, during which container volumes in India grew at a robust CAGR of 9.5%, outpacing the global CAGR of 3.13%.

India still demonstrated a healthy CAGR of 6 per cent from FY20 to FY22.

In FY23, container volumes experienced flat growth at 3 per cent to 287 MMT but witnessed a

robust recovery of 10 per cent in FY24 to 317 MMT, driven by rebound in EXIM trade despite the ongoing Red Sea crisis starting in Nov 2023.

The disruption arising out of increased attacks on ships sailing through the Red Sea region has prompted shipping liners to consider alternative, longer routes past the Cape of Good Hope, extending voyage schedule by 15-20 days thus raising transit costs and insurance premiums.



## ITC'S CEO SANJIV ASSUMES OFFICE AS CII PRESIDENT

**New Delhi, May 19:** Sanjiv Puri, chairman and managing director of ITC, has assumed office as the president of the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) for 2024-25, the chamber said on Sunday.

He takes over from R Dinesh, chairman of TVS Supply Chain Solutions.

Puri is also the chairman of ITC Infotech India, its subsidiaries in UK and US, and Surya Nepal.

Rajiv Memani takes over as president designate of CII for 2024-25. He is chairman of the India region of EY (Ernst & Young), a global professional services organisation.

He is also a member of EY's global management body as the chair of its global emerging markets committee.

Tata Chemicals Limited managing director and chief executive officer R Mukundan takes over as the vice president of CII for 2024-25.

— PTI

## Global equity markets nearing record highs

**New York, May 19:** From New York to London to Tokyo, if there's one similarity among the world's equity markets it's this: record highs.

Of the world's 20 largest stock markets, 14 have hit all-time highs recently. The MSCI ACWI index, which tracks developed and emerging markets, has been on a record-breaking run, setting another new high on Friday.

In the US, the S&P 500 and Nasdaq 100 indexes hit records this week, while the Dow Jones industrial average crossed 40,000 for the first time ever.

Meanwhile, the biggest bourses in Europe, Canada, Brazil, India, Japan and Australia are currently at or near their peaks.

Looming interest rate cuts, healthy economies and corporate earnings are driving the activity. And what's more, there are plenty of potential drivers to keep the rally rolling, such as the \$6 trillion sitting in money market funds, while risks remain scarce.

"From a macro perspective, there are no red signals," said Salman Ahmed, global head of macro and strategic asset allocation at Fidelity International, who's overweight global equities in his multi-asset portfolios.

● **INDIA HAS** been on a strong also run, with the benchmark BSE Sensex setting records and outperforming China, thanks to the government's investment pledges and an expanding economy.

"The cyclical picture is staying strong, and the rally is broadening out."

The April pullback in global stocks didn't last long, as dip buyers consistently showed up. That helps explain why the S&P 500 hasn't seen a 2 per cent drop in 311 days, its longest streak since 2017-2018.

And even Chinese equities, which have been struggling since hitting a high in February 2021, are starting to come back.

The S&P 500 has set 24 new all-time highs in 2024 after going two years without one, as US stocks have been on a \$12 trillion rally since late October.

India has been on a strong also run, with the BSE Sensex setting records and outperforming China, thanks to government's investment pledges and an rising economy. However, investors turned cautious in recent weeks over election uncertainties and high valuations. — Bloomberg

## BSE m-cap inches to \$5 trillion, election trend to decide direction

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, MAY 19

Lok Sabha election outcome related volatility is likely to continue during the week after close to two per cent gain in the benchmark indices last week.

BSE's market capitalisation inched closer to \$5 trillion mark last Saturday during the special trading session as it stood at new high of over ₹412.35 lakh crore or \$4.95 trillion. The landmark will be closely watched amid market volatility.

Market will remain closed on Monday, May 20 on account of polling in Mumbai in the fifth phase of Lok Sabha elections.

In Saturday's special live trading session Sensex



and Nifty-50 gained further with Sensex closing at 74,005.94 gaining 88 points or 0.12 per cent while Nifty-50 closed at 22,502. up 35.90 points or 0.16 per cent.

On Tuesday the market will be tracking voting percentage in the fifth phase and global cues after Monday market performance globally. Traders are expecting higher volatility as the

week progresses.

"The release of PMI data for May from both the US and India next week will be closely monitored for further market insights. Amidst ongoing uncertainties surrounding election results and quarterly earnings, we anticipate continued volatility in the near term," said Vinod Nair, head- Research, Geojit Financial Services.

"Investors are expressing optimism regarding potential interest rate cuts in 2024, supported by favourable US consumer inflation data and improved jobless claims figures, which have also contributed to a surge in gold prices and strengthened the stock market rally," Nair said.

## COMMERCE MINISTRY HOLDS PARLEYS ON NEGOTIATING FTAs

**NEW DELHI, MAY 19:** The commerce ministry has held detailed discussions with senior officials of different departments and trade experts on formulating standard operating procedures (SOP) for negotiating free trade agreements (FTAs), an official said.

To discuss the various aspects of these agreements, the ministry has organised a two-day 'Chintan Shivir' on FTA strategy and SOPs for trade negotiations.

Suggestions that came up during the discussions included comprehensive consultations with public and private sector players and sharing details of the proposed FTAs with the line ministries, the official said. — PTI

## MFs see ₹1.3 lakh crore infusion this year

**New Delhi, May 19:** Mutual funds (MFs) showed strong confidence in Indian equities this year, injecting around ₹1.3 lakh crore, driven mainly by significant retail investor interest and the robust performance of the stock market.

Mutual funds, which manage long-term wealth for domestic investors, prioritise the Indian mar-

ket's underlying growth potential and are less rattled by short-term events like elections, which allows them to keep investing in equities, Tradejini COO Trivish D said.

Additionally, the growing interest in systematic investment plans (SIPs) on the back of astonishing compounding stories by influencers and industry veterans has perked

investors, who otherwise wish to stay away from the markets, to start participating through these mutual funds, he added.

According to the data from the securities and exchange board of India (Sebi), MFs invested ₹26,038 crore in the first fortnight of the ongoing month and ₹20,155 crore in April. Moreover, the highest MF buying for

2024 was experienced in March, as they put in a net of ₹44,233 crore.

With the latest deployment, MFs investment in equities reached around ₹1.3 lakh crore in 2024 (till May 16), the data showed.

The steady flow from mutual funds and other domestic institutional investors has supported the equity markets over the past few years. — PTI

## LUXURY | DRIVE

Brand open to use e-fuels if regulation becomes favourable: CEO Stephan

## Lamborghini slams brakes on EV plans

**Sant'Agata Bolognese, (Italy) May 19:** Lamborghini is holding off for now on making its roaring sports cars fully electric as scepticism around the technology grows.

While performance won't be an issue in an electric vehicle (EV), some emotional aspects, like the sound of the Huracan's V10 engine - can't be replicated, said Lamborghini chief executive officer Stephan Winkelmann.

The Volkswagen AG-owned brand also remains open to use e-fuels if regulation becomes more

favourable.

Fully electric sports supercars "is not something that is selling so far," Winkelmann said. "It's too early, and we have to see down the road if and when this is going to happen."

It's a tense time in the high-end automotive sector, which is deliberating how to deal with regulatory pressure to lower emissions as demand for EVs slows and governments scale back subsidies for the technology.

Mercedes-Benz Group has stopped development



● **WHILE PERFORMANCE** would not be an issue in an electric vehicle, some emotional aspects, like the sound of the Huracan's V10 engine, cannot be replicated.

of separate underpinnings for electric luxury sedans to save money and plans to sell cars running on gasoline longer than expected. Lamborghini's rival Ferrari is further along in its electrification

push, and next month plans to open a factory that will make hybrid and electric supercars in Maranello, Italy.

BYD has beaten both to the punch after unveiling a 1.68 mn yuan (\$232,452)

electric sports car. The Yangwang U9 will initially be sold only in China, where Lamborghini's exposure is limited, he said.

Lamborghini has had success selling plug-in hybrids including the Revuelto sports car, but its first fully electric model, Lanzador crossover, won't arrive until 2028.

Still, the automaker is overhauling its supply chain and production to by 2030 produce Lamborghinis with 40 per cent fewer carbon emissions than currently, Winkelmann said. — Bloomberg

## Tata Motors ups outlay to ₹43,000 cr for FY25

**New Delhi, May 19:** Tata Motors group has raised its investment outlay for FY25 to ₹43,000 crore for new products and technologies, with its British arm Jaguar Land Rover absorbing the maximum share, according to a senior company official.

"Investment by JLR ended at 3.3 billion pounds (more than ₹33,000 crore), and Tata Motors did more than ₹8,200 crore. So, the total we ended up with was at about ₹41,200 crore investment in FY24," Tata

Motors Group chief financial officer PB Balaji said.

Coming to FY25, he said, for JLR, the investment will be "more like 3.5 bn pounds, broadly ₹35,000 cr, because all the product plans we had are coming together in next year".

He further said, "There is a phasing issue we are dealing (with), and these products have to (be) launched on time". Balaji said, "We will repeat the ₹8,000 crore range. So, JLR is about 6 per cent rise and Tata Motors is flat. — PTI

# BLITZCRICK



- Chennai Super Kings
- Delhi Capitals
- Gujarat Titans
- Kolkata Knight Riders
- Lucknow Super Giants
- Mumbai Indians
- Punjab Kings
- Rajasthan Royals
- Royal Challengers Bengaluru
- Sunrisers Hyderabad

ORANGE	
Virat Kohli, RCB	708
Ruturaj Gaikwad, CSK	583
Travis Head, SRH	533
PURPLE	
Harshal Patel, PBKS	24
Jaspit Bumrah, MI	20
Arshdeep Singh, PBKS	19

## IT'S SUNNY DAY

### Bright Sunrisers put Punjab in the shade

MOSES KONDETY  
HYDERABAD, MAY 19

No total seems to be too big for the flashy Sunrisers. On Sunday, they smashed another 200+ with much to spare to end the league stage with another victory at home, over the Punjab Kings.

After electing to bat and making 214 for 5, the visitors would have thought they had enough on the board. The hosts made a mockery of it with five balls to go and four wickets in hand.

The chase got off to an interesting start though. It was Impact Player vs Impact Player as Arshdeep Singh and Travis Head sneaked into the SRH and Punjab sides only in the second half. Singh struck with the first ball of the innings, rattling the stumps of his opposite number as the stadium fell silent.

From thereon, the Orange bats did the talking. On-song opener Abhishek Sharma slammed half-a-dozen sixes in his 28-ball 66; Heinrich Klaasen crashed five boundary hits in a fast 42; Nitish Kumar Reddy and Rahul Tripathi chipped in 37 and 33 respectively as Sun scripted their fifth win of the season at the Rajiv Gandhi International Cricket Stadium.

Earlier, Punjab's top order powered their side to a strong total. Two of the top three missed half-centuries though.

They began well. Openers Atharva Taide and Prabhsimran Singh remained unseparated as the visitors reached an impressive 61 for no loss at the end of Powerplay, the last ball of which was hit for a six by the former off Sun seamer Bhuvneshwar Kumar.

However, Taide fell in the 10th over as he cut T. Natarajan straight to Sanvir Singh at point to end the 97-stand for the opening wicket. His 27-ball 46 included five boundaries and two sixes. Punjab reached 99 for 1 at the half-way stage.

Later, Prabhsimran got into the act and kept stroking the ball around as Punjab raced about. They were 151 in the 15th



Abhishek Sharma of Sunrisers Hyderabad plays a shot against Punjab Kings in Hyderabad on Sunday. SRH won by four wickets. — DEEPAK DESHPANDE

over when the opener fell — edging leg-spinner Vijayakanth to wicket-keeper Klaasen — after making a stylish 71 that came off 45 balls and contained seven boundaries and four sixes.

Rilee Rossouw then shifted gears and drove around before breaking down one short of 50 as he skied a catch to Abdul Samad at long-on off Pat Cummins. Rossouw's 24-ball knock was decorated with three

boundaries and four sixes. Stand-in captain Jitesh Sharma then stroked a quick 32 to push Punjab over the 200-run mark.

For Sunrisers, Nitish Reddy was impressive in the field. He denied Prabhsimran a certain four by leaping high on the boundary line to put the ball back into play with a tennis forehand in the seventh over.

He was not that lucky rolling his arm over

though, conceding 20 runs including two sixes and a four while sending down a no-ball in the 12th over. He was asked to bowl the final over too, and gave away 19 — two sixes, a four and a wide this time — to finish with figures of 54/0 in three at an expensive 18-an-over.

Punjab made four changes from the previous match and went in with only one overseas player in Rossouw, a first in IPL.

#### SCOREBOARD

**Punjab Kings:** Atharva Taide c Sanvir b Natarajan 46, Prabhsimran Singh c Klaasen b Vijayakanth 71, Rilee Rossouw c Samad b Cummins 49, Shashank Singh run out (Nitish) 2, Jitesh Sharma not out 32, Ashutosh Sharma c Sanvir b Natarajan 2, Shivam Singh not out 2. Extras (lb-5, w-4, nb-1) 10. Total (for 5 wickets in 20 overs) 214. Fall of wickets: 1-97, 2-151, 3-174, 4-181, 5-187. **Bowling:** Bhuvneshwar Kumar 4-0-36-0, Pat Cummins 4-0-36-1, T Natarajan 4-0-33-2, Vijayakanth Vijayakanth 4-0-37-1, Shahbaz Ahmed 1-0-13-0, Nitish Reddy 3-0-54-0. **Sunrisers Hyderabad:** Travis Head b Arshdeep 1, Abhishek Sharma c Shivam b Shashank 66, Rahul Tripathi c Arshdeep b Harshal 33, Nitish Reddy c Shivam b Harshal 37, Heinrich Klaasen b Brar 42, Shahbaz Ahmed c Shashank b Harshal 3, Abdul Samad not out 11, Sanvir Singh not out 6. Extras (lb-6, w-10, nb-1) 17. Total (for 6 wickets in 19.1 overs) 215. Fall of wickets: 1-0, 2-72, 3-129, 4-176, 5-197, 6-208. **Bowling:** Arshdeep Singh 4-0-37-2, Rishi Dhawan 3-0-35-0, Harshal Patel 4-0-49-2, Rahul Chahar 4-0-43-0, Harpreet Brar 3-0-36-1, Shashank Singh 1-0-5-1, Atharva Taide 0.1-0-4-0.

POINTS TABLE						
Teams	P	W	L	N/R	Points	Net RR
KKR (Q)	14	9	3	2	19	+1.428
SRH (Q)	14	8	5	1	17	+0.414
RR (Q)	14	8	5	1	17	+0.273
RCB (Q)	14	7	7	0	14	+0.459
CSK	14	7	7	0	14	+0.392
DC	14	7	7	0	14	-0.377
LSG	14	7	7	0	14	-0.667
GT	14	5	7	2	12	-1.063
PBKS	14	5	9	0	10	-0.353
MI	14	4	10	0	8	-0.318

## Rohit lashes out at broadcasters

**New Delhi, May 19:** India skipper Rohit Sharma on Sunday lashed out at the IPL broadcasters for "breaching" cricketers' privacy by recording their conversations with friends and colleagues at training and on match days and then telecasting the contents.

Rohit expressed his disappointment after a video involving him and Kolkata Knight Riders assistant coach Abhishek Nayar, in which the former is seen contemplating his future at the Mumbai Indians, went viral.

"The lives of cricketers have become so intrusive that cameras are now recording every step and conversation we are having in privacy with our friends and colleagues, at training or on match days," Rohit posted on X. He added, "Despite asking Star Sports to not record my conversation, it was and was also then played on air, which is a breach of privacy."

"The need to get exclusive content and focused only on views and engagement will one day break

the trust between the fans, cricketers and cricket. Let better sense prevail."

Rohit was seen making a request to the broadcasters to shut down the audio while recording him after his chat with Nayar. The conversation between the two took place after MI's IPL fixture against KKR on May 11.

The audio of the chat was posted by KKR on their social media handle and fans assumed that the cricketer is speaking about leaving MI after the ongoing season.

Following the controversy, the video was taken down by the Knight Riders' social media team.

Few days after that, on May 17, Rohit was once again seen having a chat with Dhawal Kulkarni ahead of MI's fixture against Lucknow Super Giants. Seeing himself being recorded, the opener, with folded hands, requested the broadcaster to turn off the audio as one audio has already got him into trouble.

— PTI

## RR finish third after rain washes out play vs KKR

**Guwahati, May 19:** Rajasthan Royals paid the price for their shoddy show during the business end as a washout of their final IPL league game against table toppers Kolkata Knight Riders on Sunday pushed them to third place behind Sunrisers Hyderabad. While KKR finished the league engagements on 20

points with nine wins and two more solitary points courtesy wash-outs, SRH (17 points) pipped RR (17 points) by virtue of better Net Run Rate (NRR). SRH finished with NRR of 0.414 compared to RR's 0.273.

KKR will play Sunrisers Hyderabad in the first Qualifier in Ahmedabad on Tuesday followed by

the 'Eliminator' between Rajasthan Royals and Royal Challengers Bengaluru in the same venue.

Rajasthan Royals would blame themselves for getting into a nice little rut after an incredible run during the first half of the tournament when they had won eight out of their nine games. — PTI

#### QUICK BYTES

### INDIA WIN SILVER, BRONZE AT WORLD PARA ATHLETICS

**Kobe (Japan), May 19:** The Indian team picked up its first medals in the World Para Athletics Championships with high jumper Nishad Kumar and 200m runner Preethi Pal winning a silver and bronze respectively here on Sunday. Nishad, a Tokyo Paralympics silver medallist, cleared 1.99m to finish second in the men's T47 high jump final and pick up India's first medal on the third day of competitions.

American Roderick Townsend won the gold with a jump of 2.05m. Another Indian in the fray, Ram Pal finished sixth with his season's best performance of 1.90m.

Preethi Pal then added a bronze to India's tally after finishing third in women's T35 200m final with a time of 30.49 seconds. — PTI

### SUKANT, TARUN & SUHAS QUALIFY FOR PARALYMPICS

**New Delhi, May 19:** Ace Indian para shuttlers Sukant Kadam, Tarun and Suhas have sealed their berths for the upcoming Paralympics in Paris. This is the first time Kadam will be taking part in the Paralympics, and he will be playing in the men's SL 4 category. Apart from him, Tarun and Suhas have also qualified from the same category.

Mandeep Kaur in SL3 women's (for players with movement moderately affected on one side of the body, both legs, or the absence of limbs), Nithya and Sivarajan in mixed doubles SL6 category also made the cut. The Paris Paralympics will be held from August 28 to September 8. — PTI

## Foden fires City to record fourth consecutive crown

**Manchester, May 19:** Manchester City created English football history on Sunday, overcoming West Ham 3-1 to win their fourth straight Premier League title and break Arsenal's hearts as Jurgen Klopp made an emotional Liverpool exit.

Phil Foden scored two early goals at an expectant Etihad to put his side on the brink of the title before Mohammed Kudus pulled one back with a spectacular overhead kick.

But Rodri struck just before the hour to restore City's two-goal cushion and the home side rarely looked troubled as they coasted to the win.

Arsenal started the day two points behind their rivals and praying for a miracle to deny City their coronation, knowing that a win against Everton would not be enough if the champions won on home turf.

The Gunners, without a Premier League title since 2004, came from a goal down to beat Everton 2-1 but had to content themselves with second in the table for a second straight season.

City, who have now won six titles in seven years, stand alone as the only English team to have won four straight top-flight

#### ENGLISH | PREMIER LEAGUE



Manchester City's Phil Foden (right) celebrates after scoring against West Ham during the English Premier League match at the Etihad Stadium in Manchester, England, on Sunday. Manchester City won 3-1. — AP

titles, eclipsing the achievements of the great Liverpool and Manchester United teams of the past.

Klopp was given an emotional send-off at Anfield after nine trophy-filled years. Alexis Mac Allister opened the scoring in a 2-4 loss at home to Fulham. They will join Burnley and Sheffield United in the lower tier next season. — AFP

minutes later for the Reds, who ended the season in third place.

Elsewhere on the final day of the Premier League season, Luton's relegation was confirmed with a 2-4 loss at home to Fulham. They will join Burnley and Sheffield United in the lower tier next season. — AFP

## Satwik-Chirag win Thailand Open

**Bangkok, May 19:** In a confidence-boosting performance ahead of Paris Olympics, star Indian shuttlers Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty on Sunday won the Thailand Open Super 500 badminton tournament with a straight-game win over Chen Bo Yang and Liu Yi of China, here.

Satwik and Chirag, the world number three pair, prevailed 21-15, 21-15 over Liu and Chen, ranked 29th, for their ninth BWF world tour title in men's doubles.

It was also the second title of the season for the Asian Games champions following their triumph at the French Open Super 750 in March.

They had also finished runners-up at Malaysia Super 1000 and India Super 750.

"It has been a lucky tournament for us. The journey started from here. We lifted this title in 2019 and



Satwiksairaj Rankireddy (left) and Chirag Shetty pose with their medals after winning the Thailand Open doubles title in Bangkok on Sunday.

again we are lifting it here now. After 2019, we went on to win many tournaments and, hopefully, it will give more boost to us in the upcoming impor-

tant tournaments," Satwik said after the win. "They keep on playing fast and we knew we couldn't relax. Overall, I think it's the best match

we played throughout the tournament. We kept everything calm and under control. So really happy that we played well." — PTI

## ARAVINDH BEATS SALEM TO CLAIM SOLE LEAD IN SHARJAH

**Sharjah, May 19:** Indian Grandmaster Aravindh Chithambaram defeated local star A. R. Saleh Salem to emerge as the sole leader on 4.5 points after the end of the fifth round of Sharjah Masters chess tournament here.

Chithambaram is now followed by four players, the Iranian duo of Amin Tabatabaei and Bardiya Daneshvar and Americans Hans Moke Niemann and Sam Shankland who all have four points apiece.

Top seed Arjun Erigaisi is in the next pack of eight players having 3.5 points each and giving him company here is another Indian in Sankalp Gupta.

With four rounds still to be played in the tournament, as many as 16 players have an identical three points each. The list includes Indians Abhimanyu Puranik, Leon Luke Mendonca, P. Niyan and V. Pranav.

It turned out to be a tough day at the office for many but Aravindh was in

his element as he simply crushed Salem.

Sankalp continued with his impressive run, holding highly regarded Teimour Radjabov of Azerbaijan to a draw while Abhimanyu Puranik could not keep up with his form and lost to Amin Tabatabaei of Iran. — PTI