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BUMRAH ON MENTORING INDIA'S YOUNG PACERS

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Now, count your blessings on June 4

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

The largest festival of democracy concluded on Saturday that began on April 19, with 60 per cent voters turnout after the seventh round of polls on 57 seats, including Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh from where Prime Minister Narendra Modi is seeking a third consecutive term in the Lok Sabha. The voter turnout percentage is likely to be upgraded by the Election Commission.

As per the Election Commission's voter turnout app till 7 pm, West Bengal took back the lead with almost 70 per cent voter turnout, while Bihar continues to be at the lowest with 49.12 per cent voting turnout. Modi's constituency Varanasi recorded 54.83 per cent voting. Jharkhand recorded 68.16 per cent voting, Himachal Pradesh 66.91 per cent, Odisha 62.55 per cent, Punjab 55.58 per cent, Uttar Pradesh 55.53 per cent and Chandigarh 62.80 per cent.

Violence broke out between TMC and BJP supporters in Sandeshkhali in West Bengal, and complaints of EVM glitches and rigging at some booths were lodged. Barring incidents of clashes in Odisha, voting was almost peaceful.

The counting of votes will be taken up on June 4. In Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim, the counting for the



Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the Vivekananda Rock Memorial in Kanyakumari

Assembly polls will be held on June 2.

Modi also appealed to people to exercise their franchise. "Together, let's make our democracy more vibrant and participative," the Prime Minister wrote on X. "Today is the final phase of the 2024 Lok Sabha elections. As 57 seats across 8 States and UTs go to the polls, calling upon the voters to turnout in large numbers and vote. I hope young and women

voters exercise their franchise in record numbers," he said. The counting of votes on June 4 will decide how close the BJP or NDA finishes its target of "Ab ki baar 400 paar". As the exit polls numbers trickle in, multiple pollsters are predicting a return of the Narendra Modi-led NDA Government, winning over 350 seats, with the Opposition's INDIA Bloc managing somewhere between 125 and 150. After

the exit polls result, BJP chief JP Nadda exuded confidence that his party will win more than 370 Lok Sabha seats and the NDA more than 400. After the meeting with its alliance parties, Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge claimed INDIA Bloc parties will get more than 295 seats. The BJP is hoping for a historic third term for Modi. The 2024 Lok Sabha elections witnessed how Modi himself used 'Brand Modi', during the campaign

while the Opposition also chanted 'Brand Modi' to corner him. The BJP carried out a sustained campaign in southern States besides its traditional stronghold in the Hindi heartland. The INDIA Bloc also made a determined effort to garner votes to make a dent in BJP's backyard and prevent the saffron party from gaining seats in its citadel.

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Not '400 paar' but NDA head, shoulders ahead

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi in all likelihood is set to retain power for a third straight term, as several exit polls on Saturday predicted BJP-led NDA's huge win in the Lok Sabha polls.

The ruling alliance in all likelihood will open its account in Tamil Nadu and Kerala and sweep Karnataka but may see a fall in its tally in States like Bihar, Rajasthan and Haryana, according to these pollsters. The Republic TV-P Marq poll claimed that the ruling alliance will win up to 359 seats and the Opposition INDIA Bloc will bag 154 seats in the 543-member Lok Sabha. The Republic TV-Matrise poll gave 353-368 seats to the NDA and 118-133 seats to the Opposition. The Jan Ki Baat poll gave 362-392 seats to the ruling NDA and 141-161 to the Opposition alliance.

The India TV-CNX gave them 371-401 and 109-139 seats respectively, while the corresponding tally predicted by News Nation was 342-378 and 153-169.

A few other exit polls, including those from Axis My India and Today's Chanakya, were yet to forecast the full results till

EXIT POLL 2024



Table with columns: Source, NDA, INDI Alliance, Others. Rows include NDTV, India TV, Jan Ki Baat, News Nation, Republic Bharat-Matrise, Republic TV-P MARQ, CNN News 18.

filing of the report.

In the 2019 polls, the BJP won 303 seats, while the NDA tally was 353.

Congress had bagged 53 seats and its allies 38. The INDIA Bloc was formed by Opposition parties to take on the BJP in the Lok Sabha elections.

After the seventh and last phase of voting ended on Saturday, Modi exuded confidence that people have voted in record numbers to re-elect the NDA Government and said the

"opportunistic INDI Alliance" failed to strike a chord with the voters who rejected their "regressive politics".

BJP president J P Nadda, however, asserted that people have voted for a capable, powerful, developed and self-reliant India and to put aside appeasement, nepotism and corruption, exuding confidence that his party will win more than 370 Lok Sabha seats and the NDA over 400. The counting of votes will take place on June 4.

Kejriwal back in jail today, decision on bail on June 5

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal will have to return to Tihar jail as the Rouse Avenue court reserved the order, observing that the application was for grant of interim bail on medical grounds and not for the extension of the interim bail granted by the Supreme Court.

During the proceedings, the Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Saturday opposed an application moved by Kejriwal before a court here seeking interim bail in a money laundering case related to the alleged Delhi excise policy scam. Special Judge Kaveri Bawjea deferred the bail petition after hearing both sides. After the judge reserved the order, Kejriwal's counsel Hariharan urged the court to pass the order on Saturday itself, considering that he has to surrender on Sunday.

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BLOOD SAMPLE SWITCH

Mother of Porsche's minor driver arrested

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

In a fresh arrest in the sensational Porsche hit-and-run case, the Pune police on Saturday took into custody the mother of the minor accused who ran over two techies in an alleged inebriated state, for allegedly giving her blood sample to swap with that of the 17-year-old boy.

Confirming the arrest of the mother of the minor accused, Pune Police Commissioner Amitesh Kumar said the accident investigation had revealed that the minor's blood sample was replaced with that of his mother. The sample was replaced to prove that the minor accused was not in a drunken condition at the time of mishap. With the latest development, four members from the family of the minor accused — the 17-year-old boy himself, his father Vishal Agrawal, grandfather Surendra Kumar Agarwal and now the mother — have been arrested ever since the mishap took place in the small hours of May 19.

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Cong assured of 295+ seats for INDIA bloc

DEEPAK KUMAR JHA ■ NEW DELHI

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge on Saturday claimed that INDIA Bloc coalition will register a win over 295 plus Lok Sabha seats in the seven-phase general elections 2024 that concluded on Saturday.

Kharge, along with top leaders of the Bloc including former Congress chief Sonia Gandhi, met at the residence of Congress president to discuss their strategy for the counting of votes on June 4. "INDIA Bloc will get a big majority, we have a people's survey with us," Kharge said after the Opposition meeting. He said the parties have also sought time from the Election Commission of India on Sunday for steps to be taken during counting of votes besides having conveyed their workers not to leave the counting hall till all formalities are over on June 4. Senior leaders of the Congress, Samajwadi Party,



Congress leaders Mallikarjun Kharge, Sonia Gandhi, National Conference leader Farooq Abdullah, CPI(M)'s Sitaram Yechury, Samajwadi Party leader Akhilesh Yadav, RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav, AAP leaders Arvind Kejriwal and Sanjay Singh, CPI's D Raja during the INDIA Bloc's meeting in New Delhi on Friday

CPI-M, CPI, DMK, JMM, AAP, RJD, Shiv Sena (UBT) and NCP (Sharad Pawar) held discussions, even as the last phase of polling was underway. Opposition leaders who attended the meeting included Sharad Pawar, Akhilesh Yadav, Tejashwi Yadav, Anil Desai, Sitaram

Yechury, Arvind Kejriwal, Bhagwat Mann, Sanjay Singh and Raghav Chadha, Champai Soren, Kalpana Soren, TR Baalu, Farooq Abdullah, D Raja and Mukesh Sahani. DMK was represented by party treasurer

and leader of DMK's Parliamentary Party, Thiru. T.R. Baalu. Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, who was also present in the meeting, said INDIA Bloc is getting 295+ seats and the BJP will win around 220 seats and the

NDA Bloc will win 235 seats. "INDIA alliance will form a strong and stable Government on its own. (The PM face) will be decided on June 4..." said Kejriwal who formed an alliance with Congress elsewhere including Delhi except for Punjab where the parties fought against each other. Samajwadi Party Chief Akhilesh Yadav said in Uttar Pradesh, all seats of the BJP will be lost and the INDIA Bloc will win the most seats. "There was an earthquake of unemployment, price rise, GST, CBI, ED and Income Tax. All of these earthquakes will end," Yadav said after the same meeting. While former Bihar Dy CM and RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav too exuded confidence of securing 295+ in the Lok Sabha polls. "INDIA (alliance) is winning. We will decide later (on PM's face)... Their (BJP's) film of '400 paar' became a flop in the first phase itself," said Tejashwi.

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THE PIONEER REPORTS FROM GROUND ZERO

UTTAR PRADESH

VIRENDRA NATH BHATT ■ LUCKNOW

An estimated 55.60 per cent voter turnout was recorded till 6 pm in the seventh and final phase of Lok Sabha elections in Uttar Pradesh on Saturday. Poll officials said the turnout figure could increase as data was being compiled. The Election Commission of India will release the final data of voting by 5 pm on Sunday.

Voting ended at 6 pm sealing the fate of 144 candidates in 13 constituencies of the state, including Varanasi, from where Prime Minister Narendra Modi is seeking a third consecutive term in the Lok Sabha. As voting concluded in the Lok Sabha elections on Saturday, Uttar Pradesh will be in focus. The outcome in UP will be key to the '400 Paar' target the Bharatiya Janata Party has set for the National Democratic Alliance's return. The bypoll for the Duddhi (ST) assembly constituency



in Sonbhadra district was also held on Saturday where 54.48 per cent voter turnout was recorded. Six candidates are contesting from the Duddhi assembly seat that fell vacant after BJP MLA Ram Dular's disqualification following his conviction in a rape case. UP sends 80 members to the lower house of Parliament and the polling was spread over all seven phases of the Lok Sabha elections.

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HIMACHAL PRADESH

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ SHIMLA

A voter turnout of 66.56 per cent was recorded till 5 pm on Saturday in the four Lok Sabha constituencies of Himachal Pradesh where polling was held in the last phase of the general election, officials said here. They said the Kangra parliamentary seat recorded 64.07 per cent polling, Mandi 69.07 per cent, Hamirpur 65.90 per cent and the Shimla (SC) seat 67.50 per cent. Of the six Assembly constituencies where bypolls are being held simultaneously, Dharamshala recorded a turnout of 66.27 per cent, Lahaul and Spiti 73.72 per cent, Sujampur 63 per cent, Barsar 50 per cent, Gagret 68.28 per cent and Kulehar 71.40 per cent.

The BJP has filed a complaint against Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu with the chief electoral officer of Himachal Pradesh alleging a violation of the model code of conduct. The complaint said Sukhu wore a scarf of the National Students' Union of India - the student wing of the Congress - while voting in Nadaun which was objectionable and demanded action against the CM and the election agent. In Chamba district's Churah subdivision, residents of the Makhana-Chachul area falling under the Sanval gram panchayat and Juri under Chadra gram panchayat boycotted the Lok Sabha polls over road connectivity.

PUNJAB

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ CHANDIGARH

Punjab saw a voter turnout of 55.20 per cent till 5 pm for the 13 Lok Sabha constituencies while polling remained peaceful on Saturday, said the officials. In the lone parliamentary seat of Chandigarh, the voter turnout was at 62.80 per cent. The polling came to an end at 6 pm but the turnout figure will rise as there were several people in queues waiting for their turn to cast votes. In 2019, voter turnout in Punjab was 65.96 per cent and 70.62 per cent in the Union Territory (UT) Chandigarh. Among the 13 Lok Sabha constituencies in Punjab, Bathinda recorded a turnout of 59.25, followed by Gurdaspur with 58.34 per cent, according to the Election Commission data.

Among the prominent faces in the fray were BJP nominee and four-time MP Preneet Kaur, who is seeking re-election from the Patiala parliamentary constituency; and Harsimrat Badal, a three-time MP; and BJP's Parmpal Kaur Sidhu, a former IAS officer, who are trying their luck from Bathinda. Former Chief Minister and Congress candidate Charanjit Singh Channi and BJP nominee Sushil Rinku were in the fray from the Jalandhar reserved seat.

ODISHA

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ BHUBANESWAR

Barring a few incidents of clashes, polling was peaceful in six Lok Sabha constituencies and 42 Assembly segments in Odisha with a voter turnout of over 62 per cent recorded till 5 pm on Saturday, an EC official said. Sixty-six candidates are in the fray in the Lok Sabha seats, while 394 nominees are contesting the Assembly segments in the fourth and last phase of simultaneous polls in the eastern State.

Key candidates in this phase include Odisha Assembly Speaker Pramila Mallik, Government Chief Whip Prashant Kumar Mudili, and State Ministers — Sudam Marndi, Ashwini Patra, Pritiranjjan Ghadai, Atanu S Nayak, Pratap Deb and T K Behera.

Four sitting MPs — Pratap Sarangi from Balasore, Manju Lata Mandal from Bhadrak, Sarmistha Sethi from Jajpur and Rajashree Mallick from Jagatsinghpur — are in the fray in their respective seats. A polling official and a voter died of suspected heatstroke in the State, he said. Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) NB Dhal said, "Polling was peaceful in 10,882 booths, barring a few reports of EVM glitches, which were resolved."

WEST BENGAL

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ DIAMOND HARBOUR/BHANGAR/KOLKATA

Farce is a small word to express what happened at Diamond Harbour in the name of elections, said BJP and CPI(M) candidates Abhijit Das and Pratik ur Rehman contesting against Trinamool Congress general secretary Abhishek Banerjee even as reports of rampant violence surfaced in from most of the nine constituencies that went to polls in the seventh and final phase of polling on Saturday. Rate and frequency of intermittent violence and alleged booth capture was such that by 2 pm the Election Commission of India was flooded with about 1,800 complaints with most number of them 450 each pouring in from Diamond Harbour and Dum Dum alone. The EC sources said they would consider re-polling some booths after going through the complaints. Amidst stray violence, allegations and counter



allegations, Bengal witnessed comparatively sluggish polling that stopped at 69.9 per cent at 5 pm. The EC sources however said the polling percentage could go up by a few percentage points till 6 pm as there were long queues of voters outside the polling booths in many places. Reports trickling in showed about 70.41 per cent voters had cast their votes at elite Jadavpur whereas 67.60 per cent voters had exercised their franchise at Dum Dum while 72.87 per cent people had voted at Diamond Harbour.

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# Dust storm, cloudy sky bring down Capital temperature

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi experienced a sudden shift in weather on Saturday afternoon as a dust storm swept through the city accompanied by a cloudy sky bringing in respite in the national Capital which has been reeling under severe heatwave conditions and temperatures hovering around 50 degrees Celsius for the last five days.

Narela, which borders Haryana, recorded the highest temperature in the city with the maximum temperature recorded at 46.2 degrees Celsius, 6 degrees above the normal. Pusa also recorded a temperature above 45 degrees Celsius with the maximum temperature recorded at 45.2 degrees Celsius, 5 degrees above the normal. Barring Narela and Pusa, other stations showed the maximum temperature recorded below 45 degrees. The data was not available for the areas of Mungeshpur and Delhi University on the India Meteorological Department (IMD) website.

While the city experienced temperature above 45 degrees Celsius for consecutive days, Delhi's primary weather station Safdarjung observatory recorded 44.2 degrees Celsius as its maximum temperature, 4.2 degrees Celsius above the normal. The minimum temperature settled at 30.2 degrees Celsius, 3.3 degrees above the normal. The humidity level was recorded at 28 per cent at 5:30 pm.



IMD had predicted earlier that due to western disturbances, the national capital might experience a change in weather, including cloudy skies, a dust storm or a thunderstorm with very light rain accompanied by gusty winds. For Sunday, the department has again predicted thunderstorms with rainfall. Till June 7, IMD has predicted maximum temperature below 45 degrees Celsius and also strong surface winds during day time. People were seen rejoicing amid the rain that saved them from the horrors of heat. Children were seen dancing and playing amid the rainfall. A 10 year old girl in Mungeshpur rejoiced in the rain while playing with her friends bare feet. "This is the first time we have come out to

play in the afternoon during our summer vacations," she said. Delhiites have been facing water shortage and power cuts amid the scorching sun. Many in the areas of north-west Delhi like Mungeshpur and Najafgarh, that borders Haryana, are the first to take the blow of heat as winds rush from Rajasthan to these areas. "This rain has brought some relief, otherwise we were sitting without any light," said a 40 year old resident of Najafgarh. The maximum temperature recorded at Jafarpur stood at 44.5 degrees Celsius, Najafgarh at 44.6 degrees Celsius, Ayanagar at 44.4 degrees Celsius, Palam at 44.1 degrees Celsius, Ridge at 44.5 degrees Celsius and Pitampura at 44.7 degrees Celsius.

# UP Police advisory to prevent fire accidents amid heatwave

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Uttar Pradesh Police in Gautam Buddha Nagar district on Saturday issued essential guidelines to authorities, emphasising operational equipment management in critical facilities in light of the prevailing heatwave and fire accidents linked to it.

The advisory comes in compliance with the directives from the Additional Chief Secretary (Home), the Director General of Police (UP), and the Director General of Fire Services and Emergency Services (UP) during a video conference held on Friday.

According to the police advisory, schools, colleges, hospitals, ICUs and other important establishments should have standby equipment in operational mode and used alternately to prevent overheating and potential fire hazards. It also highlighted the importance of proper waste management.

"Societies and establishments must exercise caution and avoid burning waste, as this can lead to extensive fires, significantly increasing the risk of injury and property damage," it stated.

"Fire and electrical audits are crucial in preventing accidents. Gaming zones, major commercial establishments, hotels, and hospitals should conduct comprehensive fire and electrical audits. This includes inspecting electrical wiring and load capacities to prevent short circuits and replacing old, deteriorated wiring," it added. Air conditioning usage was another key area of focus in the advisory, which comes close on the heels of multiple incidents



of fire in Noida due to an "AC blast". "Air conditioners should not be operated continuously. Instead, they should be switched off at regular intervals and regularly serviced to prevent overheating and subsequent fire risks," it stated. The advisory noted that public awareness campaigns play a vital role in fire prevention. It directed officials to conduct fire safety awareness campaigns on social media and make educational videos on handling fires caused by petroleum products, gas cylinders, foam, plastics, and other flammable materials. "Ensuring the operational status of firefighting equipment is critical. All firefighting equipment in hospitals, high-rise buildings, and critical establishments must be fully operational. Additionally, a sufficient number of trained personnel should be available to handle any fire emergencies," it added. The advisory stated that coordination among various departments is essential for effective emergency response and stressed the need for enhanced coordination and communication among the fire department, traffic police, UP 112 PRV, local police, and medical services. "This ensures clear routes for fire tenders and

prompt emergency response," it noted.

At least two fire tenders should be deployed to any fire incident to ensure continuous firefighting operations. This redundancy is crucial if one vehicle runs out of water. The identification and maintenance of water resources are necessary for effective firefighting. The fire department should identify and ensure access to adequate water resources.

It said that keeping an updated list of fire hydrants is vital and that each officer and employee should have this list, and any inactive hydrants should be made operational immediately. The advisory directed senior officers to educate owners and managers of significant and fire-sensitive establishments about fire safety, emphasising that these individuals should be aware of the role of police and fire services in emergencies.

"Regular review and improvement of response times for fire tenders are essential. This practice should follow the protocols similar to UP-112 vehicle response times," it added. Immediate action upon receiving fire reports is crucial. Senior officers should prioritise and initiate firefighting actions without delay.

Preventing vehicle overheating is important to avoid potential fires, it stated, advising against continuous vehicle operation and recommended regular metre checks and allowing vehicles to cool down in the shade. Police also warned against carelessly discarding lit cigarettes or 'bidsis', as they pose significant fire risks, calling for close monitoring to prevent such hazards.

# BJP leader sends ambulance to Kejriwal, cops stop vehicle



STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Senior BJP leader Vijay Goel Son Saturday sent an ambulance to take Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal to hospital for medical tests after the AAP leader claimed he might be suffering from some serious ailments. Kejriwal moved the Supreme Court on May 26 seeking extension of his interim bail by seven days on grounds that he has to undergo some medical tests, including a PET-CT scan. He claimed in his plea that he lost seven kg in the jail and that his ketone levels are "too high", a possible indicator of a serious ailment.

The police, however, stopped the ambulance and Goel en route to the chief minister's official residence in Civil Lines here. The top court had on May 10 granted 21-day interim bail to Kejriwal, who was arrested in a money laundering case linked to the alleged excise policy scam, to enable him to campaign for the Lok Sabha polls. It had directed that Kejriwal, who is also the AAP national convenor, shall surrender on June 2, a day after the last phase

of the seven-phase polls. Goel alleged that Kejriwal was "creating drama" by citing health issues to gain people's sympathy.

"This ambulance was to take Kejriwal to any hospital where all his tests can be done within two to four hours," he told reporters. The former Union minister said the chief minister should stop "drama" and go with him for tests if he was concerned about his health. Previously, AAP leader and minister Atishi in a press conference had claimed that Kejriwal lost seven kg and his ketone level was also high and doctors said it could be symptom of problem with his kidneys or even cancer.

A Delhi court is likely to hear later in the day an application moved by the chief minister seeking interim bail. The Supreme Court registry on Wednesday refused urgent listing of his interim bail by seven days for undergoing the medical tests, saying since Kejriwal was given liberty to move the trial court for regular bail, the plea was not maintainable.

# Chronology of events leading to Kejriwal's bail plea

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Following is the chronology of events in the excise policy-linked money laundering case in which a Delhi court on Saturday reserved for June 5 its order on Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's interim bail plea.

- \* November 2021: Delhi government introduces new excise policy.
- \* July 2022: Lt Governor VK Saxena recommends Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) probe into alleged irregularities in formulation and implementation of policy.
- \* August 2022: CBI and Enforcement Directorate (ED) register cases in connection with alleged irregularities.
- \* September 2022: Delhi government scraps excise policy.
- \* October 30, 2023: ED sends first summons to Kejriwal in money laundering case for appearance on November 2.
- \* December 2023: ED issues two more summonses to Kejriwal for questioning on



- December 21 and January 3.
- \* January 2024: Two more summonses sent to Kejriwal by ED for January 18 and February 2.
- \* February 3: ED files complaint against Kejriwal before magisterial court for skipping summonses.
- \* February 7: Magisterial court summons Kejriwal on ED complaint.

- \* February: ED issues summonses for appearance of Kejriwal on February 19, February 26 and March 4.
- \* March 7: Magisterial court issues summons to Kejriwal on ED's fresh complaint against him for evading summonses.
- \* March 15: Sessions court refuses to stay proceedings against Kejriwal for skipping summonses.

- \* March 16: Magisterial court grants bail to Kejriwal in ED's complaints against him for skipping summonses after he appears before it.
- \* March 21: Delhi HC refuses to grant protection from arrest to Kejriwal on his petition challenging summonses issued to him. ED arrests Kejriwal shortly after.
- \* March 23: Kejriwal moves Delhi HC challenging his arrest by ED and trial court order remanding him in agency's custody.
- \* April 9: HC dismisses Kejriwal's petition against arrest by ED.
- \* April 10: Kejriwal moves SC challenging HC order upholding his arrest by ED.
- \* April 15: SC seeks response from ED by April 24 on Kejriwal's plea challenging his arrest.
- \* April 24: ED tells SC that Kejriwal led investigating officer through his conduct "to form the satisfaction" that he is guilty of money laundering.

- \* April 27: Kejriwal tells SC that his "illegal arrest" in case constitutes an unprecedented assault on tenets of democracy based on "free and fair elections" and "federalism".
- \* April 29: SC questions non-appearance of Kejriwal before ED despite repeated summonses for recording of statements and asks if he can challenge arrest on grounds of non-recording of his version.
- \* May 3: SC says it may consider granting interim bail to Kejriwal in view of ongoing Lok Sabha elections.
- \* May 8: SC says it will pronounce order on interim bail to Kejriwal on May 10.
- \* May 10: SC grants interim bail to Kejriwal till June 1 to campaign in Lok Sabha elections, says he will have to surrender and go back to jail on June 2.
- \* May 30: Kejriwal moves Delhi court seeking interim bail.
- \* June 1: Court reserved for June 5 order on Kejriwal's interim bail plea.

# BJP slams Kejriwal for seeking bail on grounds of health

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi BJP has hit out at the Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Saturday for seeking bail on the grounds of health, asking him to 'stop playing his sickness drama' and return back to Tihar jail on Sunday after campaigning, as ordered by the Supreme Court while granting the AAP supreme interim bail on May 11. Delhi BJP President Virendra Sachdeva said, "It is regrettable to see Arvind Kejriwal who has in best health campaigned during the last 20 days after getting bail now claiming to be seriously ill and seeking medical bail."

Expressing shock over seeing Kejriwal, who has been widely campaigning in scorching heat, he said, "It is shocking that he was campaigning perfectly fine and now is claiming to be sick before the court of



law and general public. It's strange that a man who actively campaigns in the public eye before the media wants the same media to run his fake illness news." Asking him to surrender before the magistrate if the AAP convenor has an iota of ethics left in him, Sachdeva said, "Arvind Kejriwal got his bail on the condition of surrendering on 2nd

June but once out he has tried to get the orders changed and is shamelessly fighting in every Court possible to get the bail extended. If iota of moral value is left in Arvind Kejriwal then he should stop playing illness and legal melodrama and surrender before the concerned duty magistrate early tomorrow morning."

# SC to hear plea seeking direction to Haryana to release surplus water

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court is scheduled to hear on Monday a Delhi government plea seeking a direction to Haryana to release surplus water provided by Himachal Pradesh to the national capital to mitigate its ongoing water crisis.

According to the cause list of the top court, a vacation bench of justices P K Mishra and K V Viswanathan is likely to hear the matter. The plea filed by Delhi's Water Minister Atishi has made the Centre, the BJP-governed Haryana and the Congress-ruled Himachal Pradesh parties to the petition, saying that access to water is essential for survival and is one of the basic human rights. "Access to water is one of the basic human rights of an individual. Not only is water essential for sustenance, but access to water also forms an essential component of the guarantee of dignity and a quality of life guaranteed under Article 21 of the Constitution," the plea said. "The current water crisis, which may only get worse given peak summers and ongoing water shortage, violates the right to a dignified and quality life of the people of the NCT of Delhi, who are unable to access even adequate clean drinking water," it added.

The plea has sought a direction to the Haryana government for immediate and continuous



release of water at the Wazirabad barrage, including but not limited to the full surplus water provided by the Respondent No. 2 (Himachal Pradesh) for the National Capital Territory (NCT) of Delhi, in order to mitigate the water crisis in the NCT of Delhi. The city government said it was constrained to file the plea on account of acute shortage of water being faced by the citizens due to the ongoing severe heat conditions in north India, particularly Delhi. "The record-high temperatures and heat wave in Delhi, which have resulted in maximum temperature rising up to around 50 degrees Celsius at some places, have caused an extraordinary and excessive surge in water demand in the city. "As a result, the national cap-

ital is dealing with a water shortage which has led to frequent supply cuts in many parts of the NCT, and has disrupted the daily life of the ordinary residents, the plea said. The AAP government said it has taken all measures to ensure optimisation, rationing and targeted supply of water, yet the shortage remains acute and it is clear by all indicators that the NCT of Delhi is in dire need of additional water. It said all treatment plants in the national capital are treating and supplying the water being sent. It is necessary to augment the water supply to address the present crisis, it added. The city government said it has sought the direction as a one-time measure and not filed the plea for resolving any outstanding inter-state water dispute.

# Mungeshpur weather station sensor working with three per cent error: Rijiju

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Union Minister of Earth Sciences Kiren Rijiju has said a team from the weather department investigated the Delhi Mungeshpur weather station and found that a sensor there was working with a three degrees Celsius error. Union Minister Kiren Rijiju on Saturday clarified that the weather station in Delhi which recorded 52.9 degrees Celsius on May 29 was not functioning correctly due to a sensor error. In a post on X, the Union Minister of Earth Sciences said a team of the India Meteorological Department (IMD) investigated Delhi's Mungeshpur weather station, which recorded the city's highest ever temperature, and "found a 3 degrees Celsius sensor error".

"On 29th May 2024, Mungeshpur's AWS reported a temperature of 52.9°C, our @Indiametdept team quickly investigated and found a 3°C sensor error. Corrective measures are now in place. Thanks to our brilliant scientists for their relentless dedication as together, we're making sure you get the most accurate weather information," Rijiju said in a post on X. The India Meteorological Department (IMD) on Saturday said the temperature reading of 52.9 degrees Celsius by an automatic weather station (AWS) at Mungeshpur in



northwest Delhi was due to a "malfunctioning sensor" and said such devices deployed for weather observations will be examined.

The weather office had dispatched a team of experts to Mungeshpur after an AWS deployed there recorded a maximum temperature of 52.9 degrees Celsius on May 29 to examine the device for errors, if any. "The temperature sensor of AWS Mungeshpur is found to report about three degrees Celsius higher maximum temperature than the maximum temperature reported by the standard instrument," the IMD said and attributed the readings to "malfunctioning of the sensor" of the AWS.

"We will examine AWS, course corrections, if any, will be carried out on an individual basis," said IMD Director General Mrutyunjay Mohapatra, adding that the faulty sensor of the Mungeshpur AWS would be replaced in a few days.

# Massive fire breaks out in Noida IT company building



STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A massive fire broke out in an AIT company in Uttar Pradesh's Noida Sector 63 on Saturday afternoon. According to officials, the fire broke out due to a blast in the indoor unit of an air conditioner. Chief Fire Officer Pradeep Kumar Choubey informed that no casualty has happened. "No person suffered any injuries in the fire that broke out on the second floor of the company's building around 2 pm," Choubey stated.

Six water tenders were pressed into service to douse off the fire. "When the fire service unit were alerted about the blaze, six water tenders were immediately sent to the spot. Additionally, four more vehicles were sent to meet any requirement. However, the fire was doused using the service of

three vehicles only. The fire broke out due to a blast in the indoor unit of an AC in the company," the CFO said. He said some company workers were on duty at the time of the incident but nobody suffered any injuries in the episode. In a viral video on the social media platform X (formerly Twitter), fire gutted the upper floors of the building, leaving it charred. An "AC blast" generally refers to an explosion or fire involving an air conditioning (AC) unit. Such incidents can occur due to various factors, often related to electrical or mechanical failures, according to officials. The officials have also urged people to not run their ACs continuously for long durations in order to prevent any mishap in the prevailing extreme hot weather conditions.

BJP will win more than 370 LS seats, says Nadda

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI People have voted for a capable, powerful, developed and self-reliant India and to put aside appeasement, nepotism and corruption, BJP chief JP Nadda said on Saturday, exuding confidence that his party will win



more than 370 Lok Sabha seats and the NDA more than

400. His remarks came on a day when polling was held for the seventh and last phase of the general elections. Counting of votes will be conducted on June 4. In a statement, Nadda thanked Prime Minister Narendra Modi for making this "festival of democracy" a success for the BJP. "His efforts are definitely yielding results," the BJP chief said. Nadda also thanked BJP leaders, including Union ministers Amit Shah, Rajnath Singh and Nitin Gadkari, and the "crores of party workers" for their contributions during the elections.

Modi ends 45 hours long meditation in Kanyakumari

PTI ■ KANYAKUMARI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday concluded his 45-hour-long meditation at the Vivekananda Rock Memorial here and paid floral tributes to Tamil saint poet Thiruvalluvar. On conclusion of his dhyana session, Modi, clad in white, visited the 133-ft statue of Thiruvalluvar, located next to the rock memorial and placed a huge garland there marking his tribute. He arrived at the statue complex by a ferry service and later reached the shore using the service.



The Prime Minister left by a helicopter for Thiruvananthapuram and from there, he left for Delhi. On his arrival here on May 30, the PM prayed at the Bhagavathy Amman temple and later arrived at the Vivekananda Rock Memorial. During his stay at the memorial, the PM did meditation and also performed 'Surya Arghya' at the time of sunrise, a ritual associated with spiritual practice. Modi was clad in saffron while he was engaged in meditation at the Vivekananda Rock Memorial. The PM's visit to Kanyakumari to perform

meditation evoked opposition from INDIA bloc constituents including Tamil Nadu's ruling DMK. The opposition was to the broadcast of meditation in view of last phase of polling on June 1. In view of the PM's stay, senior DMK leader and Water Resources Minister Duraimurugan on May 31 alleged that tourists were not allowed in that area which had seriously affected the local businesses and 'we have pointed out that this is not good.' Tamil Nadu Congress Committee president K Selvaperumthurai on Saturday told reporters that those doing meditation do it peacefully

Combined passing out parade of Agniveervayu trainees held at Tambaram

PTI ■ CHENNAI



A total of 1,983 Agniveervayu trainees including 234 women of other than science stream, successfully passed out from the Mechanical Training Institute (MTI) and Workshop Training Institute (WTI) here on Saturday. The grand event held at Air Force Station, Tambaram, marked the successful culmination of 22 weeks of rigorous and transformative military training at both training institutes. Air Vice Marshal Aman Kapur, Senior Officer-in-Charge Administration, Central Air Command, was the Reviewing Officer and chief guest for the impressive combined Passing Out Parade. Various activities including blindfold stripping and assembling, arms drill, physical training display, drill by Agniveervayu team, yoga, continuity drill without arms

and unarmed combat drill were held on the occasion. The Reviewing Officer congratulated all trainees passing out and felicitated the award winners who had performed exceedingly well in various fields. In his address, he urged all trainees to hone their skills further, enhance professional knowledge and develop an ecosystem to learn so that they can contribute towards aerospace safety and organisational objectives in defence of the nation, a release here said. He pointed out that the IAF has been witnessing major changes in operational philosophy and is on the path of transforming itself into a vibrant strategic force of great calibre. The officer called upon the Agniveervayu to keep themselves physically fit, and mentally agile and to uphold the core values of the Indian Air Force.

PUBLIC NOTICE

The general public is informed that the cars with the following car numbers which have completed their life Petrol Cars 15 Years Diesel Cars 10 Years. The MCD drive was confiscated by Pine View Technology Pvt Ltd and has not been claimed by anyone till now. All these vehicle owners are informed to come to the company's office and claim the scrap value of the vehicle. Otherwise, all these vehicles will be scrapped in the next three days.

Table with columns for Car Number, Make/Model, and Status. Includes entries like DL8C04102, DL9CT1373, DL2S65183, etc.

Indian Bank advertisement for a possession notice regarding an immovable property. Includes details about the borrower, the property, and the bank's actions.

Annual Maintenance Contract advertisement for a building. Details the scope of work, materials, and contact information for the contractor.

Signal & Telecom Engineering Works advertisement. Offers services for electrical and telecom systems, including maintenance and repairs.

Coast Guard undertakes steel cutting ceremony on next generation patrol vessel

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Signifying self-reliance in defence manufacturing, the Coast Guard undertakes a steel cutting ceremony for the first next-generation Offshore Patrol Vessel (NGOPV) for Indian Coast Guard at Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Ltd (MDL), Mumbai on Friday, Coast Guard said here on Saturday.

The steel cutting ceremony for the first next-generation Offshore Patrol Vessel (NGOPV) for Indian Coast Guard at Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Ltd (MDL), Mumbai on Friday, Coast Guard said here on Saturday. The cost of the project is Rs 1,614 crores. Giving details, officials said this project aims to bolster our capabilities in coastal and offshore patrolling, safeguarding maritime zones, and enhancing operational efficiency. The NGOPVs, designed to meet the evolving challenges of maritime security, are equipped with state-of-the-art machinery and equipment. Powered by two diesel engines, these vessels are capable of achieving a maximum continuous speed of 23 knots and covering a distance of up to 5,000 nautical miles. Furthermore, they boast integral twin-engine helicopter facilities and staging for heavy helicopters, enabling swift and effective aerial surveillance and response capabilities.

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ATS INFRABUILD PRIVATE LIMITED

CIN: U45400DL2007PTC168922 ANNEXURE I [Regulation 52 (8), read with Regulation 52 (4), of the SEBI (LODR) Regulations, 2015]

Financial statement table for ATS Infrabuild Private Limited. Columns include S. No., Particulars, and financial data for the quarter and year ended.

For and on behalf of the Board of Directors of ATS Infrabuild Private Limited. Includes names of directors and the date of the statement.

Punjab & Sind Bank advertisement for renovation works. Details the scope of work and the tender process.

Public notice regarding a property sale. The notice describes the property and the terms of the sale.

Lost & Found advertisement. A notice regarding lost documents and the person who lost them.

Public notice regarding the registration of a project. The notice provides details about the project and the registration process.

Public notice regarding a change of name. The notice informs about the change of name for a company.

Change of Name advertisement. A notice regarding the change of name for a company.

Public notice regarding a change of name. The notice informs about the change of name for a company.

Public notice regarding a change of name. The notice informs about the change of name for a company.

Change of Name advertisement. A notice regarding the change of name for a company.

Kotak Mahindra Bank advertisement. Includes information about a locker hire and a notice regarding the bank's operations.

# Hostage families urge ceasefire

AP ■ TEL AVIV

Families of Israeli hostages held by Hamas called for all parties to immediately accept a proposal detailed by US President Joe Biden to end the nearly 8-month-long war and bring their relatives home, but Israel's government said conditions for a cease-fire still must be met. Biden outlined a three-phase deal Friday proposed by Israel to Hamas, saying the militant group is "no longer capable" of carrying out another large-scale attack on Israel. He urged the Israelis and Hamas to come to an agreement to release some 100 remaining hostages, along with the bodies of around 30 more, for an extended cease-fire. Cease-fire talks ground to a halt last month after a major push by the US and other mediators to secure a deal in hopes of averting a full Israeli invasion of Gaza's southern city of Rafah. Israel says the Rafah operation is vital to uprooting Hamas



A Palestinian mourner carries the body of a child killed in Israeli bombardment of the Gaza Strip, during their funeral in Deir al Balah, Friday. AP/PTI

fighters responsible for the October 7 attack on southern Israel that triggered the war. Israel on Friday confirmed its troops were operating in central parts of the city. The ground assault has led to an exodus of around 1 million Palestinians out of the city and has thrown

UN humanitarian operations based in the area into turmoil. Following Biden's speech, hostage families said Saturday time was running out with the onus on both Israel and Hamas to accept the deal. "We want to see people coming back from Gaza alive and soon,"

Gili Roman told The Associated Press. His sister, Yarden Roman-Gat, was taken hostage and freed during a weeklong cease-fire in November, but Yarden's sister-in-law, Carmel, is still being held. "This might be the last chance to save lives. Therefore, the current state must be changed and we expect all to adhere to Biden's call for accepting the deal on the table, immediately. There is no other way towards a better situation for all. Our leadership must not disappoint us. But mostly, all eyes should be on Hamas," he said. The proposal came after what hostage families said was an aggressive meeting Thursday with Israel's national security adviser, Tzachi Hanegbi, who told them that the government wasn't ready to sign a deal to bring all of the hostages home and that there was no plan B. Hanegbi said this week he expects the war to drag on for another seven months, in order

to destroy the military and governing capabilities of Hamas and the smaller Islamic Jihad militant group. Netanyahu has promised a "total victory" that would remove Hamas from power, dismantle its military structure and return the hostages, and on Saturday, the government said its conditions for ending the war had not changed. Putting a permanent cease-fire in place before the conditions are fulfilled is a "non-starter," it said. Many hostage families blame the government's lack of will to secure a deal for the deaths of many of the hostages in captivity. "We know that the government of Israel has done an awful lot to delay reaching a deal and that has cost the lives of many people who survived in captivity for weeks and weeks and months and months. Our hearts are broken by the amount of people we will receive that are no longer alive," Sharone Lipschitz told AP.

# Hezbollah fighters shoot down an Israeli drone in Lebanon

AP ■ SINGAPORE

Beirut (AP): The militant Hezbollah group said it shot down an Israeli drone over southern Lebanon on Saturday, after hours Israeli drone strikes killed at least one person and wounded others. Hezbollah said in a statement that its fighters struck the Hermes 900 Kochav drone, saying such aircraft have been targeting militants and civilian homes. The exchange of fire along the Lebanon-Israel border has been intensifying over the past weeks with Israel's military push Gaza's southern city of Rafah. The Israeli military said a surface-to-air missile was fired toward a drone operating in Lebanese airspace, adding that it was hit and fell in Lebanese territory. "The incident is under review," the military said.

# 'War with China neither imminent nor unavoidable'

AP ■ SINGAPORE

United States Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin told a gathering of top security officials Saturday that war with China was neither imminent nor unavoidable, despite rapidly escalating tensions in the Asia-Pacific region, stressing the importance of renewed dialogue between him and his Chinese counterpart in avoiding "miscalculations and misunderstandings." Austin's comments at the Shangri-La defense forum in Singapore came the day after he met for more than an hour on the sidelines with Chinese Defense Minister Dong Jun, the first in-person meeting between the top defense officials since contacts between the American and Chinese militaries broke down in 2022 after then-US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi visited Taiwan, infuriating Beijing. Neither side budged from their longstanding positions on Taiwan — which China claims as its own and has not ruled out using force to take — and on China's sweeping claims in the South China Sea, which has led to direct confrontations between China and other nations in the region, most notably the Philippines.



Austin's comments at the Shangri-La defense forum in Singapore came the day after he met for more than an hour on the sidelines with Chinese Defense Minister Dong Jun, the first in-person meeting between the top defense officials since contacts between the American and Chinese militaries broke down in 2022 after then-US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi visited Taiwan, infuriating Beijing.

Neither side budged from their longstanding positions on Taiwan — which China claims as its own and has not ruled out using force to take — and on China's sweeping claims in the South China Sea, which has led to direct confrontations between China and other nations in the region, most notably the Philippines. While declining to detail the specifics of their conversation, Austin said the most important thing was that the two were again talking. "As long as we're talking, we're able to identify those issues that are troublesome and that we want to make sure that we have placed guardrails to ensure there are no misperceptions and no miscalculations... that can spiral out of control," he said. "You can only do that kind of thing if you are talking." Addressing the same forum on Friday night, Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr bluntly outlined what could be at stake, saying that if a Filipino was killed as China confronts his country's coast guard and merchant fleet to press its claims

# It's 'hard to meet' call for talks on Russia-Ukraine war: China

Beijing (AP): China said Friday it would be "hard to meet" calls for discussions on the Russia-Ukraine war, citing problems with arrangements that appear to point to Beijing's strongly pro-Moscow stance. Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said that "China's hopes appear to be hard to meet at the meeting." "There is still a clear gap between the arrangements for the meeting and the demands of the Chinese side, as well as the general expectations of the international community," Mao said. Mao gave no details, but said that China has "informed parties concerned about our considerations and concerns" and would keep in touch with all parties concerned. China claims to be neutral in the conflict, but has strongly backed Russia, most recently hosting President Vladimir Putin on a state visit.

official Xinhua News Agency released Wednesday. Putin hailed his ties with Chinese leader Xi Jinping, saying that "President Xi maintains a respectful, friendly, open and at the same time business-like style of communication." "Our every meeting is not just a dialogue between old friends ... but also a fruitful exchange of views on the most topical issues on the bilateral and international agenda," Putin said. Putin hailed Beijing's peace plan for Ukraine that has been largely dismissed and makes no requirements for Moscow to return land it has seized, saying that "we commend China's approaches to resolving the crisis in Ukraine." Switzerland had proposed the talks for the coming days in hopes of bringing an end to the war, which was sparked by Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine on Feb 24, 2022, but they haven't been endorsed by Moscow.

# 19 hurt as Russia hits Ukraine's power grid with fresh barrage

AP ■ KYIV

Russia pummeled Ukraine's energy infrastructure with a large-scale drone and missile attack Saturday, injuring at least 19 people, local officials said. The Ukrainian military reported that it had downed 35 out of the 53 missiles launched at targets across the country overnight on June 1, as well as 46 out of 47 attack drones. Injuries were reported by officials across the country, including in Ukraine's western Lviv region and the central Dnipropetrovsk region. Twelve people, including eight children, were hospitalized after a strike close to two houses where they were sheltering in the Kharkiv region, said Governor Oleh Syniuhobov. The strikes were part of a series of sustained attacks by Russia against Ukraine's power grid, which has been ongoing since March. Ukraine's largest

private energy firm, DTEK said that two of its power plants had been seriously damaged in what it said was the sixth attack on the company's plants in two and a half months. Meanwhile, Ukraine's Energy Minister, Herman Halushchenko, said in a statement on social media that energy infrastructure in the Zaporizhzhia, Dnipropetrovsk, Donetsk, Kirovohrad and Ivano-Frankivsk regions had also been targeted. Damage to Ukraine's energy infrastructure in recent weeks has forced leaders of the war-ravaged country to institute nationwide rolling blackouts. Without adequate air defences to counter assaults and allow for repairs, the shortages could still worsen as need spikes in late summer and the bitter-cold winter. In response to the strikes, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy reiterated

Kyiv's need for additional air defense systems from its Western allies. "Civilians, infrastructure and energy facilities. This is what Russia is constantly at war with," he said in a post Saturday on X, formerly Twitter. "Our partners know exactly what is needed for this. Additional Patriot and other modern air defence systems for Ukraine. Accelerating and expanding the delivery of F-16s to Ukraine. Providing our warriors with all the necessary capabilities." Elsewhere, five civilians died amid Ukrainian shelling in the Russian-occupied Donetsk region, said the areas Moscow-installed leader Denis Pushilin. Another three people were injured, he said. The Russian Defence Ministry also said that it had shot down two Ukrainian drones on Saturday morning over Russia's Belgorod region. No casualties were reported.

# ANC party that freed S Africa from apartheid loses its 30-year majority

AP ■ JOHANNESBURG

The African National Congress party lost its parliamentary majority in a historic election result Saturday that puts South Africa on a new political path for the first time since the end of the apartheid system of white minority rule 30 years ago. With nearly 99% of votes counted, the once-dominant ANC had received just over 40% in the election on Wednesday, well short of the majority it had held since the famed all-race vote of 1994 that ended apartheid and brought it to power under Nelson Mandela. The final results are still to be formally declared by the independent electoral commission that ran the election. While opposition parties hailed it as a momentous breakthrough for a country struggling with deep poverty and inequality, the ANC

remained the biggest party by some way but will now need to look for a coalition partner or partners to remain in the government and reelect President Cyril Ramaphosa for a second and final term. Parliament elects the South African president after national elections. The result ended the ANC's dominance three-decade dominance of South Africa's young democracy, but the way forward promises to be complicated for Africa's most advanced economy, and there's no coalition on the table yet. The main opposition party, the Democratic Alliance, was on around 21%. The new MK Party of former President Jacob Zuma, who has turned against the ANC he once led, came third with just over 14% of the vote in the first election it has contested. Which parties the ANC might approach to co-govern with is the urgent focus now, given Parliament needs to sit and elect a presi-

dent within 14 days of the final election results being officially declared. A flurry of negotiations were set to take place and they will likely be complicated. The MK Party said one of their conditions for any agreement was that Ramaphosa is removed as ANC leader and president. "We are willing to negotiate with the ANC, but not the ANC of Cyril Ramaphosa," MK Party spokesperson Nhlamulo Ndlela said. More than 50 parties contested the national election, but given how far off a majority the ANC appears to be, it is likely that it will have to approach one of the three main opposition parties. The MK and the far-left Economic Freedom Fighters have called for parts of the economy to be nationalised. The centrist Democratic Alliance is viewed as a business-friendly party and analysts say an ANC-DA coalition would be more wel-

comed by foreign investors. Despite the uncertainty, South African opposition parties were hailing the new political picture as a much-needed change for the country of 62 million, which is Africa's most developed but also one of the most unequal in the world. South Africa has widespread poverty and extremely high levels of unemployment and the ANC has struggled to raise the standard of living for millions. The official unemployment rate is 32%, one of the highest in the world, and the poverty disproportionately affects Black people, who make up 80% of the population and have been the core of the ANC's support for years. The ANC has also been blamed - and apparently punished by voters - for a failure in basic government services that impacts millions and leaves many without water, electricity or proper housing.

# Sri Lanka police arrests wanted handler of 4 ISIS suspects

Colombo (PTI): Sri Lanka Police have arrested the suspected handler of the four of its nationals who were arrested at Ahmedabad airport in India for their alleged links with the banned Islamic State (ISIS) outfit. The Criminal Investigation Department arrested Pushparaja Osman, 46, on Friday in Colombo. Sri Lanka Police recently announced a cash award of Rs. 2 million for any credible information on his whereabouts. Police had issued a wanted notice and a video of him seeking information from the public. The CID arrested him and he was believed to have made telephone contact with the four people arrested at the Ahmedabad airport, the police said. The Gujarat Anti-Terrorist Squad arrested four Sri Lankans with links to ISIS at the airport in Ahmedabad.

# North Korea launches more trash-carrying balloons to South

AP ■ SEOUL

North Korea launched more trash-carrying balloons toward the South after a similar campaign earlier in the week, according to South Korea's military, in what Pyongyang calls retaliation for activists flying anti-North Korean leaflets across the border. South Korea's Defence Ministry did not immediately comment on the number of balloons it had detected or how many have landed in South Korea. The military advised people to beware of falling objects and not to touch objects suspected to be from North Korea, but report them to military or police offices instead. In Seoul, the capital, the city government sent text alerts saying that unidentified objects suspected to be flown from North Korea were being detected in skies near the city

and that the military was responding to them. The North's balloon launches added to a recent series of provocative steps, which include its failed spy satellite launch and test-firings of about 10 suspected short-range missiles this week. South Korea's military dispatched chemical rapid response and explosive clearance teams to recover the debris from some 260 North Korean balloons that were found in various parts of the country from Tuesday night to Wednesday. The military said the balloons carried various types of trash and manure but no dangerous substances like chemical, biological or radioactive materials. In a statement on Wednesday, Kim Yo Jong, the powerful sister of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, confirmed that the North sent the balloons to make good on her country's recent threat to "scatter

mounds of wastepaper and filth" in South Korea in response to leafletting campaigns by South Korean activists. She hinted that balloons could become the North's standard response to leafletting moving forward, saying that the North would respond by "scattering rubbish dozens of times more than those being scattered to us". North Korea is extremely sensitive about any outside attempt to undermine Kim Jong Un's absolute control over the country's 26 million people, most of whom have little access to foreign news. In 2020, North Korea blew up an empty South Korean-built liaison office on its territory after a furious response to South Korean civilian leafletting campaigns. In 2014, North Korea fired at propaganda balloons flying toward its territory and South Korea returned fire, though there were no casualties.

# Suu Kyi close ally Tin Oo, dies

AP ■ BANGKOK



Tin Oo, one of the closest associates of Myanmar's ousted leader Aung San Suu Kyi as well as a co-founder of her National League for Democracy party, has died. He was 97. Tin Oo died Saturday morning at Yangon General Hospital, said Moh Khan, a charity worker, citing a member of his family. Charity workers in Myanmar handle funeral arrangements. Moh Khan said Tin Oo had been hospitalized at Yangon General Hospital on Wednesday due to difficulty urinating and other health problems, including weakness. His cause of death was not immediately announced. Tin Oo was respected by many of his party's members for his outspokenness and courage as he shared many of Suu Kyi's travails. In 1988, Tin Oo helped found the National League for Democracy with Suu Kyi after a failed revolt against military rule. He became vice chairman, then chairman of the new

party. But when the military cracked down the following year, he was put under house arrest, as was Suu Kyi. Similar to her, he spent 14 of the next 21 years under house arrest or in prison before he was released ahead of the 2010 general election. The party had won a 1990 election, but the results were annulled by the ruling military, which launched a crackdown on its opponents. In 2003, in one of the intermittent periods when he and Suu Kyi were at liberty before their 2010 release, they had the har-

# Sexist tropes and misinformation swirl online as Mexico prepares to elect its first female leader

AP ■ MEXICAN CITY

Mexican voters are poised to elect their first female president, a cause of celebration for many that has also touched off a flurry of false and misogynist online claims, blurring the lines behind fact and fiction. The two leading candidates, both women, have had to respond to demeaning attacks about their appearance, their credentials and their ability to lead the nation. The candidate considered the favourite in Sunday's contest, Claudia Mexico City Mayor Claudia Sheinbaum, has also faced slurs about her Jewish background as well as repeatedly debunked claims she was born in Hungary. This week, in an apparent bid to undermine her candidacy, a social media account impersonating a legitimate news outlet posted fake, AI-generated audio of Sheinbaum admitting that her campaign was failing in a key Mexican state. The wave of



election misinformation facing voters in Mexico is the latest example of how the internet, social media and AI are fuelling the spread of false, misleading or hateful content in democracies around the world, warping public discourse and potentially influencing election outcomes. "We have a general atmosphere of disinformation here in Mexico, but it's slightly different from what is happening in India, or the US," said Manuel Alejandro Guerrero, a professor

and communications researcher at the Universidad Iberoamericana in Mexico City. In Mexico's case, that misinformation is the result of growing distrust of the news media, violence committed by drug cartels, and rapid increases in social media usage coupled with a lag in digital literacy. Guerrero added one more contributing factor now familiar to Americans: political leaders who willingly spread disinformation themselves.

# Spelling Bee finalists, mostly Indian-American children, visit WH

Washington (PTI): Bruhat Soma, the Scripps National Spelling Bee's Indian-American winner, along with the seven other finalists was invited by the White House for a visit, a lifetime experience for these young talents. Bruhat, a 12-year-old seventh-grade student from Florida, emerged victorious in the prestigious Scripps National Spelling Bee on Thursday, earning more than USD 50,000 in cash and other prizes. He blitzed through 30 words in 90 seconds Thursday night and judges determined that he spelled 29 of them correctly — nine more than his competitor, Faizan Zaki. On Friday, the White House invited them to attend an event on the South Lawn where President Joe Biden welcomed the Kansas City Chiefs to celebrate their championship season and victory in Super Bowl LVIII.

# Passenger vehicle wholesales in slow lane in May due to high base effect, elections

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Passenger vehicle wholesales in India witnessed a marginal growth in May on account of high base effect and muted demand due to general elections. The overall passenger vehicle dispatches from companies to dealers stood at 3,50,257 lakh units last month as compared to 3,35,436 in the same month a year ago, registering a growth of 4 per cent. Maruti Suzuki India (MSI) said its total domestic passenger vehicle sales rose marginally to 1,44,002 units last month from 1,43,708 units in the year-ago period. The company saw year-on-year dip in sales of entry level and compact cars last month as against May 2023. Utility vehicle sales, including that of Brezza, Grand Vitara, Ertiga, S-Cross and XL6, however, rose to 54,204 units last month as against 46,243 units a year earlier. "It has been discussed that



growth this year will not be very high. It will be in single digit because of the high base effect. Secondly, there were elections and the scorching temperatures also had an impact on the overall sales in May," MSI Senior Executive Officer (Marketing & Sales) Partho Banerjee told reporters. He further said: "We are very hopeful that we will start seeing the green shoots coming with the election results coming in. I think things will turn around." Banerjee noted that the company is going to introduce a limited edition trims of its entry level cars — Alto K10, S-Presso and Celerio — in order

to rejuvenate the small car segment. The Dream Series edition trims of the three models will be launched at a price point of Rs 4.99 lakh (ex-showroom), he said. "Based on the feedback of our target customers we have come up with an edition in which we are mostly focusing on the utilities and convenience features," Banerjee said. Sales of Maruti Suzuki's mini segment cars, comprising Alto and S-Presso, declined to 9,902 units last month from 12,236 units in May 2023. Rival Hyundai Motor India reported a 1 per cent year-on-

year increase in domestic dispatch of vehicles to dealers last month. The company's wholesales rose to 49,151 units in May as compared to 48,601 units in May 2023. Hyundai Motor India COO Tarun Garg said that the sales growth this financial year is anticipated to remain in low single digit range. "In April also the industry grew by around 1.5 per cent ... So April plus May the industry growth should be around 2-2.5 per cent over same period last year," he noted. Tata Motors said its passenger vehicle sales, including electric vehicles, in the domestic market, were up 2 per cent at 47,075 units as compared to 45,984 units in the year-ago month. Mahindra & Mahindra on the other hand reported a robust 31 per cent year-on-year increase in passenger vehicle dispatches last month at 43,218 units. It had sold 32,886 units in May 2023. Toyota Kirloskar Motor reported a 24 per cent year-on-year increase in total wholesales in May at 25,273 units as compared to that of same month last year. Kia India said its total wholesales increased 4 per cent year-on-year to 19,500 units in May. The automaker had dispatched 18,766 units to dealers in May 2023. "So far in this year, we have been aggressive in introducing new competitive variants of our models, which has contributed significantly to our sales," Kia India Senior VP and Head Sales & Marketing Hardeep Singh Brar said. With a robust network expansion strategy in place, the company shall continue to grow in the rest of the year and cross 1 million domestic sales milestone soon, he added. MG Motor India reported a 5 per cent dip in wholesales at 4,769 units in May compared to the same month last year. The company had dispatched 5,006 units to dealers in May 2023.

# Top 100 companies to verify market rumours

PTI ■ NEW DELHI



The top 100 listed companies by market capitalization will have to confirm or deny any market rumour reported in the mainstream media from this Saturday. The rule will be applicable for top 250 companies from December 1. Under the Sebi's rule, these companies will have to 'confirm, deny, or clarify any reported event or information in the mainstream media that is not general in nature and that indicates that rumours of an impending specific material event' are circulating amongst the investing public within 24 hours from the reporting of the information. Sebi through its newly introduced rumour verification framework has excluded the price volatility in arriving at average market price for the purpose of corporate actions in a bid to make it fair for all investors at large. "The move would dissuade

leaking of information that would affect the valuation in the given corporation action. This initiative of Sebi would help strengthen the rumour verification framework. It would help in achieving a fair market thereby making it a preferred market for investors all over the world," Makarand M Joshi, founder, MMJC and Associates, a corporate compliance firm, said. While calculating the price for various corporate actions such as buyback through book building, buyback through stock exchange, qualified institutional placement, preferential allotment, takeovers, effect on shares price due to material price movement and confirmation of reported event or information can be excluded. It means that while calculating price for corporate actions the period during which material price movement was seen in the stock due to confirmed rumours would be excluded. Market rumours pertaining to a company's business can create significant volatility in stock prices, often leading to transactions that don't reflect a company's true value. This market rumours could be related to anything, including exiting of top management, cancellation of an order and financial health. "Sebi's framework addresses this issue by establishing a mechanism to determine the unaffected price — the price of a stock before the rumour surfaced. This price would be used for transactions unless the rumour itself caused price fluctuations in subsequent trading days," Trivesh, Chief Operating Officer of Tradejini, had said.

# ATF price cut 6.5 per cent, commercial LPG by ₹69

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Jet fuel or ATF price on Saturday was reduced by a steep 6.5 per cent and that of commercial LPG used by hotels and restaurants by Rs 69 per 19-kg cylinder on declining international oil prices. Aviation turbine fuel (ATF) price was cut by Rs 6,673.87 per kilolitre, or 6.5 per cent, to Rs 94,969.01 per kl in the national capital, according to a price notification of state-owned fuel retailers. The reduction follows a marginal 0.7 per cent (Rs 749.25 per kl) increase on May 1. The ATF rate in Mumbai was slashed to Rs 88,834.27 per kl from Rs 95,173.70. Prices differ from state to state depending on the incidence of local taxes.



Alongside, oil firms also cut the price of commercial LPG by Rs 69 to Rs 1,676 per 19-kg cylinder. This is the third straight monthly reduction in rates. The price was on May 1 reduced by Rs 19 per cylinder and by Rs 30.5 on April 1. Rate of cooking gas used in domestic households, however, remained unchanged at Rs 803 per 14.2-kg cylinder. April 1 saw the first reduction in commercial LPG prices since January. The rate had gone up by Rs 14 per cylinder on February 1 and Rs 25.5 on March 1. State-owned Indian Oil Corporation (IOC), Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd (BPCL), and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd (HPCL) revise prices of ATF and cooking gas on 1st of every month based on the average price of benchmark international fuel and foreign exchange rate. Prices of petrol and diesel continue to remain frozen. Rates had been cut by Rs 2 per litre in mid-March. Petrol costs Rs 94.72 a litre in Delhi while diesel is priced at Rs 87.62.

# Mumbai city sees 12,000 property registrations in May

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Registration of properties in Mumbai municipal region increased 22 per cent during May to 12,000 units driven by strong housing demand, according to real estate consultant Knight Frank. Citing Maharashtra government data, Knight Frank India said Mumbai city (area under BMC jurisdiction) recorded around 12,000 property registrations last month as against 9,823 units in May last year. State exchequer garnered Rs 1,034 crore in May 2024, up 24 per cent from the same month last year. Of the overall registered properties in May 2024, residential units constituted 80 per cent. "The continuous year-on-year growth in property sales and registrations provides a continuum to the growth

story that propelled on the back of state government incentive and since then, despite a rise in average prices across the city, sales and registrations of properties have maintained the momentum," Shishir Bajjal, Chairman & Managing Director, Knight Frank India, said. This reflects the appetite of the market as well as the confidence buyers have in the economic fundamentals of the country, he added. "This positive trend is expected to persist, bolstered by strong economic growth and a favourable interest rate environment, creating an encouraging atmosphere for potential buyers," Bajjal said. In the first five months of this year, the total number of properties registered was 60,820, up 17 per cent from 52,173 units in January-May 2023.

# Bata India introduces New York's footwear brand to Indian market

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

It was a glamorous affair at the exclusive preview of Nine West's latest collection in the Capital hosted by Bata India! This event marks a significant moment as Bata India introduces New York's renowned footwear and accessories brand, Nine West, to the Indian market. Actor Chitragda Singh alongside Delhi's top fashion influencers indulged in a stylishly curated evening as they adorned NINE WEST's latest styles, brought to India exclusively by Bata.



Speaking at the grand unveiling of the Nine West collection, Deepika Deepti, Head of Marketing, Bata India said, "At Bata, our aim is to bring the best of world's fashion to India for our discerning customers. Nine West, born in New York City and thriving globally, is one of the most recognisable brands in the world. With its entry in India exclusively in partnership with Bata, we are proud to continue to make truly high fashion & premium styles accessible to all." The latest collection is inspired by empowered women who dream, lead & slay. Iconic silhouettes & dainty designs ranging from sleek metallic stilettos to famed monogram style bags, each article is crafted to complement the fashion-forward women. The latest Nine West collection is now available exclusively at Bata.Com and your nearest Bata stores! Strengthening its portfolio of fashion footwear and accessories, Bata India had announced in November 2023 licensing and manufacturing deal with Authentic Brands Group (Authentic) for Nine West winning rights to manufacture, market and distribute Nine West footwear and accessories across India. Bata India's mission is to make global trends and premium fashion accessible to all consumers through its extensive retail network. It is redefining the intersection of fashion and comfort through its various brands — Bata Red Label for in trend global styles, Bata Comfit for technology enabled comfort in daily wear, athleisure brand Power for fitness sneakers and apparel, NorthStar for sneakers inspired by global youth trends, fashionable range of clogs and slip-ons under Floatz, kids brand Bubblegummers that has won the trust of parents while inspiring fun, and Hush Puppies the global brand that epitomises comfort and elegance to name a few.

# Special talk show held on jewellery used in Heeramandi

PTI ■ NEW DELHI



The national Capital decided to beat the heat by having a special talk show on jewellery of the most talked about Netflix series Heeramandi —the Diamond Bazaar. Hosted by the National Fashion & Jewellery Initiative team of FICCI-FLO, under the leadership of Anjali Aggarwal, the event held at FICCI House was attended by the FLO president, Joyshree Das Verma, high profile FLO members and dignitaries too. Anjali Aggarwal, herself a Jewellery designer and stylist, moderated the talk show and asked the Jeweller duo, Vinay and Anshu Gupta, questions about how they were chosen to do the entire jewellery for Heeramandi by Sanjay Leela

Bhansali and how they managed this mammoth project. Their answers gave deep insights into the process of jewellery designing, planning, manufacturing and into the dynamics of Bollywood. Interestingly, Vinay Gupta hails from an old renowned Jewellery family of Delhi and his experience, research and designing expertise helped him create such a magnificent collection. Today, they go by the brand name Paramani Jewels.

# Maruti Suzuki sales drop 2 per cent to 1,74,551 units in May

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Maruti Suzuki India on Saturday reported 2 per cent year-on-year dip in total wholesales at 1,74,551 units in May 2024. The company had dispatched a total of 1,78,083 units to its dealers in the same month last year, Maruti Suzuki India (MSI) said in a statement. Total domestic passenger vehicle sales rose marginally to 1,44,002 units last month from 1,43,708 units in the year-ago period, it added. Sales of mini segment cars, comprising Alto and S-Presso, declined to 9,902 units from 12,236 units in May 2023. Sales of compact cars, including Baleno, Celerio, Dzire, Ignis, Swift, Tour S and



WagonR, also fell to 68,206 units from 71,419 units in the year-ago month. Utility vehicles, including Brezza, Grand Vitara, Ertiga, S-Cross and XL6, clocked sales of 54,204 units last month as against 46,243 units earlier. Sales of vans were at 10,960

units in May 2024 as against 12,818 units a year ago, while that of light commercial vehicle Super Carry stood at 2,692 units as against 2,888 units in May 2023. MSI said its exports last month declined to 17,367 units from 26,477 units in the same period last year.

# IIFL Samasta Finance to raise up to ₹ 1,000 crore via bonds

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

IIFL Samasta Finance, a non-banking microfinance company (NBFC-MFI), plans to raise up to Rs 1,000 crore through public issue of secured bonds for the purpose of capital augmentation and business growth. The bond issue opens on June 3 and closes on June 14, IIFL Samasta Finance said in a statement. IIFL Samasta Finance plans to issue bonds, aggregating to Rs 200 crore, with a green-shoe option to retain over-subscription of up to Rs 800 crore, it said. The IIFL Samasta bonds offer the highest coupon rate of 10.50 per cent per annum for a tenor of 60 months, it claimed.

# Companies counter IAMAI's submission on Draft Digital Competition Bill

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Matrimony.com and Sharechat are among four companies that have written to the Ministry of Corporate Affairs, saying they do not agree with the submissions on draft digital competition bill made by industry association IAMAI, of which they are members. IAMAI's submission, they claim, is not reflective of the entire digital startup ecosystem or its diverse membership of over 540 companies. According to them, while only a small fraction of members have opposed the 'ex-ante' provisions introduced by the Draft Digital Competition Bill (DCB), yet the submission made by the association

"predominantly echoes this minority perspective". Any opposition to 'ex ante' regulations and continuation of the 'ex post regime' will allow entrenched players to "continue exploiting regulatory gaps to stifle competition and innovation", they argued. The letter sent to Corporate Affairs Secretary Manoj Govil earlier this week was signed by Murugavel Janakiraman, Founder and MD of Matrimony.Com; Vishnu Moha, Co-founder of Hoichoi; Morgan Cauvin, Head, Government Relations, India and Europe, Middle East, Africa, Match Group; and Manohar Singh Charan, Chief Financial Officer, Sharechat. "...Signatories, all members of the Internet and Mobile



Association of India (IAMAI), write to express our diverging views to IAMAI's recent submission on the Draft Digital Competition Bill (DCB) and the Report of the Committee on Digital Competition Law. We state that IAMAI's submission is not reflective of the entire digital startup ecosystem or IAMAI's diverse membership of over 540 companies as only a minuscule percentage of these members have opposed the 'ex-ante' provisions

introduced by the DCB, yet the submission predominantly echoes this minority perspective," the letter said. Put simply, the 'ex-ante' provision aims to ensure that the behaviours of large digital enterprises are proactively monitored and that the CCI intervenes before instances of anti-competitive conduct transpire. Currently, the Competition Act primarily envisages an 'ex-post' framework of intervention, wherein the CCI intervenes after the occurrence of an anti-competitive conduct. The dissenting companies, in their letter, said they believe that opposition of 'ex ante' regulations and continuation of the 'ex post regime' will lead to status quo being

maintained and allow entrenched players to continue exploiting regulatory gaps to stifle competition and innovation. The invocation of 'Minimum Government, Maximum Governance' conveniently ignores the reality of market distortions and abuses that necessitate targeted regulatory interventions, they said. "While we share similar concerns over the thresholds for designation of Systemically Significant Digital Enterprise (SSDEs), IAMAI's submission on the rest of the draft DCB seems to present obtuse concerns which go against the broader imperative of fostering fair competition across all core digital services in India, supporting the growth of

startups and protecting consumer welfare in India's digital economy," the letter said. The thresholds for designation of an SSDE may require revision to ensure that only those entities which are sufficiently large and having substantial presence in digital markets in India are subject to the ex-ante regulations proposed in the DCB. "This ensures that financial strength and user spread thresholds outlined in the DCB do not inadvertently encompass startups and other digital enterprises which are not true digital gatekeepers. This issue can also be effectively addressed by advocating for higher thresholds, so nascent digital services/products remain protected...By revisiting

thresholds, it can be ensured that only the largest digital gatekeepers (or 'Big Tech' companies), which have benefited from network effects, fall within the DCB's scope," it said. The letter exhorted the Ministry of Corporate Affairs to move forward with the draft DCB at the earliest. "We believe that any lingering apprehensions can be effectively addressed during the drafting of the regulations under the draft DCB, ensuring that the Indian digital ecosystem benefits from a clear regulatory framework that fosters fair competition and incentivises innovation among startups and smaller businesses without fear of suppression by larger dominant gatekeepers," it said.

# Ronaldo in tears after his Al-Nassr lose Saudi King's Cup final on penalties

AP ■ JEDDAH

Cristiano Ronaldo left the field in tears after his Al-Nassr team lost the King's Cup final to Al-Hilal and ended a second successive season in Saudi Arabia without any major silverware on Friday.

Al-Hilal won a penalty shootout 5-4 to decide a final that finished 1-1 after extra time in Jeddah. Ronaldo, who signed for Al-Nassr in December 2022, fell to the ground in despair and was consoled by teammates at King Abdullah Sports City.

The loss came just four days after the end of a Saudi Pro League season in which Al-Nassr finished second, 14 points behind Al-Hilal. There was some consolation then as Ronaldo scored twice to set a new league record of 35 goals in a season.



There was no such comfort this time at the end of a tempestuous encounter that saw two goals and three red cards.

Aleksandar Mitrovic headed Al-Hilal ahead after seven minutes. It got worse for Al-Nassr early in the second half when goalkeeper David Ospina, formerly of Arsenal and Napoli, was sent off for handling the ball outside the area.

Al-Hilal was also reduced to 10 men after 86 minutes when Ali Al-Bulaihi was red-carded for an apparent headbutt on Sami Al-Najei. Seconds later, Ayman Yahya headed Al-Nassr level.

Al-Hilal had another defender sent off in the 91st

minute after Kalidou Koulibaly, signed from Chelsea last summer, received a second yellow card.

There were no goals in extra time and the final went to a shootout. Ruben Neves missed Hilal's first attempt

as did former Manchester United defender Alex Telles for Al-Nassr. Ronaldo, who earlier hit the post with a spectacular overhead kick, converted his penalty but could only watch as Bounou, a hero of Morocco's march to the

semifinals of the 2022 World Cup, saved twice, the first from Ali Al-Hassan and then from Al-Nemer. The saves gave Hilal an 11th King's Cup triumph while Ronaldo and his team will have to wait until next season.

## Delhi joins Chennai and Singapore in race to host chess World Championship

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi has joined Chennai and Singapore in the race to host the World Chess Championship match between D. Gukesh and China's Ding Liren after the All India Chess Federation backed the national capital's bid while accusing the Tamil Nadu government of acting unilaterally by pushing the southern city's name.

The International Chess Federation (FIDE) CEO Emil Sutovsky on Saturday said all three cities have submitted their bids and they "meet the criteria".

Sutovsky added Chennai was the first to bid for the much-anticipated match in November-December this year, while the New Delhi bid came in last.

"Three bids to host the FIDE World Championship Match-2024. Chennai, Singapore, New Delhi (in order of submission). All meet the criteria," Sutovsky wrote on 'X'.

The international chess body's council will discuss the issue and announce the winner later this month. "Next week FIDE Council to discuss it -- representatives of the bidders invited to share details and take questions. Final decision in June," Sutovsky added.

The Chennai bid was made by the Sports Development Authority of Tamil Nadu while the All India Chess



Federation bid for New Delhi.

While FIDE doesn't stop any government from bidding for the prestigious event, it is unusual for two entities from the same country to bid for the tournament.

AICF president Nitin Narang told PTI that the national chess federation has bid for New Delhi as the venue for the title showdown and that a no-objection certificate (NOC) had been taken from the Indian government.

He, however, said that the Tamil Nadu government had not consulted the AICF before sending its bid to FIDE.

"The Tamil Nadu government never consulted the AICF or had any conversation with us about it (Chennai as venue), nor do they have the NOC (from the Government of India) for it," said Narang. "The New Delhi bid happens

to be from the AICF, with the NOC being given by the Government of India," he added.

Gukesh, who hails from Chennai, had become the youngest ever challenger for the world title by winning the Candidates Tournament in Toronto in April.

The basic criteria outlined by FIDE for a prospective bidder for the 2024 edition is a budget of Rs 8.5 million (Rs 71 crore approx) and a facilitation fee of USD 1.1 million (Rs 9 crore) for the global body.

The duration of the tournament is 25 days and approval of regulations will be completed by July 1.

The total prize money awarded by FIDE would be around USD 2.5 million (Rs 20 crore plus) after the fund was increased from the USD two million (Rs 17 crore) in 2023.

## Andy Murray and Dan Evans lose in first round of doubles at French Open

AP ■ PARIS

If this does turn out to be Andy Murray's last French Open, it ended after two matches: one loss in singles and, on Friday, one loss in doubles.

Murray and Dan Evans were defeated by Thiago Seyboth Wild and Sebastian Baez 7-6 (6), 7-6 (3) in the first round of doubles.

Murray, a three-time Grand Slam singles champion, was eliminated in the first round of singles by Stan Wawrinka in straight sets on Sunday night.

The 37-year-old Murray has said he thinks he probably will retire sometime this year. He has an artificial hip and has dealt with back issues this season.

He reiterated Friday that he wants

to compete at the Paris Olympics, which will hold tennis matches at Roland Garros starting on July 27. That was why he and Evans got a wild-card invitation to compete in doubles at the French Open.

Murray won singles gold medals at the 2012 Olympics in London and the 2016 Olympics in Rio de Janeiro, the only player to win two consecutive tennis titles at the Summer Games.

"Me and Dan obviously were hoping to have a good run here. Yeah, it wasn't to be. So don't know if we'll get the opportunity (to play doubles at the Olympics). There's guys obviously ahead of us in the rankings, and we've got good doubles players in the U.K.," Murray said. "Let's see what happens."



He now will turn his attention to grass courts and preparing to play at Wimbledon, where he won singles titles in 2013 and 2016.

Murray was the first British man in 77 years to win the championship there. Play at the All England Club begins on July 1.

There is a chance, Murray said, that he could team up with his older brother, Jamie, in doubles at Wimbledon.

"My brother doesn't have a partner for Wimbledon currently. We have spoken a little bit about it," Murray said. "So may do that, but not 100% sure yet."

Jamie, 38, is by far the more accomplished doubles player of the two: He reached No. 1 in those rankings and won two Grand Slam trophies in doubles in 2016, as well as five major titles in mixed doubles. Jamie said Andy told him he wanted to play doubles at the French Open "because the Olympics for him are important and he wanted to show that he wanted to be in the team and also practice and prepare and not just turn up."



## India thrash world champions Germany 3-0 in Pro League

PTI ■ LONDON

India exploited a rusty German defence, punching three goals as the Harmanpreet Singh-led side outclassed the world champions to make a winning start to the London leg of the FIH Pro Hockey League here on Saturday.

Drag-flicker Harmanpreet (16th minute), Sukhjeet Singh (41st) and Gurjant Singh (44th) tormented an out-of-sorts young German side, which started off on a roaring note but could not sustain the momentum for long.

The world No. 5 India, with 24 points from 13 outings are third, while Argentina, whom India defeated twice during the Antwerp leg of the Pro League are second with 26 points from 14 matches.

Netherlands are leading the table with 26 points from 12 games.

Goalkeeping stalwart PR Sreejesh stood rock solid against a relentless German attack in the first quarter, thwarting two penalty corners before Harmanpreet's penalty

corner conversion in the first minute of the second quarter turned the tables on world No. 3 side.

The India skipper's low flick aimed to the left of German goalkeeper Alexander Stadler took a deflection off the first rusher Barry Antheus before sounding the board in the 16th minute.

Sukhjeet then doubled the lead in the 41st minute. Picking up the ball on the wing, he gave a through pass to Abhishek and made a dash to the circle. Abhishek relayed the ball back to Sukhjeet, who unleashed an unstoppable shot past the German goalkeeper.

Gurjant then lined up the third goal for India three minutes later.

Sanjay played the ball to Jarmanpreet Singh on the goal-line. The defender then flicked the ball back to Gurjant, who scooped it past Stadler to signal India's dominance.

All along, a jittery German side tried its best to breach the Indian defence but to no avail with Sreejesh showcasing his capability in the cage.

## DP Manu wins gold in javelin throw at Taiwan Open

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India's DP Manu clinched the gold medal in men's javelin throw event at the Taiwan Open 2024 with a throw of 81.58m in Taipei on Saturday.

The Asian Athletics Championship silver medalist registered his best throw in his last attempt. Taiwan Open is a World Athletics Continental Tour Bronze-level meet. And awards crucial ranking points.

Manu started with an 78.32m throw, while his second attempt measured 76.80m.

But the 24-year-old improved his efforts sending the spear to 80.59m and 81.52m in his third and fifth attempt. He could not register a valid attempt in his fourth throw but finished strong.

The performance was, however, far from Manu's personal best of 84.35m. It is also less than his season-best effort of 82.06, which had come last month at the Federation Cup in Bhubaneswar when he had finished



second behind Olympic champion Neeraj Chopra.

Manu, who finished sixth at the World Championships last year, is yet to qualify for the Paris Olympics, the qualification mark for which is of 85.50m.

Chopra and Kishore Jena have already qualified for the Olympics.

## Olympic champ McLaughlin-Levrone runs 52.7 in first return to 400 hurdles in nearly two years

AP ■ ATLANTA

Olympic champion Sydney McLaughlin-Levrone won her first 400-meter hurdles race in nearly two years on Friday, finishing in 52.70 seconds to post the best time of 2024.

The 24-year-old world-record holder came to the Edwin Moses Legends Meet hoping simply to run a time of 54.85 seconds or better, the "qualifying standard" needed to be eligible for the Paris Games this summer.

McLaughlin-Levrone, who missed the 2023 world championships with a knee injury, has been racing mostly in non-hurdles races this year, leaving open the question of which events she'll participate



in at the Olympics.

After her race at Morehouse College in Atlanta, she said she was pleased with her time, which was more than two seconds slower than her world record of 50.68.

"It's a progression," she said. "Shaking the rust off after two years. I'll take a 52.7. Things to work on. We haven't had much hurdles practice, so there's a lot to improve." McLaughlin-Levrone's last 400 hurdles race was Aug. 8, 2022 in Hungary.

Before shutting things down due to injury last year, she won the U.S. Championship in the 400 flat in 48.74 - a time that led the world in 2023 and made her the 10th fastest woman of all time at that distance. This year, she has been running exclusively in the United States, preparing for Olympic trials in June.

"I love racing and I love Europe, but in a year like this, coming off an injury last year, we just wanted to be safe," she said.

## Real Madrid's European kings are so good, Ancelotti wants them to be studied

AP ■ LONDON

Whatever you call it, just don't call it luck. Real Madrid has dominated European club soccer's biggest prize like no other. Coach Carlo Ancelotti was asked on the eve of the Champions League final if he could explain it.

"There is something special in this club. It is important to study this," Ancelotti said on Friday. "It is something special. For what reason I don't know. History, conditions, quality of the players, character ... It happened so many times it cannot be coincidence."

Borussia Dortmund will face in Saturday's final at Wembley Stadium a club that



never seems to read the clock, that never seems to say die, and repeatedly defies the odds to pull off improbable comebacks in a competition it prizes above all others.

The most recent was substitute Joselu's two-goal

cameo in the dying stages of the semifinal against Bayern Munich when the 14-time European champion was minutes away from elimination.

Two years ago, Paris Saint-Germain and Manchester

City were undone by some of Madrid's most memorable fightbacks. Madrid went on to win the trophy in 2022 having trailed in every round from the round of 16 through to the semifinals.

"We would prefer to start (the match) winning," captain Nacho said. "We also suffer on the pitch when we are losing."

Those spectacular comebacks just add to the mystique that surrounds Madrid and the Champions League.

Victory against Dortmund would earn a record-extending 15th European Cup. Ancelotti, himself, can set a new benchmark with a record-extending fifth Champions League trophy as a coach.

## Funds to buy new wheelchair hindering champion para shooter Mona's Paralympic preparation

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Despite her successive gold medals at Parashooting World Cups, Mona Agarwal faces a stark reality - her triumphs have not translated into the crucial funds required to procure a wheelchair for the upcoming Paris Paralympic Games.

The 37-year-old, who suffers from polio and competes in the 10m air rifle (SH1) para shooting category, struck gold at the WSPS Para World Cup in New Delhi in March to secure the country's ninth and last Paralympic quota.

The mother of two then went on to grab another gold in the Para World Cup in Changwon, Korea in April, becoming one of the few



Indian shooters to secure successive top-podium finishes at the global competition. However, all her sponsorship

funds were exhausted in buying a rifle and competing "at her own cost" in the Changwon World Cup, leaving her with no resources to upgrade her wheelchair, which she believes could take her "to a different level" at the Paralympics.

"I was expecting to get enrolled in the government's Target Olympic Podium Scheme (TOPS) following my success in the Delhi Para World Cup in March. I'm hopeful it will happen but don't know the reason why it's been delayed by two months," the shooter from Jaipur told PTI.

"I have written several mails to Sports Authority of India and informed them that I have to do some equipment

upgrades for the Paralympics, so I need financial support," she added.

Mona has also excelled in various para sports including shot put, javelin, discus throw and even powerlifting.

"The Rs 15 lakh budget I had got from my sponsor for the current year has been exhausted in buying a rifle and competing in Korea, which was on own cost. I also spent Rs 7 lakh in Korea. I need about Rs 6 lakh to buy a new wheelchair," added Mona.

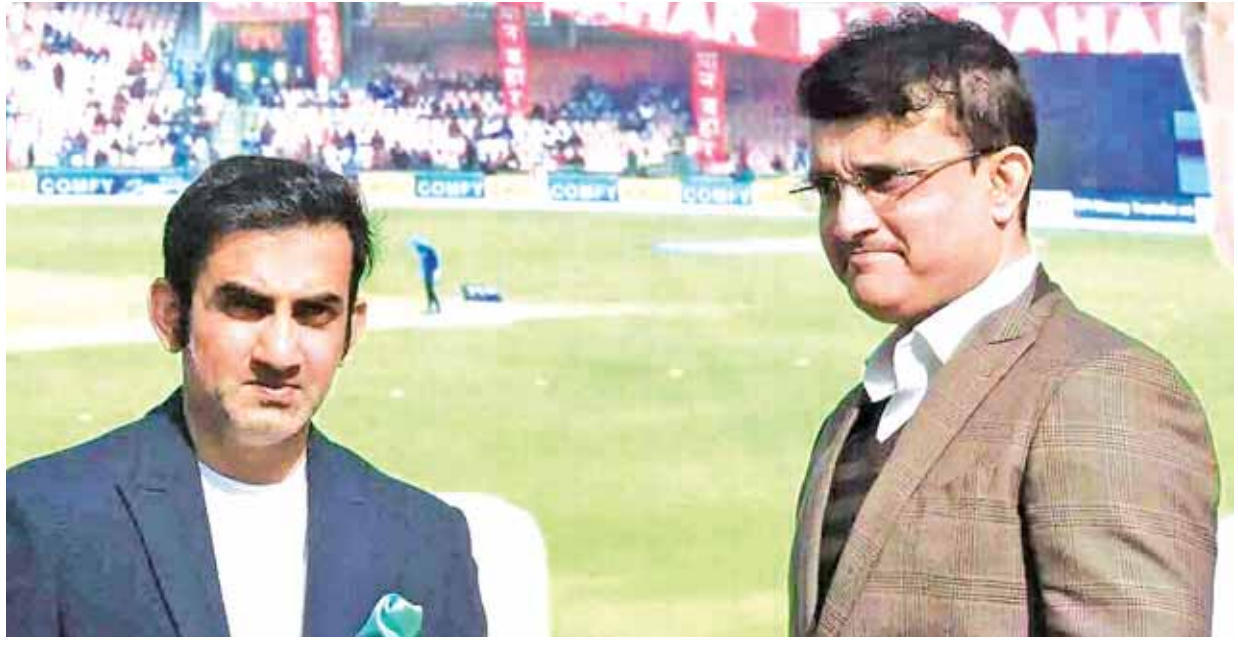
She is also the founder of the national para volleyball girls team and whenever time permits travels across India to motivate girls to take up sport.

IF HE HAS APPLIED, GAMBHIR WOULD BE GOOD COACH FOR INDIA: GANGULY

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Former India captain Sourav Ganguly on Saturday said Gautam Gambhir would be a 'good coach' for the national cricket team if he has applied for the job as his 'hunger and passion' was evident in the recently-concluded IPL. Speaking at the inauguration of the International Procurement and Supply Chain Conference organised by the Blue Ocean Corporation, Ganguly also gave his views on India's chances in the upcoming T20 World Cup.

perceived front-runner Gambhir would be suitable for the position, Ganguly had a query of his own at first. '...Has he applied? I really don't know because first he has to apply and then only he will get the job... I think (May) 27th was the last date of application,' Ganguly said. 'Obviously, BCCI has the right to extend it (the deadline) as well. If he applies and if he wants it, and I say if he applies and if he wants it, he will be a very good candidate,' he said. The 51-year-old said Gambhir's winning attitude as IPL champion Kolkata Knight Riders' mentor was there for all to see this year. 'If Gambhir applies — you can see it on TV — he worked for KKR this year. I was with Delhi (Capitals), you can see the hunger, the passion and the want to win and I will be happy if he applies and if the board decides to give him the job, I think he is a good candidate,' Ganguly said. India's head coach position will fall vacant after Rahul Dravid steps down at the end of the team's T20 World Cup



campaign in the Americas. A few days ago, BCCI secretary Jay Shah also hinted that an Indian coach would be preferred. 'We are focused on identifying individuals who possess a deep understanding of the Indian

cricket structure and have risen through the ranks,' Shah had said. **INDIA STRONG CONTENDERS FOR T20WC:** Ganguly also said India's chances are 'very good' in the T20 World Cup but the

team should play with 'freedom'. The event, to be jointly hosted by the USA and the West Indies, gets underway on Saturday. '...Play without fear and just keep hitting. There is enormous talent, (this is) a

team which has (Virat) Kohli, Rohit (Sharma), Surya (Suryakumar Yadav), (Rishabh) Pant, (Shivam) Dubey, (Hardik) Pandya, (Ravindra) Jadeja, Axar (Patel), (Jaspriit) Bumrah, Sanju (Samson),' he said when

asked about India's chances. 'That's why I say everyone is capable of winning it for India and the only way they will do it is (if they) just play with freedom. 'Play with that extra batsman and hit from the first ball, hit till you have to defend (and) play like the last ball,' he added. Ganguly backed the pair of Rohit and Kohli to open for India. 'It is Virat and Rohit, both should open. Virat has been in tremendous touch in the IPL, he is a great player,' he said. The former opener said the drop-in pitches brought from Adelaide in the USA leg of the World Cup should be batting-friendly. 'I am very keen to see how the conditions are in the US. (The Nassau County Cricket Stadium is a) new ground, new stadium. I know there have been drop in pitches from Adelaide. 'The ICC has spent a lot of money to bring in the drop-in pitches to America,' he said. '(The) drop-in pitches are normally very good, very

batting friendly. And they don't change much over a period of time because they are different from natural pitches. So we are expecting the pitches to be very good,' he added. Ganguly said India are superior to Pakistan but the arch-rivals will pose a tough challenge in the T20 format when the two sides clash on June 9. 'Our record against Pakistan has been very, very good over a long period of time. In the T20 format, probably Pakistan is more dangerous compared to 50-overs (format). We beat them in Ahmedabad when they came to India and we beat them easily. 'India is superior and if they play well, if they play freely and I keep saying the word 'freely' all the time because (in) the last World Cup in Australia, I don't think we played freely,' he said. 'Just put all the cobwebs behind. Don't worry about winning or losing. Don't think about winning the World Cup. Just go and play every game,' he added.



I don't try to over-teach: Bumrah on mentoring India's young pacers

PTI ■ NEW YORK

Considered a mentor for the new crop of Indian fast bowlers, pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah says he never tries to 'over-teach' the younger lot and steps in to help only when asked, to avoid burdening them with information. The 30-year-old Bumrah would be a key player for India in the T20 World Cup, starting here on Saturday and he would also be expected to be a guiding force for India's pace battery, featuring the relatively younger and less experienced Mohammed Siraj and Arshdeep Singh. 'You don't try to over-teach. That is something that I have learned,' Bumrah told the ICC's official website for the T20 World Cup. 'Because whenever people need help, I let them have their own questions... Because you don't want to give too much information,' he said. Bumrah said it is important for youngsters to know their path without being burdened with an overkill of information. 'It's not like they have just been lucky and they land here. So that is what I try to do. I do pass on certain information that I have gained over from my experience,' he said. 'But I don't try to burden them with (over) information. Because that is a part of the journey as well. That you have to find your own ways and solutions,' he added. Bumrah has battled a nagging back injury for the past couple of years and it even kept him out of the 2022 T20 World Cup but he has managed to fight through and enjoyed a brilliant run in the 2023 ODI showpiece. He snared 20 wickets at an average of 18.65 with an economy of just about four in that event. The reticent bowler said his focus since coming back has been to simply enjoy his game. 'Because (certain) things will

go my way. (Certain) things will not go my way,' he said. 'All of these things will be a part of my process. So I have just realised that I started playing this sport. Because I love this sport. And I will focus on that rather than the end result. 'So in that aspect you reduce your pressure. And you enjoy the sport. When you focus on those things. Rather than the things you cannot control,' he added. Bumrah has 74 T20 International wickets, which puts him third in India's all-time list. He is widely perceived to be the best among the current lot of international pacers when it comes to consistently bowling yorkers. Australian great Brett Lee has even gone to the extent of saying that Bumrah is the only pacer in the world who is executing the yorker correctly right now. Bumrah said his consistent yorkers are a result of years of practice. 'So I played a lot of tennis-ball, rubber-ball cricket when I was growing up. I used to play a lot with my friends in summer camps,' he said. '...I used to think that this is the only way to get wickets. Because I was a fan of fast bowling. I was really fascinated by what I saw on the television. So I tried to replicate that. Is it (tennis-ball cricket) a secret (to bowling yorkers) or not? I don't know,' Bumrah wondered. 'But repetition surely is. Because I have kept this delivery. I still practice it. I keep on practicing it. Because every skill that you develop, you have to practice it and make it stronger. So I think a combination of both would be the answer.' India are in Group A of the T20 World Cup, along with Pakistan, Ireland, Canada, and the USA. They will begin their campaign against Ireland on June 5.

Shanaka grabs 4/23 in Sri Lanka's scrappy win over Ireland

PTI ■ LAUDERHILL (USA)

Dasun Shanaka produced a solid all-round performance, including bowling figures of 4/23, as former champions Sri Lanka overcame some jittery moments to down Ireland by 41 runs in their T20 World Cup warm-up game here. Put in to bat at the Central Broward Regional Park Stadium Turf Ground here on Friday, Sri Lanka saw their batting misfire in the initial phases of the game. They lost half of their side for 82 runs in 11 overs before managing to post a respectable 163/8. All-rounders Wanindu Hasaranga (26), Angelo Mathews (32), and Shanaka (23) fired up the proceedings down the order to take them to a competitive total. In reply, quick-fire knocks from Paul Stirling (21) and George Dockrell (17) were the bright spots in the initial stages of the Irish chase, but former skipper Shanaka swung the momentum with his medium



pace bowling as Ireland were bowled out for 122 in 18.2 overs. Sri Lanka will face South Africa in their opening match in New York on Monday, while Ireland will be up against India on Wednesday. **AFGHANISTAN EXCEL VS SCOTLAND:** At the Port of Spain in Trinidad, Gulbadin Naib, Rashid Khan and Mujeeb Ur Rahman starred for Afghanistan in a commanding 55-run win over Scotland. Having missed out on batting in the rain-hit warmup game against Oman, Afghanistan

made the most of their encounter against Scotland. Electing to bat, Afghanistan sent all-rounder Naib to open with Rahmanullah Gurbaz and the duo set them off to a blistering start. Naib struck 20 runs off the second over of the innings, hitting two fours and two sixes against Brandon McMullen and top-scored for the Afghans with a 30-ball 69 (5x4, 6x6) that took the total to 178/8. Azmatullah Omarzai also contributed with a solid 36-ball 48. For Scotland, Chris Sole (3/35)

and Bradley Currie (2/26) managed to stem the flow of runs by picking regular wickets. Afghanistan then restricted their opponents for 123/9 with their spinners, led by Mujeeb Ur Rahman (2/23 in 3 overs) and Rashid Khan (1/3 in 2 overs), taking control of the game. Afghanistan open their T20 World Cup campaign against Uganda, while Scotland play England in Barbados on Tuesday. **BRIEF SCORES:** At Lauderhill: Sri Lanka 163/8; 20 overs (Angelo Mathews 32 not out; Josh Little 2/45, Barry McCarthy 2/31) beat Ireland 122; 18.2 overs (Curtis Campher 26; Dasun Shanaka 4/23, Maheesh Theekshana 2/14, Wanindu Hasaranga 2/40) by 41 runs. At Port of Spain: Afghanistan 178/8; 20 overs (Gulbadin Naib 69, Azmatullah Omarzai 48; Cris Sole 3/35, Bradley Currie 2/26) beat Scotland 123/9; 20 overs (Mark Watt 34; Karim Janat 2/13, Mujeeb Ur Rahman 2/23) by 55 runs.

Gilchrist backs Nepal, Netherlands to upset big teams in T20 WC

PTI ■ BARBADOS



Legendary Australian wicketkeeper Adam Gilchrist believes Nepal and the Netherlands could surprise teams like Bangladesh and Sri Lanka in the upcoming T20 World Cup. Nepal and the Netherlands are clubbed with Bangladesh, South Africa and Sri Lanka in Group D. Gilchrist believes that the international exposure gained by the youngsters in Rohit Paudel-led Nepalese team has made them a formidable unit. As for the Netherlands, Gilchrist observed that they have been always tough customers in ICC events and would like to make the most of the limited opportunities they get to play against big teams. 'I think Nepal would be a team that might be able to fire a shot,' Gilchrist told SEN Radio on Saturday. 'They've got a couple of young players who have been in all the big leagues for a number of years now,' he said. Nepal, however, have suffered a big blow ahead of the World Cup as their ace leg-spinner

Sandeep Lamichhane has been ruled out after his US visa application was rejected for a second time. With the Dutch having upset the Proteas in the 2022 T20 World Cup in Australia, Gilchrist felt they definitely would be a tough proposition. 'The Dutch always seem to ruffle a few feathers, they always seem to get under the skin, and they're drawn in the same pool as South Africa again. They nailed them in the T20 World Cup last time in Australia in Adelaide. So, it might be the Dutch,' he said. Citing the example of the USA upsetting Bangladesh 2-1 in a three-match T20 series late last month, Gilchrist said lesser-known cricket-playing nations are always looking at opportunities to beat bigger teams.

USA open against Canada

PTI ■ DALLAS (USA)

**USA FAVOURITES VS CANADA:** A team full of expatriates, tournament co-hosts USA, coached by former Australian batter Stuart Law, will promise some surprises when it kicks off the T20 World Cup taking on qualifiers Canada in a battle of debutants. The USA have proved that they will be no pushovers, having beaten the full-member side Bangladesh 2-1 in the build up to the tournament. They will also have the edge having beaten Canada 4-0 recently. The side will be boosted by former New Zealand player and 2015 World Cup finalist Corey Anderson. The hosts will be led by wicket-keeper batter Monank Patel. Born in Anand, Monank played for his home state at age-group level before making the US his home in

ICC MEN'S T20 WORLD CUP: 1ST MATCH



2016. He was the top-scorer in the World T20 Americas qualifier 2018 with 208

runs from six innings and made his T20I debut against UAE in 2019. The team will also feature some

familiar names in former Mumbai and Rajasthan Royals left-arm spinner Harmeet Singh and ex-Delhi and Royal Challengers Bengaluru batter Milind Kumar. They also have Saurabh Netravalkar, the most capped USA player, Aaron Jones, and opener Steven Taylor, their highest run-scorer in international cricket. Tearaway quick Ali Khan is also fit for the tournament, shaking off a hamstring injury which kept him out of the Canada series. Battering all-rounder Nitish Kumar, who played 18 T20Is for Canada from 2012 to 2019, has now switched sides and will be seen in the USA jersey. He made his T20I debut for the USA against Canada in April this year. Left-arm orthodox spinner Saad Bin

Zafar brings a wealth of experience to the Canada team, with top-order batter Aaron Johnson and left-arm seamer Kaleem Sana also expected to feature heavily in a side with just four players under the age of 30. **TEAMS (FROM) USA:** Monank Patel (c), Aaron Jones (vc), Andries Gouse, Corey Anderson, Ali Khan, Harmeet Singh, Jessy Singh, Milind Kumar, Nisarg Patel, Nitish Kumar, Noshtush Kenjige, Saurabh Nethralvakar, Shadley Van Schalkwyk, Steven Taylor and Shayan Jahangir. **Canada:** Saad Bin Zafar (c), Aaron Johnson, Ravinderpal Singh, Navneet Dhaliwal, Kaleem Sana, Dillon Heyliger, Jeremy Gordon, Nikhil Dutta, Pargat Singh, Nicholas Kirton, Rayyankhan Pathan, Junaid Siddiqui, Dilpreet Bajwa, Shreyas Movva and Rishiv Joshi. **Match starts:** 6 am IST.

WI aim for solid start against PNG

PTI ■ GEORGETOWN (GUYANA)

More than eight years after Carlos Brathwaite's four sixes at Eden Gardens gave them their second T20 world title, a wounded West Indies will look to redeem themselves at home when they begin their campaign in the event's ninth edition by taking on Papua New Guinea, here on Sunday. Brathwaite had slammed Ben Stokes for four successive sixes in the final over to pull off one of the most astonishing chases that made the West Indies the first team to win the T20 World Cup twice. Their maiden triumph was in 2012. But what followed was years of agony as the team found itself lost in transition. In 2021, they endured four defeats in five games to make a Super 12 exit. Worse was in store in the 2022 edition in Australia when they failed to qualify for the main round after shock defeats to minnows Scotland and

Ireland. It's been 2982 days since the memorable night at the Eden Gardens in Kolkata, something they would be desperate to reclaim especially when the tournament is at home. Their two-time T20 World Cup winning skipper Darren Sammy is back as a coach and the Rowman Powell-led side already made its intention clear with a ruthless win over Australia in a warmup match. But that Australia was a depleted side as only nine players from their squad were available for the match. Nicolas Pooran will play a pivotal role in the middle-order, but West Indies boast additional firepower with Powell, Andre Russell, Shimron Hetmyer, Sherfane Rutherford, and Romario Shepherd, making them one of

2ND MATCH: WEST INDIES VS PAPUA NEW GUINEA



the most formidable batting line-ups in the tournament. Russell has been in exceptional

form, both with bat and ball, after aiding Kolkata Knight Riders in clinching their third

IPL title recently. West Indies will also be looking to become the first team to win a T20 World Cup at home. They have replaced the experienced but injured Jason Holder with left-arm fast bowler Obed McCoy. McCoy was the leading wicket-taker during the West Indies A's recent tour to Nepal, grabbing eight wickets in five matches. Assadollah Vala-led PNG will make their second appearance after 2021 after sealing their spot via the East Asia-Pacific regional final in July 2023. Vala is one of 10 players from their 2021 campaign, with that edition's reserve member Jack Gardner picked in the 15-player group this time. Leg-spinning all-rounder CJ Amini will be his deputy. The side boasts no fewer than

eight recognised all-rounders, with both right and left-arm bowling options. Left-arm quick Sema Kamea and Kabua Vagi Morea both enjoyed qualifying action, with the latter taking a hat-trick in the game against the Philippines. **TEAMS (FROM) West Indies:** Rovman Powell (c), Alzarri Joseph (vc), Johnson Charles, Roston Chase, Shimron Hetmyer, Shai Hope, Akeal Hosein, Shamar Joseph, Brandon King, Obed McCoy, Gudakesh Motie, Nicholas Pooran, Andre Russell, Sherfane Rutherford and Romario Shepherd. **Papua New Guinea:** Assadollah Vala (c), Alei Nao, Chad Soper, CJ Amini, Hila Vare, Hiri Hiri, Jack Gardner, John Kariko, Kabua Vagi Morea, Kipling Doriga, Lega Siaka, Norman Vanua, Sema Kamea, Sese Bau and Tony Ura. **Match starts:** 8 pm IST.





Explore the artistic brilliance and cultural legacy of Sonal Mansingh through the fascinating world of classical dance with GYANESHWAR DAYAL

# THE LIVING LEGEND OF SONAL MANSINGH

In the realm of Indian classical dance, few names carry as much weight and reverence as that of Sonal Mansingh. Her life's journey is not just a tale of individual accomplishment but a testament to the power of art in transcending boundaries and enriching lives.

Sonal Mansingh's relationship with dance began at an early age. Raised in a family that valued both tradition and modernity, she was exposed to various forms of art and culture from childhood. Her initial training in Bharatanatyam began under the tutelage of renowned Guru Shri Chandralekha. However, it was her encounter with the legendary Odissi guru, Guru Kelucharan Mohapatra, that shaped her destiny. Under his guidance, Sonal delved deep into the intricate nuances of Odissi, a classical dance form from the eastern state of Odisha, India. She mastered the art with such finesse that she became one of its foremost exponents, earning acclaim both nationally and internationally. Sonal Mansingh's journey has not been without its share of challenges. As a woman navigating the patriarchal landscape of Indian society, she faced skepticism and resistance from traditional quarters. Yet, with unwavering determination and resilience, she shattered stereotypes and carved a niche for herself in a male-dominated field. Her artistic integrity and commitment to her craft have been unwavering, even in the face of adversity. Through her performances, workshops, and lectures, she has tirelessly worked towards preserving and promoting India's rich cultural heritage, inspiring generations of artists to follow in her footsteps. As a cultural icon, Sonal Mansingh's legacy transcends boundaries of time and geography. She has not only enriched the world of dance with her unparalleled talent but has also left an indelible mark on the hearts and minds of millions

SONAL MANSINGH'S JOURNEY HAS NOT BEEN WITHOUT ITS SHARE OF CHALLENGES. AS A WOMAN NAVIGATING THE PATRIARCHAL LANDSCAPE OF INDIAN SOCIETY, SHE FACED SKEPTICISM AND RESISTANCE FROM TRADITIONAL QUARTERS. YET, WITH UNWAVERING DETERMINATION AND RESILIENCE, SHE SHATTERED STEREOTYPES AND CARVED A NICHE FOR HERSELF IN A MALE-DOMINATED FIELD. HER ARTISTIC INTEGRITY AND COMMITMENT TO HER CRAFT HAVE BEEN UNWAVERING, EVEN IN THE FACE OF ADVERSITY

around the world. Her life's journey is a testament to the transformative power of art and its ability to bridge divides, foster dialogue, and celebrate the beauty of human expression. In an ever-changing world, where the allure of tradition often clashes with the forces of modernity, Sonal Mansingh stands as a beacon of a vibrant tradition, innovation, and timeless grace, reminding us of the enduring relevance of our cultural roots. As she continues to inspire and enchant audiences with her artistry, her legacy remains etched in the annals of Indian classical dance, a shining testament to the enduring power of the human spirit. Sonal Mansingh's dance themes often encompass a rich tapestry of mythological narratives, cultural traditions, and social issues. Through her performances, she weaves together stories from Indian history and legends, ancient and contemporary texts exploring the tales of gods and goddesses with intricate choreography and expressive movements. Her interpretations of classical dance are imbued with deep spiritual and philosophical elements, reflecting her profound understanding of Indian culture and traditions. Additionally, she often addresses contemporary social issues through her choreography, using dance as a medium for commentary and reflection. Whether addressing themes of gender equality, environmental consciousness, or the human experience, Mansingh infuses her performances with relevance and meaning, engaging audiences on both artistic and intellectual levels. Overall, Sonal Mansingh's dance themes transcend mere entertainment, serving as a platform for storytelling, cultural preservation,

and social advocacy. Through her artistry, she continues to captivate and inspire audiences around the world, leaving a lasting impression with each graceful movement. Sonal Mansingh, a prominent figure in the world of Indian classical dance, also had a notable involvement in politics. While she is primarily celebrated for her contributions to dance, her engagement in political discourse arose when she was nominated to the Rajya Sabha, the upper house of the Indian Parliament, in 2018. Her nomination was a recognition of her achievements and contributions to Indian culture and arts, acknowledging the importance of promoting and preserving India's rich cultural heritage within the political sphere. As a member of the Rajya Sabha, Mansingh has used the platform to advocate for the arts, cultural preservation, and the promotion of Indian dance forms. She actively participated in debates and discussions concerning cultural policies, education, sociology of culture and the role of the arts in society. Mansingh's foray into politics highlighted the intersection of culture, arts, and governance in India. Her journey serves as a reminder of the importance of recognizing and supporting cultural icons within the political landscape, ensuring that the nation's rich artistic heritage continues to thrive and flourish. Sonal Mansingh, a luminary in the realm of Indian classical dance, has left an indelible mark through her illustrious career. Honored with the Padma Bhushan in 1992, and the Padma Vibhushan in 2003, she has been lauded for her exceptional contributions to the performing arts.

As the founder of the Centre for Indian Classical Dances (CICD) in New Delhi, Mansingh established a bastion for the promotion and preservation of various classical dance forms, nurturing young talent and disseminating awareness of India's rich cultural heritage. Her mesmerizing performances have graced prestigious stages worldwide, serving as a cultural ambassador and fostering appreciation for Indian art and heritage. Appointed as a UNESCO Artist for Peace in 2003, Mansingh's efforts in promoting intercultural dialogue through dance have been globally recognized. Beyond tradition, her artistic vision fearlessly explores new themes, narratives, and choreographic styles, breathing fresh life into age-old traditions and inspiring generations of artists. Sonal Mansingh's life is a tapestry of devotion to Indian classical dance, and a commitment to preserving and promoting India's cultural heritage. Born in 1944 in Bombay, she began her dance training at a young age, later becoming a trailblazer in the field. With a career spanning over six decades, Mansingh has dazzled audiences worldwide with her performances, lectures & interviews earning numerous accolades and honors along the way. Beyond her contributions to dance, Mansingh has been a cultural ambassador for India, spreading awareness of its rich artistic traditions.

## “As in life, so in dance, character is essential”

SONAL MANSINGH talks about her art, life and life philosophy that went into making the person she is. She opened up to THE PIONEER. Excerpts

**What are some memorable performances or collaborations that have shaped your artistic journey?** Well, memorable performances and collaborations are different. From the very beginning in 1961, when I gave my maiden solo performance, to this day, every performance has been memorable for one reason or another. Whether it was in Venezuela or China, Mongolia or Mandi, in a big opera house of a megapolis or on a small-town stage, each one was memorable. Choosing the best among them all is rather difficult. However, the performance in Delhi after my car accident in Germany in 1975 stands out. Many dancers told me they were inspired by it, saying that at times they didn't see me but saw sparks. The performance for the Dalai Lama in McLeod Ganj in 1994 was also significant for its content, which moved him to tears. Performing in front of Mount Kailash was a once-in-a-lifetime divine experience.

**Tell us something about your collaborations.** Regarding collaborations, I haven't had many. My performances in Bharatnatyam, Odissi, or Chhau are



collaborations with musicians, my guide and Guru Shri Jeevan Pani Ji, researchers, gurus, yoga gurus, and anyone from whom I learned something. Life itself is a great collaboration. Learning is an effort unto itself. Things keep happening, and one must become aware of them. Life is a jigsaw puzzle from which one picks little nuggets of wisdom.

**What values are essential in classical dance?** As in life, so in dance, character is essential. Character building starts in mother's womb or even from previous births (poorva janma) and karma samskara. It then grows with upbringing, nurturing, travel, and learning. Due diligence is essential. Even slight lethargy or negativity can creep in if you leave the door of consciousness ajar, so one must always be aware. What must be



done should be done in a timely manner, and every detail must be worked out. Humility is important. Remember, reevaluate, reassess, and move on (manan chintan). Reading is essential, especially in times of dependence on social media: read, discuss, understand, and carve your own path.

**How do you approach interpreting classical dance forms to suit contemporary audiences?** I always did what I wanted to do, and this tendency was further encouraged by my Bharatnatyam guru, U.S. Krishna Rao. We are different from Western classical dancers, where brochures are distributed at the beginning, and ballerinas dance with 50 other dancers. Audience should read the brochure before the performance begins because

later there are no commentaries or announcements. That stuck with me. You cannot give a rundown of every performance you give. Every sanchari (to convey a story or series of events through body language, hand gestures, and facial expressions) must be spontaneous. If it is pre-decided, it doesn't stay spontaneous. But I leave it to each dancer, as it depends on her training, way of thinking, and approach to dance.

**Tell us something about the themes and content of your choreographic works.** I have always chosen themes of women empowerment, such as Devi, Draupadi, Panchkanya, river pollution (Krishna-Kaliya) atmospheric pollution, and thought pollution. I always say the three Vs-vichar (thought), vaani (speech), and vyavhaar

(behavior)-need to be cleansed from time to time to ward off negativity. Today, people are stressed, tired, and emotionally burdened. Our dances address these issues and uplift emotionally, physically, and spiritually.

**What advice do you have for aspiring classical dancers regarding training and technique?** Many things have changed over the years, but some things remain the same. Ekagrachitta (एकाग्रचित्त), or focus and commitment, is one such tenet all students must observe. When you go to a Guru to learn, you must be well-prepared for the next class. You must have respect for the teacher, the traditions, the place you perform, the iconography, the messages contained in the Puranas, the temples, their

architecture, and so on. **What do you have to say about the mythology of the Puranas from where you draw your themes?** I would say mythology is the wrong word. Mythology comes from 'mythos' (in Greek) which is akin to fairy tales. Our stories are not fairy tales; they are actual events that took place long ago. They have messages and inspirations that transcend time. We must honor, respect, and work according to these stories. **What are some of the challenges you've faced in your career, and how have you overcome them?** Life is a journey full of challenges, and these challenges shape who you are and how you deal with them. They help you grow, evolve, and become a



better person. I took two vows with my grandfather: I will never commercialize dance, so I give all the money from my performances to my institute, Shri Kamakhya Kalapeeth (Centre for Indian Classical Dances). I have lived in rented accommodations and will continue to do so, after my term as Member of Parliament is over.

**Could you share a particularly rewarding or transformative experience you've had?** There are not just one but many. If one allows oneself to be like a lotus and opens up to Sun, every moment is transformative and rewarding. One needs to open up to accept beauty with one's eyes, ears, mind, and heart-Satyam Shivam Sundaram. There is a beautiful prayer, "Asatoma Sadgamaya" (Lead me from ignorance to truth), "Tamasoma Jyotir Gamaya" (Lead me from darkness to light), "Mriyorma Amritam Gamaya" (Lead me from time-bound consciousness to the timeless state of Being). May we all have that rewarding journey. Through my dance, learning, and friends, I have lived a fulfilling and rewarding life. The human avatar is very rare; let's make the most of it.

The Niazi brothers have not only preserved the traditional essence of Qawwali but have also managed to infuse it with contemporary relevance, writes **GYANESHWAR DAYAL**

# KEEPERS OF QAWWALI'S

# SOUL IN A RAPIDLY CHANGING WORLD



## NIAZI BROTHERS ENTHRAL AT JASHN-E-QAWWALI CONCERT

Wishes & Blessings, a Delhi-based NGO committed to aiding those in need, organised the third edition of the fundraising concert, Jashn-E-Qawwali at Kamani Auditorium, Delhi. The event showcased mesmerizing performances by the internationally acclaimed Qawwali group, Niazi Brothers. Their soulful melodies captivated the audience, who swayed to power-packed performances ranging from traditional Qawwali tunes to popular Bollywood hits and original compositions by the Niazi Brothers. Standout renditions included timeless classics such as 'Kun Faya Kun,' 'Chaap Tilak,' 'Bhar De Jholi,' and 'Dama Dam Mast Qalandar'. The event attracted a wide audience, including beneficiaries of various Sahas (an upskilling programme for women), the street-to-school initiative, and the community kitchen. "We are extremely overwhelmed by the turnout and the resounding success of Jashn-E-Qawwali," said Dr Geetanjali Chopra, Founder and President of Wishes & Blessings, adding that,

"This marks the third edition of the fundraiser, with the previous two being immensely successful. The funds raised this year will directly contribute to our WB Rasoi programme, addressing the fundamental need for food among those in need. We are grateful to Niazi Brothers for their continued support and to everyone who attended and contributed for the cause."

The funds raised will support the expansion of WB Rasoi, a new initiative aimed at providing nutritious meals to individuals in need. The NGO recently launched its first WB Rasoi in NOIDA, NCR. Shahid Niazi of the Niazi Brothers shared, "It was an honour to perform for such a noble cause. When we needed help, they were there for us. This was our time to give back. We are proud to be associated with Wishes & Blessings NGO for the past three years and look forward to contributing more in the future." The triumphant culmination of Jashn-E-Qawwali underscores Wishes & Blessings' commitment to making a meaningful difference in marginalised communities and lives and exemplifies music's power in fostering social change.



Immersed in the mysticism of Sufi music, the Niazi Brothers stand as luminaries in the realm of Qawwali, weaving a tapestry of tradition and innovation. Sufi music, with its ethereal melodies and profound lyrics, transcends the boundaries of time and culture, reaching deep into the human soul. Rooted in the mystical traditions of Sufism, this genre resonates with listeners by invoking a sense of spiritual awakening and emotional connection. The timeless appeal of Sufi music lies in its ability to convey universal themes of love, devotion, and the quest for divine union, making it a poignant and enduring form of artistic expression that continues to captivate audiences across generations.

### A JOURNEY THROUGH SUFI MUSIC

The Niazi Brothers, hailing from Pakistan, are renowned for their powerful and evocative performances

that capture the very essence of Qawwali. The group's roots can be traced back to the renowned Patiala Gharana, known for its distinctive style and musical prowess. Growing up in a family where music was as essential as air, the brothers were immersed in the world of Qawwali from a young age, learning the intricacies and subtleties of the genre from their forebears. Their father, Ustad Allah Rakha, was a renowned Qawwali singer who instilled in them a deep respect for the traditional forms and the spiritual messages conveyed through their music. This early education laid a strong foundation, allowing the Niazi Brothers to develop a profound understanding of both the technical and emotional aspects of Qawwali. However, the Niazi Brothers' rise to prominence was not an overnight success but a journey of relentless dedication and passion. Their performances are characterised by a deep emotional connection, powerful vocals, and a mastery of the harmonium and tabla, all of which are central to the Qawwali experience. The brothers have performed on numerous prestigious stages around the world, captivating audiences with their dynamic energy and spiritual depth. Their repertoire includes classical Qawwalis that date back centuries, as well as more contemporary pieces that reflect current social and spiritual themes. This blend of old and new has helped them reach a diverse audience,

from traditionalists who appreciate the purity of their classical renditions to younger listeners who find resonance in their modern interpretations.

### THE FUTURE OF QAWWALI IN A FAST-PACED WORLD

As the world hurtles forward with technological advancements and shifting cultural landscapes, the future of Qawwali faces both challenges and opportunities. The Niazi Brothers are acutely aware of this dynamic and have been proactive in adapting to the changing times while preserving the core essence of their music. One significant avenue they have explored is the digital realm. Through social media platforms, streaming services, and online concerts, the Niazi Brothers have reached a global audience that transcends geographical boundaries. These platforms have allowed them to share their music with fans who might never have had the opportunity to experience a live Qawwali performance, thereby expanding the genre's reach and relevance. Moreover, collaborations with artists from different musical backgrounds have also played a crucial role in keeping Qawwali vibrant and relevant. By blending traditional Qawwali with contemporary music styles, the Niazi Brothers have created a unique fusion that appeals to a broader audience. This fusion not only keeps the tradition alive but also introduces its profound

spiritual and emotional depth to new listeners.

### PRESERVING TRADITION WHILE EMBRACING INNOVATION

The Niazi Brothers' approach to the future of Qawwali is a delicate balance of preservation and innovation. They remain deeply committed to the traditional aspects of Qawwali, understanding that its true power lies in its authenticity and spiritual roots. At the same time, they are not afraid to experiment and incorporate new elements that resonate with today's audiences. Education and mentorship also form a significant part of their vision for the future. By teaching young musicians the art of Qawwali, the Niazi Brothers are ensuring that this ancient tradition is passed down to future generations. They conduct workshops and training sessions, sharing their knowledge and passion with aspiring Qawwals, thus creating a new generation of musicians who can carry the torch forward. The journey of the Niazi Brothers is a testament to the enduring power of Qawwali. Through their dedication, talent, and willingness to innovate, they have kept this ancient form of spiritual music alive and thriving. As the world continues to change at a rapid pace, the Niazi Brothers stand as guardians of a rich musical heritage, ensuring that the soul-stirring strains of Qawwali continue to resonate across the globe for generations to come.



Photos: Pankaj Kumar

## Theatre of Enchantment

Gulzar's captivating adaptation of Shakespeare's *Comedy of Errors* took centrestage last week with director Salim Arif's masterful vision bringing this timeless comedy to life, says **SAKSHI PRIYA**

Delhi was recently treated to an evening of theatrical enchantment at the prestigious Shri Ram Centre Auditorium. Amidst the city's vibrant energy, laughter and thunderous applause emerged as the renowned Shri Ram Centre for Performing Arts (SRCPA) Repertory unveiled Gulzar's spellbinding adaptation of Shakespeare's *Comedy of Errors*, titled *2 BY 2*. The auditorium was transformed into a realm of lighthearted gaiety, captivating the audience with the timeless magic of a live performance. Every artist was wholeheartedly appreciated, showcasing the audience's love for exceptional work. In a world where appreciation is often fleeting, this play, masterfully directed by the renowned Mohammed Salim Arif, stood as a testament to the enduring power of art. An acclaimed visionary in the realms of film, television and theatre, Salim's directorial prowess in *2 BY 2* can only be described as a masterpiece of the highest calibre. The play is a comedic masterpiece that tickles the funny bone with its hilarious depiction of mistaken identities and coincidental mix-ups involving identical twins with identical names. Designed and directed by Salim Arif and performed by ace artists, the play is a delightful experience. The audience was particularly impressed with the fact the actors performed and delivered on a script like Gulzar's script and Arif's direction. Resemblance with the adaptation of Shakespeare's classic drama in the film *Angoor* was quite obvious but the theatrical adaptation was indeed a beautiful execution of the masterpiece.

*2 BY 2*, like Shakespeare's *Comedy of Errors*, centres on two pairs of identical twins with identical names. Raj Tilak, a wealthy merchant, has identical twins named Ashok. During a journey, Raj Tilak discovers another pair of identical twins and adopts them, calling them Bahadur. An unfortunate accident separates the family, with each parent ending up with one child from each pair. One set of twins grows up married while the other remains single and mischievous. The comedy unfolds when the unmarried Ashok and Bahadur duo arrive in the city where the married Ashok and Bahadur reside. The ensuing confusion, involving their families, a jeweller, a taxi driver, and an inspector, leads to a series of hilarious misunderstandings that has the audience in stitches. The play masterfully blends humour, acting, and a classic script to create an entertaining experience. Gulzar's script, known for its poetic and situational brilliance, adds depth and flavour to the play, enthralling the audience all along. Director Salim Arif commented, "Shakespeare's *Comedy of Errors* is a classic that centres on the notion of 'mistaken identity'. In Gulzar Saab's adaptation *2 BY 2*, the arrival of the unmarried Ashok and Bahadur in the city where the married Ashok and Bahadur reside creates a confusion that involves more than their families, to extend to a jeweller, a police inspector, and the town." The performances by the cast was exceptional, their expressions, delivery

and timing impeccable. The sets, lighting, costumes and props were meticulously crafted, adding to the play's charm. The success of *2 BY 2* is an indication to the enduring appeal of high-quality, engaging theatre. The combination of Salim Arif's direction and Gulzar Saab's writing created an unforgettable experience, proving that great work continues to receive the appreciation it deserves. *2 BY 2* is more than just a simple tale of confusion. The script, penned by the legendary Gulzar, is a masterpiece of situational comedy. Each dialogue adds a layer of humour to the chaos, keeping the audience perpetually on the edge of their seats in anticipation of what comes next. Director Salim Arif masterfully brings the script to life, ensuring the comedic timing is tight. The talented cast deserves credit for its captivating performances. From subtle inflections to dramatic gestures, every aspect of the actors' performance is a testament to their dedication to the craft. The play does not just rely on the actors. The set's design, perfect lighting, costumes and props, all contribute in transporting the audience into the world of *2 BY 2*. *2 BY 2* is indeed a celebration of theatre at its finest. As the curtains came down on the play, a thunderous applause filled the auditorium, showcasing the profound impact on the audience. The seamless blend of Gulzar's storytelling, Salim Arif's direction and the exceptional performances created an unforgettable evening of laughter and delight. With this play, the SRCPA further underlined its commitment to bringing exceptional theatre to Delhi, reminding us of power of art to unite, entertain and inspire. As one left the theatre, one was reminded of the fact that amidst life's complexities, the gift of shared joy through a live performance is an eternal treasure.

## TRAILBLAZING JOURNEY THROUGH BHARATANATYAM

Apeksha Niranjana Mundargi, a pioneer in the field of Bharatanatyam, has ushered in a new dawn for this ancient art form with her passion and innovative spirit, says **SAKSHI PRIYA**

In the vibrant tapestry of classical Indian dance forms, Bharatanatyam is a captivating expression of grace, rhythm and storytelling. At the forefront of this ancient art's contemporary renaissance is Apeksha Niranjana Mundargi, a celebrated dancer, choreographer, and teacher from Mumbai. With a journey that began in the culturally rich city of Kolhapur, Apeksha's unwavering passion and dedication have elevated her to the ranks of the most accomplished Bharatanatyam artists of our time. Through her exceptional talent, innovative choreography and profound understanding of the art form's rich heritage, she has captivated audiences across the globe, ushering in a new era of appreciation for this timeless dance tradition. Apeksha's journey in mastering Bharatanatyam has been one of dedication, discipline and learning. She describes how her love for the dance form is rooted in its profound ability to tell stories through rhythm, expression and grace. From a young age, she was captivated by the intricate footwork, eloquent gestures and expressive use of the eyes. Her journey, guided by her gurus, has deepened her appreciation for the rich cultural heritage and intricate techniques of Bharatanatyam. One of Apeksha's notable productions, *Nayanam*, which means eyes in Sanskrit, explores the myriad emotions conveyed through the eyes. This thematic performance highlights the eyes as windows to the soul, capable of portraying joy, love, sorrow and longing. Apeksha recounts a memorable moment during her Poland Spring Tour 2024 when a girl in the audience was moved to tears by *Nayanam*, underscoring the power of dance to push barriers.

Apeksha's training in the *Nritya-Ganga* dance style, introduced by her Guru Dr Sucheta Chapekar, has significantly influenced her interpretation and performance of Bharatanatyam. This style blends tradition with innovation, enhancing her performances while staying true to the essence of the art form. She emphasises that dance is a form of visual poetry, where the essence lies in dancing to the music rather than treating it as a mathematical exercise. Reflecting on her performance at a festival in Italy in 2022, Apeksha shared how she traversed a kilometre on the road while performing Bharatanatyam, ending at the 'Gate of Peace'. She portrayed the story of *Yamuna Gatha*, addressing the pollution and pain of the Yamuna River. This contemporary theme demonstrated the relevance and power of Bharatanatyam in addressing contemporary issues

and left a lasting impact on the international audience. Apeksha also highlighted the unique aspects of the Tanjavur school of Bharatanatyam, which prioritises fluidity and musicality. She incorporates these elements into her performances, creating a harmonious and synchronised expression. Her choreography balances traditional elements with her unique artistic expression, ensuring that the soul of Bharatanatyam remains intact while infusing it with innovation. Addressing the challenges faced by classical dancers today, Apeksha emphasises the importance of finding platforms to present her art and balance multiple roles while managing family life. She credits her supportive family and dedicated team for helping her navigate these challenges. She sees Bharatanatyam evolving in the modern era by making it more accessible and relatable. She aims to showcase stories that resonate with the audiences and connect through local music and folk stories. By incorporating elements such as the poetry of saints from Maharashtra and performing Bharatanatyam based on local folk stories and Gregorian chants, she hopes to bridge cultural divides and ensure that the art form remains relevant. For young dancers aspiring to pursue Bharatanatyam professionally, Apeksha advises prioritising dedicated practice, seeking guidance from knowledgeable gurus and embracing innovation within the framework of tradition. She encourages dancers to focus on expressing emotions authentically and maintaining physical and mental

fitness. Apeksha prepares for her performances through a holistic process that begins months in advance. This involves choreography, music creation, refining movements and mental rehearsal. She emphasises the importance of being adaptable and maintaining a calm demeanour, acknowledging that uncertainties may arise on a given day. She recalls her moment of connection with her audience during a performance in Poland, where she danced to Polish folk music. The fusion of Bharatanatyam with traditional Polish music created a unique and captivating experience, highlighting the universal language of dance. She aspires to spread the beauty and richness of Bharatanatyam worldwide, ensuring it remains accessible and appreciated by diverse audiences. Through innovative choreography and engaging performances, she continues to contribute to the global recognition of Bharatanatyam as a profound and timeless art form. Apeksha Niranjana Mundargi's journey through Bharatanatyam is a testament to the transformative power of dance. Her dedication, innovative spirit and profound connection to the art form have not only elevated her performances but also enriched the cultural landscape. As she continues to spread the beauty and richness of Bharatanatyam worldwide, Apeksha inspires us to embrace tradition while welcoming innovation to deepen our appreciation for this timeless art form. In this, Apeksha Niranjana is truly a beacon of light, illuminating the path for future generations, ensuring that the rich tapestry of Bharatanatyam continues to captivate and inspire audiences for times to come.



# WHERE FOOD MEETS ART IN PLATING

It is not just about cooking the dish well but also plating them right is the idea is to engage all the senses for an overall dining experience, says **SHARMILA CHAND**



**S**culpt, layer, paint, drizzle. Splash, a squiggle, dots, the jus, the sauce... there is an artist at work, bent, eyes fixed at his plate, in front of you at your table in the restaurant. He is undeterred till he finishes his task. Another few minutes, he finally looks up and tells you, your dish is ready. The artist is none other than the chef who has been busy meticulously plating the dish you ordered. The plate is his canvas and he is creating a visual masterpiece.

It's not just about cooking the dish right but the idea is to engage all the senses for an overall dining experience. "I find the process of plating to be as crucial as the preparation of the dish itself," says Chef Amandeep Singh, Executive Sous Chef at The Westin Mumbai Garden City. For him, "Plating is an art form cherished by food connoisseurs worldwide, where every element on the plate serves as a canvas for creativity and expression."

Colour and Shape Chef Amandeep's preference leans towards minimalist, neutral-coloured plates that allow the vibrant hues of the dish to shine. "The shape of the plate is equally significant; I favour plates with clean lines and ample space for artistic arrangement. Each dish has its personality, and the shape of the plate can either accentuate or detract from its essence. For instance, a circular plate complements dishes with symmetrical components, while elongated plates are ideal for showcasing linear arrangements," he says.

"The colour of the dish and its ingredients wield immense influence over the plating process. Take, for example, my signature dish, Tandoori Salmon with Mango Salsa. The vibrant hues of the succulent salmon and the vibrant mango salsa pop against a pristine white plate, creating a visually captivating presentation that entices the palate even before the first bite," adds Chef Amandeep.

According to Chef Sandeep Kalra, Director of Culinary, Pullman Novotel, New Delhi, Aerocity, "The colour of the plate totally depends on the colour and textures of the dish. Both have to complement each other. The colour of the plate one chooses can make a big difference in how the dish looks. If you want your food to really stand out, pick a plate colour that is different from the colours of the food. White plates are a good choice for colourful dishes because they make the colours pop. On the other hand, if you want the colours

to blend well together, choose a plate colour that goes well with the food colours. Earthy tones like beige or light brown can make green vegetables look even better. Also, consider the theme of your meal. If you're going for a modern look, white or black plates are often a good choice. Dark plates can also help keep food warm longer. Ultimately, the plate colour should match the style of your meal to create a beautiful and cohesive presentation."

Simran Singh Thapar, Executive Chef, The Leela Palace Bengaluru echoes the sentiment: "Play with complementary hues and remember, a pop of colour can make all the difference. Adding a variety of textures can make your dish visually interesting and enticing. Combine crunchy elements with smooth components, as I like to do in my dish 'Truffled Russet Mille Feuille with Butternut Squash Quasar -e- Pukhtan, Golden Almonds and Charcoal touille.' A crisp potato Mille Feuille is paired with a velvety smooth and rich sauce. Layering ingredients not only adds depth but also adds a sense of complexity to your presentation. I have used green microgreens to pop up the otherwise warm hues of orange and brown. An almond charcoal touille creates a visual and texture impact on my plate."

"Creating a theme or a story with your plating can make your dish more memorable," adds chef Simran. "A theme can tie everything together and captivate your audience. On my plate, I have created a theme of classics from two cuisines pairing together to create magic -- Classic French and Classic Indian." Ingredient is the Key Chef Sandeep emphasises on the 'ingredient' as the key focus. "Using the main ingredient as the central focus and organising the rest of the ingredients in various forms of purees, gels, mousse or whole forms works the best. There is no specific style that I incorporate but looking at the ingredients I adapt to plating techniques and style that complements the textures and enhances the look of the dish. One favourite dish that I love to plate often is the grilled chicken breast with sweet potato mash and sautéed green beans. The dish features a perfectly grilled chicken breast placed slightly off-centre on the



Chef Simran Singh Thapar

plate. Alongside, a generous serving of creamy sweet potato mash, flavored with cinnamon and nutmeg, provides contrast. Crisp green beans are delicately piled next to the mash, adding a fresh touch. A sprinkle of finely chopped parsley garnishes the plate, adding a pop of green. Presented on a square, off-white plate, this dish is not just delicious but also visually appealing, designed to delight both the eye and the palate."

Garnishing Lends visual Allure "When it comes to garnishes, I believe in the power of simplicity," tells Chef Amandeep. "Fresh herbs like cilantro and microgreens add a burst of colour and flavour without overwhelming the dish. A delicate sprinkle of sea salt or a drizzle of high-quality olive oil can elevate even the simplest of presentations," he says.

Likewise for Chef Sandeep, it is important to give vitality to the dish with microgreens or herbs and add a touch of elegance and beauty through edible flowers. "Show off the dish and keep room for theatrics," is his mantra.

Gerwin D'souza, Pastry Sous Chef, The St Regis Goa Resort feels, "Perhaps a swirl of sauce, a fine scattering of berries to enhance. At our Italian restaurant, Oliveto, we serve tiramisu in a glass to show off the varied layering. To add that extra flair, we place a spoon made of solid chocolate on it. Now that's my style of garnishing."

That expression of my diners at the first look of tiramisu says it all." Chefs Are Artists Too Who says we deck up our plates just because we are going through an era of social media, ask chefs. Plating as an art satisfies the aesthetic sense of creativity within us, they say. "The artist in me likes the Free Form or keeping the plating abstract," opines Chef Anshul Dhyani, Executive Chef ITC Grand Central, adding that "Not giving a



Chef Amandeep Singh



Executive Chef Anshul Dhyani



Sandeep Kalra

particular structure to it, I like to keep it simple and let the ingredients be as natural. I would like the ingredients and flavour to do the talking. Prefer to treat the plate as a canvas where every ingredient can show its own colours. For example in my dish, Seared Scallops with slow braised pork belly, granny smith puree and macerated golden raisins, Scallops and Pork belly are the main ingredients of the dish



Gerwin D'souza



Chef Subhankar Chitrakar

complemented by the raisins and apple puree. The dish has been plated in a free flow manner. All the ingredients are plated in a way that they all stand out and no single ingredient overshadows the other one. All the colours and textures are preserved and no ingredient loses its individuality but together bring about a complete culinary harmony."

"Indeed I am an artist," says Chef Aashutosh Shende, Executive Sous Chef of Paper Moon, Taj Fort Aguada Resort Spa. "For instance in my dish Tagliolini with Pesto Sauce and Pine Nuts, I treat the white plate as my blank canvas, the green pesto sauce is my vibrant paint. The green pesto sauce offers a colour palette to create a visually stunning composition on a white plate."

Composition of the dish is the king and arrangement is the key. Swirling the pesto in an artistic flourish and strategically placing the elements for balance and contrast. I build height with rolling the pasta around a large fork and then slide it on the plate. This gives not only clean lines but also height to the dish, techniques used by both chefs and artists. I express my personality and my expressions through my plating. I am not a fan of bold or dramatic swirls and many colours on my plate; I prefer a simple bed for a wild abstract masterpiece for my Tagliolini."

He has more to add: "I like to sign every dish that goes out of my kitchen and, as such, a final flourish on food plating has my signature. It could be a sprinkle of fresh herbs, in this case in particular a drizzle of balsamic reduction and a scattering of toasted pine nuts. These finishing touches showcase my creation from a meal to a work of art."

"I work in a bakery which can be at times devoid of human interaction and through my bakery items I express myself," says Chef Subhankar Chitrakar from Bakery of Taj Holiday Village Resort Spa, Goa. Citing an example of his dish, Caramel Porto, he tells, "This rich, decadent dessert - Caramel Porto - presents a fantastic opportunity every time to pique my inner artist."

Considering the portion size -- if it is a single serving I prefer a small dessert plate with a rim, for four portions I choose a shallow bowl or couple glass which allows for beautiful layering. Choosing whether to keep the same colour or play a colour contrast game, I prefer a white plate to enhance the various hues of caramel. Sometimes I do use a dark plate to create a dramatic backdrop for a glistening sauce. Considering the overall mood of the diner a classic white plate offers timeless elegance and on the other hand a more colourful bowl would add a touch of casual charm. I am not afraid to add a delicate web like swirl for a touch of whimsy."

Or for a bolder statement, a thicker controlled pour creates a dramatic centre piece. Go ahead and experiment with what's at hand, add a spring of fresh mint or a sprinkle of chopped nuts or a dusting cocoa powder to add pops of colour and flavour like a bold brushstroke. I am an artist and this is my soul that I bare through my Caramel Porto."

Author Intro: Sharmila Chand is an Author and Freelance Journalist who writes on Food, Travel, Lifestyle, Art and Wellness. She can be reached at chand.sharmila@gmail.com.

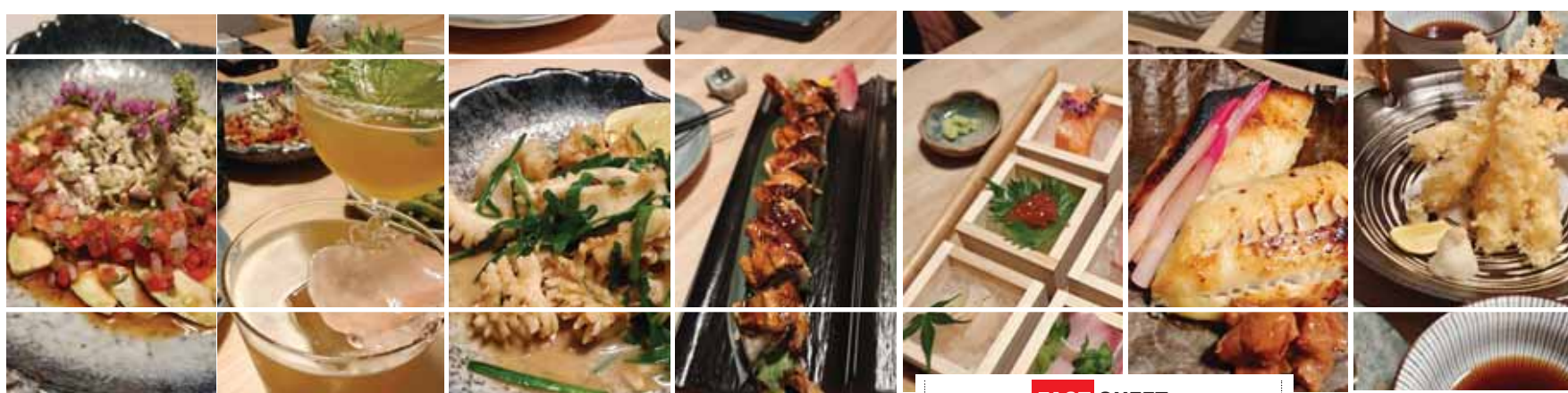
## FOOD TRENDS

# Falling in Love with Japanese cuisine

At Shin'ya, an Izakaya-inspired resto-bar at Hyatt Regency Gurugram, is drawing crowds because of the evident attention to detail and its commitment to source the best and freshest ingredients possible for a hearty Japanese meal, says **PAWAN SONI**

**J**apanese cuisine is winning hearts across the Indian community, and it is no surprise why. The dishes are light, nutritious, and packed with flavoUrs, thanks to ingredients like seaweed, soy, and seafood. The freshness of these ingredients is crucial, leading to high prices for premium seafood and fruits in Japan and sold in auctions. In India, particularly in the North, seafood is not as accessible due to the lack of coastline. However, logistics can ensure a steady, fresh supply. During my recent visit to Shin'ya, the new Japanese restaurant at Hyatt Regency Gurugram, I was impressed by the quality of the ingredients used.

At Shin'ya, attention to detail is evident from the freshly grated wasabi to the sashimi made from yellowfin tuna, a step above the commonly used bluefin tuna. Sonale Zagade, Hyatt Regency's dynamic General Manager,



emphasised their commitment to sourcing the best ingredients, recalling her personal involvement in tasting each one before finalising.

With seating for around 45 guests, this Izakaya-inspired resto-bar, with its light and minimalistic

decor, is perfect for small gatherings. On the recommendation of Shashwat Prasad, Shin'ya's mixologist, I started with a gari-infused bourbon mixed with yuzu juice and honey water. This mild drink perfectly set the tone for the

evening. The avocado carpaccio, chosen for my wife's vegetarian preference, was appreciated by both of us. The buttery avocado with caramelized onions, ponzu, and tomato salsa made a delightful start, while I enjoyed one of the lightest and crunchiest

**FACT SHEET**  
Food: 4.5/5 | Drinks: 4.5/5 | Service: 4.5/5  
Ambience: 4.0/5 | Overall: 4.5/5  
Address: Shin'ya, Hyatt Regency, NH48, Sector 83, Gurugram  
Phone: 9355816517  
Meal for Two: INR 4000 + Taxes  
Timing: 6:00 PM to 3:00 AM (Monday to Saturday), 12 Noon to 9:00 PM (Sundays)

prawn tempuras. Coated with a bit of potato starch and accompanied by a miso daikon dip, these were among the best prawn tempuras I've ever tasted. Each dish, from the selection of sashimi to sushi, was special. Apart from the Japanese fare,

Shin'ya also offers a small mix of Korean and Asian dishes. I tried the Korean-style sautéed garlic butter squid and prawn gyoza dumplings, each dish telling a unique story. Another cocktail, the Houji tea-infused tequila with agave nectar topped with fresh shiso leaf, further demonstrated the mixologist's expertise. Both food and drinks at Shin'ya are crafted to ensure guest delight. My meal concluded with the robata-grilled miso black cod. The silky pieces of fish, with slight charred edges, contrasted beautifully with the buttery flavours and pickled plum.

Shin'ya stands out for its high-quality ingredients and expertly prepared classic dishes. This restaurant is definitely one to watch in 2024.

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

WHEN A CULTURE HAS FALLEN TOTALLY AWAY FROM SPIRITUAL PURSUITS INTO MATERIALISM, ONE MUST BEGIN BY DEMONSTRATING THEY ARE EACH A SOUL, NOT A MATERIAL ANIMAL — L RON HUBBARD

YOUR WEEK AHEAD

MADHU KOTIYA



ARIES March 21-April 19

This week, your focus gravitates toward finances, business, and material wealth. You possess the astuteness of a monarch, making shrewd decisions that promise advantageous outcomes.

Lucky number 18 | Lucky colour Brown
Lucky day Sunday



LEO July 23-Aug 22

During the initial days of the week, your confidence radiates brightly, illuminating your endeavors with a promising glow. Projects initiated the previous week are now flourishing, guided by your dedicated efforts.

Lucky number 2 | Lucky colour Grey
Lucky day Saturday



SAGITTARIUS Nov 22-Dec 21

You exhibit generosity and kindness, particularly in your expenditure towards spiritual endeavors. The inclination towards charity and donations reflects your compassionate nature. Financial considerations may arise concerning the higher education of your children, amidst other familial concerns demanding attention.

Lucky number 8 | Lucky colour Pink
Lucky day Sunday



TAURUS April 20-May 20

This week, you may experience a sense of sluggishness in the progression of your tasks. Despite your efforts in various projects and ventures, tangible results may seem elusive. Patience becomes paramount during this period.

Lucky number 14 | Lucky colour White
Lucky day Friday



VIRGO Aug 23-Sep 22

This week, your keen intellect and analytical nature will be pivotal in navigating a significant phase. Whether it's a personal or professional matter, your wisdom will guide you to its resolution.

Lucky number 10 | Lucky colour Teal
Lucky day Thursday



CAPRICORN Dec 22-Jan 19

The week kicks off with a jubilant atmosphere, marking the successful completion of tasks, a wedding, or a celebratory promotion. Joyous moments with loved ones ensue. Midweek, you exhibit initiative and strong determination, empowering you to tackle challenges with wisdom and focus.

Lucky number 12 | Lucky colour Green
Lucky day Friday



GEMINI May 21-June 20

This week brings a multitude of fluctuations for individuals, encompassing both highs and lows. Commencing on a joyful note, familial bonds bring immense delight, accompanied by robust health and a surge of creativity.

Lucky number 9 | Lucky colour Purple
Lucky day Monday



LIBRA Sep 23-Oct 22

Beware of unseen forces casting shadows upon your path. Maintain integrity and fairness to ward off negativity. Deceptive influences may threaten your peace, urging caution in all dealings.

Lucky number 7 | Lucky colour Olive
Lucky day Tuesday



AQUARIUS Jan 20-Feb 18

The week commences with challenges looming ahead. Despite hurdles in your project or assignment, you may feel inclined to abandon your efforts at times. Yet, an inner resilience propels you forward, transforming you into a determined warrior ready to confront any obstacle.

Lucky number 19 | Lucky colour Magenta
Lucky day Tuesday



CANCER June 21-July 22

This week brings a sense of gratitude and optimism, promising various blessings and positive experiences. You'll begin with deepening connections in your relationship, experiencing mutual understanding and emotional closeness.

Lucky number 4 | Lucky colour Maroon
Lucky day Wednesday



SCORPIO Oct 23-Nov 21

This week, you may find yourself deeply absorbed in personal agendas, potentially overlooking promising opportunities. Your focus could be introspective, with a tendency towards self-absorption.

Lucky number 13 | Lucky colour Black
Lucky day Wednesday



PISCES Feb 19-March 20

Overextending your investments may lead to anxiety as desired outcomes remain elusive. Sleep eludes you amidst worry and uncertainty, especially in the initial days. However, a shift occurs for Pisces midweek, ushering in a period of divine favor and potential financial windfalls.

Lucky number 8 | Lucky colour Orange
Lucky day Wednesday

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ASTROTURF

BHARAT BHUSHAN PADMADEO

Don't take things on face value

What are destiny prospects of my son? When is his career breakthrough due? He is already 27, and yet not settled. When he was born, many astrologers had declared in one voice that he will make it big in life and make me proud.

too individually. They did not take note of their nakshatra modification and inter-planetary alignments. They won't visualise negative roles played by Uranus and Neptune either.



into fruits will, however, depend on how efficiently and sincerely he works towards that end. In this respect, even Jupiter the lord of 5th house (pleasure pursuits) as well as 8th (pains and

sufferings) plays a dampener. That often drives him crazy with pleasure motive, which by itself is enough to make him susceptible to become a victim of his own making.

Now his overall personality traits. Being born on 5th lunar day, he would be comfort loving, not keen to take challenges. The two luminaries, the Sun and Moon are ill-disposed off to erratic Uranus and mischievous Neptune, both posited in the 5th house.

implies taking resort to unethical means. It also makes his character questionable. Mars placed adverse to Mercury and Saturn implies that he is restless, lacks focus, who may keep moving unthinkingly in life, and with obvious consequences.