

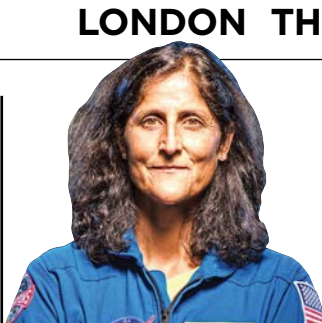
# THE ASIAN AGE

LONDON THURSDAY 6 JUNE 2024



## NATION | 3

DMK chief Stalin focused on Dravidian model that helped party win all 39 TN LS seats



## WORLD | 6

Indian-origin astronaut Sunita Williams flies to space for a third time

## DELHI AGE | 16

‘Cheating & extortion charges against Sunny Deol by producer Sourav Gupta totally baseless’



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**WINDOWS**  
Axar Patel with Rohit Sharma during the T20 World Cup against Ireland in New York on Wednesday. India beat Ireland by 8 wickets. — AP  
■ Report on Page 8

## Court junks Kejiwal bail plea, extends his custody till June 19

**New Delhi:** In yet another setback to Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal, a city court on Wednesday dismissed his application for interim bail on medical grounds in the money laundering case linked to the alleged excise policy scam. Special Judge Kaveri Baweja directed the Tihar jail authorities to take care of his medical needs in judicial custody. The judge also extended Mr Kejriwal's judicial custody till June 19. The court is scheduled to take up on June 7 his application seeking default bail in the case. The ED had opposed the plea, saying he campaigned throughout the polls but “now when he has to surrender, he suddenly claims to be ill”. The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) national convenor surrendered on Sunday at the Tihar jail as the tenure of his interim bail granted by the Supreme Court expired on June 1. **Full report on Page 2**

## BJP board will decide next Odisha CM soon

**Bhubaneswar:** Amid speculations over who would be the next CM of Odisha, state BJP president Manmohan Samal said on Wednesday the party's parliamentary board will take a decision on it in a day or two and the new CM would take oath on June 10. **Full report on Page 3**

## 5 trekkers on way to U'khand lake die

**Dehradun:** Five trekkers on their way to Sahastratal in Uttarakhand died, while four were reported missing when the rescuers abandoned their operation on Wednesday due to bad weather. Sources said the chances of survival for the missing trekkers appear bleak. **Full report on Page 4**

## COUNTERPOINT



Are you a candidate?  
I am an investor!



## ■ NDA MPs to meet Prez Fri ■ TDP lobbies for Speaker post Modi to take oath for 3rd term Sat; TDP, JD-U seek plum Cabinet slots

YOJNA GUSAI  
NEW DELHI, JUNE 5

It's official. Narendra Modi has been unanimously chosen as the leader of the NDA and is all set to form the government for the third consecutive time. The swearing-in ceremony is expected to be held on Saturday. At the NDA meet on Wednesday, the TDP and the JD(U) categorically reaffirmed that they stand firm with the NDA. After the alliance meeting, Mr Modi posted on a social media platform, “Met our valued NDA partners. Ours is an alliance that will further national progress and fulfil regional aspirations. We will serve the 140-crore people of India and work towards building a Viksit Bharat.”

On June 7, the NDA MPs will meet President Droupadi Murmu and stake their claim to form the government. Speculation is rife that both the TDP and the JD(U) are reportedly bargaining hard for plum ministries in the new government. While the allies and the BJP are tight-lipped about Cabinet berths and portfolios, sources revealed that the TDP is bargaining for the Speaker's post, three Cabinet berths and two ministries of state.

The JD(U) has also thrown its hat in the ring and was reportedly eyeing for three Cabinet berths and special category status (SCS) for Bihar. The Shinde Sena and the LJP are reportedly asking for two Cabinet berths each. However, decisions on portfolios will only be taken by the BJP top brass and the top leadership of alliance partners.

The BJP-led NDA pushed through the



Prime Minister Narendra Modi with TDP president N. Chandrababu Naidu, JD(U) chief Nitish Kumar and Shiv Sena (Shinde) supremo Eknath Shinde during a meeting at 7, Lok Kalyan Marg in New Delhi on Wednesday. — PTI



President Droupadi Murmu speaks at a dinner hosted by her for the outgoing Union council of ministers at Rashtrapati Bhavan in New Delhi on Wednesday. — PTI

▶ **THE BJP-LED NDA** pushed through the majority mark of 272 in the Lok Sabha by winning 293 seats. The BJP won 240 seats on its own, 32 seats less than a simple majority.

majority mark of 272 in the Lok Sabha by winning 293 seats. The BJP won 240 seats on its own, 32 seats less than a simple majority. The TDP won 16 of the 25 Lok Sabha seats in Andhra Pradesh and the JD(U) won 12 of the 40 seats in Bihar.

After the meeting, Mr Naidu, who is yet again back as the kingmaker, told the media, “We contested the election together. We are with NDA.”

“Honouring the mandate given by the people of our country, all the NDA partners unanimously endorsed Mr Modi as our coalition leader at a meeting held in Delhi today. Under his able leadership, we shall all strive to ensure that our country continues to prosper and emerge as a global leader,” posted Mr Naidu after the meeting. It is learnt that during the meeting, Mr Kumar told the Prime Minister, “*Jaldi kijiye* (act fast)”. He was reportedly asking Mr Modi to form the government at the earliest.

The resolution adopted in the NDA meeting stated that the “government will continue working for

## Special dinner by Prez for outgoing Union council of ministers, Modi

**New Delhi, June 5:** President Droupadi Murmu hosted a dinner on Wednesday for Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the outgoing council of ministers at the Rashtrapati Bhavan here. The event was also attended by vice-president Jagdeep Dhankhar and Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla.

“President Droupadi Murmu hosted a dinner for the outgoing Union council of ministers, led by Prime Minister @narendramodi, at Rashtrapati Bhavan,” the President's office said in a post on X.

Earlier in the day, Mr Modi tendered his resignation to the President, who accepted it and asked him to continue till the new government assumes office.

“The Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi, met the President today and tendered his resignation along with the council of ministers,” an official statement said. — PTI

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## Biden congratulates Modi on poll victory

**New Delhi:** US President Joe Biden on Wednesday congratulated Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the NDA for their victory in the LS polls. He also said the friendship between both countries is growing as both sides unlock a shared future of unlimited potential.

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## BJP's Bihar chief targeted by JD-U

■ Nitish to press for special status ■ JD-U eyes railways, agriculture

SANJAY BASAK  
NEW DELHI, JUNE 5

The first casualty of the BJP's strategic alliance with the JD(U) appears to be the party's Bihar unit president Samrat Choudhary. Mr Choudhary also holds the position of deputy chief minister of Bihar. Sources revealed that long-standing tensions between Mr Choudhary and Bihar chief minister Nitish Kumar could lead to significant changes within the BJP. The simmering rift has intensified speculation about a potential organisational reshuffle in the state, with pressure mounting on the BJP to address the discord.



Samrat Choudhary

With the Assembly elections due in April-May 2025 in Bihar, the JD(U) will now mount pressure on the Centre for special package and special category status (SSC) for the state. Pressure could also be mounted for reducing Central taxes levied on Bihar. JD(U) national secretary K.C. Tyagi on Wednesday made it clear that the JD(U) was firm on getting the special status

▶ **SOURCES REVEALED** that long-standing tensions between Samrat Choudhary and Bihar chief minister Nitish Kumar could lead to significant changes within the BJP

for the state. Speaking to a TV channel, JD(U) spokesperson Arvind Nishad went on record saying that “special status for Bihar has been a long-standing demand.” He said: “When Narendra Modi takes the oath as Prime Minister for the third time, the people of Bihar expect a special package.”

It was learnt that the Bihar CM did not meet Mr

## Sunak, Starmer clash over taxes, NHS, cost of living in TV debate

**London, June 5:** British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak and Opposition Labour Party leader Keir Starmer sparred Tuesday over tax, the cost of living and the country's creaking health system in an inconclusive televised debate ahead of a July 4 election expected to make one of them the country's next leader.

Mr Sunak tried to boost his centre-right party's dismal outlook by urging voters to back the stability of continued Conservative government. Sir Keir Starmer hoped to cement his status as the favourite by arguing that Britain



Rishi Sunak Keir Starmer desperately needs change. Both acknowledged the UK's many problems, from fraying public services to a broken immigration system. But neither could say outright, when asked, where the money would come from to fix them.

Mr Sunak stressed his stewardship of the economy, which has seen inflation fall to just over two

per cent from a peak of more than 11 per cent in late 2022. He said should stick with him because his ‘clear plan’ for the economy was working.

Mr Starmer said the election was a choice between more ‘chaos and division’ with the Conservatives and ‘turning the page and rebuilding with Labour.’

Polls currently give centre-left Labour a double-digit lead. To win, Mr Starmer must persuade voters who previously backed the Tories that Labour can be trusted with the UK's economy, borders and security. — AP



Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge with Sonia Gandhi, NCP chief Sharad Pawar, CPI(M)'s Sitaram Yechury, SP chief Akhilesh Yadav and others after the INDIA bloc leaders' meeting in New Delhi on Wednesday. — PRITAM BANDYOPADHYAY

## Kharge: INDIA to fight BJP govt, won't stake claim now

Will take steps to oust Modi at right time: Opp.

AGE CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, JUNE 5

A day after the Lok Sabha results, the INDIA bloc leaders met in the national capital at the residence of Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge. The Opposition bloc has decided not to stake a claim to form the next government.

Addressing the gathering of leaders in his opening remark, Mr Kharge said, “The INDIA bloc welcomes all parties that share its fundamental commitment to the values enshrined in the Preamble to our Constitution and to its many provisions for economic, social and political justice.”

Thanking the INDIA bloc partners, the Congress president added, “I welcome all INDIA bloc partners. We fought well, fought unitedly and fought resolutely.”



Congress leaders Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra arrive for the INDIA bloc meeting in New Delhi on Wednesday. — ASIAN AGE

Speaking with the media after the meeting, Mr Kharge said, “We held discussions for two hours about the current political situation. We have received many suggestions...the constituents of the INDIA bloc thank the people of India... People have given a befitting reply to the BJP's politics

of hate.” The Opposition alliance has decided to adopt a wait-and-watch approach. CPI leader D. Raja also said that the INDIA bloc is not going to stake a claim to form the government at the Centre.

In a joint statement, the INDIA bloc expressed

■ Turn to Page 4

## TMC MP urges Sebi: Probe market spike-exit poll link

‘Rally & crash look manipulated’

AGE CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, JUNE 5

Trinamul Congress member of Parliament Saket Gokhale has written to the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) demanding an investigation into stock market manipulation through exit polls, specifically India Today-Axis MyIndia, which allegedly “massively inflated” the seat numbers for the BJP-led NDA.

“In Bengal, they predicted 26-31 seats for the BJP which actually got just 12 seats. That's an

exaggeration of a whopping 116-158 per cent. This is way beyond any standard margin of error. On the back of exit polls, stock markets spiked massively on Monday. And after the results yesterday, the markets crashed to an unprecedented level. I have asked Sebi to investigate if there are entities that booked profits through selling on June 3 and made even more profits on June 4 by short selling. Have also asked to investigate whether any of these entities have

■ Turn to Page 4

## Fadnavis offers to resign after LS poll debacle in Maharashtra

SONU SHRIVASTAVA  
MUMBAI, JUNE 5

A day after the drubbing in Lok Sabha elections, senior BJP leader Devendra Fadnavis on Wednesday requested the BJP leadership to relieve him from the post of the Maharashtra deputy chief minister stating that he is responsible for the poor performance of this year.

Mr Fadnavis said that he wants to work for the party organisation for the Maharashtra Assembly election in the next three to four months.

The BJP leader's remark came in the backdrop of lacklustre performance in the state, where the saffron party's tally dropped drastically from 23 seats in 2019 to just nine seats in the Lok Sabha election of this year.

Mr Fadnavis held a meeting at the party's state headquarter with the members of the state election management committee and core committee to analyse the party's poor performance in the Lok Sabha polls.

“I take full responsibility for the setback the BJP suffered in Maharashtra. Now I want to focus on assembly elections and that is why I am going to request the BJP's top leadership to relieve me from my responsibility in the government and give me a chance to work full time in the party,” Mr Fadnavis said.

■ More on Page 3



Netherlands troops take part in a ceremony on the beach at Arromanches-les-Bains, northwestern France, on Wednesday. The ceremony is a part of the ‘D-Day’ commemorations marking the 80th anniversary of the World War II Allied landings in Normandy. — AFP

## IN BRIEF

**Bharadwaj asks CS for report on desilting**

**New Delhi:** In view of approaching the monsoon season in the capital city, Delhi urban development minister Saurabh Bharadwaj on Wednesday wrote to the chief secretary seeking the status of the desilting of various drains within seven days of time frame. Reminding the waterlogging situation in the national capital of the last monsoon, Delhi minister in his letter expressed disappointment over the laxity in the preparedness ahead of the forthcoming monsoon. “You being the Head of bureaucracy in Delhi should be proactive in such important matters. It has been 15 days since I asked for the status report but neither have you submitted the status report nor have you sent any response to my U.O. Note. This is unexpected from a senior IAS officer. You are, therefore, directed to submit the desired information by tomorrow i.e. 06.06.2024 evening so that all Departments meeting could be convened in this regard and departments can be given further direction”, reads the letter.

**Man shot at by 2 bike-borne assailants**

**New Delhi:** A man was shot at by two bike borne assailants in Delhi's Old Seemapuri area, an official said on Wednesday, adding that they have identified two accused and further manhunt has been initiated to nab them. Sharing the details, the police said that on Wednesday, at 12:30 a.m. a police control room (PCR) call was received regarding firing in B- Block Old Seemapuri following which a police team rushed to the spot. Upon reaching the spot, the injured identified as Kaif, was already shifted to GTB hospital. “Kaif stated that he along with his friends Irfan and Suhail were sitting in the street suddenly two boys on a bike came there and started hurling abuses and started firing,” said deputy commissioner of police (Shahdara) Surendra Choudhary. The DCP said that one of the bullets hit Kaif near his shoulder.

**5 labourers hurt in Noida wall collapse**

**Gurgaon:** Five labourers were injured after a seven feet wall of a rented accommodation collapsed in sector 82 area on Wednesday, police said. The injured were admitted to a civil hospital and the police are investigating the matter, they added. According to the police, the incident took place at around 6:20 pm when around 5 labourers were taking a bath near the wall when it collapsed and they got buried under debris. People nearby started to rescue the labourers and informed the police, they said. “The injured are being treated in a hospital and no casualty was reported so far. We are looking into the matter,” the police said.

**DELHI METRO BHAVAN IS NOW CARBON NEUTRAL**

**New Delhi:** The DMRC headquarters, Metro Bhavan, in central Delhi received carbon neutral certification on the World Environment Day. Metro Bhavan received this certification from Earthhood, a world's leading validation and verification company in the carbon market. The DMRC said the milestone follows the earlier certification of the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation's staff quarters in Nodia sector-50 as carbon neutral. As per the statement, it is a significant step in the organisation's commitment to reducing its carbon footprint and combating climate change. In line with the government's target to achieve net zero emissions by 2070, the DMRC continues to work for carbon neutrality, it stated. The certification of Metro Bhavan as carbon neutral for the fiscal year 2023-24 under the Public Accountability Standard (PAS) 2060 is a testament to these efforts, the statement added. “The DMRC has effectively reduced all greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions generated from Metro Bhavan through various innovative and eco-friendly initiatives,” the DMRC said in the statement.

■ Delhi has fixed process, it votes for BJP in LS polls: Pathak

**AAP: Victory margins narrow in Delhi, Opp performed well**

AVINASH PRABHAKAR  
NEW DELHI, JUNE 5

A day after the AAP-Congress alliance drew a blank in Delhi with the BJP registering a clean sweep, the AAP on Wednesday said the victory margins were narrow this time even though the city once again preferred to elect the saffron party in the general election as it has been doing since 2014.

AAP Rajya Sabha MP Sandeep Pathak said, “The INDIA bloc performed quite well despite the circumstances against them. In Delhi, the victory margins were narrow this time. Voters here prefer to vote for BJP in Lok Sabha polls and for AAP and other parties in Vidhan Sabha elections. They stuck to that pattern this time also.”

Asserting that the country is above the party, Mr Pathak said, “We joined the INDIA alliance with this feeling and we put our heart and soul into making the alliance win. We worked harder than our capacity. Before this election, the BJP had challenged to destroy the AAP by breaking it. BJP put many of our leaders including chief minister Arvind Kejriwal in jail. The result of all these conspiracies was that the people of the country rejected them. The AAP fought with full strength and 3 candidates became MPs from Punjab, while we had a very close contest on 2-3



Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva with the party's victorious candidates in the Lok Sabha elections.

— PRITAM BANDYOPADHYAY

seats”. “I want to thank all the volunteers of the AAP. The way they struggled even in such heat and such difficult conditions is quite amazing. Delhi has a fixed process, it votes for the BJP in the Lok Sabha elections and votes for AAP and other parties in the Vidhan Sabha elections. Delhi stuck to its electoral practice this time too, but the margin of its victory which used to be in lakhs has reduced considerably this time. It was clear that the public was completely ready to change him,” he added.

Addressing the media, he said, “In the last polls, we had won one seat and our vote share was 7 per cent. But this time, we won three seats and had a close fight for two others. We had aimed for more seats but our vote share has increased.”

“BJP put in all its efforts. Even after that, it could not get a majority. On the other hand, the INDIA bloc fought the elections in such adverse conditions and performed

so well. For us, our country is more important than our party. We fought the elections together with strength. Our party is strong and is ready to fight for the country,” the AAP leader said.

The AAP had swept the 2022 Assembly polls in Punjab by winning 92 seats out of 117 and forming the government. But the party could not repeat the same performance in the recently concluded Lok Sabha polls.

“We have performed much better than the last Lok Sabha elections. If you compare the results of the Lok Sabha elections with the results of the Assembly elections, we have got fewer votes, but we have succeeded in our goal.

“Our aim was to stop the BJP. We stopped BJP in Punjab and Chandigarh. We have achieved our aim. We will work even harder in the future and bring good results,” he said.

The AAP leader asserted that this election was not about the Aam Aadmi Party but the INDIA bloc.

**Fire engulfs eye hosp at Lajpat Nagar**

AGE CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, JUNE 5

A major fire broke out at a private eye hospital for children in Southeast Delhi's Lajpat Nagar area on Wednesday, officials said.

No one was injured in the incident, a Delhi Fire Services (DFS) official said. The police said it is suspected that a short circuit in an air conditioner on the ground floor of the two-storey building caused the fire.

Several videos of the hospital fire are doing the rounds on the social media. One of the videos showed the hospital building engulfed in flames and thick plumes of smoke rising in the sky.

The call regarding the fire at Eye7 Chaudhary Eye Centre on Ring Road was received at 11.30 am and 12 fire tenders were rushed to the spot. Later, more fire tenders were pressed into service, officials said. They said those inside



Firefighters douse a fire which broke out at an eye hospital in Lajpat Nagar on New Delhi on Wednesday.

— PTI

the hospital rushed out as soon as the fire broke out.

Deputy chief fire officer S.K. Dua said a total of 20 fire tenders were deployed to douse the fire, which was controlled by 1.10 pm. The raging flames spread to a cafeteria located on the third floor of an adjacent building but they were

**Nota secures highest votes in N-W Delhi seat**

AGE CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, JUNE 5

Of the 45,554 ‘None of the Above’ (Nota) votes cast in the seven city seats in the Lok Sabha elections, the Northwest Delhi constituency recorded the highest number of such votes at 8,984, the Election Commission data shows. In the constituency, BJP's Yogender Chandoliya won by a margin of 2,90,849 votes against Congress' Udit Raj.

This election, however, saw a negligible dip in the total number of Nota votes to 45,554 from 45,629 in 2019. The lowest count of Nota votes were cast in the New Delhi constituency where BJP's Bansuri Swaraj was pitted against AAP's Somnath Bharti. A total of 4,813 voters in the constituency opted for this option.

The Nota option gives voters the choice to reject all candidates in the fray. It was incorporated into the electronic voting machine (EVM) in September 2013 following a Supreme Court verdict.

In the Chandni Chowk constituency, where BJP's Praveen Khandelwal won with a lead of 89,325 votes, 5,563 electors opted for NOTA.

**Setback to Kejriwal as court junks bail petition**

AGE CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, JUNE 5

In yet another setback to Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal, a city court on Wednesday dismissed his application for interim bail on medical grounds in the money laundering case linked to the alleged excise policy scam. Special judge Kaveri Baweja directed the Tihar Jail authorities to take care of his medical needs in judicial custody.

The judge also extended Mr Kejriwal's judicial custody till June 19. The court is scheduled to take up on June 7 his application seeking default bail in the case.

During the hearing on Saturday, the Enforcement Directorate (ED) had opposed the application, saying he campaigned throughout the Lok Sabha elections but “now when he has to surrender, he suddenly claims to be ill.”

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) national convener surrendered on Sunday at the Tihar Jail as the tenure of his interim bail granted by the Supreme Court expired on June 1.

The case relates to alleged corruption and money laundering in the formulation and execution of the Delhi government's now-scraped excise policy for 2021-22.

The judge had observed that the application was for the grant of interim bail on medical grounds and not for the extension of the interim bail granted by the Supreme Court.

The top court had on May

**Kejriwal's wife, Raghav meet him in Tihar Jail**

AGE CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, JUNE 5

Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal's wife Sunita Kejriwal and AAP MP Raghav Chadha on Wednesday met him in Tihar Jail, official sources said.

Both were allowed to meet the AAP chief in the visitors' room at 1 pm for half an hour as per the jail rules, the sources said. As per the rules, two visitors can meet an inmate twice a week in a prison. A prisoner is also allowed to talk to his family members for five minutes daily on phone. A jail source also said the Delhi CM on Tuesday watched Lok Sabha election results on television in

his cell.

According to jail officials, Mr Kejriwal, a diabetic patient, has been looked after by two doctors and given insulin daily.

Mr Kejriwal surrendered at the Tihar Jail after his interim bail granted by the Supreme Court in the excise policy-linked money laundering case ended on June 1. He was granted the relief for campaigning in the Lok Sabha elections.

Before surrendering on Sunday, he had paid homage to Mahatma Gandhi at the Raj Ghat, offered prayers at the Hanuman temple in Connaught Place and addressed AAP leaders and workers at the party office.

about being ill.

The ED alleged that Mr Kejriwal wanted to “cheat” the court.

“If any tests are required, we'll provide all facilities in jail. If required we will take (Kejriwal) to AIIMS or any hospital,” it said.

Seeking relief, Mr Kejriwal's counsel told the court that despite his ill health, the AAP leader campaigned because that was the purpose for which the interim bail was granted by the Supreme Court.

The court has, meanwhile, sought the ED's response by June 7 on the AAP chief's other application seeking regular bail in the case.

**AAP entitled to space for party office, says HC**

AGE CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, JUNE 5

The Delhi high court on Wednesday said the AAP is entitled to space for a party office like other political parties and asked the Centre to take a decision on the issue within six weeks.

Justice Subramonium Prasad said “pressure” or non-availability of a house in the general pool cannot be a reason for rejection of the request.

“The fact that there is a huge pressure cannot be the only reason for the respondents to deny the petitioner (AAP) its right to be allotted an accommodation from the GPRA for setting up its party office,” the court said in its order.

The court said, “They are entitled to a house from the general pool. Mere pressure or non-availability is no reason to reject because pressure is always there and houses have always been allotted to political parties.”

The AAP is seeking allotment of space for its office by the Centre on account of it being recognised as a national party.

Considering that the AAP needs to vacate its current office in Rouse Avenue by June 15, the party's counsel had argued that a unit on DDU Marg, which is presently with one of its city ministers, ought to be temporarily allotted to it.

Justice Prasad, however, said the party cannot claim entitlement to the DDU Marg property.

The judge said that if

■ THE AAP is seeking allotment of space for its office by the Centre on account of it being recognised as a national party. The party's counsel had argued that a unit on DDU Marg, which is presently with one of its city ministers, ought to be temporarily allotted to it.

the AAP's representation is rejected by the Centre, the party can take appropriate steps.

The AAP had moved the court last year seeking a piece of land in the national capital for the construction of its office on account of being recognised as a national party or allotment of a housing unit on a licence basis for the time being.

The petition seeking allotment of land to the AAP is pending in the high court.

In March, the Supreme Court had granted the AAP time till June 15 to vacate its Rouse Avenue office after noting that the land was allotted to the Delhi high court for expanding judicial infrastructure.

The Arvind Kejriwal-led party has said in the court that since the land has been allotted by the authorities for the construction of office premises to all other national parties in central locations in New Delhi, it is incumbent upon them to ensure that a similar allotment is also made to it in accordance with its entitlement as per the Centre's policy.

**DU leads among India's varsities in QS Ranking**

MIT retains top rank for 13th time, IIT-Bombay climbs to 118, IIT-Delhi is 150th

AGE CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, JUNE 5

The Delhi University has excelled in various indicators, ranking among the top 22 per cent universities globally.

Out of the nine indicators, DU featured prominently among 270 institutions in four categories globally—44th in employment outcomes, 220th in sustainability, 225th in academic reputation, and 269th in employer reputation.

The Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) in Bombay and Delhi are among the top 150 universities in the world while the Massachusetts Institute of

Technology (MIT) retained the top rank globally for the 13th time, according to the QS World University Ranking 2025.

While IIT-Bombay climbed from 149 last year to 118, up by 31 ranks, IIT Delhi improved its rank by 47 points to bag the 150th position globally.

According to the coveted ranking published by the London-based higher education analyst, Quacquarelli Symonds (QS), the University of Delhi stood out for the employability of its graduates.

Congratulating the students and teachers on the occasion, Delhi University vice-chancellor Yogesh

■ OUT OF the nine indicators, DU featured prominently among 270 institutions in four categories globally—44th in employment outcomes, 220th in sustainability, 225th in academic reputation, and 269th in employer reputation

Singh said, “DU is constantly moving forward due to the faculty members and students of the university and their important contribution to the academic environment and nation building.”

Reflecting on this achievement, Mr Singh emphasised that among India's

top 10 institutions, DU displayed the most significant progress.

The University of Delhi ranked 328th in the QS World University Ranking 2025, improving from its 2023 ranking of 407.

Boasting 46 universities in this edition of the rankings, the Indian higher education system is the seventh most represented globally and the third in Asia, trailing only Japan (49 universities) and China (Mainland) (71 universities).

India has one more university within the top 150 rankings—IIT-Delhi (150th). There are two more entries in the world's top

400 with the University of Delhi (ranked 328th) and Anna University (ranked 383rd) making their debut in this tier.

“India's employment outcomes score is 10 points below the global average of 23.8, reflecting the need to bridge the gap between job requirements and graduates' skills and to create more opportunities for new graduates.

“Additionally, India's sustainability score is also about 10 points below the global average and highlights the need to prioritise and strengthen sustainability initiatives within the higher education system,” a senior QS official said.

**Rai urges rooftop plantation to combat heat**

**New Delhi, June 5:** Delhi environment minister Gopal Rai on Wednesday urged residents to combat the severe heat wave and pollution gripping the city by planting trees on their rooftops on the occasion of World Environment Day. Planting trees on rooftops can help mitigate the impact of heat and pollution, Mr Rai said while participating in a tree plantation event in Civil Lines here to mark the day.

“This time, the entire country, including Delhi, is facing a severe heat

wave. People in Delhi should plant as many trees as possible on the rooftops of their houses. This will help reduce both pollution and the heat-wave,” a statement quoted Mr Rai as saying.

Highlighting the Delhi government's ongoing tree plantation campaign, the minister noted that the city's green cover has expanded to 23.06 per cent, up from 20 per cent in 2013.

He also mentioned that the government achieved its goal of planting 2 crore saplings ahead of sched-



Gopal Rai

ule, within four years.

“Public participation is essential for a better and pollution-free environment,” he emphasised, urging residents to refrain from polluting and to discourage others from doing

so. Mr Rai announced plans for a meeting with all greening agencies to intensify the campaign further once the Model Code of Conduct ends.

The Delhi government also aims to create city forests to offer natural spaces for residents and educate future generations about environmental conservation, it said.

Mr Rai reiterated the importance of increasing the green belt, especially given the extreme heat and pollution challenges. — PTI



## SHORT TAKES

## Plants as 'prasad' at Vaishno Devi shrine

**Jammu:** Devotees visiting the Mata Vaishno Devi shrine will now get a plant as a "prasad", the shrine board said on Wednesday. Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board (SMVDSB) launched a new initiative under which they will offer plants to pilgrims from a newly established nursery "Vaishnavi Vatika". The nursery was launched by Board's CEO Anshul Garg in Katra, the base camp of the Mata Vaishno Devi shrine, on the occasion of the World Environment Day. Situated in the Trikuta hills of Reasi district, the Mata Vaishno Devi cave shrine is one of the most revered sites in Jammu and Kashmir, attracting nearly one crore devotees annually. Mr Garg highlighted the board's ongoing commitment to ecological preservation, including water conservation, afforestation, and water treatment efforts. "I congratulate everyone. We are providing plants to devotees as prasad from our nursery," Mr Garg said. — *PTI*

## 9 Maoists arrested in C'garh's Bijapur

**Bijapur:** Nine Naxalites, 5 of them allegedly involved in triggering an IED blast targeting the car of a police official last month, have been arrested from two places in Chhattisgarh's Bijapur district, police said on Wednesday. While five Naxalites were arrested from Mandem-Kuprel villages under Farsegarh police station, 4 others were held from Madded police station, the police said. All the arrested cadres were involved in incidents of murder, planting an IED to target security personnel, extorting illegal levy and putting up Maoist posters, it said. Those held from Farsegarh, identified as Guddu Kumma, Budhu Kumma, Suresh Oyam, Vinod Korsa and Munna Kumma, were allegedly involved in triggering an IED blast targeting a car in which 2 cops were travelling in Farsegarh on May 15, it said. — *PTI*

## 32 diarrhoea cases in HP dist, total 242

**Hamirpur:** Thirty-two fresh cases of diarrhoea were reported in five villages in Himachal Pradesh's Hamirpur, taking the total number of patients in the district to 242, an official said on Wednesday. Diarrhoea has spread to 12 villages in five gram panchayats — Lambloo, Bafarin, Chamned, Gasota and Pandher — having a population of around 4,550. Chief medical officer Dr. R.K. Agnihotri said 32 fresh cases of diarrhoea were detected till Tuesday night, taking the total number of patients in Hamirpur district to 242. While 103 patients were discharged after medication, 14 are hospitalised and 125 are taking treatment at home, he said. Agnihotri said six water samples were collected by the health department and sent to the Hamirpur Medical College for analysis. — *PTI*

## TMC: Probe market spike-exit poll link

■ **Continued from Page 1** direct or indirect links with the BJP or with pollsters like Axis MyIndia," said Mr Gokhale in a post on X. "The exit polls were clearly manipulated to rally the stock market. Lakhs of crores of investors' money were later wiped off on June 4 after the markets crashed." "There must be an investigation to determine if pollsters like Axis MyIndia intentionally inflated the exit polls for the BJP." "This is important because Axis MyIndia also had the BJP as a client. The investigation must also determine whether the BJP and any poll agencies have made crores by manipulating the stock markets through exit polls," he added. In his letter to Sebi chief Madhabai Puri Buch, Mr Gokhale said serious questions pertain to intentional stock market manipulation through engineered election exit polls, which merits a thorough investigation. He further said that given the fact that Axis

## 'Historic' polls, ties growing: Biden greets Modi

Putin speaks to PM, Macron congratulates 'dear friend', vows continued ties

AGE CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, JUNE 5

United States President Joe Biden on Wednesday congratulated Prime Minister Narendra Modi for the NDA poll victory while describing the Indian elections as "historic". He added that the friendship between the two nations is growing. Taking to social media platform X, Mr Biden said, "Congratulations to PM Narendra Modi and the NDA on their victory, and the nearly 650 million voters in this historic election. The friendship between our nations is only growing as we unlock a shared future of unlimited potential."

In a separate statement, the US state department said, "The United States congratulates PM Modi and the NDA... With approximately 650 million voters casting their ballots over the past six weeks, these elections represent

**Congratulations to PM Narendra Modi and the NDA on their victory, and the nearly 650 million voters in this historic election. The friendship between our nations is only growing as we unlock a shared future of unlimited potential.**

— Joe Biden, US President



the largest exercise in democracy in human history. We commend Indian voters, poll workers, civil society, and journalists for their commitment and their contributions to India's democratic processes and institutions. We look forward to continuing to further our partnership with the Indian government to promote prosperity and innovation, address the climate crisis, and ensure a free and open Indo-Pacific region." US secretary of state Antony Blinken also extended his congratulations to PM Modi.

Vladimir Putin also spoke on Wednesday to PM Modi on phone and congratulated him on the electoral success. The Russian President also said that this "reflects the support of the political course pursued by the Indian leadership, recognition of the results achieved in the socio-economic development of the country and strengthening of its international authority".

French President Emmanuel Macron too congratulated Mr Modi and referred to him as a "dear friend" while pledging to continue strengthen-

ing the strategic ties between both nations.

Till Wednesday evening, at least 60 global leaders had congratulated PM Modi, who replied to several messages on social media platform X. After Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu congratulated him, the PM thanked him and said he looked forward to "enhancing India-Israel friendship and regional cooperation in the interest of peace, security and prosperity". It may be noted that Israel is currently involved in a conflict in Gaza that has lasted more than eight months.

Mr Modi also thanked Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy for his congratulatory message and said India "will continue to support peace, security and prosperity for everyone in the region", an obvious reference to ongoing global efforts to resolve the Russia-Ukraine conflict.



People wade through a waterlogged street after rain at Chandmari area in Guwahati on Wednesday.

— *PTI*

## Law to keep them from attending proceedings

## 2 jailed MPs in new LS can take oath after nod from authorities

AGE CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, JUNE 5

Two newly elected Lok Sabha candidates — radical Sikh preacher Amritpal Singh and Sheikh Abdul Rashid, currently lodged in prison on terror charges, are giving rise to an unusual situation for the 18th Lok Sabha to be formed in the coming days.

While the law will keep them from attending the proceedings of the new House, they do have the constitutional right to take oath as Members of Parliament, the Constitution expert said. Sheikh Abdul Rashid, also known as Engineer Rashid, has been lodged in Tihar jail since August 9, 2019, on charges of terror financing. Singh was arrested in April 2023 under the National



Amritpal Singh

Sheikh Abdul Rashid

Security Act and sent to the Dibrugarh prison in Assam.

Explaining the legalities involved, the former Lok Sabha secretary general PDT Achari emphasised the importance of following the constitutional provisions in such cases.

"Being sworn in as a Member of Parliament is a constitutional right, but because they are currently in prison, Engineer Rashid and Singh must seek permission from authorities to be escorted to Parliament for the oath-taking ceremony," he said.

Once they have taken the oath, they will have to return to prison, he added.

To further explain the legalities, Mr Achari cited Article 101(4) of the Constitution which deals with the absence of members from both Houses of Parliament without prior sanction of the Chair.

He further noted that after they have taken oath, they will write to the Speaker, informing him or her about their inability to attend the House. The Speaker will then refer their requests to the House Committee on Absence of Members.

The committee will recommend whether the member should be allowed to remain absent from House proceedings or not. The Speaker then will put the recommendation to vote in the House.

## Meloni, Zelenskyy, other global heads congratulate PM on win

AGE CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, JUNE 5

Italian Prime Minister Georgia Meloni, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and even neighbouring nation Maldives President Mohamed Muizzu were among the foreign leaders who issued congratulatory messages to PM Narendra Modi who is expected to soon assume office for the third term in power. Leaders of neighbouring nations Bhutan, Nepal and SL had already congratulated PM Modi late on Tuesday evening.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy — who has been persuading India to attend the Peace Summit to be held in mid-June in Switzerland to resolve the Russia-Ukraine conflict — said, "I welcome

the successful holding of the world's largest democratic elections in India. Congratulations to PM Modi for the third consecutive victory in India's parliamentary elections. I wish the people of India peace and prosperity, and I hope for continued cooperation between our countries. India and Ukraine share common values and a rich history. May our partnership continue to thrive... Everyone in the world recognises the significance and weight of India's role in global affairs. It is critical that we all work together to ensure a just peace for all nations. In this regard, we also look forward to seeing India attend the Peace Summit."

Maldivian President Mohamed Muizzu, perceived to be a pro-China

leader who is now trying to mend fences with New Delhi, said, "Congratulations to PM Modi on the success for the third consecutive term. I look forward to working together to advance our shared interests in pursuit of shared prosperity and stability for our two countries."

Italian PM Georgia Meloni, who shares a strong camaraderie with Mr Modi, said, "Congratulations to @narendramodi on the victory and my warmest wishes for good work. Certain that we will continue to work together to strengthen the friendship that unites Italy and India and consolidate cooperation on the various issues that bind us, for the well-being of our nations and our people."

## Gen. Pande visits Thal Sena Bhawan work site

Complex to be completed by 2025

AGE CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, JUNE 5

Indian Army chief General Manoj Pande, on Wednesday visited the under construction Thal Sena Bhawan (GRIHA 4) building in Delhi Cantonment to oversee the progress. Army chief also inaugurated a state-of-the-art living barrack for troops in Delhi Cantonment.

Thal Sena Bhawan, a cornerstone project aimed at modernising infrastructure for the Indian Army, has been under construction since 15th March 2023.

The construction is scheduled to be completed by June 2025. Gen Pande was updated on the state of construction which is progressing as per schedule and adher-

ence to the highest engineering standards.

The various green initiatives and the best engineering practices which have been adopted in the project were highlighted to include transplantation of 476 fully grown trees, compensatory plantation of 5790 trees to increase the green cover, use of environmental friendly construction material to include Fly Ash Bricks, Ashcrete Cement, Recycle Wood, and Peri Formwork among others.

Post construction the Thal Sena Bhawan aims to be a Net Zero Building as it will have its own Compost Plant, Sewage Treatment Plant, Solar Panel and Electric Vehicle charging facilities to promote clean energy.

## Modi launches plantation drive on environment day

AGE CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, JUNE 5

On "World Environment Day", PM Narendra Modi on Wednesday launched a tree plantation campaign by planting a sapling at the Buddha Jayanti Park in the national capital.

Under the campaign, "Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam", millions of trees will be planted across the country. Mr Modi urged all to contribute in making our planet better.

He informed that in the last decade, India has undertaken numerous collective efforts, which have led to

increased forest cover across the nation. He said, "This is great for our quest towards sustainable development." On X, Mr Modi said, "Today, on World Environment Day, delight to start a campaign, 'Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam'. I call upon everyone, in India and around the world, to plant a tree in the coming days as a tribute to your mother."

"It would make people happy that in the last decade, India has undertaken collective efforts which have led to increased forest cover across the nation," he said.

## 5 on trek to U'khand lake dead, 13 rescued

4 missing, ops called off due to weather

PRITHVIRAJ SINGH  
DEHRADUN, JUNE 5

Five trekkers from Bengaluru, who lost their way and were stranded at Sahastratal in Uttarakhand, died while four were missing when the rescuers abandoned their operation on Wednesday due to bad weather. However, as per sources, chances of their survival look bleak. Thirteen trekkers were rescued safely from the alpine lake, situated at an altitude of 4,400 metres in the upper Himalayan region, by the SDRF and other agencies engaged in the operation.

A 22-member group that included 18 people from Karnataka, one from Maharashtra and three local guides set off on an expedition on May 29 from the Himalayan View Trekking Agency's premises at Maneri, 90 km from Dehradun, but lost its way two days back on June 3 while coming back to the starting point.

Uttarkashi DM Meharban Singh Bisht informed that one of the three guides, Rajesh Thakur, informed the district administration that the trekking team, flagged off from Maneri on May 29, was to return by June 7.

■ **13 TREKKERS** were rescued safely from the alpine lake, situated at an altitude of 4,400 metres in the upper Himalayan region, by the SDRF and other agencies engaged in the op.

However, while returning to Sahastratal from the last camp on June 3, the team lost its way due to bad weather and was left stranded. As per Mr Bisht, trekking agency informed of deaths of four member of group and requested a rescue of the 13 stranded members.

"Following this a six-member high altitude teams of the SDRF was set off on a rescue operation on Wednesday morning. The rescuers recovered dead bodies of five trekkers and managed to locate the stranded trekkers. Eleven of them were rescued and airlifted to safely by late Wednesday afternoon, while two others were returning to safety with another guide from the Kushalkalyan base camp to Silla village near Maneri with the help of another local guide. Eight of them were later airlifted to Dehradun, while three were taken to the Bhatwadi area at a safe place," informed the Uttarkashi DM.



THE ASIAN AGE

6 JUNE 2024

Can Modi transition into a good coalition leader?

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's promise that there will be big decisions in his third term at South Block and that he will go on a hot pursuit of corruption should warm the hearts of his followers but he will come across impediments that he, as chief minister of Gujarat for three terms and as Prime Minister for two, has never faced in his mission. One may attribute these to the compulsions of democracy or coalition dharma but it will now require all the skills of a seasoned negotiator to steer his government down the road towards his stated goals.

Few today will deny that the first two editions of the Modi government have been marked by the cavalier attitude of the executive to treat the legislature as a rubber stamp. Important bills were moved in the House on a few hours' notice with members of Parliament having little clue on what they were going to debate and legislate upon. Opposition voices in Parliament and parliamentary panels — which act as mini-Houses — were smothered. Government negotiators were seen repeatedly requesting leaders of the agitating farming community on the changes they need in the now-scrapped laws that sought to regulate the agriculture sector but to no purpose. Even when a bit of patience and the willingness to hear them out would have saved the government the blushes, not to mention several lives. That the BJP leadership was not willing to accede to the demands of its then-ally, the Shiromani Akali Dal, exposes its inability to meaningfully engage stakeholders. But the BJP was able to go on a solo cruise on such important measures, thanks to its numerical strength in the Lower House. Now that it has fallen short of a majority, it would need to revisit its methods.

The Modi government's so-called crusade against corruption in its last term was marked by its abuse of both laws and law enforcement agencies. The Prevention of Money Laundering Act, a draconian piece of legislation originally intended at reining in the drug mafia with impossible bail conditions, was flung at political leaders even as courts were left wondering what evidence was there against the defendants. It showed not the commitment to hunt down the corrupt but a compulsion to intimidate opponents and dissidents.

Mr Modi, however, was right when he said that dealing with the "menace of corruption is a complex task" due to increasing political greed and technology will be an important tool in this mission of ending corruption. An honest attempt to strike at the roots of graft will enable the government to allocate more resources for development and welfare schemes aimed at the weaker sections of society. But it remains to be seen if Modi 3.0 will walk the talk on these counts.

DMK's Stalin walks tall

The centre of power in Chennai and Tamil Nadu has always been Fort St George. And in modern days, the state itself has become an ideological fortress that projects and protects certain values like social justice and women empowerment.

Standing tall in the bastion of social values is M.K. Stalin who promised a 40-0 (39 + one Pondy seat) verdict from the people for the INDIA bloc and delivered it in style despite the Prime Minister Narendra Modi's most strenuous efforts to woo the state in multiple visits, including for a spiritual stint at meditation before the Lok Sabha poll results were declared.

The national BJP was able to even breach Kerala, a perennial battlefield between the Congress-led UDF and the communists' LDF, where the popular actor Suresh Gopi won a seat, besides dominating Karnataka, steam-rolling Andhra in alliance with Mr Chandrababu Naidu and Mr Pawan Kalyan and sharing the spoils in Telangana where only months ago Congress came to power.

If Tamil Nadu was the symbolic gateway to the south, its doors were firmly shut by the DMK to forces considered external to the Dravidian heartland, including in 2019 when the AIADMK, in a poll pact with the BJP then, won one seat to stop a clean sweep for DMK.

The biggest factor in the stunning performance of the contribution of 40 seats to the INDIA bloc was the DMK's ability to substantially transfer the votes of its cadre base to alliance partners in the Congress (9 +1 Pondy), CPM(4) (2), CPI (2), VCK (2), MDMK (1) and IUML (1).

Had INDIA been able to wrest power, Mr Stalin would still have been content to stay at home as one of the most powerful regional chieftains though his wish list in ministries may have been long, including the finance ministry berth for one of his colleagues. A steadfast ally of the Congress since his father M. Karunanidhi switched out of the A.B. Vajpayee BJP+ alliance to UPA in 2004, Stalin has been the staunchest ally projecting Congress as the head of the Opposition.

THE ASIAN AGE

KAUSHIK MITTER  
Editor

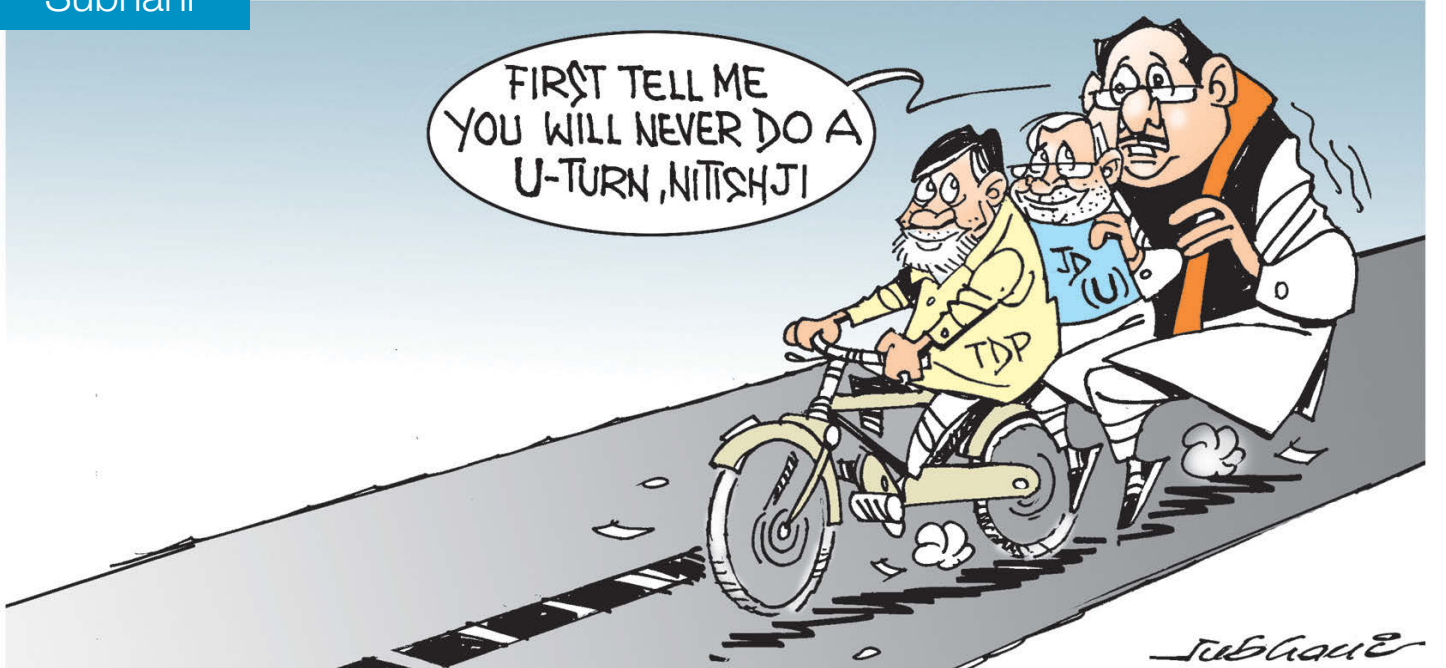
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Subhani



Pyrrhic win: Will hubris make way for humility?



Mohan Guruswamy

Prime Minister Narendra Modi won an electoral victory on June 4, which can at best be described as a pyrrhic victory. This term owes its origin to King Pyrrhus of Epirus, whose army suffered irreplaceable losses while defeating the Romans in the Battle of Asculum in 279 BC.

Closer to our times and nearer home we have the turn of events after the Battle of Gangwana between the armies of the Marwar Rathores and the combined forces of Jaipur and its Mughal overlord led by Jai Singh in 1741. In this battle, the imperial army of over 40,000 massed in a field at Kunchagaon near Pushkar, with its famed artillery guns lined up to force terms on the rulers of Jodhpur and Nagaur. As it happened, it fell upon Bakht Singh of Nagaur and his cavalry, numbering about a thousand, to take on the imperial forces. But that didn't deter Bakht Singh and his horsemen charged into the massed imperial forces and quickly punched through Jai Singh's gun line. The Rathores rode through the Jaipur army, cutting down thousands of men. They lost most of their men but the huge toll extracted demoralised the Mughal forces. After this victory, the imperial army soon disintegrated. Jai Singh never recovered his elan and died two years later.

The BJP-led NDA might have won the 2024 elections but its apparently inexorable march towards establishing a Hindutva theocracy was halted by the combined formations committed to the letter and spirit of the Constitution. The Hindi-Hindutva phalanx that threatened to overrun the federal character of India has been weakened. Most

of all in its Gangetic heartland, where the BJP led by the Modi-Yogi Adityanath "double engine" train has been derailed by the youthful and educated duo of Akhilesh Yadav and Rahul Gandhi.

The results also cut Mr Modi down to a more realistic size. He won in Varanasi in 2019 by 4.93 lakh votes, only to have it whittled down to 1.52 lakhs this week. Ironically, Rahul Gandhi won in Rae Bareilly by over 3.9 lakh votes after being humiliated in another Gandhi family bailiwick, Amethi, in 2019.

This represents a telling reversal of fortunes. Mr Modi is irrevocably on the decline with both biological and historical times against him. His swagger at the BJP's "victory" meeting was visibly contrived and forced. He tried to weave his oratorical magic with his usual mix of hyperbole and half-truths, but failed to enthuse the faithful.

For instance, he claimed to have made India the world's second largest manufacturer of mobile phones. The truth in this is only skin deep. India now assembles ₹4.4 lakh crores of mobile phones but the value addition is only 16 per cent, while China manufactures more than six times that with a value addition of almost 100 per cent. India exports as much diamonds and jewellery by its value addition is even lesser. India exports even more petroleum products (over \$70 billion), mostly from the Reliance refinery in Jamnagar, but its value addition, hence the contribution to the national economy, is a thin sliver. These numbers are due to Mr Modi's focus on the big and visible, but what is the national benefit?

Similarly, Mr Modi highlighted the spruced-up and long-nosed Vande

The days of Modi-Shah will become the days of Mr Modi and Mr Shah with Nitin Gadkari, Rajnath Singh and others speaking up. It might tone down his hubris with humility?

Bharat Express trains, but over 95 per cent of passengers still travel in crowded and grimy trains piled up on each other, usually without minimal facilities. But he tried to convince people that their lives had improved. The perceived standard of living is a relative concept. How does a passenger in a typical second-class bogie view the passenger zipping by in a plush Vande Bharat Express?

I wrote here on April 19 that I don't see the Modi express going much further than the halfway mark. But the electronic media's relentless barrage of Modi positivism and their flood of concocted polls cooked Mr Modi's goose by making over 400 the new norm. Mr Modi himself contributed to the high expectations by imperiously dismissing Rahul Gandhi to less than fifty. He accorded the same gracelessness to Akhilesh Yadav, M.K. Stalin, Mamata Banerjee and Tejashwi Yadav. They all fought back and whittled him down. In the last 82 days, Mr Modi criss-crossed the country in his IAF Boeing 777 aircraft address 206 rallies, making people like me wonder if the country was running on autopilot? No political leader anywhere in the world spent so much time campaigning as Mr Modi did in a decade. A leader's post is akin to a pulpit which is meant to preach, convince and motivate. Mr Modi instead used his platform mostly to hurl political invective on his opponents and rivals. When he spoke of achievements, he hugely exaggerated. In the end more voters saw through him than believers.

Mr Modi's political climb has been driven by such exaggerations, but the results this week tell us that the bubble has been pricked.

By its own estimations, the Modi-led BJP fell short of its declared goal by over 150 seats (*Ab ki Baar Char Sau Paar*). The BJP seat tallies diminished in all its dominant states and increased only in Odisha and Telangana. The BJP is still the largest party in Parliament, but it has been cut to size. Inside the party, Narendra Modi too has been cut to size. The BJP, which despite the malign influence of the RSS, used to have a vigorous inner-party democracy with debate and discussions animating it, had been stifled for a decade. Mr Modi ran it by dictat along with a bunch of faceless and callow aides, but can no longer continue to do so. The party now knows that the path is fraught with consequences. It may not revert back to the days of Atal Behari Vajpayee and L.K. Advani, but the days of Modi-Shah will become the days of Mr Modi and Mr Shah with Nitin Gadkari, Rajnath Singh and others speaking up. It might tone down his hubris with humility?

The new NDA will now be heavily dependent on the two most notorious political about-turn artists on the national stage — Nitish Kumar and N. Chandrababu Naidu. Both have raged and railed against Narendra Modi individually till the recent past. The arithmetical balance (JDU 12, TDP 16) requires them to function in tandem to upset the BJP appercart. It is difficult to see political events that will align their actions, but they will constantly be breathing down Mr Modi's neck. That might force Mr Modi to become a more conciliatory person. Which might not be an entirely bad thing for the governance of India?

The writer, a policy analyst studying economic and security issues, held senior positions in government and industry.

LETTERS

THANKS, CITIZENS

The 2024 election results should not be misinterpreted as a historic triumph for the ruling party. Instead, the more remarkable narrative is the resurgence of the Opposition, which clawed its way back from a position of severe disadvantage. The Congress nearly doubled its number of Lok Sabha seats. The BJP's failure to secure 400 seats is a significant moral setback. It is Prime Minister Modi's polarising campaign that fell short, as voters, especially in rural areas, prioritised issues like inflation and unemployment. Their moral discerning signifies progress towards a healthier democracy.

Vishal Mayur  
Bengaluru

VOLATILE MARKETS

UPHEAVALS in India, South Africa and Mexico have significantly influenced their respective economies. Following India's elections, equity markets declined nearly six per cent, contrasting starkly with the record highs of the previous day. This unexpected outcome has fuelled concerns about the future trajectory of welfare measures, infrastructure projects and reforms. In South Africa, the rand's depreciation persisted due to unforeseen election results hinting at a challenging coalition government, resulting in a 1.3 per cent decline in the rand over the week. Mexico witnessed a drop of almost five per cent in its peso value, potentially marking its worst month since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Amarjeet Kumar  
Hazaribagh

WHY THE DELAY?

WITH VOTING by EVMs, there is no reason why there should have been such a long delay in declaring the final results of the elections. In the earlier elections, the results were out by late afternoon. But this time it took late evening for the Election Commission to come up with the final tally. The EC needs to explain the reason for the delay. Some parties have alleged that this was a deliberate attempt to delay the results. Even during polling similar allegations were made of slowing down the voting process. The EC must clear all doubts so that the public's confidence in the entire electoral process does not suffer.

Anthony Henriques  
Mumbai

Dilip Cherian  
Dilli Ka Babu



Saurabh Garg to lead statistics ministry for 1 yr after retirement

Saurabh Garg, senior IAS officer and secretary of the department of social justice and empowerment, has been appointed as secretary of the ministry of statistics and programme implementation. Notably, Mr Garg will continue to serve in this capacity for one year beyond his retirement on July 31. He will also take on the role of secretary to the National Statistical Commission.

Interestingly, observers have pointed out that Mr Garg's new appointment follows on the heels of the similar appointment of P.K. Tripathi as the secretary to the Lokpal of India till superannuation and thereafter on a two-year contract. Is this a new trend?

An accomplished economist, Mr Garg's academic credentials are impressive, having studied economics at Johns Hopkins University, besides IIM Ahmedabad and IIT Delhi. The Odisha cadre officer is known for his contributions to policy and programme implementation, particularly his role in conceptualising the Kalia scheme in Odisha. This initiative provides crucial support to small farmers and sharecroppers and has, notably, served as a model for the national PM Kisan scheme. Most conspicuously, Mr Garg was a major force behind the direct

transfer scheme during his tenure as CEO of the Unique Identification Authority of India.

The move has caused some murmurs in Delhi's babu corridors, and while the immediate motive is unclear, time will eventually reveal how the transition unfolds. But one thing is clear: Mr Garg's continued service after retirement suggests a recognition of his valuable experience and a desire for continuity in leadership.

KEY BABU RESHUFFLE WITH AN EYE ON THE FUTURE

In a major shake-up, right in the middle of a busy, busy election, the Central government announced key appointments at the joint secretary level, signalling a strategic shift in leadership. This bureaucratic overhaul included the empanelment of 26 IAS officers from the 1995 to 1999 batches as additional secretaries.

Among the notable appointments, Ajay Bhadoo is currently serving at the Election Commission of India (EC), V. Seshadri, formerly with the Prime Minister's Office (PMO), is leading the Telangana chief minister's office (CMO) and Syed Ali Murtaza Rizvi is heading Telangana's energy department.

This sudden wave of appointments has

sparked speculation about the continuity and stability of the current New Delhi establishment. But this may be just a hint of more sweeping changes to come in the days ahead. Sources have informed DKB that the government may soon release another list of appointments, even as speculation is rife that some key figures in the Modi Sarkar may continue in their posts. While by the time you read this, the new government will be announced, these actions reveal the confidence that the Modi sarkar has in returning to power. So, despite the busy election period, it has ensured that some key aspects of administration are not overlooked.

THE CURIOUS CASE OF ELECTION-YEAR RAIDS

In the run-up to the general elections, a dozen IAS and IPS officers have found themselves under the scrutiny of the mighty Enforcement Directorate (ED) and other investigative agencies in various corruption-related cases. Allegations range from corruption to money laundering, and some raids have been criticised as politically motivated.

Recently, a 2002-batch Jharkhand cadre IAS officer was summoned by the ED for questioning in a money laundering case.

Similarly, a 2003-batch IAS Chhattisgarh cadre IAS officer was arrested by the ED, with investigations revealing his pivotal role in orchestrating a liquor syndicate's activities in the state.

In another instance, at least five IPS officers in Chhattisgarh are under the Anti-Corruption Bureau's scanner for their alleged involvement in the Mahadev betting app case. In another high-profile case, the ED raided the premises of a former Union secretary DPIIT, following a CBI case that led to a money-laundering investigation.

These raids and arrests during an election year raise questions about the motivations behind the timing and broader implications for governance. It's not lost on anyone that some of these officers are in Opposition-ruled states. Are these actions then purely in the interest of justice, or is there an element of political vendetta? The answer might remain elusive, and it only adds another layer of intrigue to the already complex world of Indian politics.

Love them, hate them ignore them at national peril, is the babu guarantee and Dilip's belief. Share significant babu escapades dilipcherian@hotmail.com.

## SHORT TAKES

## INDIAN COUPLE DROWNS AT LANKA BEACH

Colombo, June 5: An Indian couple on holiday with their family drowned while at a sea beach near Hambantota in southern Sri Lanka, police said on Wednesday.

The deceased were identified as a 35-year-old male and a 33-year-old female, both Indian nationals, and according to preliminary investigations, the victims were a married couple.

The tragic incident occurred on Tuesday. The couple were paying a visit to Sri Lanka and was with their family at Kirinda Beach, news portal *Adaderana.lk* reported.

## BANKNOTES WITH CHARLES PICTURE ROLLED OUT IN UK

London, June 5: People have been queuing on Wednesday outside the Bank of England's headquarters in London and at post offices around the UK to get their hands on the first UK banknotes featuring the portrait of King Charles III.

The portrait of the king will appear on all four banknotes issued by the Bank of England 5, 10, 20 and 50 pounds — with no other alterations to the existing designs. The notes will coexist alongside those featuring his late mother, Queen Elizabeth II, whom he succeeded as monarch.

## ITALIAN COURT CONVICTS KNOX OF SLANDER

Florence, June 5: An Italian court found American Amanda Knox guilty of slander on Wednesday and handed her a three-year jail sentence in a case related to the murder of her British flatmate in 2017.

Knox, who spent four years in jail for the killing of British student Meredith Kercher before the conviction was annulled in 2015, had returned to Italy hoping to clear her name in the last legal case against her over the affair.

However, the appeals court in Florence on Wednesday returned the same verdict.

## FILIPINO COPS ARRESTED FOR TOURIST KIDNAP

Manila, June 5: Four police officers assigned in the Philippine capital region have been arrested for kidnapping for ransom that victimised four foreign tourists, officials said on Wednesday.

Two of the officers onboard motorcycles flagged down a luxury car carrying three Chinese and a Malaysian over the weekend, while their armed civilian cohorts handcuffed and dragged the four tourists into a van. Two of the Chinese managed to escape and notified authorities, police said. The remaining captives were beaten by the kidnappers.

## META WITHHELD INFO ON INSTA, WA DEALS: FTC

Washington, June 5: Meta Platforms Inc. withheld information from federal regulators during their original reviews of the Instagram and WhatsApp acquisitions, the US Federal Trade Commission said in a court filing as part of a lawsuit seeking to break up the social networking giant.

The company formerly known as Facebook bought photo-sharing app Instagram in 2012 and the messaging app WhatsApp in 2014. Both transactions were scrutinised by the FTC at the time before they closed — Instagram as part of an in-depth review and WhatsApp with a simple 30-day one.

In the years since, the agency has faced significant criticism for allowing the deals to move forward. In 2020, the antitrust agency sued Meta alleging that it monopolised the personal social networking market by buying up emerging rivals.

Meta is seeking to have the case thrown out before a trial, arguing that it has invested billions in the apps and that the FTC shouldn't be able to renege on its prior approval of the mergers. In its filing on Tuesday, the FTC said the case involves "information Meta had in its files and did not provide" during the original reviews.

"At Meta's request the FTC undertook only a limited review" of the deals, the agency said. "The FTC now has available vastly more evidence, including pre-acquisition documents Meta did not provide in 2012 and 2014."

## Spain company preparing Kyiv tanks hacked

Madrid, June 5: Santa Barbara Systems, a General Dynamics subsidiary in Spain that is refurbishing Leopard tanks for delivery to Ukraine, suffered a cyberattack on its website, a pro-Russia hacker group said.

A spokesperson for General Dynamics confirmed that the defence contractor's Spanish unit had been targeted in an attempted cyberattack "that was detected immediately and has not compromised any of the company's systems".

They said the company decided to temporarily disconnect its website until an ongoing investigation concluded. "The company's sensitive data remains well-protected," the spokesperson added.

A spokesperson for General Dynamics in Germany said all of the company's operations in Europe were running normally.

The NoName hacking group claimed responsibility for the distributed denial-of-service (DDoS) attack via the *Telegram* messaging service.

These types of attacks direct high volumes of internet traffic towards targeted servers to knock them offline.

"We sent our DDoS-misiles against websites in russophobic Spain," the group, which often directs such actions against countries which support Ukraine, wrote on *Telegram* on Tuesday.

Nato said last month that Russia was behind an intensifying campaign of hybrid attacks on companies and infrastructure in member states.

However, Russia dismissed the accusation as "misinformation".

Santa Barbara assembles heavy vehicles such as Leopard tanks and artillery equipment for the Spanish army and has been involved in refurbishing Spain's mothballed

## RUSSIA FLAYS U.S. THREATS

## U.S.-RUSSIAN CITIZEN JAILED FOR 3.5 YEARS

● A man with dual US-Russian nationality was sentenced by a Russian court on Wednesday to three-and-a-half years in prison on charges of "rehabilitating Nazism". Yuri Malev was arrested last December over social media posts in which he was alleged to have denigrated the Saint George's ribbon, a symbol of Russian military valour.

## BIDEN TO MEET WITH ZELENSKY IN FRANCE

● US President Joe Biden will meet with Ukraine's Volodymyr Zelenskyy in Normandy, France, this week and then again at the G7 meeting in Italy to discuss Kyiv's fight against Russia, the White House said.

## KREMLIN SAYS U.S. IS BLACKMAILING CHINA

● The Kremlin on Wednesday described comments by US treasury secretary Janet Yellen that Washington would not tolerate China increasing its exports of "dual-use" goods to Russia, and would respond with sanctions, as "blackmail".



Leopard tanks for delivery to the Ukrainian Army, according to the defence ministry. — Reuters

## Drill: US bomber flies over Korea

Seoul, June 5: The United States flew a long-range B-1B bomber over the Korean Peninsula on Wednesday for its first precision-guided bombing drill with South Korea in seven years, the South said Wednesday.

The drill — seen as a show of force against North Korea — comes as tensions are rising over the North's recent launches of rubbish-carrying balloons toward South Korea and other provocations. Wednesday's training involved other advanced US and South Korean fighter jets as well as the B-1B aircraft, the second US bomber temporarily deployed over the Korean Peninsula this year.

The exercise was meant to demonstrate the US security commitment to South Korea and strengthen the allies' joint defence posture, according to the South Korean defence ministry. During the training, the B-1B dropped Joint Direct Attack Munitions while being escorted by South Korean jets, the first such bombing drill for a US bomber since 2017, a ministry statement said.

It said South Korean fighter jets also conduct-

ed live-firing exercises to demonstrate the country's readiness to punish North Korea if provoked. The JDAM bombs include "bunker-busters." JDAM is a guidance system that converts unguided, conventional bombs into more precise, GPS-guided weapons. All US fighter jets, bombers and drones can use JDAMs, and the munitions are among the weapons systems the United States has been providing to Ukraine to help it fight Russia's invasion.

North Korea is extremely sensitive to drills using bunker-buster bombs, which could threaten its leadership and complex web of underground military tunnels and structures. North Korea has previously responded to the flights of powerful US aircraft in South Korea with its own missile tests. — AP

## SCRIPTING | HISTORY

## The launch marks the beginning of the Nasa-Boeing Starliner Crew Flight Test: Boeing PIO astronaut Sunita Williams flies to space for 3rd time

Houston, June 5: Indian-origin astronaut Sunita Williams flew to space for the third time on Wednesday along with a colleague, scripting history as the first members aboard Boeing's Starliner spacecraft on a 25-hour flight to the International Space Station. Boeing's Crew Flight Test mission carrying Williams, and Butch Wilmore lifted off from Cape Canaveral Space Force Station in Florida after multiple delays. Williams, 58, is the pilot for the flight test while Wilmore, 61, is the commander of the mission.

The launch marks the beginning of the Nasa-Boeing Starliner Crew Flight Test (CFT), Boeing said. "This crew flight test represents the beginning of a new era of space exploration as we watch astronauts Wilmore and Williams put Boeing's Starliner through its paces on the way to the International Space Station," said Boeing Defence, Space & Security president and CEO Ted Colbert. "This is a great start. We look forward to getting the astronauts safely to

## Israel steps up Gaza attack amid renewed truce efforts

## Rights groups accuse Israel of hitting Lebanon with white phosphorus

Cairo, Beirut, June 5: Israel announced a new military campaign against Hamas in central Gaza on Wednesday and Palestinian medics said airstrikes there had killed dozens of people ahead of talks between US and Qatari mediators to try to finalise a ceasefire deal.

A global human rights group accused Israel of using white phosphorus incendiary shells on residential buildings in at least five towns and villages in conflict-hit southern Lebanon, possibly harming civilians and violating international law, in a report published on Wednesday. Human Rights Watch said in its report that there was no evidence of burn injuries due to white phosphorus in Lebanon, but that researchers had "heard accounts indicating possible respiratory damage".

The armed wings of Hamas and Islamic Jihad said they had fought gun battles with Israeli forces in areas throughout the enclave and fired anti-tank rockets and shells as the two sides sought the upper hand amid pressure to lay down their arms.

At least 44 Palestinians have been killed in Israeli military strikes in central Gaza Strip areas since Tuesday, health officials in



A shell that appears to be white phosphorus fired by the Israeli artillery explodes over a house in al-Bustan, a Lebanese village along the border with Israel. — AP

the enclave said.

"The sounds of bombardment didn't stop all night," said Aya, 30, a displaced woman in Deir Al-Balah. Two children were among the dead laid out on Wednesday. Mourners said they had been killed along with their mother, who had been unable to leave when others in the neighbourhood hid.

"This is not war, it is destruction that words are unable to express," said their father Abu Mohammed Abu Saif.

The Israeli military said jets were hitting Hamas militant targets in central Gaza. — Agencies

## S. AFRICA MIN. ARRESTED OVER BRIBERY CHARGE

Johannesburg, June 5: A South African Cabinet minister who is a senior member of the African National Congress was arrested and appeared in court on Wednesday over allegations of bribery, just as his party was meeting for talks to work out a way forward for the country after an election deadlock.

Sports, arts and culture minister Zizi Kodwa faces charges of taking bribes of around \$90,000, according to police. He appeared in a courtroom in Johannesburg alongside another suspect in the case. Kodwa said he intended to plead not guilty to the charges.

Kodwa, 54, is a member of the ANC's internal National Working Committee, which met on Tuesday as the party discusses how it might form a government after losing its 30-year majority in a poll last week. — AP

## 1.5° C target limit may be breached by 2028: WMO

Geneva, June 5: The UN weather agency is predicting an 80 per cent chance that average global temperatures will surpass the 1.5 Celsius (2.7 Fahrenheit) target laid out in the landmark Paris climate accord within the next five years.

The World Meteorological Organisation said on Wednesday that the global mean near-surface temperature for each year from 2024 to 2028 is expected to range between 1.1 and 1.9° Celsius hotter than at the start of the industrial era. It also estimated that there's nearly a one-in-two

## GUTERRES FOR 'WINDFALL' TAX ON PROFITS OF FOSSIL FUEL COMPANIES

New York, June 5: UN secretary general Antonio Guterres called on Wednesday for a "windfall" tax on profits of fossil fuel companies to help pay for the fight against global warming, decrying them as the "godfathers of climate chaos."

chance — 47 per cent — that the average global temperatures over that entire five-year span could

In a bare-knuckled speech timed for World Environment Day, Guterres — who has spoken out about the threat of climate change — said that carbon dioxide emissions must fall 9 per cent each year to 2030 for the 1.5° target to be kept alive. — AP

top 1.5° C, a rise from just under a one-in-three chance projected for the 2023-2027 span. — AP

## The launch marks the beginning of the Nasa-Boeing Starliner Crew Flight Test: Boeing

## PIO astronaut Sunita Williams flies to space for 3rd time



Nasa astronauts Suni Williams, left, and Butch Wilmore pose for a photo. — AP

## 'Death to Arabs': Israeli nationalists

Jerusalem, June 5: Thousands of mostly ultranationalist Israelis were taking part in an annual march through a sensitive Palestinian area of Jerusalem on Wednesday, with some stoking surging wartime tensions by chanting "Death to Arabs".

Jerusalem, the emotional heart of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, has been mostly calm through-

out the Israel-Hamas war. But the annual march, seen as provocative by Palestinians, could ignite broader unrest, as it did three years ago, when it helped set off an 11-day war in Gaza. Marchers convening outside the Damascus Gate, a central gathering place for Palestinians in east Jerusalem, chanted anti-Arab and anti-Islamic slogans. — AP

## German AfD politician stabbed

Berlin, June 5: A local candidate for Germany's right-wing Alternative for Germany (AfD) party has been injured in a knife attack, the party and police said on Wednesday, the second such incident in the city of Mannheim days after a police officer was killed.

AfD member Heinrich Koch was attacked with a cutter knife after confronting the suspect who was tearing down election posters near a town square, the party said. Police said the 25-year-old suspect was detained and, showing clear signs of mental illness, was taken to a psychiatric hospital.

It comes days after the attack at an anti-Islam demonstration in which a policeman was killed, at a time when the number of assaults and abuse against politicians across the spectrum has surged ahead of hotly contested elections.

Koch needed stitches in his head and had a cut in his stomach, but the in-

juries were not life-threatening, the party said. AfD co-chief Alice Weidel told *Reuters* the attack was a "shocking act that leaves you stunned".

The party has sought to portray the attack as part of a targeted campaign by left-wing extremists against AfD members. However, police said there was no concrete evidence that the suspect knew that he was attacking an AfD politician. Verbal and physical attacks on politicians in Germany have more than doubled since 2019, according to government data, as the country gears up for European and local elections in three states. The AfD is expected to perform strongly in the polls.

The knife attack by a 25-year-old originally from Afghanistan injured six people. — Reuters



Lebanese soldiers speak to a motorcyclist as they stand guard on a road that leads to the US Embassy in Beirut, on Wednesday. — AP

## Gunman fires shots at US embassy in Beirut

Beirut, June 5: A gunman fired shots at the US embassy in Lebanon on Wednesday and was wounded in an exchange of fire with troops, the Lebanese Army said.

The Army said the attacker, a Syrian national, was detained and taken to

hospital for treatment.

The soldiers were searching through the area for other gunmen. The US embassy said small arms fire was reported near its entrance in the morning but that the facility and staff were safe. — Reuters

## Stay on execution of 5 Pak ex-Navy officers

Islamabad, June 5: A top court in Islamabad has stayed the execution of five former Pakistan Navy officers previously sentenced to death by a military court in connection with the 2014 Navy Dockyard attack case.

Islamabad High Court (IHC) Judge Babar Sattar on Tuesday issued the written order for the hearing held a day earlier on the request of Navy officers who said they were not provided legal assistance during the general court-martial order, *Dawn* News reported.

The Navy Tribunal had sentenced the five Navy

officers after they were arrested in 2016 in connection with the Navy Dockyard attack case. They were found guilty of the attack and conspiracy against the Navy leadership.

The Navy Dockyard in Karachi was attacked in September 2014. The responsibility for the attack was claimed by the banned militant outfit Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan.

According to the statement issued by the Pakistan Navy at that time, two militants and one Navy personnel were killed in the attack. It also said that four attackers were also arrested. — PTI

## RUSSIAN COSMONAUT BECOMES FIRST PERSON TO SPEND 1K DAYS IN SPACE

Moscow, June 5: A 59-year-old Russian cosmonaut has become the first person to spend 1,000 days in space, Russian space agency Roscosmos said on Wednesday.

Oleg Kononenko achieved the milestone on Tuesday, having made five journeys to the International Space Station dating back to 2008. His current trip to the



Oleg Kononenko

ISS began on September 15, 2023, when he launched alongside Nasa astronaut Loral O'Hara and compatriot Nikolai Chub. — AP

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	74,382.24	3.20
Nifty 50	22,620.35	3.36
S&P 500*	5,317.01	0.49
Dollar (₹)	83.37	0.20
Pound Sterling (₹)	106.53	0.07
Euro (₹)	90.67	0.16
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	72,197.200	0.28
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	77.62	0.13
IN 10-Yr bond yield	7.030	-0.003
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	4.328	-0.008

\* As of 8:30 PM IST

KEC International secures orders worth ₹1,000 cr

Infrastructure company KEC International on Wednesday said it has secured new orders worth over ₹1,000 crore in the domestic market. The orders include residential projects in northern and southern India from renowned real estate developers. “We are pleased with the new orders in our civil business, including our largest order in the residential segment,” Vimal Kejriwal, MD and CEO of KEC International, said.



Jeep launches Meridian X special edition

Jeep, the American car brand, on Wednesday introduced the Jeep Meridian X special edition in the Indian market priced at ₹29.99 lakh at pan India showroom. The refreshed SUV gets minor cosmetic enhancements along with additional features. “The Jeep Meridian X reflects our dedication to constantly innovate and elevate the driving experiences for our customers,” Kumar Priyesh, brand director, Jeep India, said.

NPCI to help Peru with UPI-like payments system

NPCI International Payments Ltd (NIPL) and the Reserve Bank of Peru have announced a partnership to enable UPI-like real-time payments system in the Peru. The Peru is first country in South America to adopt the globally Unified Payment Interface (UPI) technology. NIPL said. NPCI International CEO Ritesh Shukla said this partnership aims to strengthen Peru’s financial infrastructure, to foster economic growth.



CIL contributed ₹9,560 crore to exchequer in FY24

State-owned Coal India Ltd (CIL) contribution to the government’s exchequer touched ₹9,560.28 crore in the April-May period of the ongoing fiscal. CIL paid ₹9,777.64 crore to the government exchequer in the year-ago period, according to provisional figures of the coal ministry. Total levies paid to the government in May went up to ₹4,765.20 crore from ₹4,716.5 crore paid in the corresponding month of FY23.

Exports, jobs in services sector increase in May

MADHUSUDAN SAHOO  
NEW DELHI, JUNE 5

India exports grew at a record pace and job creation rose to a 21-month high in services sector activity in May, according to a private survey. As per the May data, the robust increases in new business intakes continued to underpin output growth across India’s service economy, though the seasonally adjusted HSBC India services business activity index fell to 60.2 in May from 60.8 a month earlier.

The sector also remained above the 50 mark separating growth from contraction for the 34th straight month, according to the survey. The survey showed that rising sales, productivity gains, and demand strength reported the growth. However, the upturn was somewhat hampered by competitive and price pressures.

“India’s service activity rose at a slightly softer pace in May, with domestic new orders easing slightly, but remaining robust, implying strong demand conditions and successful advertising,” said Maitreyi Das, Global economist at HSBC.

On the price front, Das also said that cost pressures ticked up in May led by higher raw material and labour costs. “Like for output, new orders rose at a substantial pace, but were slowest in the calendar year-to-date, even as fierce competition and extreme heat across the country dampened



● THE SURVEY showed that rising sales, productivity gains, and demand strength reported the growth. However, the upturn was somewhat hampered by competitive and price pressures.

growth,” Das said. “One area that improved substantially in May was new export orders, with growth climbing to the fastest seen since the inception of the series in September 2014,” the survey noted.

The survey also said that cost pressures intensified in May. Panel members, however, said that on materials and labour rose -- while some companies suggested that additional labour costs stemmed from overtime payments and upward salary revisions due to demand strength and productivity gains, several firms indicated having taken on extra staff.

“Not only did employment rise markedly, but also to the greatest extent since August 2022, the survey said. Outstanding business volumes rose at the quickest pace in nearly three-and-a-half years,” the survey noted, adding that the overall level of positive sentiment climbed to an eight-month high.

INTEREST RATE: RBI’S PANEL STARTS 3-DAY DISCUSSIONS

Mumbai, June 5: The rate-setting panel of Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Wednesday started its three-day deliberations to decide the next monetary policy amid expectations of continuation of the current interest rate.

RBI governor Shaktikanta Das will announce the decisions taken by Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) on Friday. Experts are of the view that the central bank is unlikely to cut the benchmark interest rate (repo) as inflation still remains a matter of concern.

The MPC may also refrain from rate cut as economic growth is picking up, notwithstanding the elevated repo rate of 6.5 per cent prevailing since Feb. 2023.

The central bank last hiked repo rate to 6.5 per cent in February 2023 and since then it has maintained status quo 7 times in a row.

According to a SBI research paper, the RBI needs to continue the current stance of withdrawal of accommodation. The report titled ‘Prelude to MPC Meeting’ expects RBI to cut repo rate in third quarter of the current fiscal and “such rate cut cycle is likely to be shallow”.

It also said CPI-based retail inflation is expected to remain close to 5 per cent in May and decline thereafter to 3 per cent in July. Inflation is expected to stay below 5 per cent beginning Oct. till the end of FY25, it added. —PTI

Markets on recovery path after meltdown

BSE’s m-cap rose to over ₹408 lakh crore from over ₹394.8 lakh crore

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD  
MUMBAI, JUNE 5

Market recovered more than half of previous session’s loss as new government formation by NDA alliance partners seemed to be progressing smoothly without any hiccup.

The Sensex gained 2,303.19 points or 3.20 per cent to close at 74,382.24 while Nifty-50 closed at 22,620.35 up 735.85 points or 3.36 per cent.

BSE’s market capitalisation rose to over ₹408.06 lakh crore from over ₹394.83 lakh crore in the previous session, a notional gain of 13.23 lakh crore for market investors.

On a broad basis buying all the sectoral indices gained between 2 to 5 per cent. Leading gainers included bank, auto,



● FMCG STOCKS are seeing traction post election outcome as rural demand is set to get a boost both from good monsoon forecast as well as new government’s expected shift of focus towards social economics.

FMCG and metals.

FMCG stocks are seeing traction post election outcome as rural demand is set to get a boost both from good monsoon forecast as well as new government’s expected shift of focus towards social economics.

“The prospects of a better monsoon and potential policy shifts towards social economics could further enhance rural demand. The sector’s valuation is slightly above its long-

term average, and re-rating is anticipated to continue due to these multiple positive developments,” said Vincent KA, analyst, Geojit Financial Services.

The broader market also recovered partially with the BSE mid-cap index up 4.41 per cent and BSE small-cap index up 2.93 per cent.

“Domestic equities rebounded sharply as the sentiments got a boost post reconfirmation that

NDA is forming the government for the 3rd consecutive term, going ahead the narrative around government formation and RBI monetary policy would take the centre stage in near term,” said Siddhartha Khemka, head - Retail Research, Motilal Oswal Financial Services.

Market experienced some volatility in the first one and half hours of trading followed by steady rise as the day progressed.

However, the worrying factor is that foreign portfolio investors were net sellers of equities worth ₹5,656.26 crore after ₹12,436.22 crore sold in the previous session. Domestic institutions turned net buyers for ₹4,555.08 crore after ₹3,318.98 crore sold on Tuesday.

India’s growth outlook to remain intact

New Delhi, June 5: The BJP losing its outright majority and now having to rely on allies to form a government may delay more far-reaching elements of economic and fiscal reforms like land and labour and impede progress on fiscal consolidation, global rating agencies said on Wednesday.

Fitch Ratings and Moody’s Ratings in separate notes spoke about the implication of BJP losing its majority. “It appears the BJP-led NDA is likely to form the next government, returning Prime

Minister Modi for a third term, but with a weakened majority that could pose challenges for the more ambitious elements of the government’s reform agenda,” Fitch said.

Moody’s said it expects policy continuity, especially with regards to budgetary emphasis on infrastructure spending and boosting domestic manufacturing, to support robust economic growth.

“However, the NDA’s relatively slim margin of victory may delay more far-reaching economic and fiscal reforms that could

● COUNTRY’S ECONOMIC strength incorporates real gross domestic product growth of around 7 per cent over three-year period between FY24 through FY26.

impede progress on fiscal consolidation,” Moody’s.

Fitch too expected policy continuity to persist despite a slimmer majority. It expected the government to retain its focus on capex push, ease of doing business measures, and gradual fiscal consolidation.

“We expect India’s strong medium-term growth outlook to remain intact, underpinned by the government capex drive and improved corporate and bank balance sheets,” it added.

“Our assessment of country’s economic strength incorporates real GDP growth of around 7 per cent over three-year period between FY24 through FY26, while factoring potential upside over the medium-term resulting from improvements in productivity,” Moody’s said. —PTI

Govt to focus on policy continuity

Singapore, June 5: The new government will deliver policy continuity with some change, without detailing any possible changes, CEA said. India’s closer-than-expected election should increase the prospect of productive reforms, the chief economic adviser (CEA), Anantha Nageswaran, said on Wednesday, while the fundamental drivers of growth remain largely

● THE ELECTION outcome increases the probability of some of these factor market reforms happening, rather than lowering it, because it creates avenues for dialogue.

independent of government policy.

The government’s chief economic adviser, V Anantha Nageswaran,

said many tricky reforms were in state government hands and he viewed them as more likely to progress.

“In some cases the responsibility is disproportionately on state governments, sub-national governments,” he said, addressing an investor conference hosted by Nomura in Singapore.

“I would even say that the election outcome increases the probability

of some of these factor market reforms happening, rather than lowering it, because it creates avenues for dialogue and consensus building.”

The factor market refers to land, energy, labour and other inputs in economic production. “The supply side infrastructure improvements that have happened - they are for real and they will continue,” he said. —Reuters

Spend more on education: Rajan

SANGEETHA G  
CHENNAI, JUNE 5

India needs an economic and democratic course correction and a strong opposition will force the government to change course, said former RBI governor Raghuram Rajan.

“The Indian voter has spoken. And what a wise decision! This is a win for Indian democracy and a win for the Indian economy. Regardless of what happens over the next few days, we will have a strong opposition that forces the government to change course,” Rajan wrote in



his LinkedIn account. India’s economic growth, although seemingly high compared with other countries, has not been large enough, or taken place in the right sectors, to create enough good jobs. India is still a young country, and over ten million youth start

looking for work every year. When China and Korea were similarly young and poor, they employed their growing labour force and consequently grew faster than India is today.

“Education and training are exactly the sorts of services the government should be spending more on. Doing so would enhance the quality of India’s human capital. Services exports have flourished without much help from the government. But the state could do far more to improve the human capital of Indians,” he added.

MEITY HAS PLANS TO TAKE UP SLEW OF INITIATIVES: OFFICIAL

New Delhi, June 5: IT secretary S Krishnan on Wednesday said that Meity will take up a slew of new initiatives as planned, while building on the legacy of past successes and outcomes.

Krishnan, speaking on sidelines of a Software Technology Park of India event, said the ministry of electronics and information technology (Meity) has a number of initiatives which have been planned and are in the works and those will be taken up once the new government is in place.

To a question on whether the work on digital personal data protection (DPDP) rules and shaping Digital India legislation framework will continue at speed, Krishnan said, “the legacy in terms of what we have in the organisation in terms of...institutional memory continues.”

Asked in particular about the status of the proposed Digital India legislation, he said, “We will see how we structure it...it is too premature to hazard a guess on what shape it takes.” —PTI

Sebi to enhance thresholds for basic demat accounts

New Delhi, June 5: Capital markets regulator Sebi on Wednesday proposed to enhance the threshold for the basic service demat account (BSDA) to ₹10 lakh from the current ₹2 lakh in a bid to boost the participation of retail investors in the securities market.

A basic service demat account, or BSDA, is a more basic version of a regular demat account. The facility was introduced by Sebi in 2012 for reducing the burden of demat charges on investors with small portfolios.

At present, an individual can hold debt securities worth up to ₹2 lakh and other than debt securities worth up to ₹2 lakh in a single demat account to be eligible for BSDA.

In order to further boost participation in the securities market and to facilitate ease of doing investments, the facility of BSDA has been comprehensively reviewed, it said.

The regulator proposed that the value of securities held in the demat account should not exceed ₹10 lakh for debt and more than debt securities



combined at any point of time.

Listing out eligibility criteria, Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) said an individual needs to have only one demat account where he/she is the sole or first holder and the individual needs to have only one BSDA in his/her name across all depositories.

Additionally, SEBI has proposed to review the maximum annual maintenance charges for BSDA.

For portfolio values up to ₹4 lakh, Sebi has proposed that annual maintenance charge for a BSDA should be nil and for portfolio values of between over ₹4 lakh and up to ₹10 lakh, the charges should be ₹100. However, if portfolio value exceeds ₹10 lakh then BSDA should automatically be converted into a regular demat account. —PTI

AI | SUPPORT iPhone maker infusing its Siri digital assistant with AI

Apple forges deal with OpenAI

California, June 5: Sam Altman’s OpenAI, the generative artificial intelligence (Gen AI) start-up, and Apple, racing to catch up in the AI area, have forged a partnership to integrate OpenAI’s ChatGPT into the iPhone’s operating system.

Altman is unlikely to take the stage at Apple’s annual developer conference, the agreement will be a key focus of Apple’s Worldwide Developers Conference next week - and it shows just how much the power in Silicon Valley has shifted over the past few years.

The deal gives OpenAI access to hundreds of millions of Apple users, including ones that might have been hesitant to try ChatGPT otherwise. For



● THE DEAL gives OpenAI access to hundreds of millions of Apple users, including ones that might have been hesitant to try ChatGPT otherwise.

Apple, the arrangement brings the company the technology of the AI era, a chatbot with eerily powerful abilities that it can pair with its own services.

Apple has been developing a host of AI features, including ones that run on its devices and others that require cloud computing. It’s also infusing its Siri digital assistant with AI. But company’s own chatbot isn’t yet up to snuff.

The OpenAI partnership

is likely a “short-to medium-term relationship” for Apple, said Dag Kittlaus, a tech veteran who co-founded and ran the Siri business before it was acquired by Apple. “But you can bet that they will be working hard building out their own competencies here.”

The WWDC keynote address, delivered by chief executive officer Tim Cook on June 10, is seen as Apple’s biggest sales pitch

in years. The company has to convince consumers, developers and investors that it can thrive in the AI era. And there’s added pressure because Apple’s existing business is stagnant, with revenue declining in five of the past six quarters.

The two companies haven’t disclosed the deal publicly yet, and terms of arrangement aren’t clear.

Apple remains in talks with Google about using Gemini in its devices, the iPhone maker reached an agreement with OpenAI first. In the end, Apple may offer a number of third-party chatbots, but it’s negotiating the deals on a case-by-case basis, according to the people with knowledge of the situation. —Bloomberg

## CRICKET

ICC MEN'S  
T20 WORLD CUPPAGE  
8

## SHORT SINGLES

## 'India-Pak game is a battle of nerves'

Shahid Afridi sees the India-Pakistan contest as an equivalent to the hugely popular 'Super Bowl' in USA and reckons whichever team handles nerves better will come out on top in the T20 World Cup contest in New York on June 9.

The last time the two teams played at the T20 World Cup, it turned out to be a game for the ages with Virat Kohli pulling off a special win for India.

"For those Americans discovering the tournament, they should know that Pakistan's game against India is like our Super Bowl," Afridi, who is the T20 World Cup ambassador, told ICC.

"I used to absolutely love playing India and I really believe it is the biggest rivalry in sport. When I played in those games, I got a lot of love and respect from the Indian fans and it means so much to both sides.

"Against India, it is about handling the pressure of the occasion. There is so much talent in both teams, they just need to put it together on the day. That will be the case in that game and in the tournament overall. The team that can hold its nerve will come out on top."

## Pak's Wasim to miss opening tie

All-rounder Imad Wasim will miss Pakistan's T20 World Cup opener against USA on Thursday due to a persistent side strain, said captain Babar Azam.

Babar said Wasim has still not completely recovered from his side strain and the left-arm spinner is under observation.

"The medical staff is monitoring him and he will be available for the remaining matches in the World Cup," Babar told the media here.

The seasoned T20 specialist Wasim was brought out of retirement two months back with the World Cup view. The selectors felt that his style of bowling would suit the slow nature of pitches in the Americas.

Along with Wasim, left-arm spinner Mohammed Amir too was picked for the ICC showpiece but they have been used sparingly in the series against New Zealand, Ireland and England in the run-up to the tournament.

"They (pitches) appear good for pace bowlers and we have a very good pace attack so the pitches seem good for us," said Babar.

Babar emphasised that they have no issues with the facilities being offered to the team at the venues in the USA.

## Scots, English share points

Intermittent rain forced abandonment of the T20 World Cup clash between England and Scotland here on Tuesday with both teams sharing a point each. Rain arrived right at the innings break once again after having already truncated the game to a 10-overs-per-side affair, with Scotland reaching 90 for no loss in the first half.

England's target was revised to 109 runs needed off 10 overs via the Duckworth-Lewis-Stern method as Ireland kept the opposition bowlers under the pump for the majority of the contest.

Michael Jones made a 30-ball 45 not out with two sixes and four fours while George Munsey hit an unbeaten 41 not out off 31 balls with as many boundaries to lead the charge for their side.

A passing shower right after the toss led a wet spot on the pitch which forced a delay of 20 minutes, while the longest break came right after the powerplay.

## FIRELAND!

## Blues come out all guns blazing in World Cup opener

MOSES KONDETY  
NEW YORK, JUNE 5

It was a mismatch. Ireland were on the field alright but nowhere near India who blew them away to begin their T20 World Cup campaign with an eight-wicket victory at the Nassau County International Cricket Stadium here on Wednesday.

With a lowly 96 to chase, the Blues rocked big time to finish the task in just 12.2 overs.

Captain Rohit Sharma (52 in 37 balls) warmed up to the big occasion quite well as he played some splendid strokes around the wicket that fetched him four boundaries and three soaring sixes which were lapped up by the partisan crowd in Blue jerseys. Two of those maximums came off left-arm pacer Josh Little's successive balls in the ninth over. Later, a scorching boundary off Mark Adair brought up his 30th T20 half-century. Soon, Rohit retired hurt after being hit on the arm, perhaps to conserve his energy for the bigger games ahead.

With six needed, Suryakumar Yadav (2) tired to finish it with a big hit but only managed to hole out to George Dockrell midway through the field off leg-spinner Ben White. However, Rishabh Pant (36 not out in 26 balls, 3x4, 2x6) completed the job in similar style as he sent fast bowler Barry McCarthy over the pavilion with a switch hit to set off celebrations in the stands.

Virat Kohli (1) fell cheaply. After facing three dot balls from Mark Adair in the third over he got restless and jumped out of the crease to play an expansive drive, only to slice a catch to Ben White at third man.

Earlier, Indian bowlers were right on target, pinning down rival batsmen and cramping them for space regularly. Hardik Pandya was the most successful, taking three wickets while conceding 27 runs in his four overs - he was also on a hat-trick. Jasprit Bumrah was next



Jasprit Bumrah (right) celebrates after taking the wicket of Ireland batter Harry Tector during their T20 World Cup match at the Nassau County International Cricket Stadium in New York on Wednesday.

best with 2 for 6 in three overs. Arshdeep got 2 for 35, figures that were somehow spoilt in his last over in which he conceded 16 runs. Axar Patel and Mohammed Siraj took a wicket apiece.

Ireland were all over the place, falling like pins against the powerhouses. Their batting card presented a sorry picture with No. 7 Gareth Delany being the top-scorer with

26 in 14 balls. He also hit two fours and a couple of sixes.

They began well though. Captain Paul Stirling leapt out of the crease to play a fine stroke off Arshdeep through the cover. That was the flattery before deceit. The Irish skipper soon perished as he tried to hit the same bowler out of the ground, only to sky a catch to wicketkeeper Pant on the first ball of the

third over. Five balls later, Arshdeep struck again, this time ripping through opener Andy Balbirnie to disturb his stumps. Ireland 9 for 2. They did not lose any further wickets though and crawled to 26 by the end of the Powerplay period. Skipper Sharma introduced Pandya and his Mumbai Indians captain struck with the fifth ball, knocking back Lorcan Tucker's

## SCOREBOARD

**Ireland:** Andy Balbirnie b Arshdeep Singh 5, Paul Stirling c Pant b Arshdeep Singh 2, Lorcan Tucker b Pandya 10, Harry Tector c Kohli b Bumrah 4, Curtis Campher c Pant b Pandya 12, George Dockrell c Bumrah b Mohammed Siraj 3, Gareth Delany run out 26, Mark Adair c Dube b Pandya 3, Barry McCarthy c & b Patel 0, Josh Little b Bumrah 14, Ben White not out 2. Extras (lb-5, nb-1, w-9) 15. **Total (all out in 16 overs) 96.**

**Fall of wickets:** 1-7, 2-9, 3-28, 4-36, 5-44, 6-46, 7-49, 8-50, 9-77.

**Bowling:** Arshdeep Singh 4-0-35-2, Mohammed Siraj 3-0-13-1, Jasprit Bumrah 3-1-6-2, Hardik Pandya 4-1-27-3, Axar Patel 1-0-3-1, Ravindra Jadeja 1-0-7-0.

**India:** Rohit Sharma retired hurt 52, Virat Kohli c White b Adair 1, Rishabh Pant not out 36, Suryakumar Yadav c Dockrell b White 2, Shivam Dube not out 0. Extras (w-6) 6. **Total (for 2 wickets in 12.2 overs) 97.**

**Fall of wickets:** 1-22, 1-76, 2-91.

**Bowling:** Mark Adair 4-0-27-1, Josh Little 4-0-42-0, Barry McCarthy 2.2-0-18-0, Curtis Campher 1-0-4-0, Ben White 1-0-6-1.

middle stump with a beauty that cut right back into the right hander.

Harry Tector, Curtis Campher, George Dockrell, Mark Adair and Barry McCarthy fell in a heap as Ireland slumped from 28 for 3 in the seventh over to 50 for 8 in the 12th, a triple figure score looking far out of reach.

That's when top-scorer Delany got together with Gujarat Titans player Little to raise some runs. Their 27-run partnership for the ninth wicket was instrumental in Ireland inching closer to the 100-run mark. That stand was broken courtesy a Bumrah thunderbolt that crashed into Little's stumps.

Delany then put on a 19-run stand for the last wicket with No. 11 Ben White before losing his wicket in bizarre fashion, trying to push for a second run on a free hit to be run out with four more overs left in the innings.

## SCOREBOARD

**Nepal:** Kushal Bhurtel lbw b van Beek 7, Aasif Sheikh c Kingma b Pringle 4, Anil Sah c van Beek b Pringle 11, Rohit Paudel c O'Dowd b Pringle 35, Kushal Malla c O'Dowd b van Meekeren 9, Dipendra Singh Airee c van Beek b de Leede 1, Sompal Kami b van Meekeren 0, Gulsan Jha b van Beek 14, Karan KC c Kingma b de Leede 17, Sagar Dhakal not out 0, Abinash Bohara c & b van Beek 0. Extras (lb-4, w-4) 8. **Total (all out in 19.2 overs) 106.**

**Fall of wickets:** 1-10, 2-15, 3-40, 4-52, 5-53, 6-66, 7-84, 8-106, 9-106.

**Bowling:** Vivian Kingma 4-0-23-0, Tim Pringle 4-0-20-3, Logan van Beek 3.2-0-18-3, Paul van Meekeren 4-0-19-2, Bas de Leede 4-1-22-2.

**Netherlands:** Michael Levitt c Airee b Sompal Kami 1, Max O'Dowd not out 54, Vikramjit Singh lbw b Airee 22, Sybrand Engelbrecht run out 14, Scott Edwards b Bohara 5, Bas de Leede not out 11. Extras (lb-1, nb-1) 2. **Total (for 4 wickets in 18.4 overs) 109.**

**Fall of wickets:** 1-3, 2-43, 3-71, 4-80.

**Bowling:** Karan KC 3-0-17-0, Sompal Kami 4-0-18-1, Gulsan Jha 2-0-17-0, Dipendra Singh Airee 2-0-6-1, Abinash Bohara 3.4-0-29-1, Sagar Dhakal 4-0-21-0.

## Oz chase history, Pak up for USA

**Bridgetown (Bar-bados), June 5:** With the World Test Championship mace and the 50-over World Cup trophy already in their bag, Australia will look to hit the ground running in their quest to become the first team to simultaneously hold all three world titles when they take on Oman in their T20 World Cup opener here.

To accomplish the feat, the former champions will rely on their wealth of experience, with several of Australia's greatest modern-era players, preparing for their final farewell in international colours.

The T20 trophy evaded Australia for the longest time but the maiden title in 2021 changed that. However, a year later, they failed to progress from the league stage on home soil.

However, Australia have no dearth of match-winners in their squad, starting from newly-appointed skipper Mitchell Marsh. The all-rounder will be a key factor batting at No.3. Travis Head has been in red-hot form and was the side's star performer in the WTC final and ODI World Cup final.

Australia might experiment in the group stage to find their best XI.

The ever-reliable trio of Mitchell Starc, Pat

Cummins and Josh Hazlewood will run the pace unit.

Oman lost their opening game after against Namibia. While they did a commendable job with the ball by taking the match into the Super Over, the batters will have to be more responsible if they want to pull off an upset win over the mighty Australians.

## PAK LOOK TO PUT OFF FIELD DRAMA BEHIND

Last edition's runners up Pakistan will take on co-hosts USA in the day's other match.

While on paper, the Babar Azam-led side looks the outright favourite to win the clash, Pakistan's recent form suggests that it might not be a cake walk.

Pakistan lost a T20 International in Ireland and then suffered a 0-2 defeat in England this week, not the ideal result before a global event. Before that, they drew 2-2 at home with a New Zealand side that was missing many of its World Cup squad members. The run-up to the marquee event has been chaotic to say the least with change in captaincy, shuffling of the top-order and players coming out of retirement.

—PTI



## ROHIT TRIED TO GET DRAVID TO STAY ON AS INDIA COACH

**New York, June 5:** India captain Rohit Sharma said on Tuesday that he had unsuccessfully tried to get Rahul Dravid to stay on as coach, hailing him as "a big role model".

David said ahead of India's opening match at the T20 World Cup against Ireland in New York on Wednesday that the tournament would be his last act as coach.

Dravid's contract runs out at the end of the month and he will not reapply for the job, after almost three years in charge.

"I've enjoyed every bit of it, working with him," Rohit, who has played under and with Dravid for India.

He added: "I tried convincing him to stay, but obviously there are a lot of things that he needs to look after as well.

"I've personally enjoyed

my time with him. I'm sure the rest of the guys will say the same. It's been great working with him."

India have failed to win a global trophy under Dravid but Rohit was nevertheless full of praise for the 51-year-old former national skipper.

"Such a big role model for all of us," Rohit said.

"Growing up we watched him play and we know what he's achieved personally as a player and what he's done for the team over the years."

He added: "He's shown a lot of great determination throughout his career, and that's something that when he came here as a coach, I wanted to learn from him.

"It's been very fruitful." Dravid took over the team from Ravi Shastri after the 2021 T20 World Cup.

—AFP

## Paolini sinks Rybakina

**Paris, June 5:** Italy's Jasmine Paolini reached her first Grand Slam semifinal at the French Open on Wednesday after dumping out fourth seed Elena Rybakina 6-2, 4-6, 6-4.

Paolini, seeded 12th, is enjoying the best season of her career at the age of 28 and will play two-time Australian Open champion Aryna Sabalenka or 17-year-old Mirra Andreeva for a spot in the final.

"It's an unbelievable feeling," said Paolini, who had never previously made it past the second round at any Grand Slam until this year.

She had two points for a 5-3 lead on her serve in the

second set but had to regroup after former Wimbledon champion Rybakina rallied to take the match to a deciding set.

She had won a total of four matches in 16 Grand Slam appearances before advancing to the fourth round of the Australian Open in January.

Now she is two wins away in her unlikely quest to emulate compatriot Francesca Schiavone, who won the 2010 French Open.

## BOPANNA-EBDEN SAIL INTO SEMIFINALS

The second seeded Indo-Australian duo of Rohan Bopanna and Matthew

Ebden sailed into the semifinals with a comfortable victory over Belgium's Sander Gille and Joran Vliegen in the men's doubles quarterfinals here on Wednesday.

The pair won 7-6 (3), 5-7, 6-1 at Court Suzanne Lenglen.

Bopanna and Ebden took one hour and four minutes to complete their win over the Belgium duo, seeded 10th in the year's second Grand Slam.

It hasn't been an easy road to the quarterfinals for the duo of Bopanna and Ebden as they played three-setters in their first and third round matches too.

—Agencies

## SINDHU LOSES IN FIRST ROUND OF INDONESIA OPEN

**Jakarta, June 5:** India's ace shuttler P. V. Sindhu went down to Hsu Wen-chi of Chinese Taipei in the first round of the Indonesia Open on Wednesday, making a stunning early exit from the BWF Super 1000 tournament. A two-time Olympic medalist and a former world champion, Sindhu lost the women's singles contest 15-21, 21-15, 14-21, which was her maiden loss to Wen-chi.

The Taiwanese shuttler took an hour and 10 minutes to beat the Commonwealth Games gold-medallist.

—PTI

## Chhetri's last dance in India's must-win match vs Kuwait

**Kolkata, June 5:** Emotions will run high when the talismanic Sunil Chhetri leads India out one last time in a crucial FIFA World Cup qualifying match against Kuwait here on Thursday, hoping to propel his team into the next round as a parting gift after dominating the national football landscape for 19 years.

The 39-year-old Chhetri will hang his boots at the end of this match and would like to ensure that the team enters the final-18 stage of the World Cup qualifiers for the first time.



Sunil Chhetri at a press conference in Kolkata on Wednesday.

—PTI

The top two teams from nine groups of four teams each will go on to make the third stage. This round will decide FIFA's increased allocation of eight World Cup berths

for Asia. It will be a little far-fetched to imagine India in the 2026 World Cup in North America, but a win over Kuwait will take the team into the uncharted territory of being up against the best of Asia in at least 10 matches.

That would also translate into some quality friendly games.

Occupying the second spot behind Qatar (12 points) in Group A with four points from four games, India are ahead of Afghanistan on goal difference and Kuwait, who have three points.

## POWERLIFTER SANDEEP HANDED 10-YEAR BAN

**New Delhi, June 5:** The Anti-Doping Disciplinary Panel (ADDP) of the NADA has suspended powerlifter Sandeep Kaur for 10 years, one of the longest ban periods handed by the committee, for her second doping offence as well as for using multiple prohibited drugs which constituted aggravating circumstances.

The 31-year-old Punjab powerlifter received eight years ban for her second doping offence — the first being in 2019 (tested positive for Stanozolol) — and additional two years after her sample was found to contain multiple banned substances. Kaur had returned to competition in August last year after serving the four-year ban for her first doping offence and she finished third in the 69kg open category in the National Championships.

—PTI