



**WORLD 5**

SIX PALESTINIANS KIDS KILLED IN ISRAEL ATTACK IN RAFAH

**MONEY 6**

INDIA ATTRACTIVE FOR MANUFACTURING

**SPORT 8**

LITTLE ROOM FOR ERROR AS RCB FACE DOMINANT KKR

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## Low voter turnout in phase 1 alarms parties

### Heat to polls done deal could be reasons as parties find answers

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

Low voting percentage in the Hindi belt Western Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan, and Uttarakhand during the first phase of polls which concluded on Friday, has become a cause of concern for the political groups with all the warring parties in a fix for the upcoming six phases Parliamentary polls.

Experts and political leaders explained reasons could be scorching heat wave or high temperature, overconfidence amongst BJP voters / cadre that "Aayega to Modi hi" or lack of enthusiasm amongst Opposition voters that election done deal, Aayega to Modi hi.

The low voting percentage may go either ways. The Opposition may claim that BJP core voters did come to cast their vote while some section of BJP say people did not come to vote as it was clear that Modi is coming to power for the third time.

Some political experts remarked the low turnout is an indication of tough time for the ruling BJP and a wake up call to make changes in the strategy or activate its cadre.

The total percentage of voting is estimated around 65.5 per cent for the first phase of polling in 102 constituencies.

In the first phase of the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, the voter turnout was recorded at 69.43 per cent.

Some of the constituencies were different then and the total



number of seats which went to polls were 91.

According to EC's voter turnout app, Hindi belt Western Uttar Pradesh witnessed 60.25 per cent voting, Bihar 48.88 per cent, Rajasthan 57.65 per cent and Uttarakhand 55.89 per cent voting. The final data of the first phase polling is yet to come.

In UP, 65.95 per cent voting was reported in Saharanpur, 60.60 per cent in Moradabad, 61.17 per cent

in Kairana, 59.54 per cent in Nagina, 61.91 per cent in Pilibhit, 58.21 per cent in Bijnor, 54.77 per cent in Rampur and 59.29 per cent in Muzaffarnagar. These seats fall in the Jat and sugarcane belt of the State.

A voter turnout of over 55.89 per cent was recorded in the five Parliamentary constituencies of

Uttarakhand.

The voter turnout in Uttarakhand in the 2019 general elections was

over 61.48 per cent.

The Nainital-Udham Singh Nagar seat recorded the highest voter turnout of 61.35 per cent, followed by Haridwar 62.36 per cent, Tehri Garhwal 51.74 per cent, Pauri Garhwal 50.84 per cent and Almora 46.94 per cent.

According to officials, low voting could be attributed to heat or high temperature in Hindi belt areas. Interestingly, some BJP leaders say voters have realised that Modi Government is coming for the third terms that was the reason why some people did not come to

cast their vote.

Given this scenario, leaders of contesting political parties on Saturday traded charges with each other.

On low voting percentage in Uttarakhand, Congress leader Harish Rawat said, "The lower percentage of voting has been observed in the areas where BJP was dominant. This is due to the frustration in medium-income and lower-income groups because of the BJP's economic policies... I believe the INDIA Bloc alliance is dominant over BJP in the first phase of the elections...."

While RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav took a dig at the BJP and said that the BJP's "400 paar" film has become a super flop on the first day itself, Lok Janshakti Party chief Chirag Paswan attributed a relatively low voter turnout in Bihar to "no challenge faced by the NDA" in the State.

Paswan, whose party is fighting five out of the state's 40 seats, as part of the coalition led by the BJP, claimed that the INDIA bloc's performance will be "worse" than in 2019, when it could win only one seat in Bihar.

"The voter turnout in Bihar is low because the Opposition here is in a state of atrophy. Although the NDA is going to do well everywhere, at least it has some competition in, say, West Bengal, which is a reason why voters there turned up in large numbers yesterday," he told reporters.



Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud and Union Minister of Law & Justice Arjun Ram Meghwal during the inauguration of a conference on 'India's New Criminal Justice System - A Progressive Step' organised by the Ministry of Law and Justice, at the Ambedkar International Centre, in New Delhi, on Saturday  
PTI Photo

## New criminal laws signify watershed moment: CJI

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Hailing the enactment of the new criminal justice laws as a watershed moment for society, Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud on Saturday said India is set for a significant overhaul of its criminal justice system.

Speaking at a conference here on "India's Progressive Path in the Administration of Criminal Justice System", he said the new laws would be successful if those, who are in charge of implementing them, adapt to them.

These new laws have transitioned India's legal framework on criminal justice into a new age, the CJI said.

He also said much-needed improvements have been introduced to protect the interests of victims and carry out investigation and prosecution of offences efficiently.

"India is set for a significant overhaul of its criminal justice system with the upcoming implementation of three new criminal laws... These laws signify a watershed moment for our society because no law affects the day-to-day conduct of our society like the criminal law. "India is set for a significant overhaul of its criminal justice system with the upcoming implementation of three new criminal laws...These laws signify a watershed moment for our society because no law affects the day-to-day conduct of our society like the criminal law," he said.

"The enactment of these laws by Parliament is a clear indication that India is changing and on the move, and needs new legal instruments to deal with the current challenges," the CJI said.

## Bihar schoolteachers upset over vigilance to boycott polls

DEEPAK KUMAR JHA ■ DARBHANGA/ MADHUBANI/SUPAUL

Keeping a 'hawk-eye' on the school teachers in Bihar has led to acute resentments against Chief Minister Nitish Kumar from five lakh Government schoolteachers and their families, and a majority of them backed by several associations of teachers, have decided to 'boycott' the voting in Lok Sabha polls.

The latest to add fuel is while Bihar Government has announced holidays for children due to prevailing heat conditions, it is mandatory for the teachers to be present for two hours in the morning in the school premises and they have to share their GPS location to the administration.

"Our choice is BJP due to Modi (PM Narendra Modi) but the candidate here is from the JDU. We have grievances against Nitish Kumar and have decided to boycott



Bhagalpur: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi and RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav during an election campaign rally ahead of Lok Sabha polls, in Bhagalpur  
PTI Photo

voting. Those keeping with moral of democracy may vote NOTA but we shall never vote for Teer (arrow which is the JDU symbol)," said Prakash Thakur, a primary schoolteacher in Bamangaon of Supaul district.

His another companion in the Sakri village Madhubani, Ashish Jha, rued the fact the way "Nitish Kumar has completely attacked on the democratic

norms of teachers". "Strictness is acceptable but when you attempt to be vigilant then it's a problem. There has been protest for months on the unnecessary measures by the State Education Department on more than five lakh strength of primary and secondary school teachers but Nitish kept ignoring and thus even any political party who has

been tied with JDU will have to bear the brunt," Jha said.

In fact, several teachers' associations in Bihar have been up in arms against State education department against the education department's several gag order against teachers.

CPI MLC Sanjay Kumar Singh, who is also general secretary of the Federation of University Teachers of Bihar (FUTAB), is leading one of the protest fronts against the education department's additional chief secretary KK Pathak.

The most problematic area which the teachers claimed they have been affected is the separate holiday calendars for Urdu and Hindu schools for the first time and also removing several Hindu festivals from the holiday list. Pathak led department has also issued showcase notice against over 150 teachers for airing their views and expressing their concerns on social media against the Government orders.

## Rahul to look for safe seat after Wayanad polls: Modi

T N RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Launching a blistering attack against Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Saturday that 'Shehzada and his team were waiting for the polling to get over in Wayanad, from where he is contesting, to find another safe seat for him, and predicted that he (Rahul) will "run away" from Kerala like he did from Amethi.

Addressing an election rally at Nanded in Marathwada region, Modi said: "Shehzada is in trouble in Wayanad. Shehzada and his toli (gang) are waiting for the poll to get over on April 26. After that, they will find a safe seat for him. They will put him up there as a candidate". Alluding to Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan's criticism of Rahul on Friday, Modi said: "INDI alliance leaders are speaking against one another.... The Kerala Chief Minister slammed Shehzada in such a manner yesterday that even I do not



Nanded: Prime Minister Narendra Modi with Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde during a rally for Lok Sabha polls, in Nanded, on Saturday  
PTI Photo

speaking like that. Shehzada had to run away from Amethi. I am sure he will run away from Wayanad similarly. For the first time in the history of the country, members of the Congress will not vote for the party. ... Even in the place where he lives, there's no Congress candidate".

Modi said that the infighting was on within the Opposition INDIA bloc over the 25 per cent seats. "Come June 4, the INDI alliance leaders will tear the clothes and hair of one another. Do you want to waste your votes on these leaders? That's why you should vote for

the NDA. Voting for NDA is voting for Vikas Bharat," he said. Modi, who also addressed another election rally at Parbhani in Marathwada, said that INDIA alliance leaders had come together to save and protect their corruption. "The voters are asking them for their leader but they cannot answer. The people had thoroughly rejected them in the first phase of polling. Even before the completion of the election, the Congress leaders have accepted the defeat".

The Prime Minister charged that the Opposition INDIA bloc believed in vote bank

politics. "By boycotting the Ram Temple consecration ceremony in Ayodhya, the Opposition leaders have insulted our astha (faith). They cannot be pardoned for insulting our astha and disrespecting 'Sanatana' dharma. ... Curing every wound inflicted by the Congress is Modi Ki guarantee," Modi said, as he listed the achievements of his government like Article 370, Triple Talaq and growing economy.

Modi said that since they were used to contest and win elections to Rajya Sabha, the Opposition parties were not getting candidates. Hence the Opposition leaders are not campaigning. Even on 25 per cent of the seats the Opposition was contesting, the INDI alliance constituents are fighting against each other and making allegations against each other. They are even threatening to put each other in jail. Can you trust such people?" the Prime Minister asked the audience.



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# VIEWPOINT

## Sceptical Bengal, Sanatani Bengal



Romit Bagchi

A few days ago, someone close to me sent me a well-written treatise on why the Bengali intelligentsia remains untainted by the Hindutva blitzkrieg augmented by the Ram Mandir triumphalism. Before explaining the Bengali elite's glorious insularity from the North India-steered religious fanaticism going under Sanatan Dharma, he expounded why Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru feared the Hindu fundamentalism more than the Communist doctrinalism, given the frighteningly high rate of illiteracy in India in his time.

Nehru wrote in 1948 in the aftermath of Mahatma Gandhi's assassination that the Communists were a lesser evil than the Hindu fundamentalists because people accepted Communism following intellectual churn whereas the mass, bereft of the power to intellectually discriminate, gulped fundamentalism which inevitably stirred up a blind energy that swamped the collective life with blind passion to devour all that is not in line with it.

Those who have studied Nehru say that to combat the ascendant majoritarianism masquerading as nationalism in partitioned India, he followed a strategy of setting into motion a State-sponsored project of secular pedagogy with the help of the left-leaning intelligentsia. As part of this strategy, the army of the State-backed intelligentsia unleashed an ideological campaign to fortify the idea of secularism through erecting an elaborate superstructure of discourse. They permeated the premier cultural institutions, especially in media, and entrenched themselves in top posts to control these institutions. It is thanks to this army of intelligentsia that the notion of secularism came to be invested with a veneer of prestige with those opposing this ideological

superstructure dismissed as dimwits.

But the Bengali intelligentsia's abhorrence for the 'obscurantist' Sanatani tenets is supposed to have preceded the Nehruvians' ideological campaign for secularism. My friend from Kolkata who sought to enlighten me on why the argumentative, illumined Bengal scorns the north India-led Sanatani mumbo jumbo wrote that intellectual Bengal's aloofness started at least 200 years before the advent of the Nehruvian regime when the intellectual giants strove to rid the society of the evils inherent in the Sanatani culture by tearing down the chauvinistic and casteist walls to let the light of the rationalistic Western culture to permeate the life here that remained mired in meaningless ritualistic idiosyncrasy.

He averred with decisive depreciation that the Bengali intelligentsia looks down upon a Bengali- even though he is a scholar himself with radiant academic accomplishment- who professes unapologetic fidelity to the Sanatani culture as a halfwit, needing enlightenment.

Reading his treatise, I felt low as though relegated to hopeless inferiority. I thought with alarm that as I have been living in Uttarakhand- hailed as the repository of the Sanatani wisdom- for close to ten years, I must have become a halfwit myself.

True, I have changed a lot under the influence of the people I have been living with, by the culture they embody. And what was left in me of the West- admiring intellectuality got completely rubbed out during the frenzied time when a Ram wave overwhelmed the whole of north India. I was overwhelmed too. I, of course, do not and cannot support much of what has been going on in the name of Lord Ram and Sanatan Dharma and yet I cannot help thinking that the long-slumbering spirit of this ancient nation has finally started to awaken.

I am thus an incorrigible halfwit but so are the millions of Bengalis who, untouched by the pedagogy of the self-confident sceptics, have remained staunch followers of Sanatan Dharma for thousands of years. They have been taking immense pains and spending their hard-earned money to come to Uttarakhand on pilgrimage, trekking through difficult terrain amidst the mountains, thronging temples, tak-



ing holy dips in Ganga and praying for wish-fulfilment and final liberation from the Karma-driven cycle of birth and death.

Ask them and they will tell that Sanatan Dharma is a not mass of self-hypnotic delusion, crazy superstitions and unsubstantial speculations but based on the rock solid truths of life- a self-search, self-purification and self-perfection, a discovery and journey towards the hidden sources of the Spirit. Now, the question is: who represents the real Bengal- the highbrow intellectuals who take it upon themselves the task of setting the cultural tone for the bhadraloks or the 'riffraff' humans who been clinging to the Sanatani culture that has kept India alive and united amidst the enormous lingual and cultural diversity breathing down its neck?

Let me narrate a gripping short story titled 'Bharatavarsha' written by a renowned Bengali author S Wajid Ali. The writer was a 10-year- old child when he came to Kolkata for the first time. While walking around, he stopped at a grocery on a corner of which was sitting an old man reading from a fat book. A middle aged man, attending to the customers, was coming when there was no customer and sat to listen to the reading. Three children also sat next to the old man, listening beamingly to the story with keen interest. The story narrated how Ramchandra, assisted by an army of monkeys, built a bridge across the sea to reach the island of Lanka. As the writer was summoned back home, he did not get to know whether Ramchandra ever crossed the sea. After a few days, he went back to his village.

Twenty five years later, the author came to the same place in Kolkata and stopped at the same shop. Massive changes had meanwhile occurred. Mansions came up where small houses had earlier stood; big motorcars took the place of rickshaws or horse-drawn carriages; bright electric lamps replaced the flickering gas lamps. But the old grocery remained untouched by these changes; it stood exactly as before with the same kerosene lamp he had seen 25 years ago hanging from the roof. Stupefied, he saw an old man, looking like the one he had seen 25 years ago, reading from the same fat book while a middle-aged man, resembling the one he had seen then, was now and again coming up to him to listen to the reading and going back when the customers arrived. A boy, similar to the one seen the last time, sat gazing at the old man's glowing face. Curiosity raging in him, the writer recounted his befuddlement on seeing the same scene seen 25 years ago to the old man. The old man told him that the old man he had seen 25 years ago was his late father and the kid was his grandson.

Pointing to the book, the writer asked the old man how old it was. A gentle smile lighting up his face, he said that the book was the Bengali translation of Ramayana written by Krittibas Ojha and purchased by his grandfather years before he was born. The story finishes with the following lines that remain etched in the Bengali psyche: "It felt as though I had been blessed with a wonderful insight. A gleaming picture of timeless Bharatvarsha suddenly revealed itself before my eyes: the same tradition continues uninterrupted; nowhere has it changed."

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PAPER WITH PASSION

## Thunderstorms and light rain likely in parts of State today

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Various parts of the State witnessed light rain along with thunder on Friday evening after the end of polling for the Lok Sabha election.

The State meteorological centre has forecast that very light to light rain/thunderstorms are likely to occur at isolated places in Uttarkashi, Chamoli and Pithoragarh districts of the State today. Dry weather is likely to prevail in the remaining districts. However, surface winds are expected to be strong and gusty (30-40 kmph) over isolated places in the State on Sunday.



The meteorological centre has further forecast that the provisional State capital Dehradun will witness a mainly clear to partly cloudy sky today.

The maximum and minimum temperatures are likely to be about 35 degrees Celsius and 19 degrees Celsius respectively in Dehradun on Sunday. The maximum and minimum

temperatures recorded in various parts of the State on Saturday were 34.6 degrees Celsius and 20.2 degrees Celsius respectively in Dehradun, 36.6 degrees Celsius and 19 degrees Celsius in Pantnagar, 24 degrees Celsius and 11.4 degrees Celsius in Mukteshwar and 24.8 degrees Celsius and 10.5 degrees Celsius in New Tehri.

## Business fraternity to hold meeting ahead of tourist season



PNS ■ NAINITAL

Tourists throng Nainital during the summer and the district administration generally starts holding meetings to discuss preparations for the tourist season two months in advance. This time, the authorities have not held a single meeting regarding the tourists with April reaching its fag end.

The Ma Naina Devi Nainital Vyapar Mandal has come forward and declared that it will hold a meeting on April 23. The district administration and police will also be invited to this meeting.

The Vyapar Mandal founding head Puneet Tandon said that the body will organise a meeting on Tuesday.

All the stakeholders, representatives of the police and administration along with mediapersons will be invited to this meeting. The Kumaoon commissioner, Nainital district magistrate, senior superintendent of police and municipality officials along with the superintendent of police

(Traffic) will be invited to this meeting. "The Vyapar Mandal understands the situation faced by the police and administration. However, the meeting we are planning to organise should have been held by the authorities at least a month ago. The polling for the Lok Sabha election was held on Friday and now this important meeting for the tourist season can not be deferred any longer," Tandon said.

# Himgiri Zee University now Jigyasa University



PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The Himgiri Zee University (HZU) has undergone a name change to Jigyasa University with the endorsement of Uttarakhand Governor lieutenant general (ret'd) Gurmit Singh. The vice chancellor of the university BS Narendra Parashar shared this information during a Press conference held here on Saturday.

Addressing the media he emphasised that the primary aim behind renaming the university is to redefine its trajectory and empower individuals in molding a more prosperous educational future. This rebranding signifies the institution's pro-

gression and steadfast commitment to promoting inquisitiveness, analytical thinking and exploration in the quest for knowledge, he said.

He further added that as it embarks on this new chapter as Jigyasa University, the establishment reaffirms its dedication to fostering intellectual curiosity, academic rigor and social responsibility. Its commitment to providing exceptional education and nurturing the next generation of leaders remains unwavering, he claimed. Expanding on the initiatives,

Parashar mentioned the continuation of the teacher training program conduct-

ed in the college, enabling teachers to instruct students more effectively. Additionally, at the end of each semester, the university always solicits feedback from students regarding the facilities and overall experience. He mentioned that last year, the university achieved an average placement rate of 80 per cent.

He further assured that all academic programmes, campus facilities and ongoing initiatives will proceed without interruption. He added that the transition to the new name will be smooth for both current and prospective students.

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**CORRIGENDUM**

It is to inform that a public notice dated 19.04.2024 in daily newspaper. The Pioneer has wrongly published the sale deed 06.12.1987 dated 12.03.2004 of IP situated at bearing khata No. 17 cross road, dehradun, cross no. 17 area cross road (rash vihara marg Dehradun. Butted Which is to be read as Sale Deed No. 5456 dated 29.12.1980 situated at 17, cross road, Rash Vihari Marg, Dehradun, bounded

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**NORTHERN RAILWAY**

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Tender No.	12-DRM-MB-24-25 dt. 20.04.2024		
Name of Work	Replacement of old PI station with EI for station KJY of Moradabad Division.		
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Advertised Value (Rs.)	1,63,90,769.58	Earnest Money (Rs.)	2,32,00.00
Period of Completion	08 months	Bidding Start Date	02.05.2024
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## Wide variation in Assembly wise voter turnout in U'khand



PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The data of the Election Commission shows that maximum voter turnout was reported in Haridwar Lok Sabha constituency in the State where 62.36 per cent voters exercised their franchise. In comparison only 46.94 per cent turnout was reported in the Almora (SC) reserved constituency which is lowest in the State.

In Garhwal LS constituency 50.84 per cent turnout was reported this time while in Tehri constituency 52.57 per cent turnout was reported.

In Nainital- Udham Singh Nagar constituency 61.35 per cent turnout was reported in this election. The data shows that 73.21 per cent voters came

### LS election 2024

out to vote in Haridwar rural Assembly segment under

Haridwar LS constituency which is highest in the State. In comparison only 32 per cent turnout was reported in the Salt assembly constituency which is the part of the Almora (SC) reserved constituency.

In Almora LS constituency, Champawat Assembly segment reported the highest turnout at 56 per cent. Here the Salt assembly constituency reported only 32 per cent turnout. In Haridwar LS constituency high voter turnout was reported in Haridwar rural ( 73.21 per cent), Laksar ( 72 per cent) and Piran Kalier ( 70

per cent) Assembly constituencies. Here Dharampur and Rishikesh constituencies reported only 51.80 per cent voter turnout each.

In Nainital- Udham Singh Nagar LS seat, Sitarganj assembly segment reported highest voter turnout of 70.15 per cent while in Nainital Assembly constituency only 51.67 per cent voters came out to vote.

Ramnagar Assembly segment of Garhwal LS constituency reported 61.60 per cent turnout which was highest in this LS seat. Here Lansdowne reported a meagre 40.10 per cent turnout. In Tehri LS seat Vikasnagar Assembly segment reported 64.70 per cent turnout while Ghansali reported a low turnout of 41.50 per cent.

## Consistent drop in voter turnout a cause of concern

Participation of voters in State decreasing in last two LS polls

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The dismal voter turnout in the Lok Sabha elections 2024 in Uttarakhand shows that all the efforts of the election commission and the civil society to increase the voter turnout in the State have proved to be a failure. A day after the end of the polling, the EC data shows that 55.89 per cent of total 83,21,201 voters turned out to cast their votes in Uttarakhand.

It means that about 35 lakh voters did not vote in the hustings to elect their Member of Parliament (MP). It is pertinent to mention here that the EC had taken a target of 75 per cent voter turnout in the LS elections -2024 and had undertaken a massive campaign to achieve this. However the poor response by the voters gave a setback to the plan of achieving a high voter turnout. In fact the turnout was much less than the turnouts reported in the last two LS elections. In the LS election-2019, a turnout of 61.88 per cent was reported which means that about six per cent less people came out to vote this time.

What is a matter of concern is the fact that the voter turnout is continuing to decrease in the State from the last two LS elections despite the efforts of the EC.

In the LS election of 2014, 62.15 per cent voters came out to vote which is the highest ever in the LS elections in the State.

The experts point out that the low turnout indicates the disinterest of the people in the governance which is not a good sign for democracy and society.

One of the reasons for less voter turnout in the mountainous parts of the State is the migration of people to cities. Reasons such as lack of enthusiasm in the workers of the political parties and ongoing marriage season in the State are also being attributed for less voter turnout this time.

The founder of Social Development for Communities (SDC) foundation, Anoop



Nautiyl told The Pioneer that in percentile terms there is a 9.68 per cent drop in turnout this time as compared with 2019. He listed migration and distant polling booths as causes for low voter turnout in mountainous areas of the State. Nautiyl added that the political parties also failed to address relevant issues in the campaign due to which the voters became disinterested in voting.

“ The campaign of the parties appeared more in the Online mode than on the ground. The strict guidelines of the Election Commission also took the sheen off the campaign which became lacklustre,” he said.

Nautiyl added that marriage season, harvesting season and long weekend also drove many voters away from the polling booths.

## Apathy towards politics & anti-incumbency led to drop in voting among young adults



PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Various factors including apathy towards politics, indifference and anti-incumbency influenced young adults into abstaining from voting in the Lok Sabha election which was held in Uttarakhand on April 19. The voter turnout was notably low on the polling day. In light of this, the young adults in the city opined that none of the political parties in power genuinely serve the public's interests, which indirectly led to their decision to abstain from participating in the voting process on Friday.

Dwelling on this, a college student Shivansh Bhauguna said that he did not visit the polling station to vote in this election. Instead, he spent the day with friends after making plans with them. He emphasised his limited interest in politics, stating that he does not care to keep track of which government comes to power, as every party, once in the role, prioritises its own agenda over the welfare of the general public, he said. Another young

adult Mohammad Ibrahim said that he abstained from the entire election process this year citing his aversion to standing in line to vote and the influence of anti-incumbency. He opined that regardless of which party wins, they will prioritise their own interests over serving society.

Commenting on this, a local resident Rajeev Kumar claimed that the younger generation, particularly young adults, are increasingly well-informed about various matters. He highlighted the significant role they play in the electoral process through their participation in voting. However, it has been noted that this year, young adults have displayed a decreased interest in voting. Factors such as waning interest in politics, anti-incumbency sentiment and primarily, the younger generation's inclination towards laziness and lack of understanding of their civic responsibilities, have been cited as the key reasons behind their lack of participation in this year's election, he said.

## Congress sees hope in low voter turnout & variation in voting pattern

In Haridwar LS seat, 70 per cent turnout reported in Congress- ruled assembly segments as compared to 55 per cent in BJP -ruled ones

GAJENDRA SINGH NEGI ■ DEHRADUN

The Congress party which had lost all the five Lok Sabha seats to the BJP in the Lok Sabha elections of 2014 and 2019 in Uttarakhand is fancying its chances in three out of the five LS seats of the State. The average low voter turnout in the election coupled with the fact that a comparatively higher voting percentage was reported in many pockets in the State seems to have rekindled the hope of the grand old party. The party insiders point out that the Congress has a fair chance in Garhwal, Haridwar and Nainital- Udham Singh Nagar constituencies.



Jhaberda assembly constituencies respectively.

All these constituencies are held by Congress MLAs Furkan Ahmed, Mamta Rakesh, Ravi Bahadur and Virendra Kumar Jati respectively and an average 69.86 per cent voter turnout was reported in these five Assembly constituencies.

In comparison there are six Assembly constituencies BHEL Ranipur, Roorkee, Doiwala, Haridwar, Dharampur and Rishikesh in Haridwar LS constituency which are held by BJP MLAs Adesh Chauhan, Pradeep Batra, Brijbhushan Gairola, Madan Kaushik, Vinod Chamoli and Premchand Agarwal. In them 60, 59.40, 57.45, 54.84, 51.8 and 51.8 per cent voter turnout was reported respectively which

means that only 55.88 per cent voters came out to vote in these areas considered to be the strongholds of the ruling BJP.

High voter turnout was also reported in Laksar (72 per cent), Kanpur (68.45 per cent) and Manglaur (63.20 per cent) Assembly constituencies of Haridwar.

The political observers point out that the voter turnout in the Muslim areas was higher than the average voter turnout in the LS constituency .

It is estimated that Muslims and Dalits constitute more than 50 per cent of the 20, 31,632 -strong electorate of Haridwar Lok Sabha constituency.

There are an estimated 5.50 lakh Muslim voters in the constituency which is about 27

per cent of the total electorate of the Haridwar Lok Sabha.

The high voter turnout in Muslim areas has brought tension in the BJP camp.

The party is now hoping that the Muslim vote bank will divide between Congress, BSP and independent candidate Umesh Kumar which will pave the way for victory of its candidate the chief minister Trivendra Singh Rawat.

Congress leader Manish Nagpal claimed that apart from Muslims and Dalits all sections of the society have voted for the Congress candidate Virendra Singh Rawat.

He claimed that there was a direct contest between BJP and Congress in Haridwar this time with BSP and independent Umesh Kumar leaving no impact on the electorate.

## Women voters favoured employment opportunities & healthcare

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Women voters said that they voted in favour of employment opportunities for illiterate women and improved healthcare, safety and security in the Lok Sabha election held in the State on Friday.

Several women of all age groups were seen at polling stations exercising their franchise. A woman voter, Bubby Singh discussed the election and important issues expressing her strong belief in the power of voting to make a difference as a woman.

She said it is a privilege to cast her vote and have her voice heard on crucial women's issues like safety, employment, healthcare and education.

Another woman voter Shanza Merchant said that she cast her vote not only as a civic duty, but also to highlight important issues during the election.



## Highlights

- Several women of all age groups were seen at polling stations exercising their franchise.
- Many other female voters also voiced their concerns. However, when discussing their decision to vote, they noted that family influence played a significant role
- Among the total of 83,271,207 registered voters in Uttarakhand, 4,012,006 are females.
- During the Lok Sabha election of 2019, there was a notable increase in female voter turnout, averaging 64.38 per cent, compared to the overall average voting turnout of 61.5 per cent in the same year.

intention to prioritise issues that have been neglected by the government, like healthcare and safety measures for women. She further said that she voted for the same party as her family and followed her husband's voting choice.

Notably, among the total of 83,271,207 registered voters in Uttarakhand, 4,012,006 are females. Additionally, during the Lok Sabha election of 2019, there was a notable increase in female voter turnout, averaging 64.38 per cent, compared to the overall average voting turnout of 61.5 per cent in the same year.

## GDMC to provide incentives to hospital employees within a week

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The Government Doon Medical College (GDMC) hospital has decided to provide incentive to the hospital employees under the Atal Ayushman Uttarakhand Yojana (AAUY) within the current week. Stating this, the medical superintendent of GDMC hospital Dr Dhananjay Dobhal informed that the hospital administration has consistently allocated incentives to the hospital employees under AAUY for the past three years as a means of enhancing their motivation. He explained that through this scheme, a minimum of Rs five lakh for treatment is provided free of charge to each patient, with the government later reimbursing the hospital. Subsequent to the refund receipt, 50 per cent is utilised for procuring essential treatment-related items, while the remaining 50 per cent is divided accordingly; 35 per cent is designated for additional expenses, and the remaining 15 per cent is distributed among hospital employees, encompassing doctors, nurses, ward personnel and other staff, as an incentive, he said.

Dobhal further added that the hospital



has decided to provide incentives to the employees twice a year, once during Deepawali and once during Holi. The incentives were distributed to the employees on the last Deepawali.

However, various unavoidable reasons such as employee transfers and national holidays have caused a delay in issuing the incentives under AAUY during this Holi. Further, the hospital admin-

istration has decided to distribute the incentives to the employees within this week. Regarding the allocation of a 15 per cent incentive among hospital employees, he mentioned that five per cent of the incentives are allocated to the surgical team, three per cent to nursing staff, one per cent to ward boys, one per cent to data operators and the remaining percentage to other employees.

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The Health minister Dhan Singh Rawat instructed the officials to enhance health arrangements on the Char Dham Yatra circuit. He said this in a review meeting held on Saturday. The election commission gave permission to the Health department to conduct the said meeting in view of the Yatra schedule to start in May.

During the meeting, Rawat instructed officials to improve health facilities for pilgrims and locals during the Yatra period. He further added that the State government is focused on ensuring the successful execution of the Char Dham Yatra, scheduled to begin on May 10. Efforts are underway to prepare a comprehensive roadmap for enhancing health facilities for devotees along the Yatra routes, he said.

Rawat further informed that he instructed Chief Medical Officers (CMOs) of all the districts associated with the

Char Dham Yatra to supply essential life-saving equipment and sufficient medications to both permanent and temporary medical facilities along the pilgrimage routes. Further,

senior officials from the department have been tasked with ensuring the presence of specialised doctors, general physicians, paramedics, pharmacists and other medical per-

sonnel. Additionally, Srinagar Medical College, Doon Medical College and AIIMS Rishikesh have been advised to be on high alert during the Yatra period, he added.





# Voting foremost duty of citizens in democracy: CJI

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■**  
NEW DELHI

Chief Justice of India (CJI) D Y Chandrachud has urged citizens not to miss the opportunity to vote in the general elections, saying it is one of the "foremost duties" in a constitutional democracy.

In a video message for the Election Commission's 'My Vote My Voice' mission for the 2024 Lok Sabha polls, Justice Chandrachud said, "We are citizens of the world's largest democracy, which is our country."

"The Constitution gives us a multitude of rights as citizens but it also expects that each of us performs the duty, which is cast upon us. And one of the foremost duties of citizenship is to cast a vote in a constitutional democracy," he said.

"I will request every one of you please do not miss this opportunity to vote responsibly as citizens of our great motherland. Five minutes, every five years for our nation. It's doable, isn't it? Let's vote with pride. My



vote, my voice," the CJI said. Justice Chandrachud said the citizens have a participatory role in electing the government and that is why it is said that "this government is a government of the people, by the people and for the people". He recalled his excitement as the first time voter and queuing up at the polling booth to exercise the franchise. "The ink on the finger when I vote allows tremendous feelings of patriotism and association with the nation..." he said. "So our Constitution and our

law provides for one citizen, one vote and one value. I think that's the great tenacity and the power of our nation as a constitutional democracy," he said. The CJI said he never missed that duty to cast his vote when he was a lawyer and had to run around for work. The Lok Sabha elections will be held from April 19 to June 1, 2024 to elect the 543 members of the 18th Lok Sabha. The elections will be held in seven phases and the results will be announced on June 4, 2024.

# Musk defers India visit over Tesla obligations

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■**  
NEW DELHI

Tesla chief Elon Musk has postponed his two-day visit to India later this month wherein he was reportedly scheduled to meet Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The entrepreneur was also likely to announce an investment of two-three billion dollars during the visit. He is now likely to India later this year.

In a post on Saturday, Musk said his visit to India was delayed due to "very heavy Tesla obligations." He also said "Unfortunately, very heavy Tesla obligations require that the visit to India be delayed, but I do very much look forward to visiting later this year," the SpaceX CEO tweeted. His visit was reportedly to commence from Sunday.

Musk has to reportedly attend a crucial conference call on April 23 in the United States to answer questions about Tesla's first quarter performance. Last week, Musk posted on X that he was "looking forward" to meeting Prime Minister Modi. Musk, who also owns SpaceX, was expected to announce an



investment of \$2-3 billion to build a factory for entry-level cars amid the long-awaited Tesla Inc's entry into the Indian market. Recently, the government announced a policy lowering high tariffs on imported cars if firms invest locally. The billionaire entrepreneur was also expected to unveil plans to introduce Starlink, a satellite network that provides high-speed internet connection.

Musk, the world's fourth-richest man, was also expected to meet Indian space tech start-ups during his visit.

The government had reportedly invited companies like Skyroot Aerospace, Dhruva Space, Piersight, and Digtantara for talks with the SpaceX CEO in New Delhi.

Prime Minister Modi has met Elon Musk twice before -- during a Tesla plant visit in 2015 and during his state visit to the US in 2023.

In a recent interview, Modi said Musk was a supporter of India. "Look, the first thing saying that Elon Musk is a supporter of Modi is one thing, basically, he is a supporter of India. And I just met him. It's not like that," Modi had said.

The development also comes just days after the Centre held its first set of consultation meetings with automobile industry players, including Tesla representatives, to evolve guidelines to operationalise the new Electric Vehicle (EV) policy released last month. The guidelines are expected to provide more clarity on investments in EV manufacturing in the country, which is at a nascent stage in the country.

The Congress took a swipe at the Narendra Modi government over the postponement of Elon Musk's India visit, saying it was odd the Tesla CEO was coming to meet an outgoing prime minister and that he too has now read the "writing on the wall".

# Indian Navy holds extensive exercise to check preparedness

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■**  
NEW DELHI

The Indian Navy carried out an extensive exercise along the East Coast as part of efforts to check its preparedness to meet any maritime security challenges, navy said here on Saturday.

The exercise 'Poorvi Leher' witnessed participation of ships, submarines, aircraft and special naval forces.

"The Indian Navy conducted Exercise Poorvi Lehar on East Coast under the Operational Control of the Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Eastern Naval Command," the Navy said. It said the exercise was aimed at validation of procedures towards assessment of the Indian Navy's preparedness to meet maritime security challenges in the region.

The exercise was conducted in multiple phases, including combat training in a realistic scenario during the tactical phase and successful conduct of various firings during the weapon phase, towards reaffirming the Indian Navy's capability to deliver ordnance on target, it said.



"With operation of aircraft from diverse locations, a near continuous maritime domain awareness was maintained throughout the Area of operations," the Navy said in a statement.

"In addition o the participation of assets from Eastern Naval Command, the exercise also witnessed participation of assets from IAF, Andaman and Nicobar Command and Coast Guard indicating a very high degree of interoperability amongst the Services," it said. The exercise offered valuable lessons to participating forces operating under realistic conditions, thereby enhancing their readiness to respond effectively to maritime challenges in the region, the Navy added.

# Priyanka close aide Bittu joins BJP

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■**  
NEW DELHI

Hours after quitting from the Congress party, Tajinder Singh Bittu a close aide of Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi on Saturday joined the BJP at party headquarters in the national capital. Bittu who stepped down as the All India Congress Committee (AICC) secretary in-charge Himachal Pradesh, and Karamjit Kaur Chaudhary, the wife of late Congress veteran Santokh Singh Chaudhary, joined the BJP in the presence of Union minister Ashwini Vaishnaw and its national general secretary Vinod Tawde.

Bittu tendered his resignation to Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge. He wrote in the letter, "I hereby tender my resignation from the primary membership of the Indian National Congress and from my post AICC, secretary Co-Incharge of Himachal Pradesh, effective immediately." In a Facebook post, Bittu shared his resignation



letter and said, "With heavy heart , after 35 years , I resign from the Congress party." Bittu resignation came a day after India began voting for the Lok Sabha Elections 2024. Karamjeet Kaur had last year unsuccessfully contested the Lok Sabha bypoll in Jalandhar following the death of her husband, who was the sitting

MP. Karamjeet Kaur whose husband Santokh Singh Chaudhary died during Rahul Gandhi's Bharat Jodo Yatra last year, accused the Congress of disrespecting his legacy. Sources said Karamjeet Kaur was upset with the Congress for fielding former chief minister Charanjit Singh Channi from the Jalandhar

Lok Sabha constituency. At a press conference, Tawde said their induction into the BJP will boost the party, especially in Punjab where the polls are scheduled for June 1. Bittu told reporters that he had been feeling "suffocated" in the Congress after being with the party for over 35 years. "Three-four power cen-

tres work in the Congress and all of them seek to function independently without having any coordination," he claimed. Tawde also targeted the Congress over the murder of a girl by a man on a college campus in Karnataka's Hubli and alleged that its government in the state does not seem to be taking appropriate action as it is protecting its vote bank and not women.

The victim, Neha Hiremath, daughter of a Congress councillor, was allegedly stabbed to death by Fayaz Khondunai, who was subsequently arrested. Local BJP leaders have called it a case of "love jihad", a claim dismissed by the Congress.

Tawde said a similar attitude was displayed by the TMC government in West Bengal over the Sandeshkhali issue as it allegedly worked to protect the accused Shajahan Sheikh and not the women who were victims.

Crime and criminals have no religion and culprits should be dealt with stringently, the BJP leader added.

# Congress prioritising vote bank over protection of women: BJP

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■**  
NEW DELHI

The BJP on Saturday accused the Congress government in Karnataka of misleading people over the murder of a girl on a college campus, alleging that it has prioritised the protection of its "vote bank" over the protection of women.

BJP general secretary Vinod Tawde sought to draw a parallel between Karnataka's handling of Neha Hiremath's killing to the way West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee allegedly shielded the Sandeshkhali case accused Shajahan Sheikh.

"In a similar way, the Congress-led Siddaramaiah government in Karnataka is attempting to protect Fayaz who brutally murdered a Congress councillor's daughter Neha," he told reporters.

He said Congress councillor Niranjan Hiremath has claimed that his daughter's murder is a case of "love jihad" but Chief Minister Siddaramaiah is framing



ing it as a love affair and attempting to mislead the public. The Congress government should punish criminals severely, regardless of the religion, he said.

Tawde also mocked the opposition INDIA bloc, noting that Telangana Chief Minister Revanth Reddy criticised DMK leader Udhayanidhi Stalin after the polls were over in Tamil Nadu.

Likewise, once the elections in Kerala are over, Congress lead-

ers will start speaking against Kerala's ruling Left parties, he said.

This is the true nature of their alliance, he said. In an interview, Reddy had flayed Stalin over his remarks on Sanatan Dharma.

Tawde also claimed that TMC president Mamata Banerjee has said she will lead the INDIA bloc after the elections. "Have Rahul Gandhi and Mallikarjun Kharge accepted her claim," he asked.

# Congress, SP combine wiped out in first phase of LS polls: Shah in UP rally

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■**  
NEW DELHI

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Saturday claimed that Congress-SP combine was wiped out in the first phase of polling as he took a jibe at Rahul Gandhi and Akhilesh Yadav, calling them "princes." Polling in Saharanpur, Bijnor, Kairana, Muzaffarnagar, Nagina (reserved), Moradabad, Rampur and Pilibhit seats was held on Friday.

Addressing an election rally in support of BJP candidate Hema Malini here in Vrindavan, Shah said, "Let me tell you the result of the first phase, don't tell it to anyone, I will tell you - Congress, SP have been wiped out in the first phase."

Earlier in the day in an election meeting in Meerut, Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav claimed that the atmosphere had changed in the state and that people had rejected the BJP after the first day of polling.

The SP chief and former Congress president Rahul Gandhi shared the dias addressing the first joint election meeting Amroha on Saturday. Shah in his turn said, "On the one hand, there is the Congress and the Samajwadi Party, which are involved in scams and corruption worth Rs 12 lakh crores and on the other hand, there is Narendra Modi, who despite being a chief minister for 23 years, is not guilty of corruption of even a penny." He added, "There are two camps. On one side is our leader Narendra Modi who was born in a poor family and on the other side is Rahul Baba who was born with a silver spoon. You have to decide



between the two." Taking a jibe at the Rahul and Akhilesh, Shah said, "In 2017, two princes had come together... They have come together in 2024 as well, (but) BJP will win maximum seats in Uttar Pradesh." In 2017, Congress and SP contested the Uttar Pradesh Assembly elections in an alliance, which faced the rout, as the BJP and allies won 325 seats in the 403-member Uttar Pradesh Assembly.

"On one hand, there is Rahul Baba, who takes a holiday abroad on a private island in Thailand as soon as summer arrives, and on the other is Narendra Modi, who does not take leave even on the day of Diwali. You have to decide between these two," Shah said in the rally. Shah also claimed that in 2014, before BJP came to power, people were migrating from western Uttar Pradesh. "SP goons were harassing people. Then you formed Yogi ji's government in 2017 and now the same goons are fleeing." Giving credit to Prime Minister Narendra Modi for

the construction of Ram temple in Ayodhya and removal of Article 370 in Kashmir, he alleged, "When the consecration ceremony was taking place, Congress and SP were invited. But to appease their vote bank, they did not go for the 'pran pratishtha' in Ayodhya."

"Modi ji abolished Article 370 on August 5, 2019 and linked Kashmir with India forever," he added. The BJP leader also attacked the UPA-I and II, saying the alliance's tenure was marred with frequent terror attacks.

"Sonia-Manmohan's rule continued for 10 years, every day, 'Alia, Malia, Jamal' used to come from Pakistan, do bomb blasts and go away, but no one used to utter a word."

"In 2014, the people of Western UP made Modi ji the Prime Minister and when Pakistani terrorists attacked Uri and Pulwama, within 10 days Modi ji entered Pakistan and carried out a surgical strike and air strikes and eliminated the terrorists," he said.

Shah said when Congress left power, the Indian economy

was in shambles, and it was left for the BJP to turn that around. "Manmohan Singh had left our economy at number 11, Modi ji worked to bring it to number five."

He said Modi honoured the farmers of Uttar Pradesh and Mathura by giving Bharat Ratna to former Prime Minister Chaudhary Charan Singh.

National Democratic Alliance constituent Rashtriya Lok Dal (RLD) chief Jayant Chaudhary, who is also Charan Singh's grandson, shared the stage with Shah at the meeting and appealed to vote for Hema Malini. Shah claimed that during the pandemic, Rahul derided the Covid vaccine by calling it "Modi vaccine."

"But, one night, Rahul Baba also secretly got the vaccine... Rahul Baba, You should be ashamed of yourself doing politics during a pandemic like Corona," he said.

In the second phase on April 26, voting will be held in Mathura, Amroha, Meerut, Baghpat, Ghaziabad, Gautam Buddha Nagar, Bulandshahr, and Aligarh.

# Government sets up National Task Force on Brain Health

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■**  
NEW DELHI

In response to the escalating challenges posed by neurological disorders in the country, more so post Covid-19 pandemic, the Government has set up a 'National Task Force on Brain Health' with a mandate to address the gaps in brain healthcare accessibility and quality across primary, secondary, and tertiary levels nationwide.

This high-level panel is spearheaded by Delhi-based Institute of Human Behaviour and Allied Sciences (IHBAS) Director RK Dhamija and is composed of nine members from various medical and governmental sectors.

Dr. Dhamija emphasized the urgent need for pragmatic strategies to mitigate disparities in healthcare access, citing studies revealing a high disease burden for conditions like stroke, epilepsy, headache, Parkinson's disease, and dementia, predominantly among urban populations.

Notably, neurological disorders rank as the leading cause of disability-adjusted life years (DALYs) globally, accounting for approximately 9 million deaths annually.

The panel's mandate includes recommending actionable steps to strengthen the healthcare system, facilitate early diagnosis and treatment, and promote neurological health through preventive measures, particularly within Ayushman Arogya Mandirs. It has been entrusted to deliver its comprehensive report by July 15, aiming to pave the way for a more inclusive and effective approach to brain healthcare in India.

As per various studies, a significant portion of neurological cases, including epilepsy, is preventable, emphasizing the importance of early intervention and promoting protective factors like education, social support, healthy lifestyles, and physical activity.

Aligned with global initiatives, the World Health Organization (WHO) targets the establishment of inter-sectoral programs for brain health promotion and neurological disorder prevention in 80% of countries by 2031.

The members of the task force are Dr Manjiri Tripathi, HOD Neurology, AIIMS Delhi, Dr Veena Kalra, ex-professor and Head Paediatrics, AIIMS Delhi, Dr Rabinder Singh, Neuro-rehabilitation scientist, ICMR, Rajib Kumar Sen, senior advisor, NITI Aayog, Indrani Kaushal, Economic Advisor, Union Health Ministry, Radhika Chakravarthy B and Rajesh Yadav, Joint Secretaries from Union Social and Justice Ministry and Dr Suvarna from NIMHANS, Bangalore.

The prevalence of neurological disorders underscores their significant impact, with 1 in 3 individuals expected to experience such conditions during their lifetime.

These disorders rank as the foremost cause of disability and the second leading cause of death globally. Moreover, in low- and middle-income countries, 43% of children under the age of five face challenges in reaching their developmental potential due to factors like extreme poverty and growth stunting. This not only results in financial losses but also predicts a 26% reduction in annual earnings during adulthood.

# Current plastic production threatens 1.5 degrees global warming limit: Study

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■**  
NEW DELHI

If the current rate of plastic production continues, it could use up the global carbon budget to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius by as early as 2060 or no later than 2083, according to a study.

The study by the United States' Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory (LBNL) suggests that primary plastic production needs to decrease by around 12 to 17 per cent per year starting in 2024 to avoid breaching the 1.5 degrees Celsius limit set by the Paris Agreement.

It comes ahead of the fourth round of United Nations negotiations for an international treaty to end plastic pollution in Ottawa, Canada, during April 23-29. It is estimated that global plastic production today accounts for around 12 per cent of total demand for oil and 8.5 per cent of total demand for natural gas.

Greenhouse gas emissions during primary plastic production come from burning fossil fuels for heat and electricity, and other processes that don't involve burning. About 75 per cent of these emissions happen before the plastic is even formed.

Burning fossil fuels is the primary reason for the increasing concentrations of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, which are driving up global temperatures.

In 2019 alone, primary plastic production generated about 2.24 gigatonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (GtCO2e), which is 5.3 per cent of total global greenhouse gas emissions (excluding agriculture and LULUCF (Land Use, Land-Use Change and



Forestry).

In contrast, the global aviation sector produced 0.6 GtCO2e in 2019, while the entire global transport sector, including aviation, produced 8.3 GtCO2e.

Under a conservative growth scenario (2.5 percent per year), GHG emissions from primary plastic production would more than double to 4.75 gigatonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (GtCO2e) by 2050, accounting for 21-26 per cent of the remaining global carbon budget for a 50 per cent chance of staying below the 1.5 degrees Celsius threshold.

At a growth rate of 4 per cent per year, emissions from primary plastic production would increase more than threefold to 6.78 GtCO2e, accounting for 25-31 per cent of the remaining global carbon budget, the study said.

Under these two growth scenarios, cumulative GHG emissions from primary plastic production could total 106-126.6 GtCO2e between 2019 and 2050, which is 21-25 per cent of the remaining carbon budget.

The share of the carbon budget allocated to primary plastics increases to 26-31 per cent when considering a smaller carbon budget that offers a 67 per cent chance of staying below the 1.5 degrees Celsius limit, said the study.



# 6 kids among 9 Palestinians killed in Israeli airstrike in Rafah

AP ■ RAFAH

An Israeli airstrike on a house in Gaza's southern-most city killed at least nine people, six of them children, hospital authorities said on Saturday, as Israel pursued its nearly seven-month offensive in the besieged Palestinian territory. Israel's war against the Islamic militant group Hamas has led to a dramatic escalation of tensions in an already volatile Middle East. The strike late Friday hit a residential building in the western Tel Sultan neighbourhood of the city of Rafah, according to Gaza's civil defence. The bodies of the six children, two women and a man were taken to Rafah's Abu Yousef al-Najjar hospital, the hospital's records showed.

At the hospital, relatives cried and hugged the bodies of the children, wrapped in white shrouds, as others comforted them. The fatalities included Abdel-Fattah Sobhi Radwan, his wife Najlaa Ahmed Aweidah and their three children, his brother-in-law Ahmed Barhoum said.

Barhoum also lost his wife, Rawan Radwan, and their 5-year-old daughter Alaa. "This is a world devoid of all human values and morals," Barhoum told The Associated Press Saturday morning, crying as he cradled and gently rocked the body of Alaa in his arms. "They bombed a house full of displaced people, women and children. The only martyrs were women and children." No victims were registered from a second overnight strike in the city. Rafah, which lies on the border with Egypt, currently hosts more than half of Gaza's total population of about 2.3 million people, the vast majority of whom have been displaced by fighting elsewhere. Despite calls for restraint from the international community, including Israel's staunchest ally, the United States, the Israeli government has insisted for months that it intends to push a ground offensive into the city, where it says many of the remaining Hamas militants are holed up. Such a ground operation has not materialized so far, but the Israeli military has repeatedly



Smoke rises from an explosion during an Israeli military raid in the Nur Shams refugee camp, near the West Bank town of Tulkarem, on Saturday, April 20, 2024

carried out airstrikes in and around the city. The war was sparked by an unprecedented raid into southern Israel by Hamas and other militant groups on October 7 that left about 1,200 people dead, the vast majority of them civilians, and saw about 250 people kidnapped and taken into Gaza.

Israel says about 130 hostages remain in Gaza, although more than 30 have been confirmed to now be dead, either killed on October 7 or having died in captivity. The Gaza Health Ministry said Saturday the bodies of 37 people killed by Israeli strikes were brought to hospitals in Gaza over the past

24 hours. Hospitals also received 68 wounded, it said. The latest figures bring the overall Palestinian death toll from the Israel-Hamas war to at least 34,049, and the number of wounded to 76,901, the ministry said. Although the Hamas-run health authorities do not differ-

entiate between combatants and civilians in their count, they say at least two thirds have been children and women. The war has sent regional tensions spiralling, leading to a dramatic eruption of violence between Israel and its arch-enemy Iran that threatened to escalate into a full-blown war. On Friday, both Iran and Israel played down an apparent Israeli airstrike near a major air base and nuclear site in central Iran, indicating the two sides were pulling back from what could have become an all-out conflict. Over the past several weeks, an alleged Israeli strike killed two Iranian generals at an Iranian consulate in Syria and was followed by an unprecedented Iranian missile barrage on Israel. Israel has also faced off with the Hezbollah militant group, an Iranian proxy operating from Lebanon, with the two sides there frequently trading rocket and drone attacks across the Lebanese-Israeli border. Yemen's Iran-backed Houthi rebels have also joined the fray, launching strikes against merchant ships in the Red Sea and

the Gulf of Aden in what they say is a campaign of solidarity with the Palestinians in Gaza. Tension has also been high in the occupied West Bank. An Israeli army raid in the Nur Shams urban refugee camp that killed at least four people on Friday — three militants and a 15-year-old boy — continued into Saturday. The Israeli army said its forces had killed 10 militants in the refugee camp and the surrounding areas while the military and the Border Police had arrested eight Palestinian suspects. Nine of its officers and soldiers were wounded, it said. An Associated Press journalist at the camp said sounds of intermittent gunfire and explosions were still ringing out Saturday afternoon. The Palestinian Red Crescent said they were trying to reach a number of casualties in the camp but were being prevented by the Israeli army, which instructed their emergency teams to leave the area. The raid appears to be one of the largest that has taken place at the refugee camp since the Israel-Hamas war broke out on

October 7. At least 469 Palestinians from east Jerusalem and the West Bank have been killed by Israeli fire since October, according to the Palestinian Health Ministry. Palestinian health authorities said one of those killed Friday was a 15-year-old boy shot dead by Israeli fire. The Islamic Jihad militant group confirmed the deaths of three members, including one who it said was a local military commander. The Israeli military said four Israeli soldiers were slightly wounded in the operation. Saraya al-Quds, the military arm of Islamic Jihad, said its fighters had engaged in heavy gunbattles Saturday morning with Israeli forces in the town of Tulkarem, adjacent to Nur Shams. Residents in Tulkarem went on a general strike Saturday to protest the attack. The Palestinian Authority, which administers parts of the West Bank, has a limited foothold in many of the territory's northern towns and cities, including Tulkarem and Jenin. Militant groups, including Islamic Jihad, are active in both cities, often clashing with Israeli soldiers during army raids.

## Man who set himself on fire outside Trump trial succumbs

AP ■ NEW YORK

A man who doused himself in an accelerant and set himself on fire outside the courthouse where former President Donald Trump is on trial has died, police said. The New York City Police Department said the man was declared dead by staff at an area hospital. The man was in Collect Pond Park around 1:30 pm Friday when he took out pamphlets espousing conspiracy theories, tossed them around, then doused himself in an accelerant and set himself on fire, officials and witnesses said. A large number of police officers were nearby when it happened. Some officers and bystanders rushed to the aid of the man, who was hospitalised in critical condition. The man, who police said had travelled from Florida to New York in the last few days, hadn't breached any security checkpoints to get into the park. The park outside the courthouse has been a gathering spot for protesters, journalists and gawkers throughout Trump's trial, which began with jury selection Monday. Through Friday, the streets and sidewalks in the area around the courthouse were generally wide open and crowds have been small and largely orderly. Authorities said



Former President Donald Trump speaks with the media following proceedings in his trial, at Manhattan Criminal Court in New York on Friday

they were also reviewing the security protocols, including whether to restrict access to the park. The side street where Trump enters and leaves the building is off limits. "We may have to shut this area down," New York City Police Department Deputy Commissioner Kaz Daughtry said at a news conference outside the courthouse, adding that officials would discuss the security plan soon.

## Moscow shoots down 50 Ukrainian drones

AP ■ KYIV

Ukraine launched a barrage of drones across Russia overnight, the Defence Ministry in Moscow said Saturday, in attacks that appeared to target the country's energy infrastructure. Fifty drones were shot down by air defences over eight Russian regions, including 26 over the country's western Belgorod region close to the Ukrainian border. Two people — a woman with a broken leg and the man caring for her — died during the overnight barrage, after explosions sparked a blaze that set their home alight, Belgorod Gov. Vyacheslav Gladkov wrote on social media. A pregnant woman and her unborn child were also killed in shelling later Saturday, he said. Drones were also reportedly destroyed over the Bryansk, Kursk, Tula, Smolensk, Ryazan, Kaluga regions across Russia's west and south, as well as in the Moscow region. Russia's Defence Ministry said that it had shot down a Ukrainian Sukhoi Su-25 fighter jet. It provided no details and the claims could not be independently verified. Ukrainian officials normally decline to comment about attacks on Russian soil. However, many of the drone strikes appeared to be directed



This photo released by the Russian Defense Ministry Press Service Saturday, April 20, 2024, shows an unmanned aerial vehicle drop a dummy bomb during its flight as Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu visits the training ground of the Moscow Military District to check the implementation of instructions for the development of unmanned aerial vehicles and small arms, taking into account the experience of a special military operation, Russia

toward Russia's energy infrastructure. The head of the Kaluga region, Vladislav Shapsha, said Saturday that a drone strike had sparked a blaze at an electrical substation, while Bryansk Gov. Alexander Bogomaz and Smolensk Gov. Vasily Anokhin also reported fires at fuel and energy complexes. In recent months, Russian refineries and oil terminals have become priority targets of Ukrainian drone attacks, part of stepped-up assaults on Russian territory. Ukrainian

drone developers have been extending the weapons' range for months, as Kyiv attempts to compensate for its battlefield disadvantage in weapons and troops. The unmanned aerial vehicles are also an affordable option while Ukraine waits for more US military aid. Moscow also said Friday evening that an American citizen known to have fought with Kremlin-backed separatists in Ukraine between 2014 and 2017 had died in the Russian-occupied Donetsk region.

## The House on brink of giving nod to aid for Ukraine, Israel

AP ■ WASHINGTON

The House is preparing in a rare Saturday session to approve USD 95 billion in foreign aid for Ukraine, Israel and other US allies, Democrats and Republicans joining together behind the legislation after a gruelling monthslong fight over renewed American support for repelling Russia's invasion into Ukraine. Republican House Speaker Mike Johnson, putting his job on the line, relied on Democratic support this week to set up a series of votes on three aid bills, as well as a fourth that contains several other foreign policy proposals. If the votes are successful, the package will go to the Senate, where passage in the coming days is nearly assured. President Joe Biden has promised to sign it immediately. Passage through the House would clear away the biggest hurdle to Biden's funding request, first made in October as Ukraine's military supplies began to run low. The GOP-controlled House, sceptical of US support for Ukraine, struggled for months over what to do, first demanding that any assistance be tied to policy changes at the US-Mexico order, only to immediately reject a bipartisan Senate offer along those very lines. Reaching an endgame has

been an excruciating lift for Johnson that has tested both his resolve and his support among Republicans, with a small but growing number now openly urging his removal from the speaker's office. Yet congressional leaders cast the votes as a turning point in history — an urgent sacrifice as US allies are beleaguered by wars and threats from continental Europe to the Middle East to Asia. "The only thing that has kept terrorists and tyrants at bay is the perception of a strong America, that we would stand strong," Johnson said this week. "And we will. I think that Congress is going to show that. This is a very important message that we are going to send the world." Still, Congress has seen a stream of world leaders visit in recent months, from Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy to Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, all but pleading with lawmakers to approve the aid. Globally, the delay left many questioning America's commitment to its allies. At stake has also been one of Biden's top foreign policy priorities — halting Russian President Vladimir Putin's advance in Europe. After engaging in quiet talks with Johnson, the president quickly endorsed Johnson's plan

this week, paving the way for Democrats to give their rare support to clear the procedural hurdles needed for a final vote. "It's long past time that we support our democratic allies in Israel, Ukraine and the Indo-Pacific and provide humanitarian assistance to civilians who are in harm's way in theatres of conflict like Gaza, Haiti and the Sudan," House Democratic leader Hakeem Jeffries said at a news conference Friday. Voting on the package is likely to create unusual alliances in the House. While aid for Ukraine will likely win a majority in both parties, a significant number of progressive Democrats are expected to vote against the bill aiding Israel as they demand an end to the bombardment of Gaza that has killed thousands of civilians. At the same time, Donald Trump, the presumptive Republican presidential nominee, has loomed large over the fight, weighing in from afar via social media statements and direct phone calls with lawmakers as he tilts the GOP to a more isolationist stance with his "America First" brand of politics. Ukraine's defence once enjoyed robust, bipartisan support in Congress, but as the war enters its third year, a bulk of Republicans oppose further aid.

## US sanctions 4 firms for providing ballistic missile components to Pak

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

The US has slapped sanctions on three Chinese companies and one from Belarus for supplying missile-applicable items for Pakistan's ballistic missile programme, including its long-range missile programme, the State Department has announced. The names of the companies are Xi'an Longde Technology Development, Tianjin Creative Source International Trade and Granpect Co. Ltd from China and Minsk Wheel Tractor Plant from Belarus. These entities "have engaged in activities or transactions that have materially contributed to, or pose a risk of materially contributing to, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction or their means of delivery, including any efforts to manufacture, acquire, possess, develop, transport, transfer or use such items, by Pakistan," State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said on Friday. Miller said the US is committed to strengthen-

ing the global nonproliferation regime by taking action to disrupt procurement networks supporting proliferation activities of concern. China, an all-weather ally of Pakistan, has been the main supplier of arms and defence equipment to Islamabad's ambitious military modernisation programme. The Minsk Wheel Tractor Plant in Belarus supplied special vehicle chassis to Pakistan's long-range ballistic missile programme. Such chassis are used as launch support equipment for ballistic missiles by Pakistan's National Development Complex (NDC), which is responsible for the development of Missile Technology Control Regime Category (MTCR) I ballistic missiles, according to a State Department Factsheet. China's Xi'an Longde Technology Development Company Limited, supplied missile-related equipment, including a filament winding machine, to Pakistan's long-

range ballistic missile programme that the US said was destined for Pakistan's NDC. Filament winding machines can be used to produce rocket motor cases. Tianjin Creative Source International Trade Co Ltd supplied missile-related equipment to Pakistan's long-range ballistic missile programme, including stir welding equipment (which the United States assesses can be used to manufacture propellant tanks used in space launch vehicles), and a linear accelerator system (which the United States assesses can be used in the inspection of solid rocket motors). Tianjin Creative's procurements were likely destined for Pakistan's Space and Upper Atmosphere Research Commission (SUPARCO), which develops and produces Pakistan's MTCR Category I ballistic missiles, the US state department said. Granpect Company worked with Pakistan's SUPARCO to supply equipment for testing large-diameter rocket motors.

## Army to maintain peace during Pak bypolls today

Islamabad (PTI): Pakistan on Saturday decided to deploy army troops to maintain peace during key by-elections that are to be held in the country on Sunday to fill the seats vacated by various candidates or where elections were postponed due to the death of candidates. The general elections were held across the country on February 8 to elect representatives for the National Assembly and four provincial assemblies. But polls were cancelled for one National Assembly, two Punjab Assembly and one seat of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa Assembly respectively. Apart from those, candidates who had won more than one seat opted for a chosen seat after elections, leaving the Election Commission of Pakistan to organise by-election on 21 seats, including five National Assembly and 16 provincial assembly seats. Elections will be held on two seats of the National Assembly each in Punjab and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa and one seat in Sindh, whereas elections will be

held on twelve seats of Punjab Assembly and two each of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan assemblies. In Punjab, NA-132 (Kasur) and NA-119 (Lahore) were vacated by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz, while Shehbaz also gave up two of his provincial assembly seats in Lahore. He, however, retained his NA-123 seat in the National Assembly. Due to the prevailing law and order situation, the ECP had asked the federal government to approve the deployment of Pakistan Army and Civil Armed Forces (CAF) troops to keep peace, which endorsed the move and announced that to use the armed forces' units as a quick response force. The Ministry of Interior in its notification issued on Friday stated that the CAF and Pakistan Army units would be used as second and third tiers of security and they would be available with immediate effect till April 22 in all 21 constituencies.

## Shehbaz Sharif set to visit Saudi to advance investment talks

Islamabad (PTI): Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif is expected to visit Saudi Arabia soon, his second trip this month to the friendly Gulf kingdom, to advance investment talks as his cash-strapped government has presented lucrative returns on Saudi investment. According to The Express Tribune, in addition to the enticing prospects of harvesting rich dividends on investment, Pakistan has assured priority in profits to Saudi investors without any hindrances. Sharif's government has presented returns ranging from an appealing 14 per cent to an astounding 50 per cent on Saudi investment, the report said. According to government sources involved in these discussions, the indicated returns on Saudi investment are expected to allow the Kingdom to recoup its invested capital within three to nine years, depending on the nature of the

project. Pakistan aims to advance the Saudi Arabia investment initiative during the April 27-28 visit of Sharif, who will be accompanied by a team from the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC). Prime Minister Sharif was in Jeddah earlier this month to perform Umrah and met Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman and discussed a planned USD 5 billion Saudi investment package for Pakistan, according to the joint statement issued by both countries. The visit to Saudi Arabia was the first foreign visit by Sharif since he assumed office in March. During their recent visit to Pakistan, a high-level Saudi delegation asked maximum questions about projects in agriculture, mining and the Diamer Basha dam, the report said. These are the areas where the government has indicated maximum returns on the investment.

## North Korea tests 'super-large' cruise missile warhead, anti-aircraft missile

Seoul (AP): North Korea said on Saturday it tested a "super-large" cruise missile warhead and a new anti-aircraft missile in a western coastal area as it expands military capabilities in the face of deepening tensions with the United States and South Korea. North Korean state media said the country's missile administration on Friday conducted a "power test" for the warhead designed for the Hwasal-1 Ra-3 strategic cruise missile and a test-launch of the Ppyolji-1-2 anti-aircraft missile. It said the tests attained an unspecified "certain goal." Photos released by the North's official Korean Central News Agency showed at least two missiles being fired off launcher trucks at a runway. North Korea conducted a similar set of tests Feb. 2, but at the time did not specify the names of the cruise missile or the anti-aircraft missile, indicating it was possibly seeing technological progress after testing the same system over weeks.

## UK's India Gate to commemorate role of Indian soldiers from World Wars

PTI ■ LONDON

A local council in the seaside resort of Brighton in south-east England has approved plans for an annual multi-faith event to commemorate the role of Indian soldiers in the two World Wars at the town's India Gate memorial from this October. The India Gate was presented to the people of Brighton by the "princes and people of India" as a gesture of thanks for the care

provided by the town's hospitals and is "dedicated to the use of the inhabitants of Brighton." It was unveiled by the Maharaja of Patiala, Bhupinder Singh, on October 26, 1921, and stands at the southern entrance of the Royal Pavilion — one of three buildings in Brighton serving as a base hospital which treated these soldiers from undivided India founded on the Western front. These included soldiers from the modern-day countries of India, Pakistan,

Bangladesh, Nepal, Myanmar and Bhutan. "By holding a day of remembrance, the city can preserve the memories of the undivided India soldiers who fought for Britain in the war and ensure that this vital history is more widely understood and recognised by and for contemporary generations," notes the Brighton and Hove Council's report which was approved at a council meeting on Friday. "Given the important histori-

cal context of the India Gate and increased interest in the recent history of the Pavilion estate, it is important that, as a testament to the international reputation of the city, this multi-faith event celebrates the undivided India story as well as embracing the India Gate and its story," it concludes. The India Gate, designed by Thomas Tyrwhitt, replaced a much lower gate that was erected by Brighton Corporation following its purchase of the

Pavilion in 1850 and is described as a dome resting on four pillars in a style derived from Gujarat. According to historical records, in World War I (1914-1918) more than 1.5 million soldiers from pre-Partition India served in the British Indian Army of the colonial era, participating in major battles such as the Battle of Neuve Chapelle, Battle of Gallipoli, and the Battle of the Somme. In World War II (1939-1945), over 2.5 million

soldiers from undivided India volunteered to serve in the British Indian Army, the largest volunteer army in history. The Royal Pavilion Indian hospital in Brighton that cared for the wounded from these battles is also marked by the Chattri memorial, which stands on the spot where Hindus and Sikhs were cremated. It is accompanied by a memorial maintained by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission and an annual

remembrance ceremony is organised by the Chattri Memorial Group there every June. The local council's Culture, Heritage, Sport, Tourism & Economic Development Committee feels an annual memorial event at the India Gate in October would be a suitable addition to the current remembrance services and would additionally recognise the commitment of Muslim and Buddhist soldiers of undivided India.

The details of the event will be determined and delivered by a committee of community leaders, in partnership with the Brighton & Hove Museums, and supported by Brighton & Hove City Council. The committee will also engage with local Armed Forces personnel and veterans, the Undivided Indian Ex-Services Association, and leaders from the wider South Asian community before further plans for the memorial are finalised.



PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Saturday said the Centre has tailored policies to make India an attractive destination for manufacturing and services, and the aim was to produce not just for the domestic market but for exports as well. She was responding to a query on American tech billionaire Elon Musk postponing his meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

“Policies have been made to attract investments. We want manufacturers and investors to come and produce not just for India but also for exports. We will try to attract manufacturers and investors through policies,” she told reporters. Tesla CEO Musk on Saturday said his visit to India has been delayed due to the company’s heavy obligations.

“When big companies show interest to come to India, we will do everything to make it attractive for them to come and invest. In that process, if there is anything to discuss, we will certainly discuss. But whatever we have done, we have done it through policy,” Sitharaman added. Asserting the Union government’s

# Centre aims to make India attractive destination for manufacturing, services: Sitharaman

approach has helped especially after China plus one started being a concern for many industry experts, she said policies have been tailored in such a way so as to make India an attractive destination for manufacturing and for services. Speaking about inflation, she said it never crossed the tolerance band, except for one month, under the Narendra Modi government, whereas before that (pre-2014) the economy was in a bad shape and inflation was in double digits. “At that time (pre 2014) nobody had any expectations from the country. After much hard work, we have emerged as the world’s fifth largest economy and are confidently saying we will be third in the next two to two-and-half years,” the Union minister said. On employment, Sitharaman said there was lack of complete data from both the formal and informal



Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman during an interaction with Gujarat Chamber of Commerce & Industry (GCC) members, in Ahmedabad

PTI

sectors, but asserted initiatives of the Centre have ensured jobs to lakhs.

“The data is inadequate. I am not saying this pride but while accepting its weakn.

All I can say regarding employment is that the money given to people and

startups through different schemes...People in crores have availed support. Between October 2022 and November 2023, through the Rozgar Mela, Modi has given government jobs to 10 lakh people,” she said.

When asked about the rule that requires larger companies to pay Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) within 45 days of receiving goods or services, Sitharaman said the law has been existence since 2007-08 and is not new. “Later MSMEs themselves came and said the 45-day payment is not happening within that financial year. But within that financial year, this amount is shown as expenditure and to that extent tax is not being paid. All that we have done through the Finance Act that was passed in Parliament on February 1, 2023,” she said.

“We just said tax treatment remains the same. Make a

claim in the year you pay to the MSMEs. How can you claim when you have not made payment?” she asked. Queried about the Indian rupee weakening against the US dollar, she said the fluctuation was due to global uncertainty, wars as well as uncertainty in supply of crude oil from the Middle East. Earlier, addressing industry leaders from Gujarat on ‘Viksit Bharat -2047’, she said 28 per cent of total capital under Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme has come to the state, which has shown remarkable alertness in the last 10-12 years. So semiconductor manufacturing for India comes first in Gujarat, which has a policy as well as government and ecosystem ready for manufacturing for Viksit Bharat 2047, she said. “The IFSC at GIFT City in Gandhinagar is a big gateway for services to grow in Gujarat. A world-class financial services centre very close to Ahmedabad is just the key for India to reach that kind of global market for attracting more investment and more financial operations,” Sitharaman said. She also said Gujarat was in third position in attracting FDI in manufacturing.



## HDFC Bank Q4 net profit grows to ₹17,622 crore

PTI ■ MUMBAI

HDFC Bank on Saturday reported a 2.11 per cent growth in consolidated net profit to Rs 17,622.38 crore for the March 2024 quarter against Rs 17,257.87 crore in the preceding December quarter. On a standalone basis, the country’s largest private sector lender reported a net profit of Rs 16,511.85 crore compared to Rs 16,372.54 crore in the December quarter. In July 2023, the bank merged its home loan-focused parent HDFC into itself. Its core net interest income grew to Rs 29,080 crore for the reporting quarter, while the other income grew to Rs 18,170 crore. The lender has reported its core net interest margin of 3.44 per cent on total assets. The gross non-performing assets ratio came at 1.24 per cent.



## NSE IX gets SEC class relief; permits US clients to trade on equity index option contract

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

NSE International Exchange (NSE IX) has received US Securities Exchange Commission (SEC) class relief, allowing US clients to participate in trading Equity Index Option Contracts on the bourse, according to a statement.

The class relief allows NSE IX members to get acquainted with equity indices at NSE IX through activities with approved broker-dealers and financial institutions in the US. Also, this class relief permits eligible broker-dealers and large financial institutions based in the US to trade on these index derivatives options contracts through NSE IX members, subject to compliance with the applicable laws, the bourse said in the statement on Friday.

NSE IX is an International multi-assets exchange set up at GIFT City in June 2017 and recognised by the International Financial Services Centre Authority (IFSCA). Earlier in November 2020, it became the first International Exchange in Gift City to get an exemption under part 30 by the Commodity Futures Trading Commission (CFTC). The CFTC exemption enables NSE IX members to trade in futures derivatives for US clients.

These exemptions permit NSE IX members to accept US clients’ funds directly for the purpose of trading in futures and options contracts on NSE IX even without the members having to get registered with the CFTC and SEC as a futures commission merchant or SEC member respectively.

## India growing when world is in stress: CII president designate

PTI ■ KOLKATA

Sanjiv Puri, president-designate of leading industry body CII, said that India is growing when the world is going through a phase of stress.

Speaking at an event here on Friday night, Puri, also the chairman and managing director of ITC Limited, said that the present juncture is an interesting moment.

“CII has a rich legacy built over

decades. We will certainly be looking forward to contributing to the growth of the economy and industry”, Puri said.

He said “This is also an interesting moment because this is India’s moment. There has been numerous policy interventions made internally, and the global factors which give us the tailwinds. The country is growing at a time when the world is at stress.”

Puri said that there are lots of opportunities in India which has a huge talent pool. “The world is looking at us so far as supply chain and digital transformation are concerned. India also has the advantage of the demographic dividend”, he added.

He said big opportunities lay both in services and manufacturing. “The country needs to harness these opportunities. Reforms agenda

to accelerate and enterprises need to play competitiveness”, Puri said.

Puri stressed the need for an inclusive and sustainable growth which is important to create livelihoods.

“Industry can survive when society thrives. Decarbonisation will address the issue the climate change but will take time. Enterprises and government need to work together”, he said.



## Zomato gets ₹11.82 crore tax demand notice

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Online food delivery platform Zomato has received a tax demand and penalty order of Rs 11.82 crore related to GST on export services provided to its subsidiaries located outside India from July 2017 to March 2021.

The order was passed by the Additional Commissioner, Central Goods and Services Tax, Gurugram, raising the GST demand of Rs 5,90,94,889, with applicable interest (not quantified) and penalty of Rs 5,90,94,889.

“We believe that we have a strong case on merits, and the company will be filing an appeal against the order before the appropriate authority,”

Zomato stated in a regulatory filing late evening on Friday. It informed that the demand order has been received, “confirming demand of GST on export services provided by the company to its subsidiaries located outside India during the period July 2017 to March 2021 by upholding that such services do not fulfil the conditions for the supply to qualify as export of service under GST”

“The company, in its response to the show cause notice, had clarified on the allegations, along with supporting documents and judicial precedents, which appears not to have been appreciated by the authorities while passing the order,” it added.

## India becoming a convenient hub for travel between SE Asia & Middle East

PTI ■ CHENNAI

India is slowly becoming a convenient hub for travel between Southeast Asia and the Middle East as airlines prefer to transfer people by connecting through Indian cities, a top industry official said.

There is huge growth in India and many domestic routes are used by airlines for connectivity, V Sumantran, the Chairman of the Board of Directors of InterGlobe Aviation Ltd (IndiGo Airlines) said here on Saturday. Delivering his address at the 65th Institute Day of the Indian Institute of Technology, Madras, he said that IndiGo Airlines started off as a low-cost airline in 2006 and has made the largest single order in the aviation industry by ordering 500 aircrafts in France.

“India needed an airline that will provide affordable travel for many of us and the net result we can see. Even now we see India really moving forward with a lot more speed on infrastructure development. We have about 140 operating airports now and that would become 220 by 2030. We are seeing a huge increase in regional travel”, Sumantran, an IIT-Madras alumni, said.

IndiGo is a very young airline by global airline standards. But the entire platform of IndiGo has been affordable fares, courteous service, on-time performance, and a “very well networked” route system which India needed, he said.

## FarEye launches initiative to help logistics startups in fundraising, mentoring

PTI ■ NEW DELHI



Last-mile Technology platform FarEye on Saturday said it has launched an initiative, Innovation Nexus, to help startups raise funds and receive mentoring from global experts in the logistics sector.

The initiative will provide a direct platform for promising logistics startups to engage with industry leaders and foster connections, the company said.

FarEye co-founder and CEO Kushal Nahata said the national logistics policy launched by the government offers huge opportunities for startups.

Startups are going to play a

significant role in reducing logistics costs, and in this journey, Innovation Nexus is going to be the game changer for early-stage startups from mentoring to easy fundraising, Nahata added.

The initiative was unveiled at Greater Noida during “The Last Mile Leaders Event”, organised on April 19 by FarEye in collaboration with Microsoft.

FarEye COO and co-founder Gautam Kumar said, “The initiative is a launchpad for

startups to secure transformative partnerships. It is exciting to see the surge in the adoption of AI, robotics, and embedded data analytics, all geared toward enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of logistics operations”.

During a day-long event, over 40 supply chain experts from more than 20 countries, representing diverse industries, including retail, logistics, postal, consumer packaged goods (CPG), and pharmaceuticals, came together to explore the transformative potential of technology in driving cost reduction in the logistics sector.

During the event, the Last-

Mile Trends Report 2024 was also unveiled.

The report highlights crucial factors influencing the logistics sector’s strategic decisions and market dynamics, it said.

Nahata also said that within the next five years, autonomous drones will handle 30 per cent of urban deliveries, reducing delivery times and costs dramatically.

“With urban delivery traffic projected to increase carbon emissions by 32 per cent by 2030, prioritising sustainability is non-negotiable. The surge in electric vehicle adoption and government initiatives like the FAME scheme reflects a visible shift towards greener logistics in India,” he added.

## Premier Energies files IPO papers with Sebi; looks to raise ₹1,500 cr

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Solar cell company Premier Energies Ltd has filed preliminary papers with capital markets regulator Sebi to raise funds through an initial public offering (IPO).

The Hyderabad-based company’s IPO is a combination of a fresh issue of equity shares worth Rs 1,500 crore and an offer for sale (OFS) of up to 2.82 crore shares by a promoter and investors, according to the draft red herring prospectus (DRHP) made public on Saturday.

Under the OFS component, South Asia Growth Fund II Holdings LLC will divest 2.38 crore equity shares, South Asia

EBT Trust will divest 1.53 lakh equity shares, and promoter Chiranjeev Singh Saluja will sell 42 lakh equity shares.

The company may consider a pre-IPO placement aggregating up to Rs 300 crore. If such placement is undertaken, the fresh issue size will be reduced. Proceeds from the fresh issue of Rs 1,168 crore will be used for investing in subsidiary Premier Energies Global Environment Private Ltd, to partially finance the establishment of a 4GW solar PV TOPCon (tunnel oxide passivated contact) cell and 4GW solar PV TOPCon module manufacturing facility in Hyderabad, and the remainder will be allocated towards general corporate purposes.

Founded in 1995, Premier Energies is an integrated solar cell and module manufacturer with a 2GW capacity for cells and 3.36GW for modules. Additionally, the company offers EPC solutions, O&M (operations & maintenance) services, and operates as an independent power producer (IPO).

It has five manufacturing facilities, including in Hyderabad and Telangana.

As of FY23, its revenue from operations stood at Rs 1,428 crore, and Rs 2,017 crore for the nine months ended December 31, 2023.

The company had an order book of over Rs 5,300 crore as of March this year.

## India role during G-20 presidency appreciated at IMF and WB meeting: Seth

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

During the annual Spring meetings of the IMF and the World Bank there was a widespread appreciation of the role played by India during its G-20 presidency in building consensus on a range of key global issues, a top Indian official has said.

India hosted the G20 Summit in New Delhi from September 9-10. The summit adopted a 37-page consensus declaration overcoming major differences on the Russia-Ukraine war and took several steps to ensure the stability of the global economy.

“There is a widespread appreciation of Indian presidency of the G-20 in building consensus on several issues,

relevant for global deployment, conducted of various meetings during the presidency as well as the leaders’ summit,” Ajay Seth, Economic Affairs Secretary told PTI on Friday on the sidelines of the annual sprint meetings of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. Due to the ongoing Lok Sabha election, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman is not attending the annual IMF and World Bank meetings.

Instead, the Indian delegation this time is being represented by senior government officials, including RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das, and the Economic Affairs Secretary Ajay Seth.

There is the recognition that India

provides practical examples of following successful development paths.

“There was also an appreciation that the very effective conduct of monetary policies and responsive and responsible fiscal policies is leading to maintaining its financial stability in emerging economies, including India amid global conditions,” Seth said.

“There are a few ideas given on sustainable finance about how the financing for climate action should be happening,” he said in response to a question.

On the sidelines of the Spring Meetings, the second meeting of G20 Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors under the Brazilian



Presidency was held on April 17-18. The two sessions discussed the topics of reimagining finance for a just transition and climate goals and international financial architecture for the 21st century.

During the first session, the RBI Governor shared India’s experience such as the issuance of sovereign green bonds for about USD4 billion and the introduction of a framework for regulated entities to accept green deposits. On the sidelines of the Spring Meetings, the Economic Affairs Secretary also had bilateral meetings with counterparts from the US, the UK, Saudi Arabia, Japan, Brazil, and South Africa as well as the Chair of Financial Stability.

Speaking in the session on reforming

the international financial architecture, the RBI Governor underscored the need for sound macroeconomic fundamentals for managing volatility in capital flows.

He emphasised the need for central banks to remain focused on ensuring price and financial stability. Seth appreciated the Brazilian Presidency for developing the 2024 MDB agenda based on the 2-volume report of the G20 Independent Expert Group on Strengthening MDBs that was prepared under the Indian Presidency of the G20.

He also emphasised the need for MDBs to work together as a system as well as explore options to enhance the use of risk mitigation instruments.



# Verstappen wins again, takes first Formula 1 sprint race of the season

AP ■ SHANGHAI

Max Verstappen, continuing his dominance in Formula 1, took Saturday's first sprint race of the season - the prelude to the full-blown Chinese Grand Prix on Sunday.

Verstappen passed Lewis Hamilton of Mercedes on the ninth of 19 laps and stretched out his lead to win by 13 seconds ahead of Hamilton. Sergio Perez of Red Bull was third and Charles Leclerc of Ferrari was fourth.

"The first few laps were quite hectic," Verstappen said. "Once I got in the lead the car was handling pretty well."

It was his eighth victory in an F1 sprint. Red Bull's Verstappen is the three-time defending F1 champion and is almost unbeatable in any format.

He now has 85 points to lead the overall season standings. Perez is second with 70 followed by Leclerc with 64 and Carlos Sainz of Ferrari with 59.

Second place was like a consolation victory for Hamilton. The seven-time champion has not been a factor the last several seasons. His last GP win was in 2021 in Saudi Arabia in the second-last race of the season.

"I forgot what he felt like to be out ahead," Hamilton said. "It felt good for the short while that I had it. I was grateful for the moment."

Verstappen will be the favourite to win Sunday's Chinese Grand Prix, the fifth race of the season. Verstappen has won three of the first four GP races and 22 of the last 26. Lando Norris of McLaren and Hamilton of Mercedes started on the front row with Fernando Alonso of Aston Martin and Verstappen on the second row.

The sprint - F1 will run six this season - is about one-third the distance of a full race. The winner gets eight points with seven for second, six for third and so forth.

Saturday's race was run on a dry track, unlike the wet and slippery qualifying session on Friday.

Verstappen likened the sprint



qualifying on Friday to "driving on ice." Verstappen was among several drivers who ran off the track in a chaotic, wet session exacerbated by the track, itself.

The track is the great unknown going into Sunday's race. This is the first Formula 1 race in China in five years. The circuit has had a thin "seal coating" applied, described as liquid asphalt. F1 tyre supplier Pirelli said it was not fully aware of the changes heading into the race.

Two small grass fires broke out on at the edge of the track in Friday practice.

the citadel that dominates the Athens skyline and is Greece's top tourist draw.

The flame will stay there until Saturday morning, when the champagne-colored torch travels to Delphi, an important ancient Greek religious center, before reaching the town of Volos in central Greece.

Ceremoniously lit on Tuesday at the ruined birthplace of the ancient Games, Olympia in southern Greece, the flame is being carried around Greece by a string of torchbearers. Parts of the relay are being made by ferry or plane.

The flame will be delivered to French officials next Friday at the renovated ancient marble stadium where the first modern games were held in 1896. At Athens' port of Piraeus it will board the Belem, a French three-masted sailing ship - built in 1896 — to be transported to France.

The flame is due to reach the southern French port city of Marseille on May 8, and will travel through France in the buildup to the July 26 opening ceremony in Paris.



## Juventus rescues late point in draw with Cagliari in Serie A

AP ■ GENOA (ITALY)

Cagliari scored two first-half penalties but gave up a late own goal for Juventus to draw 2-2 in a thrilling Serie A game.

Gianluca Gaetano opened the scoring for the home side after half an hour and Yerry Mina got a second with an almost identical spot kick six minutes later.

Juventus had a first-half goal from Dušan Vlahovic disallowed after a video review but the Serbian forward got one back in the 61st minute with a swerving free kick.

Just when it looked like Cagliari would get the win and distance itself from the relegation zone, Alberto Dossena put the ball into his own net with three minutes left.

Juventus was five points behind second-placed AC Milan and 19 behind champion-elect Inter Milan. Juve has won only one of its

last seven league games. Cagliari was five points above the relegation zone but still in a dogfight.

Only six points separated Sassuolo in 19th place and Lecce in 13th.

With Salernitana almost certainly going down, two others will join it.

A second-half goal from Luis Alberto gave Lazio a 1-0 win at Genoa and moved the capital club into sixth and within touching distance of a Champions League spot.

The result snapped Genoa's four-game unbeaten run and was another good result for a visitor which has won four of its last five league games.

Lazio was one place and one point ahead of Atalanta, which has two games in hand.

The top five teams in Serie A are guaranteed a place in next year's expanded 36-team Champions League. Sixth spot could be enough if Roma or Atalanta win the Europa League.

## Seeking to curb player agent fees, FIFA's Infantino calls on lawmakers for help and targets England

AP ■ ZURICH

FIFA has called on lawmakers to help control payments to player agents in the multi-billion dollar soccer transfer market, and targeted the world's richest league in England.

English clubs paid 500 million euros (USD 530 million) in fees to agents in the year to February, FIFA president Gianni Infantino said on Friday, while paying just 6 per cent of that amount — 30 million euros (USD 32 million) — to foreign clubs "that trained and developed the players signed."

"Most of this money is leaving football," Infantino said of the agent fees in a statement on his Instagram account.

FIFA has faced multiple legal cases in Europe brought by agents trying to block the soccer body's plan for tighter regulations in the transfer

market. FIFA wants to cap agent commissions at 10 per cent of transfer fees when they acted for the selling club, and from 3 per cent to 10 per cent of salaries of players they represent.

Rules intended to take effect last October stalled after agents won a key legal ruling in England - by far the most lucrative market where agencies have earned tens of millions of dollars from transfers of elite players to Premier League clubs.

The tribunal in London ruled that if the English Football Association implemented the FIFA rules it would be an abuse of dominant position in breach of competition law.

FIFA knows the value of transfer and agent fees from deals between clubs in different countries which must be processed through its financial clearing house in Paris. The FIFA



system also directs money from those deals toward clubs which train and nurture players earlier in their career and are entitled to a share.

"The compensation and solidarity payments are imposed by FIFA regulations and are vital for thousands of less privileged clubs who

struggle to generate sufficient revenue," Infantino said, citing the need for "transparency, accountability and better redistribution" in the transfer market.

"Because of that we were sued by some agents but FIFA will continue to defend its position in court."

"I call on governments and lawmakers to join us and play an active role in ensuring the funds generated in transfers are kept within football and are shared with clubs from all around the world."

The FIFA leader added the less wealthy clubs "are absolutely key for current and future generations of footballers."

Agents who brought legal challenges outside England have argued most in their profession operate at the lower end of the market and cannot afford to have their fees capped.

## Manu soars high, Anish wins on expected lines

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Manu Bhaker dished out an excellent performance to dominate the women's 25m pistol qualification, eclipsing the world record score by a good six points while Anish Bhanwala won the men's 25m rapid-fire pistol Olympics Selection (OST) Trials 1 here on Saturday.

Olympian Manu topped the women's 25m pistol qualification at the Dr Karni Singh Shooting Range.

Manu was all class in the women's final, her scores in the 10 series of five rapid-fire shots read 4,4,5,5,5,5,4,5,5 and 5.



When Esha Singh was first eliminated on 23 after the seventh series, Manu was already on 32, six ahead of

Rhythm Sangwan and Abhidnya, who were tied at that stage.

Esha, however, will still lead

the women's 25m pistol OST at the end of it, thanks to her 585 in qualifying, which helped her top the five-woman field on Friday.

Manu will be just behind her in second with Simranpreet, Abhidnya and Rhythm completing the order.

Anish also stamped his class in the men's RFP by finishing with 33 hits, a clear six ahead of Vijayveer Sidhu, who was second. Adarsh Singh took the third spot with 23 hits.

Bhaveshe Shekhawat, after topping the qualifications, finished fourth with 18 while Ankur Goel was first to exit with 10 hits to his name at the stage.



## Diksha Dagar fires 4-under, tied fifth at Joburg Open

PTI ■ JOHANNESBURG

Diksha Dagar continued her fine run, firing a superb 4-under 69 in round three to rise to tied fifth at the Joburg Ladies Open here on Saturday.

Diksha, a two-time winner on the Ladies European Tour and third on the Order of Merit in 2023, had rounds of 73-71-69, improving by two shots on each day at the Par-73 Modderfontein Golf Club for a total of 6-under.

The clubhouse leader was Spain's Luna Sobron Galmes (71-73-68) at 7-under. But, she will be overtaken by Tamburlini of Switzerland, who was already 13-under with three holes yet to play, and Aunchisa Utama of Thailand was 8-under, also with three more holes in the third round.

Diksha is now 6-under but will need to have a big finish in the final round to make a bid for her third career title.

She is looking at a third Top-10 finish of 2024 after Lalla Meryem Cup in Morocco and Aramco Series Florida.

Tvesa Malik, a multiple-time winner at home on Hero WPGT and a one-time winner in South Africa, also showed a welcome return to form, adding 72 to her first two rounds of 71 and 75, and she is now 1-under to be placed inside top 25.

Tvesa missed a large chunk of 2023 as she lost her playing

rights, but she has made great progress in South Africa's Sunshine Tour, where she won at the start of the year.

All four Indians made the cut. Vani Kapoor (76-75 and 3-over through 16) was yet to finish her third round. She was lying tied 50, and Ridhima Dilawari (73-78 and 1-under through 14) was tied 54.

Ladies European Tour (LET) rookie Chiara Tamburlini of Switzerland (70-68 and 5-under through 15) was on top of the leaderboard as she ran away to 13-under and a five-shot lead over Aunchisa Utama of Thailand (69-71 and 2-under through 15) who was 8-under.

Diksha opened her third round with a birdie on the second but gave that shot back on the Par-5 fifth hole.

She struck a purple patch in the middle of the round with three birdies in a row from seventh to ninth and added a fourth on Par-3 11th. She closed with a run of seven pars, a couple of which had makeable birdie putts.

Home favourite Nadia van der Westhuizen, who held the halfway lead at the Joburg Ladies Open after firing a round of 68, was none-under but slipped in the third round as she was 2-over through 14 and was now tied 3 with four holes to play.

After two rounds of action, the cut fell at five-over par, with 71 players making it through to the weekend.

## Gukesh to clash with Alireza on what promises to be a photo finish

PTI ■ TORONTO

Teenaged Indian Grandmaster D Gukesh will have his task cut out against Firouza Alireza of France in the penultimate round of the Candidates' chess tournament, on what promises to be a photo-finish here.

Gukesh, with his last white game, will improve his chances greatly in the tournament if he can get past Alireza, who has clearly been struggling. With 7.5 points in his bag, Gukesh shares the lead with Hikaru Nakamura of the United States and Ian Nepomniachtchi of Russia.

Just two rounds are remaining in the biggest event of the year.

The most important clash of the penultimate round will be between Nepomniachtchi and Nakamura. The latter has been displaying top form having won three in a row while Nepomniachtchi is the only player in the tournament who has remained undefeated after 12 gruelling games.

Apart from these three, Fabiano Caruana is the only player who has a chance to win the event.

With seven points, thus far, the American will have to tackle a tough opposition in R



Praggnanandhaa of India and finally Nepomniachtchi in the last round.

Even Gukesh has a tough opponent to deal with in Nakamura in the final round and much will depend on how he does against the world number three.

Praggnanandhaa had shown signs of a podium finish mid-

way through the tournament but could not quite end up where he wanted to.

However, the Indian has displayed great promise and it is only a matter of time before he can be in the top five of the world ranking or even more.

Currently Praggnanandhaa has six points.

Another Indian Vidit

Gujrathi had a promising start and his two victories against Nakamura in the tournament stand out as his best efforts.

Nerves, however, played some part along with time pressure on certain occasions and the Indian will have to wait for another chance.

It has been a tough call for

Alireza, who has just 4.5 points while Abasov, on three points, is at the bottom of the table.

In the women's section, Zhongyi Tan is in the front on eight points and her nearest contender is compatriot Tingjie Lei, who is a half point behind.

The two leaders are followed by Russian duo of Aleksandra Goryachkina and Kateryna Lagno along with India's Koneru Humpy on six points apiece.

R Vaishali on 5.5 points comes in next, a full point ahead of Anna Muzychuk of Ukraine and Nurgyul Salimovaa of Bulgaria.

**Pairings of round 13 (Indians unless specified):** Vidit Gujrathi (5) vs Nijat Abasov (AZE, 3); D Gukesh (7.5) vs Firouza Alireza (FRA, 4.5); R Praggnanandhaa (6) vs Fabiano Caruana (USA, 7); Ian Nepomniachtchi (FID, 7.5) vs Hikaru Nakamura (USA, 7.5).

**Women:** Zhongyi Tan (CHN, 8) vs Aleksandra Goryachkina (FID, 6); Koneru Humpy (6) vs Anna Muzychuk (UKR, 4.5); R Vaishali (5.5) vs Tingjie Lei (CHN, 7.5); Nurgyul Salimova (BUL, 4.5) vs Kateryna Lagno (FID, 6).



## Honda's Kavin Quintal finishes 11th at ARRC

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Kavin Quintal of Honda Racing India finished the first race of the second round on a creditable 11th during the FIM Asia Road Racing Championship (ARRC) in China on Saturday.

Quintal earned five points for the Honda team while his teammate Mohsin ended up in 20th place.

Starting on 15th on the grid, Quintal maintained his composure and a steady pace throughout.

In the final lap, he accelerated fast at the opportune moment, crossing the chequered line in 11th position with a timing of 19:03.094.

Mohsin finished the race with a timing of 19:25.863.

However, at the 20th position, he scored no points for the team.





# LITTLE ROOM FOR ERROR AS STRUGGLING RCB FACE DOMINANT KKR

PTI ■ KOLKATA

Aware that they cannot afford any more slip-ups, Royal Challengers Bengaluru will have their task cut out when they face dominant hosts Kolkata Knight Riders in a tricky Indian Premier League match here on Sunday. RCB's pursuit of a maiden IPL title has once again hit a roadblock following six losses in seven matches. With five consecutive defeats, the bottom-ranked RCB now confront the daunting task of winning their remaining seven games to keep their playoff prospects alive. For a side that has been severely let down by their bowlers and relies heavily on the batting prowess of Virat Kohli, Faf du Plessis and veteran Dinesh Karthik, facing KKR presents a significant challenge. "From a bowling perspective, we don't have as many weapons. So, unfortunately, it comes down to the batters to

make sure that we use our form and our confidence. The scores that we put on the board are probably going to be the only way we are going to get into the competition," their skipper Du Plessis has admitted earlier. The fact that they are coming after conceding the IPL's record total of 287/3 by Sunrisers Hyderabad in their last match will undoubtedly linger in the minds of their bowlers. It would not be a bad idea to bring back their most expensive (Rs 11.5-crore) buy this season, Alzarri Joseph, to go alongside Mohammed Siraj, who was not picked against SRH. Joseph has bagged a solitary wicket in three appearances for RCB while also getting hammered at 11.89 runs per over. Glenn Maxwell's spin also could have been a nice option, but the struggling Australian all-rounder, who pulled out of the game against SRH citing "mental fatigue", is also battling



a hip strain that may keep him out of action for some more time. Their batting has centred

around the two openers — Kohli and Du Plessis — and Karthik, while the rest of the players have failed miserably.

Kohli is once again leading the run chart with 361 runs at 72.20, though his middle over strike rate of 135 has been a

cause of concern. The star Indian batter more often than not was seen to have slowed down against the spinners in the crucial 7-15th over phase after getting a start in the power play. Du Plessis has been their next best batter with 232 runs, but it's seasoned wicketkeeper-batter Karthik, who has been phenomenal in his final IPL season. The veteran has amassed 226 runs at a strike-rate of 205-plus and in the monstrous chase against SRH, it was his 35-ball 83 that gave them hope of scripting an improbable win before they fell short by 25 runs. The trio will again have to play a key role against the likes of Sunil Narine, Mitchell Starc and Harshit Rana. The home side will also be coming on the back of a defeat to Rajasthan Royals in a last-ball finish. So KKR, who have played one match less than RCB, will also eye a return to winning ways

and inch closer to playoffs by taking their tally to 10 points at the midway stage. The biggest threat for RCB will be Narine, not just with the ball but also with the bat at the top of the order. Narine, who scored his maiden T20 century in their last match against RR, is KKR's leading run-getter this season with 276 runs at an incredible strike rate of over 187. The next best KKR batter is his opening partner Phil Salt, who has struck at a rate of 151-plus. The pair's splendid form means that the likes of Rinku Singh, Andre Russell have got limited opportunities. With a maiden fifty to his name, youngster Angkrish Raghuvanshi has impressed with his batting. RCB will have to target the KKR top-three to expose their batting and give themselves some chance. With the city in the grip of an extreme heat wave, the temperature is expected to soar to 41-degree Centigrade come Sunday.

**TEAMS (FROM):**  
**Kolkata Knight Riders:** Shreyas Iyer (c), KS Bharat, Rahmanullah Gurbaz, Rinku Singh, Angkrish Raghuvanshi, Sherfane Rutherford, Manish Pandey, Andre Russell, Nitish Rana, Venkatesh Iyer, Anukul Roy, Ramandeep Singh, Varun Chakravarthy, Sunil Narine, Vaibhav Arora, Chetan Sakariya, Harshit Rana, Suyash Sharma, Mitchell Starc, Dushmantha, Sakib Hussain and Mujeeb Ur Rahman.  
**Royal Challengers Bengaluru:** Faf du Plessis (c), Glenn Maxwell, Virat Kohli, Rajat Patidar, Anuj Rawat, Dinesh Karthik, Suyash Prabhudessai, Will Jacks, Mahipal Lomror, Karn Sharma, Manoj Bhandagar, Mayank Dagar, Vijaykumar Vyshak, Akash Deep, Mohammed Siraj, Reece Topley, Himanshu Sharma, Rajan Kumar, Cameron Green, Alzarri Joseph, Yash Dayal, Tom Curran, Lockie Ferguson, Swapnil Singh and Saurav Chauhan.



## Rahul, Ruturaj fined ₹12 lakh each for slow over rate

PTI ■ LUCKNOW

Lucknow Super Giants skipper KL Rahul and his Chennai Super Kings counterpart Ruturaj Gaikwad have been fined Rs 12 lakh each as their teams maintained a slow over rate in their Indian Premier League match here. Playing at home, LSG beat defending champions CSK by eight wickets in the match at the Bharat Ratna Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee Ekana Cricket Stadium on Friday. As it was the teams first offence of the season under the IPL's Code of Conduct relating to minimum over-rate offences, both Rahul and Ruturaj were fined 12 lakh, an IPL statement read. "Mr KL Rahul, Captain, Lucknow Super Giants has been fined after his team maintained a slow over-rate during Match 34 of the TATA Indian Premier League (IPL) 2024 against Chennai Super Kings at the Bharat Ratna Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee Ekana Cricket Stadium, Lucknow," the IPL said. Regarding the other penalised player, the IPL said, "Mr Ruturaj Gaikwad, Captain,

Chennai Super Kings has been fined after his team maintained a slow over-rate during Match 34 of the TATA Indian Premier League (IPL) 2024 against Lucknow Super Giants at the Bharat Ratna Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee Ekana Cricket Stadium, Lucknow." Openers Rahul and Quinton de Kock, who made classy fifties on a slow pitch, produced a chasing masterclass to power LSG to a comfortable win over CSK. Asked to bat first, Ravindra Jadeja came up with a solid unbeaten 57 before Moeen Ali (30 off 20) and Mahendra Singh Dhoni (28 off 9) went on a six-hitting spree to take CSK to a fighting 176 for six. In reply, Rahul (82) and De Kock (54) battled with authority during their match-winning alliance of 134, the highest partnership for any wicket at the Ekana Stadium, as LSG scored 180 for 2 in 19 overs to recover from back-to-back defeats and consolidate their position in the table. CSK, who came into the match with twin wins, on the other hand, slumped to their third loss in this IPL.

PTI ■ LUCKNOW

Lucknow Super Giants pacer Matt Henry was in awe of the "world-class batsmanship" of skipper KL Rahul and Quinton de Kock, saying the century-plus opening stand between the duo helped them outclass a "very good" Chennai Super Kings bowling attack in the IPL here. In pursuit of 176 for 6 on Friday, Rahul (82) and de Kock (54) made classy fifties on a slow pitch to produce a chasing masterclass and power LSG to a comfortable eight-wicket. "In terms of our batting, the opening partnership was incredible. The partnership between KL and Quinton really changed the game for us. The batsmanship overall was world-class and that what was the

difference at the end of the day," Henry said at the post-match press conference. The duo stitched 134 runs in 15 overs to chase down the target. "It was always going to be a competitive total. We knew that it will come down to partnerships. In a tournament like this if you are chasing, you need guys in your top-order to make big runs and today we had two of them, the way they (Rahul and de Kock) went about their work. "The batsmanship they showed laid the platform for us to finish the job against a very good Chennai attack," the New Zealand pacer, who didn't have a very good outing said. Henry also lauded the effort of LSG's bowling unit, especially left-arm spinner Krunal Pandya (2/16).



"The pitch was little bit on the slower side, but the guys adapted to the surface, we did a really good job. The key thing for us was ability to take wickets. KP (Krunal) and the spinners to be able to continue to take wickets and bowling to a fresh batsman made a massive difference for us," he said. Henry also feels that there is no dearth of talent in India and was impressed by the efforts of youngsters in the team. "Coming here and meeting a lot of young quicks, it's really exciting to see. There is no surprise about the depth in India but the skill set these guys have and the confidence to execute their plans under pressure is just incredible," he said. "The bowling group that I am part of is awesome."

## His mind is staying up to date, but body might give way: Uthappa on Dhoni

PTI ■ LUCKNOW

Amazed at Mahendra Singh Dhoni's longevity, former India batter Robin Uthappa says the Chennai Super Kings talisman's "mind is staying up to date" and the only thing that could end his prolonged run in competitive cricket is his body. Dhoni has showed tremendous form this IPL season, powering CSK with his blistering cameos, the latest coming in the match against Lucknow Super Giants in which he slammed a nine-ball 28 here on Friday. Speaking on JioCinema, Uthappa said, "The only thing stopping him is his health. His fitness will be the only thing that stops him from playing

any further. He loves the game, is deeply passionate about it, and wants to continue playing it. "If there's anything that will stop him, it will be his own body that will give way. The mind is staying up to date." Dhoni slammed a four and a six off Mohsin Khan before smashing Yash Thakur for another maximum. He finished the innings with two more fours as 19 came off the last over. Speaking of Dhoni's exploits, former India pace spearhead Zaheer Khan said, "The roar is getting bigger, better, and louder, and so is MS Dhoni's presence on the field. "He's getting better and better with every innings he is



playing. The sheer impact of him, it's unbelievable to see him go out there and put this kind of pressure on the bowlers. It was just

phenomenal." Asked to bat first, Ravindra Jadeja came up with a solid unbeaten 57 before Moeen Ali (30 off 20) and Dhoni (28 off 9) went on a six-hitting spree to take CSK to a fighting 176 for six. In reply, KL Rahul (82) and Quinton de Kock (54) battled with authority during their match-winning alliance of 134, the highest partnership for any wicket at the Ekana Stadium, as LSG scored 180 for 2 in 19 overs to recover from back-to-back defeats and consolidate their position in the table. Uthappa also praised Rahul's innings, saying the knock has boosted his prospects of getting picked in the T20 World Cup squad.



## I am 100 per cent ready to play T20I World Cup: Karthik

PTI ■ KOLKATA

Veteran wicketkeeper-batter Dinesh Karthik, who has been in phenomenal form in this IPL, has not given up on his dream to play for India again and would do "everything he can to be in that flight" to the T20 World Cup in the USA and West Indies next month. Karthik, who will turn 39 by the time the World Cup kickstarts on June 1, was also part of the last edition of the T20I World Cup in Australia in 2022, which was also his last appearance for Team India. Since then he has become an off-the-field cricket expert, involved in commentary stints. Returning to IPL this season, he has taken his batting to a new level and displayed some astonishing power-hitting to strike at a rate of 205-plus. He is also the third leading run-getter for RCB with 226 runs, behind Virat Kohli (361) and skipper Faf du Plessis (232). "At this stage in my life, it would be the greatest feeling for me to represent India. I'm very, very keen to do so. There is nothing bigger in my life other than representing India in this T20

World Cup," the RCB wicketkeeper-batters said ahead of clash against KKR. With Karthik's also emerging as a contender, the wicketkeeper slot will be a hotly-contested one for which the Team India think tank may pick two at the most. Making a comeback from a near-fatal accident, Rishabh Pant has also showed positive intent while captaining Delhi Capitals, and Sanju Samson (Rajasthan Royals), Ishan Kishan (Mumbai Indians), KL Rahul (Lucknow Super Giants) are also in the fray. Karthik said he would respect whatever the Big Three — coach Rahul Dravid, captain Rohit Sharma and chairman of selectors Ajit Agarkar — decide. "I also feel there are three very, very stable, honest people who are at the helm to decide what should be the best Indian team for the World Cup — Rahul Dravid, Rohit Sharma and Ajit Agarkar. "And I'm completely with them. I respect any decision that they take. But all I can say is I'm 100 per cent ready, and I'll do everything I can to be on that flight to the World Cup."

PTI ■ MULLANPUR (PUNJAB)

Their campaigns wobbling after a string of defeats, bottom-rung teams Punjab Kings and Gujarat Titans will be desperate to arrest the slide and get back to winning ways in their Indian Premier League match here on Sunday. Former champions GT have slipped to eighth position in the pecking order after an embarrassing loss to Delhi Capitals at home, where they were bowled out for 89 to suffer their third defeat in four matches. PBKS are struggling in the ninth place following a nine-run loss to Mumbai Indians away on Thursday night, the margin of defeat made respectable by an incredible rearguard act by the in-form young duo of Ashutosh Sharma and Shashank Singh after the team was tottering at 14/4 in a chase of 193. Five losses and two wins in seven outings hardly inspire confidence and irrespective of the fact that their upcoming opponents are also struggling to get their act right, PBKS will have their task cut out in front of their fans, who had little to cheer about so far this season at the newly-inaugurated home venue. The absence of their influential skipper Shikhar Dhawan in the last few matches has hit PBKS hard and doubts remain over the southpaw's availability for

## PBKS, GT look to resurrect campaigns

Sunday's fixture. Dhawan has been undergoing rehabilitation since picking up a shoulder injury during the home fixture against Sunrisers Hyderabad on April 9, resulting in England all-rounder Sam Curran to fill in as the skipper. While Dhawan hasn't had a great time with the bat in IPL 2024, scoring 152 runs from five innings at a strike rate of 125.61, his presence at the top of the order as well as in the field matters for a side that seems to have forgotten how to win matches. Having finished eighth in the last edition following eight losses and six victories, the story hasn't changed for PBKS, whose biggest concern has been the failure of their specialist batters. The likes of Prabhsimran Singh, Liam Livingstone and Rilee Rossouw have failed to live up to the expectations, something that has affected the team badly. The only silver lining for PBKS this season has been resolute displays from their unsung Indian players Shashank and Ashutosh, who both bat lower in the order and have had to make up for the shortcomings at the top on more than one occasion, including their heroics that gave MI a massive scare the other night.



PBKS' opponents GT, who have so far registered three wins while suffering four defeats, will need to pull up their socks after the horror show with the bat against Delhi

Capitals. With quality players such as skipper Shubman Gill, Sai Sudharsan, David Miller and Rashid Khan in their ranks, complemented by a handy

support cast comprising people like Rahul Tewatia, Mohit Sharma, Wriddhiman Saha and Noor Ahmad, GT would hope the show against DC was a mere blip.

As far as bowling is concerned, the absence of Mohammad Shami has hurt them badly while Umesh Yadav has leaked plenty of runs though he has also taken seven wickets. Star spinner Rashid has been doing as well as he could in his primary role and is also chipping in with more than handy contributions with the bat.

**TEAMS (FROM):**  
**Gujarat Titans:** Shubman Gill (c), David Miller, Wriddhiman Saha, Sai Sudharsan, Shahrulkhan Khan, Matthew Wade, Kane Williamson, Azmatullah Omarzai, Abhinav Manohar, Rashid Khan, Vijay Shankar, Rahul Tewatia, Spencer Johnson, Kartik Tyagi, Joshua Little, Darshan Nalkande, Noor Ahmad, Ravirrinivasan Sai Kishore, Mohit Sharma, Jayant Yadav, Umesh Yadav, Sushant Mishra, Sandeep Warrier, Sharath BR, Manav Suthar.  
**Punjab Kings:** Shikhar Dhawan (c), Matthew Short, Prabhsimran Singh, Jitesh Sharma, Sikandar Raza, Rishi Dhawan, Liam Livingstone, Atharva Taide, Arshdeep Singh, Nathan Ellis, Sam Curran, Kagiso Rabada, Harpreet Brar, Rahul Chahar, Harpreet Bhatia, Vidwath Kaverappa, Shivam Singh, Harshal Patel, Chris Woakes, Ashutosh Sharma, Vishwanath Pratap Singh, Shashank Singh, Tanay Thyagarajan, Prince Choudhary, Rilee Rossouw.



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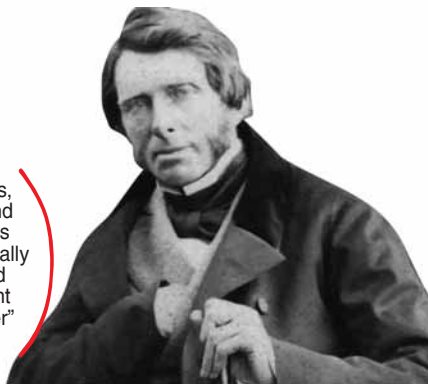
Shikhar, Plot No.1, Sector-29, Gurgaon – 122001

Engagement of manpower on contract:

VC No.	Post	No. of Vacancies
Written test for the posts of Assistant Manager (Mechanical/Metallurgy), Assistant Manager (Electrical/Electronics), Assistant Manager (Civil) and Assistant Manager (IT/CS) advertised vide VC No 132/24-135/24 will be conducted on 05-05-2024. Last date for submission of application has been extended to 29-04-2024.		
Written test will be conducted at Guwahati, Kolkata, Mumbai, Chennai, Bangalore, Gurugram, Hyderabad on 05-05-2024.		



"Sunshine is delicious,  
rain is refreshing, wind  
braces us up, snow is  
exhilarating; there is really  
no such thing as bad  
weather, only different  
kinds of good weather"  
— John Ruskin



Abrupt shifts in weather, as exemplified last week in Delhi swaying from moderate cold conditions one day followed by record-breaking warmth the next, underscore the unpredictability and volatility of regional climates, says ARCHANA JYOTI

# INDIA BATTLES VOLATILE AND UNPREDICTABLE WEATHER



The recent forecast by the Indian Meteorological Department predicting above-normal monsoon rainfall brings a glimmer of hope, particularly for agriculture and water resources. However, beneath this layer of optimism lies a stark reality: erratic weather patterns are wreaking havoc across the nation, presenting formidable challenges.

India's climate has become akin to a rollercoaster ride, with unpredictable twists and turns affecting lives from Uttar Pradesh to Gujarat and Kerala to West Bengal. The abrupt shifts in weather, as exemplified by last week's Delhi's experience of moderate cold conditions one day followed by record-breaking warmth the next, underscore the unpredictability and volatility of regional climates.

Reflecting on her eight decades of life, 80-year-old Rambha Devi confronts a bitter truth: humanity's reckless treatment of Mother Nature is returning to haunt us. "For too long," she laments, "we've exploited the Earth without considering the consequences of our actions. We've depleted natural resources, polluted the air and waterways, and recklessly disrupted delicate ecosystems around the globe."

Now, as Devi observes, nature is fighting back. The once predictable and reliable weather now seems to operate on capricious whims. Extreme heat waves scorch the land one day, only to be followed by torrential rains and floods the next.

Unpredictable storms lash coastlines, leaving devastation in their wake. The rhythm of seasons blurs, leaving farmers like Devi's family uncertain about sowing and reaping times.

Throughout her lifetime, Devi has witnessed the consequences of humanity's disregard for the natural world. Once-vibrant forests were reduced to barren wastelands, rivers choked with pollution, and species pushed to the brink of extinction. Now, as the impacts of climate change intensify, she fears for future generations.

As she gazes upon the world she's known for eight decades, Devi knows the road ahead will be arduous. These fluctuations not only threaten agricultural patterns but also have profound implications for public health and well-being.

Ramesh Tiwari, a farmer from Uttar Pradesh's Ghaziabad, shares how sudden rain and hail storms destroyed his crops, leaving him struggling to support his family. "I've toiled day and night," he says, "only to see it all washed away in minutes." The state saw as many as 7,020 farmers from 50 districts seeking compensation for the damage till March 2. Similar tales emerge from across the nation.

In Maharashtra, Priya, a resident of a drought-prone Vidarbha village, recounts how scorching heatwaves and heavy rainfall disrupt water access and damage local crops, exacerbating food insecurity.

Similarly, Raju Vashaya, a farmer in Rajasthan, describes the challenges of coping with unpredictable weather, making it difficult to predict crop yields and threatening his family's livelihood.

Further, whether it is Assam in the Northeast or down South Kerala, locals face displacement from floods triggered by heavy rainfall and landslides. Their stories reflect the widespread devastation and loss in these regions. Meanwhile, along Gujarat's coastline, Sanjay Joshi, a fisherman, expresses concern about the increasing frequency of cyclones and floods, threatening his livelihood and community safety.

Dr Mrutyunjay Mohapatra, director general of the IMD, explains about the visible trends in extreme weather events. "Globally, temperatures have risen by about 1.2 degrees Celsius compared to 100 years ago. Over India, the rise has been about 0.6 degrees Celsius. The rise has been more in the northern, central, and eastern parts, and less over peninsular India.

"This temperature rise has an impact on extreme weather events. It's getting hotter not just on the surface, but also in the troposphere, increasing its water-holding capacity. Studies show that with a rise of 1 degree Celsius, moisture-holding capacity increases by about 7 per cent. If the atmosphere can hold more moisture, it will have the capacity to cause more rainfall."



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So, the probability of the occurrence of heavy rainfall has increased. Studies also show an increase in the frequency of heavy rainfall events. These are events when 24-hour cumulative rainfall on a particular day is more than 15 cm. Such events are increasing over the tropical belt as a whole, including in India. This trend is more evident in Maharashtra, Gujarat, Odisha, and West Bengal, he says.

The rise in the average global temperature has hit various countries of the world too. Like the United States of America, all European countries, including China, Japan, Indonesia, Canada, and others are reporting now and then extreme heat waves, droughts, wildfires, record rains, and floods. A recent example has been Dubai in UAE which was caught off guard, as heavy rainfall deluged it.

The sixth IPCC report released in August 2021, revealed in detail that in the coming decades, winters will get shorter and summers will get longer. Some places will

experience an increase in the incidents of drought as a result of heat waves and some places will face floods due to heavy rains. India has already felt the impact, with rising temperatures affecting 75% of its districts, with heat wave records breaking every year. "We were expecting these changes possibly after 2025, leading on to 2030. But they are happening now, and are likely to get intense and possibly more frequent in coming years," warns Dr K J Ramesh, former Director General of Meteorology at IMD.

In agricultural regions, these see-sawing weather patterns have started impacting crop cycles, leading to reduced yields, crop failures, and economic losses for farmers. Erratic weather, including unseasonal frosts or heat waves, can disrupt planting and harvesting schedules, affecting food production and livelihoods, says who was at the IMD helm when the country reported several extreme weather events, including Cyclone Fani, the most intense storm over the Bay of Bengal to make landfall on India's east coast since 1999.

To address erratic and extreme weather challenges, proactive measures are needed at both the local and national levels. This includes investing in climate-resilient agriculture practices, improving weather forecasting and early warning systems, enhancing infrastructure resilience, and implementing measures to mitigate the impacts of extreme weather events on public health, he suggests. Marginalized communities too are all set to face health and income strains amid climate challenges.

Vaibhav Chaturvedi, a fellow at Council on Energy, Environment and Water (CEEW), summarises the looming challenges ahead, stating, "Globally, India is the fifth-most vulnerable country. While the frequency and intensity of extreme events are increasing, we are left with less than a decade to adhere to the Sendai Framework; course correction needs to have a razor-sharp focus on curtailing the compounded impacts of climate extremes. There is no denying that the climate is changing and it is changing fast."



# AN ITALIAN HOLIDAY

Brescia offers a perfect blend of history, natural beauty, and culinary delights, its ancient ruins, the relaxing Lake Garda, or the vineyards of Ca'del Bosco, this little known part of Italy is sure to enchant you, says  
**PAWAN SONI**

We have long known Milan as the fashion capital of the world. The city's Galleria Vittorio Emanuele, a luxury shopping complex, is home to many big designer brands. However, Northern Italy offers much more than just Milan's Duomo. Boasting a history dating back to 753 BC and inhabited for over 850,000 years, Italy is a destination known for its museums, cathedrals, churches, and more. On this trip, I ventured to the Brescia province near Milan, an ancestral town less touristy than Milan. In fact, most Italians I spoke with had yet to explore Brescia, which is also part of the Lombardy region. To reach Brescia, I boarded a local train from Milan Centrale railway station. This station is a sight to behold, with its beautiful and elegant architecture rivaling many tourist attractions worldwide. The 70-minute train ride cost just ₹7.5 and offered a glimpse into local life. Amidst reading, chatting, and enjoying the ride, I hardly noticed any tourists. The view outside was breathtaking, overlooking farms, factories, canals, and the elegant Alps mountains. Nestled in Lombardy, Brescia is the region's second-largest city, often overshadowed by its more famous neighbours. However, this hidden gem has much to offer, including a rich history and picturesque surroundings. It has been a major industrial hub since pre-Roman times. History enthusiasts will be thrilled by Brescia's well-preserved Roman ruins, such as the Capitolium and the Teatro Romano. The Capitolium, a temple dedicated to the Capitoline Triad of Jupiter, Juno, and Minerva, stands as a testament to the city's ancient past. The Teatro Romano, an ancient Roman theatre, provides a glimpse into Brescia's theatrical traditions. Capriano del Colle, a small commune known for its wineries, houses the municipal department in Palazzo Bocca, a



building with rich heritage dating back to the late 17th century. I had the pleasure of enjoying a meal, courtesy of the Italian Trade Agency, in this beautiful landmark building. A highlight of visiting Brescia is a trip to Lake Garda, a short drive away. Italy's largest lake, Lake Garda, is renowned for its crystal-clear waters and picturesque towns. Sirmione, with its medieval castle and natural hot springs, is a popular destination for those seeking relaxation. For wine lovers, a visit to Ca'del Bosco is a must. This renowned winery produces Franciacorta sparkling wines using the traditional Champagne method. Visitors can tour the vineyards and cellars and enjoy a tasting of the winery's exquisite wines. The vineyard's beauty rivals that of any tourist destination, with the bottling plant and cellar areas artistically designed. This destination deserves at least half a day of your time and is one of the most beautiful vineyards I have visited. No visit to Brescia is complete without exploring



the iconic Vittoria Alata, or Winged Victory, a stunning marble statue dating back to the Roman era. This masterpiece, depicting the goddess Nike, is a symbol of Brescia's rich history and is housed in the city's Santa Giulia Museum, located in a former monastery with roots tracing back to the 8th century. Just a short distance from Brescia lies the serene beauty of the Iseo Lake area, surrounded by picturesque towns like Iseo and Sarnico. This area offers a peaceful retreat from city life, with leisurely walks along the lake, exploration of charming villages, and savouring of delicious local cuisine. Monte Isola, Italy's largest lake island, is a must-visit, offering stunning views and a tranquil atmosphere. Brescia offers a perfect blend of history, natural beauty, and culinary delights. Whether exploring ancient ruins, relaxing by Lake Garda, or sipping fine wine at Ca'del Bosco, Brescia is sure to enchant you.

(Author is a food critic and founder of the Big F Awards. He can be reached at [Pawan.Soni@indianfoodfreak.com](mailto:Pawan.Soni@indianfoodfreak.com))

## JOYFUL GOAN NOSTALGIA IN A BOUTIQUE SETTING

Once a humble 125-room budget haven, now transformed into a sophisticated 135-room Joie de Vivre by Hyatt, Ronil Goa marks a significant milestone as the first of its kind in India and Southwest Asia, says **RUPALI DEAN**

During a weekend journey to Goa, there is lots to revel in, like vibrant takeovers at popular bars while navigating traffic warnings amidst local insights. Grateful for tranquillity amid burgeoning tourism, the allure of undiscovered venues fuels a persistent fear of missing out. Today's Goa contrasts starkly with the nostalgic reminiscences of the 1990s and early 2000s, as stories of a quieter, untouched era blend with the vibrant, bustling present. Ronil Goa, a Joie de Vivre by Hyatt in Calangute, intriguingly connects these divergent facets of Goa's evolving narrative. At Ronil a cherished gem with a legacy spanning over 35 years, I discovered a captivating fusion of past and present. Tucked away along the Calangute-Baga Road, the resort's unassuming facade belies the vibrant haven that unfolds beyond its doors — two distinct blocks flanking serene pools and an inviting on-site restaurant. My journey began with a warm welcome in true Goan style — a delightful coffee-rum shot that set the stage for the energetic vibe of the resort. Straying from convention, the check-in process eschewed the traditional reception in favour of the lively ambience at Patrão's, the round-the-



clock lobby bar where tantalizing cocktails and local bites awaited. The unique touch came as DJ Maria greeted me with an iPad in hand, ready to customize the property's musical offerings based on my preferences, ensuring a personalized soundtrack for my entire stay.

### JOIE DE VIVRE

JdV, short for joie de vivre, epitomizes the essence of simple joy in living. At this property, 'the hub' reigns as the focal point, boasting a vibrant pool, complete with a swim-up bar, cosy cabanas, sunken beds perfect for unwinding with cocktails, and a wood-fired oven for delectable pizzas and poolside barbecues. Ideal for those seeking a dynamic holiday experience, the rooms in this block exude a high-energy ambience. With the pool remaining open until 2 am, spontaneous midnight swims are just a PJ change away, accompanied by a soundtrack that shifts gears



post-10 pm. For a more serene retreat, opt for accommodations in the second block to escape into tranquillity and silence. Here, a peaceful pool awaits, providing a relaxing atmosphere for a leisurely dip until 10 pm. Whether craving lively vibes

or seeking calm repose, JdV offers a tailored experience to suit your holiday preferences. In my Deluxe room, overlooking the tranquillity pool, thoughtful design elevates the stay experience to a new level of sophistication. Unveiling smart design touches that exude practical

luxury, a sliding mirror serves as an elegant door to the wardrobe, while textures adorn the walls in lieu of conventional artwork typically found in hotel rooms. A generously sized bathroom mirror accented with a border LED light offer both functionality and style.

### FACT BOX

#### WHERE?

Calangute - Baga Rd, Saunta Vaddo, Goa, Baga, Goa: 403516

TEL: 08326941234

(The author, an acclaimed lifestyle and travel writer, has been awarded the Best Food Writer in the country by the Indian Culinary Forum, WACS and the Ministry of Tourism)



For tea enthusiasts, a selection of Tea Trunk blends awaits, sourced from the locally renowned Goa-based brand that boasts a tea room in Fontainhas. Additionally, a French Press stands ready, showcasing the exclusive Ronil special sunrise and sunset coffee blends. Opening the balcony doors during the day allowed the melodies from outside to mingle with my sanctuary—though as night fell, the desire for tranquillity surfaced, and the music lingering until 1 am required a gradual adjustment.

#### CHILL ZONE

Indulging in a culinary adventure at the Ronil Bistro led by head chef Karan Kohli quickly became a delightful ritual during my stay. For lunch, the fish curry, rice, kismoor, and tindli pickle effortlessly stole the show, showcasing Chef Kohli's culinary prowess. Come dinnertime, the poolside ambience paired perfectly

with the fresh, pillowy sourdough pizzas and the BBQ a true highlight of the evening. While the house made churros come highly recommended by the team for dessert, I found the ice cream equally captivating. Sourced from Goa's renowned Cream Choc, the pistachio gelato stood out as a refreshing conclusion to lunch and a comforting midnight snack in the quiet of my room. Night owls are in for a treat with the complimentary lager tucked away in the minibar, a perfect companion for those late-night moments of relaxation. The property's bespoke experiences, from bonfires to barbecues, floating breakfasts, and poolside picnics, are meticulously curated to foster unforgettable moments to relish. While the property gleams with modernity, it intertwines a subtle thread of yesteryears, evoking tales of Goa's bygone charm that now linger in whispers. Amidst the staff's offerings for lively bar crawls and exploratory visits to Chapora Fort lies a unique opportunity to embrace the cocoon of nostalgia within Ronil Goa's embrace — a place where cherished memories are reincarnated, fostering an ambience that transcends mere tourist trappings.



RUPALI DEAN absorbs an enticing feast at Burma Burma on the occasion of a festival that cultivates the spirit of togetherness and connection

# CELEBRATE BURMA'S THINGYAN FESTIVAL OF HARVEST

At the core of the Thingyan Festival celebrations at Burma Burma resides the "Village Set", a harmonious dining experience for two that unites individuals through a delightful assortment of authentic Burmese delicacies presented artfully on a flat, woven tray, cultivating a spirit of togetherness and connection amongst guests. For aficionados of Burmese cuisine, an enticing dining celebration awaits from April 11 to May 19, with a curated menu celebrating Thingyan — the harvest festival; a cultural jubilation steeped in tradition, epitomizing renewal and transformation through symbolic water splashing. Extending well beyond Burma's realms, this festivity harmonizes with New Year and harvest revelries across Asia. The native Burmese *Padauk* flower, blossoming during this auspicious occasion, adorns the landscape, mirroring the festival's infectious spirit. Experience a culinary voyage in Yangon this season, where diners are enveloped in a celebration of flavours through a specially-crafted menu that highlights the diverse and rich tapestry of Burmese cuisine. Groups of loved ones come together to enjoy an array of small plates bursting with authentic tastes, complemented by sweet indulgences that leave a lingering desire for another visit. Immerse yourself in an array of traditional Burmese home-style dishes and invigorating beverages exclusive to this limited-time offering at Burma Burma, available not only in Delhi NCR but also in Mumbai, Bengaluru, Kolkata, Hyderabad, and Ahmedabad. My dining experience was truly remarkable. Each sip of Twilight, a vibrant blend of mango puree, coconut, Yakult, and fizz, was a delightful prelude to the Plum Sour, a refreshing mix of plum puree, lime, ginger ale, and black grass jelly that tingled my taste buds. El Dragon, with its exotic mix of dragon fruit, coconut water, litchi water, and elderflower syrup, was a light and refreshing choice. Exploring Yangon's culinary scene, the Sweet Lime & Shallot Salad intrigued with its tangy mix. Each bite evoked market flavours, setting the tone for the



## FAST FACTS

Enjoy festive menus across multiple locations in Delhi NCR (DLF Cyber Hub-Gurgaon, DLF Mall of India Noida and Select City Walk, from April 11 to May 19 2024.

(The author, an acclaimed lifestyle and travel writer, has been awarded the Best Food Writer in the country by the Indian Culinary Forum, WACS and the Ministry of Tourism)



showcasing the rich flavours of Burmese produce. The Roselle & Mushroom Stir Fry, a Chin tribe specialty, featured sour roselle leaves and mushrooms stir-fried with garlic, bird's eye chili, and turmeric, offering a tangy twist typical of Burmese cuisine. Wrapping up my meal was the Banana Sanwin Makin, a traditional semolina cake with banana, strawberry, coconut cream, and poppy seeds — a sweet conclusion. To top it off, the Lemon Poppy Seed Ice Cream, with zesty lemon and black poppy seeds, and the complimentary *Mont Lone Yay Paw*, a festive treat of glutinous rice flour dumplings filled with palm jaggery and coconut, added a perfect finishing touch to my culinary journey. And Musk, a fragrant blend of muskmelon, honey, lavender white tea cold brew, and poppy seeds, was a perfect finale to my meal. The culinary journey beautifully intertwined Burmese traditions with the diversity of Asian flavours, making the Thingyan celebration a memorable experience filled with joy, camaraderie, and delectable dishes.

# PF CHANG'S NOW IN GURUGRAM

You may have indulged in chicken lettuce wraps at various Asian eateries, yet the pioneering credit belongs to P.F. Chang's. Established by Paul Flemming and Philip Chiang, the inaugural establishment debuted in 1993 in Scottsdale, Arizona, and has since grown exponentially - boasting over 300 locations worldwide. Now, the Asian dining spot taps the Delhi NCR market with Chang's first outlet opening at DLF Cyberhub in Gurugram

BY RUPALI DEAN

What can guests look forward to? 'A joyful experience cantered on life, family, and delicious food,' as described by Ramit Mittal, Executive Chairman & Director of Gourmet Investments Pvt Ltd, who brought this renowned Asian dining destination to the country first in Mumbai this year, complete with all its distinctive features, be it in the ambience or the cuisine. As you enter P.F. Chang's, you're greeted by the iconic statue of a horse, symbolizing strength and loyalty. Once inside, you'll be surrounded by the classic red and gold décor, featuring a dragon, katana, and a cherry blossom tree. The open kitchen allows you to witness the chefs skillfully working at the woks, while the lively bar area offers an array of colourful and inviting beverages to explore. Indulge in the culinary delights with their iconic 'OG' Chang's Lettuce Wraps and a tantalizing array of signature dishes like Dynamite Prawns, Chang's Spicy Chicken and Kung Pao Chicken, all paying homage to Cecelia Chiang's culinary legacy. Setting a new standard for Indian diners, P.F. Chang's in India stands out by offering a range of vegetarian and Jain options besides an entire new range of sushi delights, steamed dumplings and entrees. I was particularly impressed by the exquisite flavours of the Asparagus and Peas Dumplings, the boldness of the Singaporean street-style noodles, and the unique twist of the Samba Roll. Noteworthy is the brand's dedication to healthy dining by abstaining from MSG in their dishes. Complete your gastronomic journey with



demonstrated through signature dishes such as the Spicy Kimchi Fried Rice, and Mongolian Tenderloin. Describing the process akin to a graceful dance rather than mere cooking, the precision and skill involved make it a culinary poetry in motion. Teetotalers should go for the interesting carafes like the Zen Garden Passion fruit Mojito. However, for those seeking a lift in spirits, the restaurant will be offering an enticing cocktail menu. Featuring a range of classics like Margaritas, and innovative mixes of gin and whiskey, there's a libation to delight every taste bud and complement the Asian cuisine perfectly. Standout options include the likes of Midnight in Shanghai and Japanese Old Fashioned. Mittal highlights that the experience transcends typical Asian dining; it's a hub for memorable celebrations. Whether it's a milestone like a 50th birthday or a simple gathering to honour a friend's career move, the restaurant elevates every occasion with a touch of elegance. Expect golden table mats, specialized chopsticks, and unique candle holders that add a luxurious flair to your dining experience.

## FACT BOX

P.F. Chang's, Gurgaon Where? P.F. Chang's, Unit No. 6, Ground Floor, DLF Cyber City, DLF Phase 2, Sector 24, Gurugram

Timings: 12 pm to 1 am

Reservations: +918655894667 or +918655894668



# Capo Pizza Opens Cloud Kitchens in Delhi and Gurugram



Capo Pizza, renowned for its commitment to crafting authentic gourmet pizzas with a modern twist, is proud to announce the launch of its cloud kitchens in Delhi and Gurgaon. As the demand for high-quality and convenient dining experiences continues to grow, Capo Pizza is poised to deliver the true taste of Italy directly to the doorsteps of pizza enthusiasts across the region. The new cloud kitchens in Delhi and Gurgaon mark an exciting milestone for Capo Pizza, further expanding its reach and accessibility to urban professionals, families, and food enthusiasts who appreciate the finest in Italian cuisine. With a focus on premium ingredients, expert craftsmanship, and exceptional customer service, Capo Pizza aims to redefine the pizza delivery experience in the region.

eco-friendly packaging and practices to minimize its environmental footprint and contribute to a healthier planet. To celebrate the launch of its cloud kitchens in Delhi and Gurgaon, Capo Pizza is offering special promotions and discounts for a limited time. Customers can place their orders conveniently through the Capo Pizza website or popular food delivery platforms.

**ABOUT CAPO PIZZA** Capo Pizza is all about crafting authentic gourmet pizzas with a modern twist. Their cloud kitchens are situated in Delhi and Gurgaon, bringing the true taste of Italy directly to pizza enthusiasts' doorsteps. Their menu features a diverse selection of pizzas, from classic Margherita to gourmet options like Pesto margherita pizza. Each pizza is carefully crafted by skilled chefs who are dedicated to delivering a gastronomic experience that delights the senses and leaves a lasting impression. In addition to its commitment to quality and authenticity, Capo Pizza is also focused on sustainability, employing



By PAWAN SONI

Old Delhi is a foodie paradise, especially in areas like Chandni Chowk and Jama Masjid, where hidden gems await. I have been exploring food walks in the area long before it became popular. During Navratras, my friend Rajesh Tara led us to some vegetarian places, and I blindly followed. When you frequent a place, you tend to stick to your favourites. Each bylane in Old Delhi offers something new; you just need to be open-minded.



Here are some places we tried:

**Omni Kachodi Waala:** An old shop claiming almost 70 years of history. Open only on Sundays, the crispy kachodi with delicious *aloo sabji* is a must-try. Priced at ₹15 per kachodi, they offer Aloo and Dal varieties as well.

**Lotan ke Choley Kulche:** Long queues for its spicy choley served with soft kulcha. Adjust spice levels wisely, as it can be intense. They offer *choley ka paani* at an additional cost of Rs10 per glass, or with butter at ₹20, which adds the required flavour.

**Standard Sweets:** A proper restaurant serving small *bhatura-sized pooris* with *aloo-choley sabji* mix. Unique for adding a kofta in the sabji, priced at Rs130, it ss a delicious treat, albeit a bit expensive compared to the others.

**Ram Swaroop Halwai:** Known for *bedmi poori* and *nagori-halwa*, this shop may be popular for pricing but less for taste. Priced at ₹20 for 2 *pooris* or Rs15 for 2 pieces of *nagori-halwa*, the *pooris* might taste a bit off with the burnt oil and the quality is not as good as Shyam Sweets.

**Jain Sandwich:** Closed on Sundays, this shop serves fruit sandwiches, perfect for the summer with sliced bread loaded with butter, mango chunks, and dry fruits. There are many more shops like *Kuremal ki Kulfi*, *Ashok ki Chaat*, and *Bade Miyan ki Kheer*, among others. These are just the vegetarian options. Email me your favorite places, and I'll include them in the next article, along with some non-vegetarian outlets in the area.

(Author is a food critic and founder of the Big F Awards. He can be reached at Pawan.Soni@indianfoodfreak.com)



