



OPINION 6 DAWN OF A NEW ERA IN INDIAN POLITICS

WORLD 9 HEZBOLLAH FIGHTERS SHOOT DOWN ISRAELI DRONE IN LEBANON

MONEY 10 RBI UNLIKELY TO CUT INTEREST RATE ON JUNE 7, SAY EXPERTS

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WE HAVE NOT REALLY NAILED DOWN OUR BATTING UNIT: ROHIT 12 SPORTS

Modi hits the ground running for 3.0



Prime Minister Narendra Modi chairs a meeting to review post cyclone Remal situation, especially in the Northeast region, in New Delhi

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

As majority of exit polls predicted a massive win for the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA), Prime Minister Narendra Modi held multiple meetings on Sunday on a "wide range of topics" including one on the post-cyclone Remal situation, especially in the northeast region, and another to review the 100-day agenda that his team will seek to implement once Government formation is completed.

day agenda of the new Government that his team will seek to implement once Government formation is completed. According to sources, senior bureaucrats on several Ministries attended the review meeting and some of them made a presentation before the Prime Minister. Sources added that at least 10 groups, each headed by a secretary-level official as a coordinator, have been created to implement this agenda over the first 100 days of the new Government. Much before the Lok Sabha polling exercise began, Modi had set in motion the exercise

for different Government Ministries to prepare the 100-day agenda for the new Government. He had asked his Council of Ministers to prioritise programmes and initiatives for the first 100 days. PM Modi's day-long marathon meetings come a day after he returned from a 45-hour meditation at Vivekananda Rock Memorial in Kanyakumari. Informing about the meeting, PM Modi wrote in a post on X, "Chaired meetings to review the situation in the wake of heatwaves and post-cyclone flood situations in different

parts of the nation. Took stock of the efforts underway to assist those affected by these adversarial conditions." The first meeting focused on the extensive damage caused by the cyclone, including the loss of human lives, and the destruction of homes and properties due to widespread landslides and flooding. PM Modi stressed the need to ensure regular fire and electrical safety audits in hospitals and other public places as he reviewed the heatwave situation in the country amid fire incidents which have claimed many lives. The Prime Minister

instructed officials that proper drills for preventing and handling incidents of fire must be undertaken on a regular basis, according to an official statement. He also said that regular drills for the maintenance of fire lines in forests and productive utilisation of biomass must be planned. Modi was briefed that as per forecasts, the heatwave is likely to continue in parts of Rajasthan, Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh. Monsoon this year is likely to be normal and above normal in most parts of the country and below normal in parts of peninsular India, the statement said. In the meeting to review the post-Cyclone Remal situation, another official statement said, Modi was briefed about its impact in the affected states, including the loss of lives and damage to houses and other properties due to landslides and floods in Mizoram, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya and Tripura. National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) teams have carried out evacuation, airlifting and road clearance operations, it said, adding the Union home ministry is in regular touch with State Governments. PM Modi said the Union Government will continue to extend full support to the States affected by the cyclone, according to the statement.



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BJP, INDIA bloc say EC must follow protocols

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

A head of the counting of votes for Lok Sabha elections, the leaders from both the ruling side and the Opposition side met the election commission of India (ECI). While senior BJP leaders and Union Ministers Piyush Goyal and Nirmala Sitharaman urged the commission to implement several critical measures to safeguard the integrity of India's electoral process, a delegation of leaders from the INDIA bloc met the full bench of the election commission and urged it to ensure that all the guidelines are followed on June 4, when the votes polled in the LS polls will be counted, including



Congress leader Abhishek Manu Singhvi with INDIA bloc leaders comes out after a meeting with the Election Commission of India

declaring the postal-ballot results before the outcome of the EVMs is announced. Goyal alleged that certain INDIA bloc parties along with some civil society groups and NGOs, are attempting to undermine the electoral process. "We had to call upon ECI today, in light

of the repeated attempts by a section of the political parties in INDI alliance and certain motivated civil society groups and NGOs who are trying their level best to undermine the integrity of India's electoral process," he said.

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Exit polls fake: Delhi CM as he returns to lock-up

SAUMYA SHUKLA ■ NEW DELHI

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Sunday surrendered at the Bihar jail after his interim bail granted by the Supreme Court in the excise policy-linked money laundering case ended on June 1. The AAP chief was granted interim bail on the grounds for campaigning in the Lok Sabha 2024 elections. Before surrendering, Kejriwal paid



Ranjan Dimri/Pioneer

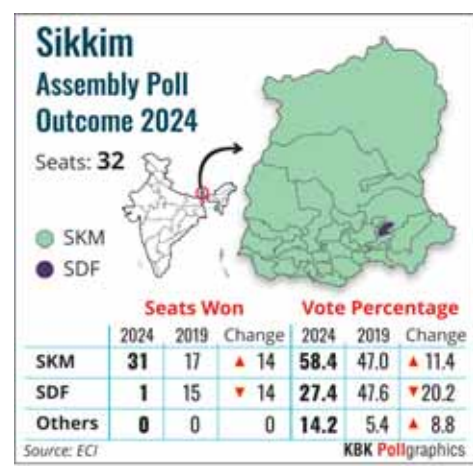
homage to Mahatma Gandhi at the Raj Ghat, offered prayers at the Hanuman temple in Connaught Place and addressed AAP leaders and workers at the party office. Before surrendering at the Bihar, AAP supremo addressed party workers and leaders. During his address, Kejriwal said, "I am going back to jail not because I was involved in corruption but because I raised voice against dictatorship," he said.

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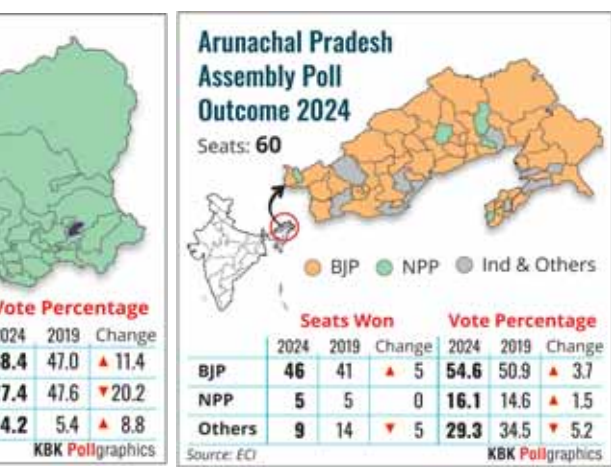
NO SURPRISES IN NORTHEAST BJP, SKM retain Arunachal, Sikkim

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

As results of Assembly elections in two northeastern States announced on Sunday, both the BJP and the Sikkim Krantikari Morcha (SKM) retained their hold over Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim, respectively. With 55 per cent vote share and 46 seats, the BJP won the 60 members Arunachal Pradesh Legislative Assembly polls and is set to come back for a third consecutive term. In Sikkim, the ruling Sikkim Krantikari Morcha won 31 seats in the 32 members Sikkim Legislative Assembly polls, comfortably surpassing the majority mark over the Sikkim Democratic Front. SDF which ruled the State for 25 years in a row till 2019, bagged just one seat. Former India football captain and SDF candidate Bhiachung Bhutia lost the Barfung seat by a margin of 4,346 votes, his sixth defeats in the last 10 years since 2014, he had joined TMC to contest from Darjeeling. In Arunachal Pradesh, only 50 of the 60 Assembly seats went to the BJP, as 10 BJP MLAs, including outgoing Chief Minister Pema Khandu and Deputy CM Chowna Mein, secured victory unopposed.



The BJP vote share also increased to 55 per cent as compared to 50.86 per cent in 2019. Taking to X, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said, "Thank you Arunachal Pradesh! The people of this wonderful state have given an unequivocal mandate to politics of development. My gratitude to them for reposing their faith in @BJP4Arunachal yet again. Our Party will keep working with even greater vigour for the State's growth." The PM also said, "I would like to appreciate the hardwork of the exceptional



@BJP4Arunachal Karyakartas through the election campaign. It is commendable how they went across the state and connected with the people." The National People's Party (NPP) bagged five seats, while the People's Party of Arunachal won two seats and the NCP secured three. The Congress won one seat, and independent candidates emerged victorious in three constituencies. In the first declared result of the day, independent candidate Wanglam Savin triumphed over the BJP's

Kamrang Tesia in the Khonsa (East) constituency. Responding to the verdict, incumbent Chief Minister Pema Khandu said, "This is a mandate for 10 years of development with huge support from the centre. You all know Arunachal Pradesh is the land of rising sun. BJP's victory here shows (Prime Minister Narendra) Modi ji will become PM for the third term." Khandu was also regarded as a strategist who, through political manoeuvring, brought the BJP to power for the first time in the northeastern state bordering China.

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Vedic scientist's study forecasts 'BJP 400 paar'

SAUMYA SHUKLA ■ NEW DELHI

With most of the exit polls showing a comfortable win for the BJP in the Lok Sabha 2024 elections, vedic scientist and a doctorate holder in astrology and vedic science from Banaras Hindu University (BHU) Dr. Shesh Narayan Vajpayee has affirmed a thunderous win to the BJP led NDA Government. His predictions through "varn vigyan" hit the bulls-eye for the saffron party fulfilling their "abki bar 400 paar" slogan, forecasting NDA 432 seats. His predictions suggest that the BJP will secure 368 seats in the highly anticipated general elections of 2024 where on one side the saffron party is looking comfortable enough to secure a third term as per to exit polls and the INDIA Bloc is denying all predictions awaiting the actual results on June 4. The scientist, who predicted corona early on in 2018, has also predicted the date for the next wave of a variant of Covid on May 25, 2025 which will hit people worldwide. However, he said, "I do not have the knowledge of the impact vaccines will create. If it proves to be effective it will decrease the impact of the wave. However, if it proves to be



ineffective, the effect would be devastating." Vajpayee in a letter to the Prime Minister's Office and the United Nations early on in 2018 wrote that a big disease that causes difficulty in breathing, dry cough, dizziness, vomiting, diarrhea and other such serious issues is just around the corner. "While I didn't write about the pandemic, I informed them that a big disease is coming. But no one paid heed to me," he said. He has been warning the Government of India about this virus turning into an epidemic since January 2020,

to the PMO that if possible, do not get the vaccine because the claims of making the vaccine are not credible. On 8th December, in Britain, the vaccine was given to a 90-year-old woman. She was in a bad condition from 14 December. I wrote at this time, applying the vaccine is taking a risk." He added that the subject was not if the vaccine was effective or not, it meant that the time was not right. Dr. Vajpayee has been regularly sharing forecasts of weather-related natural disasters, earthquakes and terrorist incidents with the government for the last few years. He claims that he shares his forecasts based on vedic science with the Prime Minister's Office, Meteorological Department and Ministry of Earth Sciences every month. He also said that he not only predicted the days when the pandemic will start, he also informed about the peak of a Covid wave. Vajpayee claimed that he was in constant touch with Government officials in the Central Government and Delhi Government, informing them of his predictions, many of which did match in hindsight. However, most seemed hesitant to accept that vedic science could be used to do such forecasts regarding pandemic and weather.

Muggy, parched, blacked-out Mungeshpur dances in the rain

SAUMYA SHUKLA/ ABHI SINGHAL ■ NEW DELHI

As the droplets of respite fell after dust storm in Delhi on sparsely populated area of northwest Delhi's Mungeshpur, residents breathed a sigh relief from temperature that soared above 50 degrees Celsius, water scarcity and power cuts with some of them in the area not even having a fan. Residents have been having difficult time in the past 15 days as they grapple with severe water shortages as water is coming for only 10 minutes in the day and tankers hardly makes an appearance to the area. Many told The Pioneer about filling

water from the tube wells in the field. Adding to their woes, residents said they had to walk a kilometer to fill water from tankers available in the nearby areas or turn to the tube wells. As the rainfall brought some comfort, many were seen sitting on the pavements of their homes to feel the cold air, where they generally take refuge due to the power cutoffs. On Wednesday, when they faced a 12 hours cut in the night, Santoshi Devi, 56 years said, "raat ko 11 baje gyi thi light aur subah 11 baje aayi, 12 ghante mein halat kharab ho gyi" (the electricity was cut from 11 pm to 11 am. In these 12 hours it was very difficult to survive in such hot



The residents of Mungeshpur came out of their suffocating houses and stood in the open to enjoy the drizzle; (R) most of them displayed a big smile as rain brought much-delayed relief

time). Children rushed out of their home to rejoice in the rainfall which was preceded by a dust-storm. Four kids playing in the rain shared how only one of them had a fan in their home. So eager were they to take to the streets, many responded to questions with "please ask fast. We have to go and play". Varsha, an eight year old girl, playing barefoot with four of her friends had a grin on her face and said, "This is the first time I have come to play in afternoon since the summer vacations started." Another 13 years old boy, playing along, added that, "papa lohar hain, itni garmi mein paseene mein bheege

rehte hain" (my father is a blacksmith, he keeps sweating while working the whole day due to heat). A father and a son duo, including a 65 year old Arman and a 27 year old Subhash, who have their own junk shop, brave heat, dust and rain daily to work for nonstop 12 hours without a fan in their shop. "Papi paet ka sawal hai" says the duo when asked about working in such conditions without any precautions to safeguard them from the heatstroke that has claimed two lives, which has been reported, in Delhi. A 20 years old Suresh, lying on a charpai in the rain told that the water supply was

down for 15 days in between and at that time their only support was the water from the tube wells in the fields. He further added that the water supply has been back on track in the last 3 days but the water still comes for only 2 hours in the morning. A mother of two children shared her ordeals of feeding her baby. "I feel uneasy while feeding my two years old girl. In fact she has been unwell too and has been vomiting for the past two days due to the scorching heat." Many, who have spent their whole life in this place, stated that while summers are usually very hot but this time around, temperatures are soaring very high.

Heatwave conditions to continue in Bundelkhand region

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ LUCKNOW

The heatwave conditions will continue in the Bundelkhand region for the next three days in Uttar Pradesh. Senior scientist of the Met department, Mohammed Danish, said that in the rest of the state the maximum temperatures would fall down and remain static. "There will be light rain accompanied by thunderstorms in isolated places of the state. With another western disturbance approaching the state, the temperature will go further down after June 4 in various districts," he said. In the state, Fatehpur recorded the maximum temperature at 46.2 degree Celsius while Lucknow recorded 42.2 degree Celsius temperature. The local forecast is partly cloudy skies. Meanwhile, Lucknow

Divisional Commissioner Roshan Jacob has asked all district magistrates of the Lucknow division and municipal commissioners to take appropriate measures in view of the heatwave conditions and the approaching monsoon. She said that according to the Meteorological department, there was a possibility of higher temperatures in the month of June. She pointed out that the rainy month in Uttar Pradesh starts from mid-June. "According to the Meteorological department, the monsoon is likely to be more active in the state this year. In case of excessive rainfall in the upcoming rainy season, due to waterlogging and drainage problems, the possibility of spread of infectious diseases increases along with obstruction in the movement of people. It is the mandatory duty of the urban bodies to

ensure supply of pure drinking water to the general public and cleanliness of drains. Instructions have been given from time to time through various government orders for protection from heat and for management and effective preparation of diseases and ill effects arising from it," she said. "Arrangements for water tank kiosks should be made at various places on the routes. Heatwaves should be monitored at district and civic level through video conferencing. Wide publicity should be given regarding what to do and what not to do during a heatwave. Regarding the ill effects of the heatwave, a warning should be sent through the mobile message on WhatsApp," she said. Jacob said that there should be changes in the working hours of workers and employees. "Guidelines should be issued to

prevent death from sunstroke. Press conferences should be organised regularly regarding heatwaves. Temples and malls should be identified as cooling centres. Arrangements for water and buttermilk should be made by individual NGOs/community groups at public places," she added. She stressed on repairing breakages and leakages in the pipelines supplying water to the settlements. "Chlorination should be done from time to time for water purification. Samples should be collected and their bacteriological/virological tests should be done regularly. In areas where drinking water is being supplied through hand pumps, appropriate quantities of chlorine tablets should be distributed as per requirement. Sewer lines and water pipelines should be checked in urban areas. If any breakage or leak-

age is found in the sewer or water pipeline, it should be rectified immediately. Till the said leakage is corrected, alternative arrangements should be made for safe drinking water supply in the area concerned," she added. Jacob said that shade and drinking water should be provided at bus stands/stations and terminals. "By identifying the waterlogged places, a micro action plan should be made and anti-larva soot should be sprayed regularly during the day and fogging should be done in the evening. To reduce suspended particulate matter (SPM) and dust in the city, water should be sprinkled on the roads as per requirement. For smooth functioning of the traffic system, it should be ensured that any public event or function is not organised on the road but on the side of the road," she added.

Thief falls asleep during theft, arrested

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ LUCKNOW

In a bizarre incident reported from Lucknow, a thief barged into a doctor's house, searched the entire house but fell asleep as he was inebriated. Later, when the thief woke up in the morning, he found cops standing in front of him. According to police, the thief even opened the water pump, but when he started removing the battery, he fell asleep. The incident was reported from Sector 20 of Indira Nagar in Ghazipur police station area. On getting information, the

Ghazipur police reached the spot and arrested the thief. The thief, identified as Kapil, has been booked under Section 379 A (theft) of the Indian Penal Code, Station House Officer of Ghazipur Vikas Rai disclosed, adding that further action is being taken. According to police, the house belongs to Dr Sunil Pandey. He was earlier posted in Balrampur Hospital. However, currently, he is posted in Varanasi and for this reason his house was vacant. Neighbours said that when they woke up in the morning,

the door of Dr Pandey's house was open. The Residents Welfare Society was contacted after which some members went inside the house and saw all household articles strewn. "The cupboards were broken. Everything, including cash, had been taken out. The thief had even taken out the wash basin, cooking gas cylinder and water pump," a resident said. When people went a little further, they saw a person sleeping in a drunken state. The residents then called the police.

Jashn-e-Adab festival kicks off

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ LUCKNOW

Amidst the vibrant streets of Lucknow, Jashn-e-Adab, a beacon of cultural enlightenment, celebrates its 13th anniversary with a spectacular two-day festival showcasing the richness of language, literature and heritage. Founded 13 years ago, Jashn-e-Adab has tirelessly worked to promote language and culture across 18 states of India, igniting a dynamic wave of literary fervour nationwide. The inaugural session of this festival on Sunday witnessed the presence of distinguished personalities including Justice Rajesh Singh Chauhan (Judge, High Court Lucknow Branch), Justice D K Upadhyaya (Chief Justice of Bombay High Court), IPS officer Qaiser Khalid (Additional Director General), and Kunwar Ranjeet Chauhan, the visionary founder of Jashn-e-Adab foundation. Together, they lauded the foundation's remarkable journey and its invaluable contributions to the literary landscape of India. Reflecting on the essence of Lucknow, a city steeped in cul-



A scene from play 'Katghare Mai Ghalib'

ture, heritage, and Urdu language, participants engaged in insightful discussions, highlighting the city's timeless charm and profound influence on literature. Kunwar Ranjeet Chauhan, in a candid moment, shared his apprehensions and triumphs, remarking on the fearless journey

The festival unfolded with captivating performances, including a mesmerising Ghazal singing session by Pradeep Ali, and an uproarious theatrical rendition by the Mitr Group, 'Katghare Mai Ghalib', leaving the audience enthralled and in stitches. Piyush Mishra's discourse on 'Naye mausam banane lag gaya hu' delved into the evolving landscape of theater in contemporary times, provoking thought and reflection. The evening was further adorned with a breathtaking Kathak performance by Vidha Lal and group, epitomising the grace and elegance of Indian classical dance. Culminating the first day with a grand Mushaira, the festival witnessed an ensemble of literary stalwarts including Prof Waseem Barehvi, Padma Shri Surendra Sharma, Padma Shri Prof Ashok Chakradhar, Farhat Ehsas, Jamuna Upadhyay, Azm Shakiri, Qaiser Khalid (IPS), Dr Bhawana Srivastava, Naina Sooin Kapil 'Sahar' (IRS), Kunwar Ranjeet Chauhan, Col Gautam Rajrishi, and Abhishek Shukla, captivating the audience with their eloquence and wisdom.

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Forest dept to plant 35 cr saplings

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ LUCKNOW

The Uttar Pradesh Forest department will plant 35 crore saplings in the state this year. A senior forest official said here on Friday that all preparations had been completed in this regard. He said that the targeted plantations would be completed in two days during the Van Mahotsav which kicks-off on July 1. Giving details, the official said that the Forest department along with 26 other departments would be carrying out the plantation exercise. "The Forest department will plant 14 crore saplings, while 12.59 crore saplings will be planted by the Rural Development department, 2.5 crores by the Agriculture department, 1.5 crores by the Horticulture department, 1.06 crores by Revenue department and 1.28 crores by the Panchayati Raj department".

Attempt to outrage woman's modesty

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ LUCKNOW

Two youths attempted to outrage the modesty of a woman employee in Gomti Nagar police station area. Interestingly, the accused were named in a complaint which the victim had filed with Dial 112 and at the police station and also had posted the complaint on the chief minister's portal in the past. Earlier, she did not know the names of the accused and so the Gomti Nagar police had assured her of registering a case after investigation. The victim said she first reported the matter to Dial 112 on May 7 and later she went to Gomti Nagar police station to lodge the report. "Despite this no action was taken. On May 29, the accused, Vibhu, along with one of his aides, had misbehaved with her in the LDA market in Vishwas Khand 3 where her company's office is located. "I instantly called the in-charge of the police outpost concerned and also sent the photos of the accused persons on WhatsApp of the police officer of the police outpost," she said. The victim said that accused Vibhu, along with his aide Dablu Shukla of Vishwas Khand, reached her office and caught her hand and attempted to molest her. She said her

two colleagues intervened to save her but they were also thrashed. Meanwhile, four youths got fresh with a female friend of their colleague and even thrashed him for opposing their reprehensible act in Vibhuti Khand police station area. The incident came to light on Sunday. The woman is a resident of Jankipuram and she filed a complaint against four youths identified as Ekagra Gupta, Akarshit Srivastava, Vikky Verma aka Lekhpal and Varun Nigam. The police registered a case under various sections of the Indian Penal Code, including eve-teasing. As per reports, the woman had visited the area in the evening on May 31. A little later, the accused youths, who are known to her friend Amit Gupta, also visited the spot. It is alleged that the above named miscreants started passing lewd comments on the victim and some of them even tried to get physical with her while others came close to her and she complained about this to Amit, who rebuked them. "This irked the miscreants who beat Amit and then lunged at me also. I sat inside my car to save my dignity. But the miscreants forcibly opened the doors and dragged me out of the car," the victim alleged.

She said the attackers broke the front and rear windscreen with some hard object, passed lewd comments and eve-teased her. "Amit attempted to save me but his friends assaulted him and attempted to outrage my modesty," she alleged. **ADVOCATE ATTACKED:** Over a dozen car-borne youths allegedly attacked an advocate following a verbal spat over collision of their cars in Hazratganj in the night on May 28. The incident took place following an argument with the victim Pushkal Shukla of Sector 14 in Indira Nagar. As per reports, Shukla along with his friend Atul left his chamber at gate number 8 of Old High Court around 2 am to reach home after dropping his friend on the way. On reaching Samta Mulak crossing, the car of the opposite party hit Shukla's car and he objected to this. This snowballed in a verbal spat between him and accused Siddhant Shukla who allegedly threatened the former with dire consequences. "I and Atul moved the car towards Darulsaafa as I thought Hazratganj was a safe place," he said. He said the accused kept chasing him and they stopped him near Darulsaafa and attacked him with an iron rod when he and his friend tried to flee the scene.

Exit polls...

From Page 1

"I was given a 21-day (relief) by the Supreme Court. These 21 days were unforgettable. I did not waste even a minute. I campaigned for saving the country. The AAP is not important, it is secondary. The country comes first," he said. Kejriwal also asserted that all exit polls predicting a third term for the BJP-led NDA at the Centre were "fake". Exit polls on Saturday predicted that Prime Minister Narendra Modi will retain power for a third straight term, with the NDA expected to win a big majority in the polls. "They are not forming Government on June 4. These exit polls are mind games to drive you into depression," Kejriwal told AAP workers and leaders. Earlier, he shared an emotional message for his supporters and asked them to take care of themselves as he surrenders at Tihar Jail after his 21-day interim bail expired on June 1. In a post on X (formerly Twitter), the AAP convener said, "I came out for election campaign for 21 days on the orders of the Hon'ble Supreme Court. I am very grateful to the Hon'ble Supreme Court. Today I will surrender by going to Tihar. I will leave home at 3 pm. First I will go to Rajghat and pay tribute to Mahatma Gandhi. From there I will go to Hanuman temple in Connaught Place to seek blessings of Hanuman ji. And from there I will go to the party office and meet all the workers and party leaders. From there I will again leave for Tihar." In a tweet in Hindi, he further stated, "All of you take care of yourselves. I will take care of you all in jail. If you are happy then your Kejriwal will also be happy in jail." In his address in AAP headquarter, Kejriwal said, "I am going back to jail not because I was involved in corruption but because I raised voice against

dictatorship. I was given a 21-day (relief) by the Supreme Court. These 21 days were unforgettable. I did not waste even a minute. I campaigned for saving the country. The AAP is not important, it is secondary. The country comes first." While exit polls on Saturday predicted that Prime Minister Narendra Modi will retain power for a third straight term, with the NDA expected to win a big majority in the polls, Kejriwal asserted that all exit polls predicting a third term for the BJP-led NDA at the Centre were "fake". "They are not forming a Government on June 4. These exit polls are mind games to drive you into depression," Kejriwal told AAP workers and leaders. Before Kejriwal arrived at the Tihar jail, traffic movement was restricted in the areas around the prison and security arrangements heightened with deployment of police personnel. The chief minister paid homage at Mahatma Gandhi's memorial at the Raj Ghat, offered prayers at the Hanuman temple in Connaught Place and addressed workers and leaders of the AAP before surrendering. Kejriwal's wife Sunita Kejriwal was seen accompanying him. AAP leaders, including Atishi, Kailash Gahlot and Saurabh Bhadraj, Rajya Sabha MPs Sanjay Singh and Sandeep Pathak, and party leaders Durgesh Pathak, Rakhi Birla and Reena Gupta were also present. Earlier, a Delhi court on Saturday reserved its order on the interim bail plea of Kejriwal who is seeking seven days' bail on medical grounds in connection with the money alleged case related to alleged excise policy scam. Special Judge Kaveri Baweja of Rouse Avenue Court reserved the verdict, set to be announced on June 5. Kejriwal's counsel cited medical reasons for the bail request.

BJP, SKM retain Arunachal...

From Page 1

Khandu's political odyssey began amid a personal tragedy. The untimely demise of his father, former Chief Minister Dorjee Khandu, in a helicopter crash in 2011, thrust him under the spotlight. In the run-up to the Assembly polls held simultaneously with the Lok Sabha elections on April 19, he campaigned on a plank of corruption-free governance, emphasizing transparency and people-centric policies. In the 2019 Assembly elections, the BJP won 41 seats in Arunachal Pradesh. The Janata Dal (United) bagged seven, the National People's Party (NPP) five, Congress four, and the Peoples Party of Arunachal (PPA) one. Two independents also won in the Assembly polls. All except one Congress MLA, former Chief Minister Nabam Tuki, joined the BJP. Arunachal Pradesh recorded 82.95 per cent of voting in the Assembly Election 2024 while the turnout for the two Lok Sabha seats in the State was recorded at 77.51 per cent. It was 82.17 per cent in

the Assembly Election 2019. In Sikkim, SKM has secured 58.38 per cent vote share while its rival SDF got only 27.37 per cent. The BJP contested in 31 Assembly seats but failed to win a single one in Sikkim where it had 12 members in the outgoing House. The BJP could secure only 5.18 per cent of the votes in the Himalayan state. The SKM got 58.38 per cent votes while the Sikkim Democratic Front bagged 27.37 per cent votes. Sikkim BJP president Dilli Ram Thapa lost to SKM nominee Kala Rai in the Upper Burtuk Assembly constituency. Thapa, a sitting MLA and a former Minister lost to Rai by 2,968 votes. The BJP decided to go alone in the Sikkim Assembly polls after severing its alliance with the Sikkim Krantikari Morcha (SKM) led by Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang after the seat-sharing talks broke down on the latter's reluctance to meet the BJP's demand for a respectable number of seats. Tamang has emerged victorious in the Rhenock constituency, securing a

decisive win over his SDF rival Som Nath Poudyal by a margin of 7,044 votes. In the Soreng Chakung Assembly constituency, Tamang holds a lead of 2,052 votes over his nearest SDF competitor, A.D Subba. Prime Minister Modi hailed Tamang and the SKM for the victory. "Congratulations to SKM and CM @PSTamangGolay for their victory in the Sikkim Assembly Elections 2024. I look forward to working with the State Government to further the progress of Sikkim in the coming times," Modi said in a post on X. Responding to the Prime Minister's post, Tamang thanked him. "We are committed to continuing our efforts towards the development and prosperity of Sikkim. We look forward to collaborating with you to achieve our shared goals for the betterment of our state. Your unwavering support has been a driving force for us, and we look forward to your continued guidance and blessings," Tamang said in an X.

Sikkim Governor Lakshman Prasad Acharya on Sunday dissolved the 10th Sikkim Legislative Assembly (SLA) with immediate effect to clear the decks for the constitution of the 11th SLA following the declaration of results. Former Sikkim Chief Minister and SDF supreme Pawan Kumar Chamling was defeated by SKM nominee Bhoj Rai Rai in the Poklok Assembly seat by a margin of 3,063 votes. Rai polled 8,037 votes while Chamling got 4,974 votes. Arjun Rai (BJP) and Sanju Rai (CAP-S) got 739 and 691 votes respectively in the Poklok Kamrang Assembly seat. The five-time former CM lost to SKM's Raju Basnet by 2,256 votes from the Namcheybung Assembly constituency. Basnet bagged 7,195 votes while Chamling got 4,939. After winning Assembly Polls in Sikkim, CM Designate Prem Singh Tamang said, "(SDF leader) Pawan Kumar Chamling lost completely in 2019 only but it's a democracy. The work they couldn't do in 25 years,

we did it in five years. People have voted on that basis." Bhaichung Bhutia, the former captain of the Indian football team, is once again faced defeat in electoral politics by a margin of over 4000 votes. He previously contested elections twice in West Bengal as a Trinamool Congress candidate: the 2014 Lok Sabha elections from Darjeeling and the 2016 Assembly elections from Siliguri, losing both. He then moved his electoral base to Sikkim, forming his own party and contesting the 2019 Assembly elections from Gangtok and Tumen-Lingi, only to face defeat in both attempts. He also lost the 2019 bypoll from Gangtok. The counting day for Assembly polls in Arunachal and Sikkim was moved up from June 4 to Sunday because the current assembly terms end on June 2, and a new House must be formed by then. The Assembly polls in these States were conducted simultaneously with the Lok Sabha polls in their initial and most extensive phase on April 19.

Modi hits the ground running for...

From Page 1

Incessant rain and landslides have disrupted life in several parts of the northeast, affecting air and rail services and flooding arterial roads and highways. Top bureaucrats were part of the meetings the Prime Minister chaired. Voting in the seven-phase Lok Sabha elections concluded on Saturday and the results will be out on Tuesday, June 4, as part of the nationwide counting. All major exit polls on Saturday projected that the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) would retain power with a resounding victory in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections. The BJP and its allies are expected to breach the 300-seat mark once again. Ten exit polls said that though the BJP-led NDA will win at least 350 seats, it will fail to cross the 400-seat mark.

BJP, INDIA bloc say EC must follow...

From Page 1

During the meeting, the BJP delegation outlined four key requests aimed at ensuring the integrity of the electoral process. Goyal said that, he emphasised the need for all officials involved in the counting process to be thoroughly familiar with the prescribed procedures and to strictly adhere to all election commission protocols. Additionally, he highlighted the importance of guaranteeing the safety and security of the electoral process during both the counting and the announcement of results. Goyal also urged the election commission to recognize and address systematic attempts to undermine the electoral process and to take stringent

action against those responsible for such activities. Briefing the media after the INDIA bloc meet at Nirvachan Sadan, Congress leader Abhishek Singhvi said this was the third time that a delegation of Opposition leaders visited the poll panel during the general election and, among other things, urged the officials to ensure that the postal ballots are counted and their results declared before the results of the electronic voting machines (EVMs) are announced. Salman Khurshid along with D Raja, Samajwadi Party leader Ram Gopal Yadav, Sanjay Yadav, Nassir Hussain, and Salman Khurshid reached the poll body. Sitaram Yechuri also reached the office of the

election commission with other leaders. "This is the third multi-party delegation visiting the EC during this process.... We spent time with the EC on two-three major issues. Most important was counting the postal ballots and declaring the results first. This is a very clearly stated statutory rule, which specifically says that you should take up the postal ballots first," Singhvi said. "Our complaint is that this guideline has been given a go-by. They have repealed the practice," he added. The leaders of the INDIA bloc requested the EC to instruct its officials that they should follow the guidelines. Communist Party of India (Marxist) general secretary Yechury said they have

urged the poll panel to ensure that its own guidelines are implemented, which includes ensuring that the control units of the EVMs are moved through CCTV-monitored corridors and a verification of the current date-and-time display of the control units is done. "This verification is important because unless it is done, there is no authenticity that it is the same control unit that came from the polling booth, that it has not been changed," he said. Yechury also said the start and end time and date of the polling process should be checked on the control unit." The slips and tags that are put when an EVM is sealed should be shown to all the counting agents for

verification. After pressing the button for the results, reconfirming the date of poll is not done ... That has to be ensured," he said. Moreover, Congress leader Khurshid also demanded vigilance during the counting and called the meeting promising. Khurshid said, "We requested for very strict vigilance during the counting process and they gave us a satisfactory reply... We didn't question any rules but made sure they are adhered to and followed faithfully. The meeting has been very promising." CPI General Secretary Raja also spoke about the meeting with. "... We primarily demanded that the Election Commission should strictly adhere to the

Conduct of Election rules 1961, section 54 A...", Raja said. Meanwhile, senior leaders of the INDIA bloc met here to discuss their strategy for the counting day, even as the Trinamool Congress (TMC) and People's Democratic Party (PDP) skipped the meeting. Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge, who presided over the deliberations, said they would meet EC officials on Sunday "to discuss certain issues". The Opposition parties have asked their agents to monitor the vote-counting process closely on Tuesday and ensure that form 17C, which contains the number of votes recorded at each polling station, is shared with them.

CM to MPSP: Fully implement NEP to become role model

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ LUCKNOW

Chief Minister and Gorakshpeethadhiswar Yogi Adityanath, on Sunday, highlighted that the institutions under the Maharana Pratap Shiksha Parishad have played a leading role in adopting the National Education Policy and now, they need to fully implement the policy's provisions and become role models for other institutions. The chief minister was chairing a meeting on Sunday at Mahayogi Gorakhnath University, Arogyadham, Gorakhpur, to review the annual performance and future plans of all institutions under the Maharana Pratap Shiksha Parishad (MPSP). He said, "All the institutions of Maharana Pratap Shiksha Parishad, including educational and medical, have always proved their usefulness in the interest of society and nation by doing excellent work in their respective fields." He urged all institutions to continue this excellence, engage in healthy competition, enrich campus culture, and focus on continuous innovation. He said that these institutions had also made social participation a part of their mission and should expand this further in the future. During the meeting, Chief Minister Yogi took information from the heads of all the institutions about their year-long activities and achievements and gave his suggestions on their goals regarding the upcoming action plan. The institutions presented their

annual review and future plans through a PowerPoint (PPT) display. Chief Minister Yogi praised the activities of the institutions under the MPSP and extended his best wishes for achieving their future goals. He stated that the MPSP was not just an organisation that opens schools, colleges, or hospitals as its mission is to contribute to the social development of society and the nation through education, health, and other services. He said that the foundation of the MPSP was laid with the intent of nurturing a sense of nationalism and preparing capable citizens for the nation. Regardless of whether conditions were favorable or unfavorable, the MPSP has never deviated from this comprehensive goal, he pointed out. The chief minister said that the institutions of the MPSP had always prioritised maintaining a disciplined campus culture and the institutions had made exemplary efforts in this regard. He said it was the responsibility of all heads of institutions to regularly oversee that discipline, cleanliness, greenery and mutual harmony were maintained on campus. He also instructed that there should be no negligence in the quality of education in academic institutions and the facilities available in medical institutions. Additionally, he emphasised that research and innovation are essential to keep up with the times and future needs. The efforts made by the MPSP's institutions in research and innovation are commend-

able, and continuous attention to these areas is necessary. During this, he also reviewed the social participation of the institutions of the MPSP. He enquired about how each institution engaged with the community and fulfilled its social responsibilities over the past year. He said that it was the responsibility of every institution to expand its scope for the progress of the society and to make people self-reliant. The chief minister expressed happiness that the institutions of the MPSP have constantly connected with different dimensions and have maintained a series of continuous works for the health, education, vocational training and self-reliance of the society. During the meeting, the chief minister also discussed the working methods of the institutions of Maharana Pratap Shiksha Parishad. Praising the working methods of all the institutions, he said that there was always scope for improvement even in excellence. He said that the institutions related to education should continuously upgrade their student-centric working system and the institutions related to medical services should continuously upgrade their patient-centric working system. He stressed that whatever the work may be, the spirit of service should always be paramount. Chief Minister Yogi instructed that preparations should begin now to make the centenary year 2032 of the Maharana Pratap Shiksha Parishad grand and historic. He mentioned that the

MPSP was established in 1932 in eastern Uttar Pradesh to promote educational revival and preserve national values and it has been continuously progressing while upholding the values and ideals of its founder, the great Brahmleen Mahant Digvijaynath Ji Maharaj, and its expander, the Brahmleen Mahant Aavadyanath Ji Maharaj. "In eight years, it will reach its centenary year. By then, we need to establish the Parishad's institutions as a model. For this, all heads of institutions must prepare a detailed action plan and start working on it immediately," Yogi added. The Chief Minister conducted an intensive inspection of the Mahayogi Gorakhnath University campus on Sunday and also gave necessary guidelines regarding infrastructure and other facilities. He emphasised the need to ensure high quality in the construction of the medical college and to reflect Indian culture in the building's design. He also gave instructions regarding the stadium, pharmacy college, and other facilities on the campus. Before holding the review meeting, CM Yogi Chief also inspected the construction work of the new building at Maharana Pratap Inter College located at Golghar. A new four-storey building equipped with state-of-the-art facilities is being constructed. During this, he emphasised that special attention should be given to preserving heritage and maintaining quality in the construction works.

Strong chemistry between Modi, Yogi was evident during LS poll

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ LUCKNOW

With all the seven phases of Lok Sabha elections 2024 having concluded, all eyes are on the results to be announced on June 4. Meanwhile, the Bharatiya Janata Party and all other constituents of the National Democratic Alliance are upbeat over the exit poll results, which were announced on Saturday, based on reports from various survey agencies. An official spokesman of the government claimed here on Sunday that on one hand, the Narendra Modi government is poised to surpass the magical figure of 400 seats and assume power for the third time, on the other, excellent results are expected in Uttar Pradesh as well. Discussions are also on about the Prime Minister Modi-Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath duo once again proving to be a super hit in Uttar Pradesh. During the Lok Sabha elections, the chemistry between the two leaders appeared very strong, he said. The impressive results in UP as predicted by the exit polls have also provided concrete evidence of excellent teamwork between Modi and Yogi. From Meerut to Mirzapur, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath attended nearly 21 events together. During this time, they participated in 13 public meetings, five roadshows, a nomination event in Varanasi, and a visit to the Kashi Vishwanath Temple.



Everywhere, the respect and mutual trust demonstrated by the two leaders were evident. Additionally, several videos from these events went viral on social media, further solidifying the growing trust between Prime Minister Modi and Chief Minister Yogi. One particular viral video was from a public meeting in Pilibhit, where Chief Minister Yogi hesitated to cross in front of the prime minister to approach the dais. However, the prime minister took his hand and encouraged him to proceed ahead. Another widely shared video featured the prime minister receiving a 'Trishul' at the Kashi Vishwanath temple. This clip captivated internet users, keeping it trending for an extended period. Out of the 21 events with Prime Minister Modi, 15 were public meetings where Prime Minister Modi and

Chief Minister Yogi openly demonstrated their trust in each other. Referring to Yogi Adityanath as his chief minister, the prime minister expressed pride in having a companion like Chief Minister Yogi by his side. He praised Chief Minister Yogi's actions everywhere he went, especially applauding the remarkable improvements in the state's law and order situation during every rally. In addition, phrases like "Hamare Yogi Ji" and "Mere Yogi Ji" in the prime minister's speeches also highlighted the strong bond between the two leaders. The public also embraced the duo in UP with slogans like 'Modi hai toh mumkin hai' and 'Yogi hai toh yakeen hai'. Once again, in alignment with 'Fir Ek Baar Modi Sarkar', 'Abki Baar 400 Paar', Chief Minister Yogi, tirelessly engaged in campaigning across all 80 Lok Sabha seats of UP over the past two months. In many constituencies, Yogi held pub-

lic meetings twice or thrice. Additionally, he held public meetings in a total of 12 states and two Union territories, appealing for votes in favour of the prime minister. Alongside, he stood by the prime minister on every major platform in the state, like a shadow. Whether it was roadshows or public meetings, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath was consistently seen on the right side of Prime Minister Modi, conveying a significant message to the public. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath appeared alongside Prime Minister Narendra Modi at several public meetings, including those in Meerut (March 31), Saharanpur (April 6), Pilibhit (April 9), Amroha (April 19), Aligarh (April 22), Agra (April 25), Etawah (May 5), Lalgaon (May 17), Barabanki (May 17), a women's empowerment dialogue in Varanasi (May 21), Basti (May 22), Ghazipur (May 25) and Mirzapur/Robertsganj (May 26). Additionally, in Uttar Pradesh, Prime Minister Modi held five major roadshows with the chief minister, including roadshows in Ghaziabad (April 6), Bareilly (April 26), Kanpur (May 4), Ayodhya (May 5) and Varanasi (May 13). Furthermore, in Varanasi, Chief Minister Yogi remained alongside the prime minister during the latter's visit to the Kashi Bhairav temple and Shri Kashi Vishwanath Dham for worship (May 13) and nomination in Varanasi (May 14).

Yogi offers prayers at Gorakhnath temple

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ LUCKNOW

A day after the final phase of voting in the Lok Sabha elections, while many politicians were likely engrossed in analysing the electoral mathematics, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's Sunday morning was dedicated to his usual routine of offering prayers, guru darshan and serving cows. The morning drizzle added to the joyous and affectionate atmosphere as Chief Minister Yogi spent time among the cattle and children. Notably, despite his busy schedule due to the two-month-long Lok Sabha elections, Chief Minister Yogi frequently visited the Gorakhnath temple, offering prayers, performing gauseva and interacting with children. Chief Minister and Gorakshpeethadhiswar Yogi has been staying at Gorakhnath temple since Friday evening. His Sunday routine was traditional. After offering prayers to Lord Shiva and Guru Gorakhnath, he visited the statue of Mahant Aavadyanath to seek his blessings. Afterwards, as usual, he went on a tour of the temple



premises. While walking around, he noticed children who had come with their families. Chief Minister Yogi affectionately patted them and showered blessings. The children seemed very cheerful, enjoying

CM expresses happiness over BJP's victory in Arunachal

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ LUCKNOW

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath expressed joy over the Bharatiya Janata Party's overwhelming victory in the Arunachal Pradesh assembly elections. He linked this victory to the slogan 'Fir Ek Baar Modi Sarkar' and hoped that on June 4, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the BJP would form the government at the Centre with a resounding majority. On his X handle, Chief Minister Yogi wrote, "With an overwhelming majority in the Arunachal Pradesh assembly, the resolve of 'Fir Ek Baar Modi Sarkar' has been fulfilled. This dawn from the eastern direction will illuminate the country on June 4. The Congress-led INDI Alliance is sure to be defeated on June 4." The counting of votes for the Arunachal Pradesh assembly election was completed on Sunday. The results showed a massive majority for the BJP, which won 46 seats, while the performance of Congress has been disappointing and the party could win only one seat in the state.

All set for counting of votes in UP

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ LUCKNOW

The stage is set for the June 4 counting of votes polled in the Lok Sabha elections in Uttar Pradesh, with authorities deploying 179 observers, 80 returning officers, and making multi-layer security arrangements at 81 centres set up across the state. Uttar Pradesh Chief Electoral Officer Navdeep Rinwa said here on Sunday that the counting of votes for Lok Sabha general election-2024 would commence from 8 am on June 4 in 81 counting centres in 75 districts of the state. The counting and sealing proceedings will be conducted under CCTV surveillance. Counting of votes will take place at two centres each in Agra, Meerut, Azamgarh, Deoria, Sitapur, Kushinagar districts. Counting of votes of eight Lok Sabha constituencies will take place in three districts, counting of votes of 37 Lok Sabha constituencies will take place in two districts and counting of votes of 35 Lok Sabha constituencies will take place in one district. The CEO said that the counting of postal ballots will take place at the counting venue of returning officer/district headquarters of the district.

The votes will be counted assembly constituency wise. Thereafter, the result of the Lok Sabha constituency will be declared by adding up the results of the assembly constituencies. The counting of votes in Ghaziabad Lok Sabha constituency and Sahibabad assembly constituency will be completed within 41 rounds and they have a maximum number of 1,127 polling booths. According to Navdeep Rinwa, the Election Commission of India has deployed 179 observers for counting of votes. Fifteen observers will be deployed in one assembly constituency, 104 observers will be deployed in two assembly constituencies and 60 in three assembly constituencies. The counting of votes in 80 Lok Sabha constituencies will be supervised by 80 returning officers and 1,581 assistant returning officers. Counting of votes in assembly seats where bypoll was held will be supervised by the returning officer and assistant returning officer under the watchful eyes of the CCTV. A total of 851 candidates are in the fray in the Lok Sabha general elections 2024, out of

which 771 are men and 80 are women. Maximum 28 candidates are in Ghosi Lok Sabha constituency and least four candidates are in Kaiserganj Lok Sabha constituency. Adequate deployment of central paramilitary forces has also been done to ensure safe counting of votes. The CEO said for appointment as polling agent, the candidate or his election agent has to apply to the returning officer on Form-18 three days before the date of commencement of counting of votes. There is no prescribed qualification for appointing a counting agent. Candidates above 18 years of age can be made counting agents. The Election Commission of India has prohibited the appointment of members of the council of ministers, MPs, MLAs, mayor, chairperson of municipal council/nagar panchayat as counting agents. There is a ban on appointing persons protected by the central/state government as counting agents. However, there is no restriction on appointing village heads, sarpanch, panchayat members, councillors etc. as counting agents, who are residents of the constituency, Non-resident Indians (NRIs)

can also be made counting agents. For security at the counting centres, a three-tier security system has been put in place to protect the counting venue. The first level of security will be at a radius of 100 metres from the counting site, where the state police force will be deployed. The second level of security will be at the gate of the counting venue, where the state police force will be deployed. The third level of security will be for the counting hall which will be under the supervision of the Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs). The chief electoral officer said district election officers had been instructed to lay special emphasis on the dos and don'ts for counting personnel in view of the heatwave conditions. The counting personnel should use light cotton clothes and wear a cap, or carry an umbrella or cotton towel or any other cloth to cover the head, he advised. They should keep a water bottle, drink lemonade or ORS to keep themselves hydrated, he said. Instructions have also been given to ensure fans, coolers and sitting arrangements for candidates, their agents, counting personnel and other employees.

Tiger Amar, lion Pataudi roar to greet Yogi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ LUCKNOW

On Sunday, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath inspected the Shaheed Ashfaq Ullah Khan Zoological Park (Gorakhpur Zoo). During his visit, he observed five-year-old lion Bharat and seven-year-old lioness Gauri, recently brought from Etawah Lion Safari. Royal Bengal Tiger Amar raised a leg excitedly and roared, seemingly saluting the chief minister. Yogi Adityanath laughed and remarked, "Kya Re? Kaisa Hai Tu?" Giving this information here on Sunday evening, an official spokesman claimed that the chief minister advised a zoo employee not to touch the enclosure net, noting that the tiger's agitation might be due to this. Another lion, Pataudi, also roared in greeting when the chief minister approached his enclosure. The wild animals' roars during his visit seemed to please Yogi Adityanath. While inspecting the zoo, he fed bananas to the rhinoceros pair Hari and Gauri and, after observing several other animals, he instructed the zoo officials to ensure their proper care. Chief Minister Yogi



Adityanath, who had been busy campaigning for the Lok Sabha elections for the past two months, took some leisure time on Sunday afternoon to visit Gorakhpur Zoo, one of his cherished projects. The chief minister, known for his fondness for wildlife, often visits the zoo whenever possible. Upon arriving at the zoo, he began by inspecting the entire facility. When he saw the rhino pair, Hari and Gauri, he smiled and approached their enclosure to feed them bananas. This pair of rhinos is particularly dear to the chief minister and he has also fed them bananas on previous visits. Throughout his tour, Chief Minister Yogi also observed the enclosures of lions, tigers, white tigers, deer, monkeys, jackals, leopards, hippos and bears. Accompanied by Divisional Forest Officer and Zoo Director Vikas Yadav, the chief

minister gathered information about wildlife care during his visit. When the chief minister approached the enclosure of tiger Amar, the tiger lifted one leg in a saluting posture and began to roar. This sight made Chief Minister Yogi laugh. Malani and the white tiger Geeta joined in with their roars. Upon reaching the enclosure of lion Pataudi, who was already present at the zoo, the lion also roared in a saluting posture. Chief Minister Yogi then visited the newly arrived lions, Bharat and Gauri, as well as leopards Chandni and Bhavani, whom he had personally named and fed them milk with his own hands. The chief minister also inspected the zoo's hospital and enquired about the rescue methods, treatment and feeding of the wild animals. He observed the animals currently undergoing treatment and asked about their recovery timelines. During his visit to the zoo, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath also interacted with the visitors. A group from Deoria expressed their gratitude, saying that the zoo is a beautiful gift of knowledge and entertainment for the people of eastern Uttar Pradesh. The chief minister blessed many children by patting their heads and giving them chocolates. One child, Samad Ansari, near the hippo enclosure, jumped with joy upon receiving chocolate from the chief minister. Director-DFO Vikas Yadav, SDO Dr Harendra Singh, veterinarian Dr Ravi, and others were present during the chief minister's zoo inspection.

UPPCL making toll-free number 1912 effective

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ LUCKNOW

Uttar Pradesh Power Corporation Limited (UPPCL) has geared up to make the toll-free number 1912 more effective in order to address efficient redressal of the grievances of the power consumers related to power supply issues amid scorching heat. UPPCL Chairman Ashish Kumar Goyal has instructed the officials to answer calls received on toll-free number 1912 promptly and ensure immediate action for expeditious resolution of problems. The toll-free number was started in April 2017. After the Yogi government assumed office in the state, the government emphasised on developing it as a one-stop solution for power consumers' problems. Through the government's efforts, this toll-free number is ensuring timely resolution of electricity consumers' issues. To enhance the effectiveness of the 1912 toll-free number, the UPPCL chairman has instructed officials to ensure that calls are answered promptly and that they remain in contact with consumers until their issues are resolved.

The toll-free number was started in April 2017. After the Yogi government assumed office in the state, the government emphasised on developing it as a one-stop solution for power consumers' problems. He emphasised that the importance of the 1912 toll-free number has significantly increased in the current extreme heat conditions. Consumers report their issues via this number, so the staff should diligently work to resolve these problems. From April 1, 2017, over 1.90 crore complaints related to bills, meters, connections, power supply, power theft and suggestions among others were received from all over the state on the toll-free number 1912. Among these, 99.72 per cent (1,88,59,860) complaints were resolved in a

specific timeframe. Around 32,10,816 complaints were received in Dakshinanchal division, 83,79,434 in Madhyanchal, 45,36,535 in Pashchimanchal, 27,25,922 in Purvanchal and 59,983 complaints were received from KESCo. As many as 10,51,466 complaints related to bills were received on toll-free number 1912, out of which 99.75 per cent complaints were resolved. Similarly, 20,38,117 complaints related to meters were received, out of which 20,17,677 were resolved. Across the state, 2,34,834 complaints were received regarding smart meters, out of which 2,34,232 were resolved in a timely manner. Around 4,07,523 complaints regarding connection were received, out of which 4,06,475 complaints were resolved. Additionally, 1,31,00,458 complaints regarding power supply were received, out of which 1,30,94,391 complaints were resolved, including 2,03,698 complaints regarding damaged transformers, out of which 2,03,481 complaints were resolved. Besides, 1,41,785 information regarding theft were received, out of which 1,39,526 complaints were resolved.

Tight security arrangements for counting of votes

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

After the completion of voting, the EVMs have been kept under tight security arrangements at Pahadia Mandi where the counting of votes will be held on June 4. To avoid any untoward incident, three-tier security cordon had been created for EVMs kept at strong room. The personnel of central armed police forces have been deployed to keep a

watch on the inner security where after completion of polling, the EVMs were deposited till midnight hours on Saturday and then kept in the strong room. After the inner security, Provincial Armed Constabulary (PAC) and armed personnel have been deployed in the second cordon, followed by the outer one where more than 50 policemen have been deployed. To maintain proper security,

the duty of security personnel has been changed after every eight hours shift. To keep a watch on the security, three deputy SP ranked officers have been put on duty for eight hours each to monitor the security personnel. Besides, strong room is being monitored with the help of CCTV cameras. According to Commissioner of Police (CP) Mohit Agrawal, the police personnel deployed to monitor the

strong room have been instructed to remain alert and keep extra vigila and no one should be allowed to go towards the strong room. Besides, the police personnel have also been deployed outside to keep a watch on the suspicious persons and check the heavy vehicles. Apart from this, various parties and candidates have also kept their teams to keep watch on strong rooms.

BJP afraid of defeat in Varanasi: Ajay Rai

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Congress candidate, supported by INDIA Bloc, Ajay Rai alleged that the ruling BJP is so afraid of defeat in Varanasi that the police put public representatives under house arrest on the day of voting. "The incident of putting Congress public representatives under house arrest and creating an atmosphere of terror among their supporters and curbing voting in favour of Congress is a serious police action to hurt democracy under the pressure of the ruling party", he alleged.

He further alleged that the local administration itself stood against him in the election field. "Putting public representatives under house arrest without any notice on the day of election is an act of strangling civil liberties", he said, terming the police action of putting Congress corporators' party leader Gulshan Ali and corporator Ramzan Ali under house arrest as a biased administrative action to influence the voting. Ramzan Ali is a corporator of ward 45 (Qazi Sadulla Pura) and Gulshan Ali is a corporator

of ward number 100 (Kamalpara). In another statement, Ajay Rai, has strongly objected to the CCTV cameras monitoring the EVM strong room 'stopping working intermittently' and termed it as suspicious. "To say that the CCTV cameras stop working after some time due to heat is unbelievable and ridiculous", he said, adding that the administration should ensure that the cameras work uninterrupted so that EVM security remains transparent and public trust in the system remains intact.

Fire in shop

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

A namkeen shop caught fire in Harbansh Mohal police station area late on Saturday night. The people informed the police and attempted to control the fire. After some time, the fire brigade rushed to the spot and extinguished the fire. The entire goods of the shop were gutted but fortunately no casualty was reported in the incident. CFO Deepak Sharma said on receipt of information through the mini control room, fire tender from Latouche Road Fire Station immediately rushed to spot and controlled the fire. Entire goods of the shop were gutted in the fire, he said.

Campaign to create awareness on malaria prevention, control

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

To prevent mosquito-borne disease malaria, the Health department will observe the entire month of June as 'anti-malaria month'. The main objective of this campaign is to make people aware about the symptoms, preventive measures, investigation and treatment of malaria. During the month, fever screening camps will be organised in all rural and city hot spot areas in which all the patients of fever will be examined and treatment and consultation will be provided as per the need. Chief Medical Officer (CMO) Dr Sandeep Chaudhary said awareness will be created among the public regarding prevention and control of malaria. "Participation of the public will be ensured in the activities being done for disease control. All fever patients will be tested to identify malaria and the patients found positive will be given complete treatment", the chief medical officer said. ACMO and nodal officer Dr SS Kanaujia said that messages like 'attack on mosquitoes every

Sunday', 'attack on larvae to kill malaria' and 'delay in fever control will cost heavily' will be effectively publicised. District Malaria Officer Sharat Chand Pandey said as many as 85 hot spot areas have been identified in the rural areas of the district and 70 in the city. "Fever screening camps will be set up in all these hot spot areas. Facilities for testing and treatment of malaria are available at all government hospitals, community and primary health centres (CHCs/ PHCs) in the district", he said, adding that necessary guidelines have been given to all CHOs and ASHA workers regarding the anti-malaria month. He said malaria is caused by the bite of an infected female Anopheles mosquito. "As this mosquito breeds in dirty water so everyone should keep one's house and surroundings clean and do not allow dirt and dirty water to accumulate anywhere", he said. According to him, the main symptoms of malaria are fever with chills and shivering, except for one or two days, high fever, vomiting and headache, sweating profusely when fever

subsides, fatigue and weakness after fever subsides. He advised the patients to pay special attention and if one has fever, he/she should immediately go to the nearest health centre and get him/her examined. He also suggested the people to wear light cotton clothes and keep the room cool, put a bandage of normal water on the head, hands, feet and stomach, avoid consulting quacks, during fever drink more water and other liquids like coconut water, shikanji, fresh fruit juice etc and do not take unnecessary medicines without consulting a doctor. Pandey also gave some suggestions for protection from mosquitoes which include getting nets installed on doors and windows, using mosquito nets regularly and adopting mosquito repellent measures, not letting water collect in unused objects, keeping the water tank completely covered, wearing full-sleeved shirts and pants, not let water collect around the house and workplace, emptying and drying coolers, pots, etc weekly and if water is found collected in pits, covering it with soil.

Dr Vishwanath Seth Award announced for excellence in sociology

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

The Chhatrapati Shahu Ji Maharaj University (CSJMU) has announced the Dr Vishwanath Seth Award for Excellence in Sociology. This prestigious award will be bestowed upon the top two position holders in the MA Sociology programme. Dr Vishwanath Seth dedicated over a decade to the university as the Director of the College Development Council. Before this role, he served as a sociology lecturer at Christ Church College, Kanpur. Dr Seth has received numerous prestigious accolades, including the Rashtriya Gaurav, Rashtriya Ratan, Pride of India, and Gem of India awards, in recognition of his exceptional research contributions to sociology. Under his mentorship, more than 20 students have successfully completed their PhDs. Dr. Seth devoted his life to education, profoundly impacting many lives through his dedicated guidance.

Exit poll prediction hailed

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

The activists of Namami Ganga expressed gratitude by performing aarti of Maa Ganga at Dashashwamedh Ghat on the hat-trick of victory of Modi government in the 'great yagya of democracy', Lok Sabha elections, as per the exit poll predictions. They also expressed gratitude to every voter. They offered prayers to Maa Ganga by taking the pictures of 'Ganga Putra' Prime Minister Narendra Modi in response to the statement of Modi who had said that Maa Ganga had called him when he came here to contest the Lok Sabha election in 2014. Now in this poll he has said that Maa Ganga has adopted him. On the occasion, they also offered 'shramdaan' cleaning the river and removing puja and other wastes from there and appealed to the people to follow the appeal of the PM by keeping the river clean and not to throw garbage in it and its



Namami Ganga activists in Varanasi on Sunday expressing happiness over exit poll predictions

tributaries. Regional Namami Ganga (Kashi) coordinator Rajesh Shukla said Modi will be successful again with the hard work of party workers and the blessings of Baba Vishwanath, Maa Ganga and the people of the country. He said that we have sought blessings of Maa

Ganga by performing aarti so that the poll results on June 4 will be as per the exit poll predictions. National Clean Ganga, New Delhi officer Atharvaraj Pandey, who was also present at the event, said through the Namami Ganga project, we have to fulfil the

PM's the resolution to clean the Ganga. Prominent among others who were also present were Namami Ganga's city coordinator Shivdutt Dwivedi, city co-ordinator Sarika Gupta, Preeti Jaiswal, Pankaj Agrahari, Sohan Singh, Neha Puri and Lovely.

Exit polls misleading people: Shyam Lal Pal

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

Samajwadi Party (SP) state president Shyam Lal Pal said like the BJP leaders, the exit polls are also misleading the people of the country. The exit polls are trying to disappear the people. While talking to journalists at Press Club here

on Sunday, the state president of SP said that opposition bloc, INDIA, is going to win more than 70 seats in Uttar Pradesh. Apart from Phulpur, Allahabad, Bhadohi and Kaushambi seats are going to INDIA's account. It is going to win around 300 seats in the whole country, he claimed.

Meanwhile Bahujan Samaj Party in charge of Prayagraj division Sabir Siddiqui says that the exit polls are completely different from the ground reality. Such exit polls are conducted to put pressure on the officials and workers engaged in the elections. The BSP has fought well on all the seats. "We

have got the support of the public and we are winning the elections. This will become clear on June 4", he claimed. Senior BJP leader Dr. Shailesh Pandey said, "The opposition has lost the elections. They have no basis. After losing, like every time, they will blame the EVM".

PuVVNL: Restoration work of power infrastructure done on war footing

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

In view of the seventh phase of Lok Sabha elections held on Saturday, quick restoration work of power infrastructure in Kushinagar and Maharajganj districts was a big challenging task for Purvanchal Vidyut Vitran Nigam Limited (PuVVNL). Due to the severe thunderstorm that hit Kushinagar and Maharajganj districts on May 30 between 6 and 7 pm, the power infrastructure in many districts suffered heavy damage. In this thunderstorm about 1,000 poles were damaged in Maharajganj district and about 800 poles in Kushinagar and the supply of 60 power sub-stations was affected by this natural calamity. Due to it about 90 per cent of the power supply of these districts was disrupted. In view of the Lok Sabha elections, restoration work was done on a war footing to ensure smooth conduct of the election process and according to the PuVVNL, supply was normalised in about 90 per cent of the area by the night of May 31

and restoration work continued rapidly in the remaining areas to ensure 100 per cent supply in the districts. According to the PuVVNL release, the restoration work of the Electricity department was praised by the district magistrates of Kushinagar and Maharajganj. According to the PuVVNL release, about 1,500 manpower was engaged to carry out the restoration work of the power infrastructure on a war footing, which included the working agencies as well as departmental contract workers. Besides, work was done to install 1,550 new poles and restore the fallen poles; 290 km of 33kV/11kV lines and 320 km of LT lines were restored and 380 additional transformers that fell from the poles due to storm were re-installed. To ensure availability of materials, the same was ensured by diverting materials from various districts. Besides, work was expedited by establishing coordination with the officers of the Forest department. Senior and experienced officers from the Discom (PuVVNL) level were deployed to camp in the district to monitor and coordi-

nate the restoration work which was continuously monitored from the Discom control room. In another release, the PuVVNL said that to ensure uninterrupted power supply during voting in several districts of Purvanchal on Saturday, a special control room was established in every district and an officer of the level of subdivision officer was put on duty in the control room. The superintending engineers/ executive engineers/ subdivision officers and junior engineers were made aware of every fault/ breakdown/ damage of distribution transformers with full details and must inform the same to the respective control room. Every officer was instructed to monitor the complaints received on 1912 and ensure to resolve them in minimum time and they should remain in constant touch with the polling officers posted at every polling place and the district election control room and ensure to normalise the supply in minimum time in case of any kind of power disruption/fault. The superintending engineers/ executive engineers/ subdivision officer level officers were directed

with the district administration/local public representatives/ media representatives/ other social persons giving information and keep informing them about the power disruption and keep taking feedback of power supply from them. Special attention was paid to the feeders and distribution transformers of those areas where there is more disruption and the reasons for the disruption were identified and resolved. Trolley transformers were kept near sensitive places from the point of view of power disruption so that the supply can be normalised in minimum time. Also, damaged distribution transformers should also be replaced in minimum time. To ensure the availability of essential materials at power sub-stations so that in case of power disruption, there is no time spent in transporting the material and the supply can be normalised in minimum time. All officers were directed to maintain contact with each other and ensure 100 per cent phone pickup so that unnecessary delay can be avoided on receiving information about the disruption.

Goods train derails

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

A goods train coming from Kanpur to Prayagraj derailed near Kanwar border between Kaushambi and Fatehpur on Sunday. The derailment disrupted the Delhi-Kanpur-Prayagraj goods train route. The railway engineers reached the spot. GM DFC Prayagraj GB Sharan said the Kanpur-Prayagraj goods train route was disrupted. Around 5.20 am on Sunday morning the goods train going from Kanpur to Prayagraj derailed near Kanwar border. On getting information Prayagraj Division's General Manager DFC GB Sharan reached the spot with a large

number of engineers, gangmen and trackmen. The work of restoring the track of the goods train was started from around 11 am. Sharan said information about derailment of goods train was received around 5:20 am. The goods train route from Kanpur to Prayagraj was disrupted. After about three hours, he himself reached the spot with a team of railway engineers. With the help of railway personnel after about 4-5 hours, the goods train route was repaired and opened for traffic. A committee has been formed to investigate the reasons for the derailment of the goods train. The team will submit its report to the Railway Ministry after investigation soon, he added.

Training session on fire safety measures

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

The Kanpur Development Authority (KDA) organised training session for its officers and employees on fire safety measures on Saturday. They were taught about the use of fire extinguishing equipment, including the fire cylinder, installed by the Care Taker Department by Mohit Shukla and Sanjay Shukla. Trainers Mohit Shukla and Sanjay Shukla informed that during the fire, nobody was required to run here and there. Instead, they should use the fire cylinder by taking out its safety pin. While using the fire cylinder, special attention should be paid to the availability of air. They said the fire



The training session on fire safety measures organised at KDA.

employees, security personnel and other people were present during the training session. MAN DIES: An elderly man was crushed to death while a couple asleep there was injured under the debris of his hut which suddenly caved in during a storm in Tisauli village under Mangalpur police station area of Kanpur Dehat on Saturday night. After investigations, the police sent the body for autopsy. Bhaum Singh (80) was sleeping in the hut. His son Marjad Singh, daughter-in-law Guddu Devi and their son Raj (5) were also sleeping there. On hearing the noise, villagers rushed to spot and rescued all the family members but Bhaum Singh was found dead.

Awareness rally taken out

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

An oath was administered to protect the environment under the leadership of Senior Executive Director (Unit Head) Sanjay Kudesia in IFFCO Ghyanagar Phulpur. With the aim of awakening the spirit of environmental protection among the public, an awareness rally 'Run for Environment' was taken out in IFFCO Colony, which was flagged off by Vinita Kudesia by cutting the ribbon here on Sunday. An awareness march was taken out with environmental awareness posters, banners and slogans in which a large number of IFFCO employees, women and children participated. After this, a massive plantation



was done by Senior Executive Director Sanjay Kudesia along with other senior officers in IFFCO Colony. The programme was coordinated by Senior Manager EPC Umesh Kumar Shukla. GMs respectively Sanjay Vaish, MD Mishra, JGMs respectively Dr Anita Mishra, PK Singh, Sanjay Bhandari, PK Patel,

Ratnesh Kumar, Arun Kumar, AK Gupta, HOD Human Resources Shambhu Shekhar, General Secretary of IFFCO Officers' Association Swayam Prakash, Manoj Tiwari (EPC) and a large number of employees, officers, women and children participated in the awareness rally and tree plantation programme.

Emphasis on tree plantation

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

An awareness rally was taken out at Banaras station on Sunday under Mission LiFE and the message was given to the passengers that at present, due to the severe heat, water crisis and hot winds caused by climate change, animals and plants are being greatly affected. The campaign was launched at various other stations of Varanasi Division of North Eastern Railway (NER) under the guidance of Divisional Railway Manager Vineet Kumar Srivastava and Senior Divisional Mechanical Engineer Apoorv Swarnkar. During their awareness event the participants also informed the passengers and others that



Plantation being done under Mission LiFE at Banaras station on Sunday.

and ultimately the trees are drying up. The passengers were also made aware that our planet can be saved only by proper use of natural resources, massive tree plantation and conservation of rainwater. Apart from this, by distributing cotton bags to the passengers, they were made aware/ encouraged to use cotton/ disposable bags instead of single use plastic at the station. On this occasion, Chief health inspectors (CHIs) Dr D Narayan and Kamlesh Singh, deputy chief station superintendent (Commercial) Sarvesh Pandey, station superintendent Vivek Singh etc were present. Under Mission LiFE for Environment being observed prior to World

Environment Day, a tree plantation programme was organised by CHI Raju Yadav on platform numbers 2/3 of Varanasi City railway station. A drawing and painting competition was organised among the children at Chhapra railway station and the children took out a prabhat pheri to make people aware. A rally was taken out for environmental protection at Azamgarh station and the passengers were urged to conserve water and plant trees. Besides, a rally was taken out for environmental protection at Ghazipur City station and awareness was created for not using plastic by distributing bags among passengers and staff.

Summer camp organised for students

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

The Sir Padampat Singhania Education Centre (SPSEC) is steadfast in its commitment to the holistic development of its students, inculcating in them a culture of creativity, innovation and excellence. Reflecting this dedication, the school organised a 'Summer Camp - A Summer to Remember' for its students in the school premises. It aimed at rejuvenating and motivating the young Singhania through a plethora of engaging activities. From Sports Mania featuring taekwondo, chess, cricket, tennis, and more, to crafty creations, rhythm and groove, nature explorers, cooking bonanza and oratory skills ses-

sions, the ten-day event was brimming with excitement and learning. The highlight of the camp was the valedictory ceremony where the participants were lauded for their dedication and presented with certificates of appreciation. The event also showcased the newfound skills and talents acquired during the camp. The attendees enjoyed the captivating performances, including soulful renditions of classic compositions as well as enthralling dance and

oratory presentations. The creativity of the young minds was on full display with exhibits ranging from 3D paintings to nature-inspired crafts made from recycled materials. Principal Bhawna Gupta commended the students for their enthusiasm and encouraged them to continue their journey toward excellence while emphasising the importance of sustainability in their endeavours.

TALK SHOW ORGANISED: Ananya Bajpai from the batch 2015-2016 of Sir Padampat Singhania Education Centre has achieved international recognition. She has secured a place among the three students globally who have received a scholarship of ₹1.80 crore to pursue a doctoral degree from the University of California. Ananya was selected from the multitude of applications submitted by lakhs of students worldwide. Ananya completed her BSc in Biotechnology from Kanpur University and pursued post-graduation in Medical Biotechnology from the Sanjay Gandhi Post Graduate Institute of Medical Sciences. After successfully clearing the JRF Ananya is currently working as a Junior Research Scientist at SGPGI. In order to encourage and inspire other students at the school, a 'Talk Show' with Ananya was organised. Principal Bhawna Gupta, honoured Ananya for her remarkable achievement.

BJP excited as exit polls predict Modi's landslide win

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI/PATNA

With exit polls indicating that Prime Minister Narendra Modi all set to return for third term, BJP leaders expressed a lot of enthusiasm over the massive winning margin predicted by pollsters. Former Union Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad, a party candidate from Patna Sahib constituency, on Sunday, targeted former Congress president Rahul Gandhi over his remark about exit polls and claim of getting 295 seats in the 2024 Lok Sabha Elections. The senior BJP leader said the grand old party is performing poorly because it didn't stop daydreaming. Advising Congress to work on the ground and stop criticising Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Prasad said "There is no bar on daydreaming in India. The Exit Poll is only reflecting the exact poll. We will cross 400 in Delhi (Centre) and 40 in Bihar." The exit polls have predicted a stunning victory for the saffron party, with



some pollsters claiming that the BJP-led NDA's score may well cross the 400 mark. "PM Narendra Modi worries about the poor, worries about

the farmers, he is the one who is working to develop this nation, and he is the one who is safeguarding the country," said Prasad at Patna.

Prasad also jibed at Congress chief spokesman Jairam Ramesh's statement and said that Congress's current situation is because the party never

stopped daydreaming. "People can dream during the day and there is no restraint on that. Congress is performing poorly because they haven't stopped daydreaming. They should work on the ground and win the confidence of the public and should stop criticizing and abusing PM Modi." Tripura unit BJP president Rajib Bhattacharjee claimed on Sunday People have voted for "Modi's guarantee", and this will ensure 400 seats for the BJP-led NDA on June 4. Speaking to reporters, Bhattacharjee claimed the opposition bloc INDIA will be defeated in the elections as it had no promise or programme for the people. "Almost all the exit polls have predicted a landslide victory for the BJP-led NDA. My prediction is that the NDA will cross the 400-mark target set by PM Narendra Modi," he told reporters. "The opposition bloc has no programme for the people. They will be defeated in the elections," he said, adding that several opposition leaders were sent to jail because of cor-

ruption, while the remaining were waiting for the same fate after June 4. Founder of CVOTER, Yashwant Deshmukh said "NDA is winning primarily because PM Modi is popular and because there is a huge gap of vote share in different states wherever they are winning...Two states are a good battleground- West Bengal and Maharashtra, there is a contest in each seat. Beyond these states, all the states are one-sided... On Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's "Modi fantasy poll" remark, Deshmukh said "Politicians are free to say whatever they wish. They can say that they are fantasy polls of PM Modi but when our exit polls were showing that Congress is winning in Karnataka or Telangana or other INDI alliance partners in West Bengal, Delhi, Punjab, Kerala, and Tamil Nadu, whenever we were saying that they are leading and they are winning, were we fantasy polls of Rahul Gandhi or Arvind Kejriwal or Mamata Banerjee or Stalin?."

India sends 90 tonnes of pharmaceutical ingredients to Cuba



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

India on Sunday sent 90 tonnes of pharmaceutical ingredients to Cuba as part of its humanitarian assistance to the island nation. Cuba has been reeling under shortage of essential goods, food items and medicines. "The government of India is extending humanitarian assistance to the government of the Republic of Cuba. A consignment of approx 90 tonnes of nine Made in India Active

Pharmaceutical Ingredients (APIs) left Mundra port on June 2," Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said. "These APIs will be used by the Cuban drug manufacturers to produce essential antibiotics in the dosage form of tablets, capsules, syrups and injections, needed for treatment of chronic communicable diseases," it said. The MEA said the assistance reaffirms India's status as the "Pharmacy of the World" and underlines its commitment to historic friendship with Cuba.

Congress confident of party surpassing exit poll projections

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Congress leaders on Sunday exuded confidence that the party will do much better than what was projected in the exit polls in states such as Karnataka, Maharashtra, Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan, and asserted the INDIA bloc is going to form the next government. Two separate virtual meetings were held with one involving Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge and former AICC chief Rahul Gandhi with the party's Lok Sabha candidates, legislative party leaders and state unit chiefs while another by Congress general secretary

Jairam Ramesh with key state leaders, PCC presidents and legislature party leaders of various states. Kharge, Rahul, party general secretaries Jairam Ramesh and K C Venugopal, along with other senior leaders, interacted with the party's Lok Sabha candidates and reviewed the preparations for the counting day on June 4. The meeting comes a day after exit polls predicted that Prime Minister Narendra Modi will retain power for a third straight term, with the BJP-led NDA expected to win a big majority in the Lok Sabha polls. Ramesh has said that the exit polls that came out Saturday evening are "completely bogus" and have been "orchestrated

and masterminded by the man whose exit is inevitable and guaranteed on June 4." "These are all part of the psychological games being played by the outgoing prime minister (Narendra Modi) and the outgoing home minister (Amit Shah). The outgoing home minister calls up 150 District Magistrates and collectors yesterday. The results that the exit polls have come up with bear no relation to reality," the Congress leader alleged. Leaders of several INDIA bloc parties had also met here on Saturday and took stock of the opposition's preparations leading up to the June 4 counting of votes polled in the Lok Sabha elections, and asserted they will get more than 295



seats, enough for them to form the next government. During his zoom call interac-

tion with Ramesh, Assam Congress chief Bhupen Borah said that his party would win at least seven seats in the state. He said that alleged internal squabbling in the BJP and the impact of the INDIA bloc had benefitted the Congress. Leader of Opposition in the Punjab Assembly Partap Singh Bajwa said all the surveys have given 7-9 seats to the Congress. "We are ahead on 9 seats, 1 seat will go to the AAP and 3 seats will be won by the candidates who will not in any way help the NDA or PM. The INDIA alliance will get a minimum of 10 seats...In Punjab, the NDA is not going to get even a single seat," he said. Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu said the Congress has an edge on two parliamentary seats and is in a tight contest on

the two other seats in the hill state. He exuded confidence that the Congress was also winning the six assembly seats where the bypolls have taken place. Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar said that his party would win at least two-third of the 28 seats on the back of the popularity of the guarantees the Congress fulfilled after coming to power in the state. Bihar Congress chief Akhilesh Prasad Singh said that his party would definitely win 6-7 seats out of 9 seats it contested in the state. Maharashtra Congress chief Nana Patole, Haryana state unit chief Uday Bhan, Rajasthan Congress chief Govind Singh Dotasra and Uttar Pradesh

Congress chief Ajai Rai also spoke during the interaction and exuded confidence of a much better performance in their respective states than the projections made in the exit polls. "The unusual interaction before the media came a day after the Exit polls on Saturday predicted that Prime Minister Modi will retain power for a third straight term, with the BJP-led NDA expected to win a big majority in the Lok Sabha polls. All the state leaders, who spoke at the virtual interaction, debunked the exit polls as part of a psychological game being played by the BJP to 'reduce the morale of the Congress workers'."

India hails amendments aimed at enhancing global response to health emergencies at World Health Assembly

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

India has hailed the amendments aimed at enhancing the global response to Public Health Emergencies of International Concern and Pandemic Emergencies at the 77th World Health Assembly held recently. It was based on 300 proposals made by member countries after the Covid-19 pandemic. These amendments include provisions to facilitate equitable access to essential health products during health crises and the mobilization of financial resources to support developing countries in building, strengthening, and maintaining the core capacities mandated by the International Health Regulations (IHR). India played a pivotal role in the development of this instrument, advocating for operationalizing equity to ensure a

fair and effective response by developing countries to Public Health Emergencies. Apurva Chandra, Union Health Secretary and Chair of Committee A at the World Health Assembly (WHA), emphasized, "This is a step towards equity and the creation of an umbrella of solidarity that will help protect the world from future pandemic threats." The Working group on International Health Regulations (WGHR) and Intergovernmental Negotiating Body on Pandemic treaty with country representations began the negotiation process in two separate groups almost two years ago and met a number of times, including many resumed sessions on the issue, the statement said. The processes witnessed a number of close calls with seeming deadlocks over positions taken by the various stakeholders, it added.

Exit polls deliberate attempt to justify rigging of elections: Opposition

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI/ MUMBAI/LUCKNOW/PATNA

Opposition parties on Sunday termed the exit polls "bogus" and it was Congress a "deliberate attempt" to justify rigging of the elections and part of "psychological games" being played by Prime Minister Narendra Modi to lower the morale of the INDIA bloc workers. Former Congress president Rahul Gandhi dubbed the exit polls as "Modi media poll". "This is not called an exit poll but its name is 'Modi media poll'. This is Modi ji's poll, it is his fantasy poll," Rahul Gandhi told reporters at the AICC headquarters after a meeting with party's Lok Sabha MPs via video conference. Exit polls on Saturday predicted that Prime Minister Modi will retain power for a third straight term, with the BJP-led NDA expected to win a big majority in the Lok Sabha polls. Asked how many seats INDIA

bloc will get, the former Congress chief said, "Have you heard Sidhu Moose Wala's song '295'? So 295 (seats)." While Shiv Sena (UBT) MP Sanjay Raut described the exit polls as a "corporate game and a fraud" and claimed there was pressure on the media companies which conduct it, Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav also questioned the veracity of the exit polls, saying the opposition had already said that "pro-BJP media" would show the ruling party crossing 300 seats in the Lok Sabha. Speaking to media, the Rajya Sabha member claimed the opposition INDIA bloc will win 295 to 310 seats. "This is not an exit poll but the figures are taken through a people's poll," he said. In Maharashtra, the Maha Vikas Aghadi, which comprises the Uddhav Thackeray-headed Shiv Sena (UBT), Congress and Sharad Pawar-led NCP (SP), will win more than 35 seats out of the total 48, Raut said. "The Shiv Sena will maintain its 2019 tally of 18 seats and the



for free?" Raut asked. The Shiv Sena (UBT) leader too claimed the opposition INDIA alliance will win 295 to 310 seats. "This is not an exit poll but the figures are taken through a people's poll," he said. In Maharashtra, the Maha Vikas Aghadi, which comprises the Uddhav Thackeray-headed Shiv Sena (UBT), Congress and Sharad Pawar-led NCP (SP), will win more than 35 seats out of the total 48, Raut said. "The Shiv Sena will maintain its 2019 tally of 18 seats and the

exit polls, the BJP wanted to benefit from the share market which opens on Monday, and added that "disappointed faces" of BJP leaders are telling the truth. Insisting that the INDIA bloc was winning the Lok Sabha polls, the SP chief also called on the candidates and their poll agents to closely "monitor" the EVMs on counting day. "Understand the chronology of the exit poll. The opposition had already said that pro-BJP media would show the BJP crossing 300 seats that would create the scope for fraud. Today's pro-BJP exit poll was prepared many months ago, the channels just aired it now. People's public opinion is being deceived through this exit poll," Yadav said. "Based on this exit poll, BJP wants to benefit from the share market which opens on Monday. If these exit polls were not false and BJP was not losing, then BJP would not have blamed its own people. The disappointed faces of BJP leaders are showing the truth," he added.

He said that BJP leaders are realising that the result of the whole country cannot be changed like the Chandigarh mayoral election because this time the opposition is fully alert and public anger is also at its peak. "Corrupt officials who are in cahoots with BJP are also not able to muster the courage to rig the elections after seeing an active Supreme Court, and they also do not want to become a victim of public anger," the SP chief said. All the workers, office bearers and candidates of INDIA bloc should not make even one per cent mistake in monitoring the EVMs, Yadav said and added that the opposition alliance is winning the polls. "That is why remain alert and get the counting done and celebrate the victory only after official certification," he said. In a separate social media post Akhilesh said, "The basis of exit poll is not EVM but the DM. Administration should remember that there is no greater force than people's power."

EC seeks factual information from Ramesh on his remark

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Election Commission (EC) sought factual information from Congress leader Jairam Ramesh on Sunday on his claim that Home Minister Amit Shah has called up 150 district magistrates and collectors ahead of the June 4 counting of votes for the Lok Sabha polls. In a letter to Ramesh, the poll panel has asked him to share details regarding his claim by 7 pm on Sunday. The EC has referred to his post on X on June 1, in which the Congress general secretary had alleged that "the outgoing Home Minister has been calling up DMs/Collectors. So far, he has spoken to 150 of them. This is blatant and brazen intimidation, showing how desperate the BJP is..." The process of counting votes is a sacred duty cast upon every returning officer and such public statements "tend to put an element of doubt and thus, deserves to be addressed in



larger public interest", the EC has told Ramesh. It has also told the Congress leader that when the Model Code of Conduct is in force, all officers are under the deemed deputation of the commission and they report directly to the poll watchdog for any directions. "However, no DM has reported any such undue influence as alleged by you...", the EC's letter to Ramesh has stated. "It is requested that details of 150 DMs to whom such calls

have been allegedly made by the Home Minister along with the factual matrix/basis of your information are shared by 7 pm today -- June 2, 2024, so that appropriate action can be taken," it has told the Congress leader. It has said that being a responsible, experienced and very senior leader of a national party, Ramesh must have made such a public statement ahead of the counting day on the basis of facts or information he believes to be true.

INS Shivalik departed from Singapore for Japan: Navy



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Indian Navy warship, INS Shivalik, mission deployed to the South China Sea and Pacific Ocean, departed Singapore on Thursday for onward passage to Yokosuka, Japan, navy said here on Saturday. The ship is scheduled to participate in JIMEX 24 and RIMPAC 24. This deployment is aimed at enhancing the degree of interoperability with the JMSDF, US Navy and other partner navies participating in RIMPAC 24.

Researchers announce successful trials of nutraceutical in protecting smokers' lungs

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Offering a promising preventive measure against smoke-related diseases, Indian researchers have announced successful clinical trials of HARAS, a curcumin-based nutraceutical in protecting smokers' lungs by significantly reducing carbon monoxide (CO) levels. The clinical study findings are published in peer reviewed journals International Journal of Chemical and Biochemical Sciences and Journal of Oral and Maxillofacial Pathology. This breakthrough formulation utilizes curcumin, a compound derived from turmeric and has been developed by Cambridge-educated nanoscientist Dr. Vijay Kanuru, Founder of Nanoved Research Foundation through innovative nanotechnology. Clinical trials, conducted by Sharda University's researchers including Dr Deepak Bhargava, Dr Vidya Devi Chandvarkar, and Dr Mithilesh



Mishra, involved 25 healthy smoker volunteers who were administered 10 ml of HARAS juice daily for 30 days. CO levels were meticulously monitored using a breath analyzer at the beginning, mid-point, and conclusion of the trial. Results revealed a statistically significant reduction in CO levels by the 30th day (P<0.001), underscoring HARAS's effectiveness in detoxifying smokers' lungs. Dr. Bhargava, Professor and Head of the Department of Oral Pathology and Microbiology at Sharda University, emphasized the

clinical importance of these findings: "Our clinical studies demonstrate that HARAS provides substantial lung protection for smokers by significantly reducing carbon monoxide levels. This nutraceutical stands as a crucial tool in combating the adverse health effects of smoking." Cigarette smoking remains a leading cause of lung cancer and other chronic diseases, with statistics showing it accounts for 90% of lung cancer cases in men and 70-80% in women. Smokers are 15 to

30 times more likely to develop lung cancer or succumb to it compared to non-smokers. Dr. Mithilesh Mishra, Associate Professor at Sharda University, noted the clinical benefits: "In our extended study with 100 smoker patients, HARAS showed no side effects while significantly reducing CO levels, confirming its safety and efficacy." Dr. Kanuru said, "By utilizing liposomal nanotechnology, we have vastly improved the bioavailability of curcumin, allowing even small doses to offer significant health benefits. HARAS is not only beneficial for smokers but also provides protection against conditions induced by air pollution, such as fatigue, inflammation, and cardiovascular issues." Dr. Pradyut Waghayra a leading pulmonologist at Apollo Hospitals Hyderabad, added: "HARAS's capacity to mitigate cigarette smoke-induced pulmonary inflammation and oxidative stress marks it as a vital preventive measure for millions of smokers."



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PAPER WITH PASSION

An encore?

Exit polls predict an easy win for NDA, though INDIA says it is confident of 295+ seats

If what the exit polls say holds true, the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) is going to form its third successive Government at the Centre. The seventh and final phase of polling has concluded and the nation eagerly awaits on June 4 a formal announcement of the results. The exit poll predictions notwithstanding, the Opposition Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance (INDIA) coalition remains optimistic of securing over 295 seats. This juxtaposition of predictions raises intriguing questions about the electorate's intentions as well as the efficacy of exit polls itself. These polls, often seen as a barometer of public sentiment, do give a sense of the electorate's mood though it may or may not be accurate. If the predictions ring true, we can confidently say that it reflects a continued endorsement of the NDA's policies and Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership. We can conclude that the BJP's focus on economic development, national security and social welfare schemes seems to have struck a chord with a substantial number of voters. Initiatives like the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY) and various infrastructure projects have likely contributed to this favourable outlook. On the other hand, INDIA has been claiming, based on its own assessment, a clear majority for itself. Despite the exit polls, the INDIA alliance, comprising 28 major Opposition parties, remains confident of winning over 295 seats.



This coalition, which includes the Congress too, believes that their emphasis on inclusive growth, social justice and a more decentralised governance model has resonated with a significant segment of the population. INDIA's campaign has centred on addressing economic

disparities, improving education and healthcare and promoting secular values. Their optimism suggests a belief that there is a substantial undercurrent of support not fully captured by the exit polls. As far as exit polls are concerned, it would be too early for the NDA to start celebrating and for INDIA to sulk. There have been instances when exit polls have been wide of the mark and actual results have been at total variance with the predictions. Experts say the sample size must be at least five per cent (which is rarely the case) and it should be spread across demographics. Besides, predicting the number of seats based on exit votes is always subjective. What is important right now is a smooth transition/retention of power by whichever alliance takes Delhi. As the nation waits for the final results, the exit polls and INDIA's confidence set the stage for a potentially transformative election. The voters' message appears to be multifaceted, reflecting a balance between a desire for stability and development on the one hand and a push for inclusive growth and accountable governance on the other. Ultimately, regardless of the outcome, the next Government will need to respect the mandate and address the aspirations of the populace without discrimination and bias. So, till the actual verdict comes, keep your fingers crossed!

PICTALK



People take a boat ride on the Ganga at Assi Ghat, in Varanasi

Dawn of a new era in Indian politics

Beyond the immediate winners and losers, the aftermath promises to be marked by potential new alliances, power shifts and the rise of emerging political forces



KALYANI SHANKAR

The 2024 Lok Sabha elections are closing and the results will be on June 4. The aftermath of the election is not simply about winners and losers. It is about more than just the anticipated outcomes. It includes the potential for unforeseen alliances, dramatic shifts in power dynamics and the emergence of new political forces, all of which are yet to be unveiled. The BJP's potential win in the election is a significant event that could reshape the political landscape. However, the outcome is uncertain, with two possible scenarios, each with implications. One scenario predicts a massive victory for the BJP, possibly even exceeding 400 seats. The other scenario suggests a more modest result for the BJP with fewer seats.

A landslide victory for the BJP could have far-reaching consequences.

In a worst-case scenario, if the BJP wins fewer seats, the party could still secure support from other parties. If the party emerges as the single largest, albeit with fewer seats than in the 2019 poll, it has a plan B to form the Government with the help of some neutral parties. The strategic decisions made by the Congress party, such as reducing the number of contested constituencies, highlight the depth and complexity of Indian politics. Each move is a calculated step towards a larger goal. As the sixth phase of the Lok Sabha polls concluded on Saturday, the Congress claimed the BJP's fate is "all but sealed," with the INDIA bloc having already crossed the halfway mark of 272 seats and is on course for a total of over 350 seats. The INDIA Alliance, a significant player in Indian politics, was formed by 26 Opposition parties last year to fight Modi unilaterally. However, if the BJP returns to power, the alliance may face a significant challenge. Some partners, such as the Trinamool Congress and the AAP, have decided to refrain from forming partnerships for the Lok Sabha polls, weakening the Congress's position. A BJP victory could lead to reevaluating the INDIA



Alliance's strategy, with some partners choosing to align with the BJP and others seeking new partnerships or independent paths.

If the BJP wins more seats, smaller parties may rush to join the alliance. This rush may be fueled by their desire to align with the winning side, which could impact the post-election scenario. However, this rush to join the coalition may be more than just motivated by political interests. Some parties want to oppose Modi, while others see alliances as a failed attempt. Others, like the Trinamool Congress and the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) in Punjab, have chosen to refrain from engaging in partnerships. They, along with the Congress and the Left Parties, would challenge the NDA.

This could result in the collapse of the newly formed India coalition, as this alliance has many fair-weather friends who may ally with any party based solely on their self-interest. The BJP's ability to secure more seats or gain support from other parties will not be a surprise. This could impact the political landscape, potentially leading



THE UDDHAV THACKERAY FACTION OF THE SHIV SENA AND THE SHARAD PAWAR-LED NCP WERE PREVIOUSLY WITH THE BJP AND IT WOULDN'T BE SURPRISING IF THEY HELPED THE NDA

to a realignment of political forces, including the INDIA Alliance.

The BJP has lost some crucial allies, such as SAD, Shiv Sena and JD(U). However, JD(U) and the TDP have now rejoined. In Tamil Nadu, the AIADMK, a former NDA ally, may also rejoin the NDA depending on its performance in the polls. Even the ruling DMK is considering its options after the election. The party understands the importance of maintaining a solid working relationship with the NDA and PM Modi. These potential alliances and shifts in power dynamics could significantly impact the political landscape after the elections.

The BJP could seek support from parties led by influential leaders such as Naveen Patnaik, Jagan Mohan Reddy, K Chandrashekar Rao, Mayawati and others. Though not aligned with any coalition, these leaders have significant political influence and have helped the BJP in the past when the ruling party needed them. Their potential role in the post-election scenario could significantly shape the political landscape.

The Uddhav Thackeray faction of the Shiv Sena and the Sharad Pawar-led NCP were previously with the BJP and it wouldn't be surprising if they helped the NDA.

Delhi Chief Minister Kejriwal is ambitious and eyeing the prime ministership. He will remain in opposition. Kejriwal predicted that if Modi wins again on June 4, he will put Uddhav Thackeray, Sharad Pawar, Rahul Gandhi and Mallikarjun Kharge in jail. He would also be sent back to jail. However, it's important to note that these are potential scenarios and not confirmed outcomes. Various factors, including the election outcome, can influence it. The June 4 election results will show how politics will shape the Indian alliance, splintering or strengthening it. They will also indicate whether the BJP will become more arrogant with a hat trick under its belt. A third consecutive BJP win could embolden the party, leading to a more assertive political landscape.

(The writer is a popular columnist; views are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

OPPOSITION ASSURED OF VICTORY

Madam — Apropos the news story "Congress assured of 295+ seats for INDIA bloc," published on June 1, this is my response. As a daily newspaper reader, I find the recent claims by Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge quite significant. The assertion that the INDIA Bloc will secure over 295 Lok Sabha seats in the 2024 elections reflects a strong confidence in their coalition's appeal. The strategic meeting, attended by prominent opposition leaders like Sonia Gandhi, Arvind Kejriwal and Akhilesh Yadav, underscores their united front and meticulous planning for vote counting on June 4.

Kharge's emphasis on staying vigilant during the vote count, particularly concerning EVMs and Form 17C, highlights the coalition's commitment to ensuring a fair process. The involvement of various party leaders, including Sharad Pawar and Tejashwi Yadav, signals a robust alliance to overcome the BJP's influence. The INDIA Bloc's confidence, bolstered by their internal survey, suggests a significant shift in Indian politics. If their predictions hold, we could witness a transformative phase in the country's governance.

Tisha Reddy | Hyderabad

SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC GROWTH

Madam — Apropos the news story "Economic growth raises sustainability concerns," published on June 1, this is my response. India's economic ascent is remarkable, with its GDP growth rates positioning it as the fifth largest economy, surpassing the UK in 2022 and poised to overtake Japan by 2025. This growth is fueled by increased consumption, driving production and employment. However, this surge in consumerism raises significant sustainability concerns. The Household Consumption Expenditure Survey, 2022-23, shows a notable rise in average Monthly per capita consumer expenditure (MPCE), with urban and rural households increasing their spending by 33.5 per cent and 40.42 per cent respectively since 2011-12. This shift from 'needs to

Haryana thrives under current Govt



This is my response to the news story "Haryana is driving towards progress and prosperity," published on June 1. Haryana embodies courage and strength. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who has savoured Haryana's spirit, has led with vigour for ten years. Seeing Rafale jets soar in Ambala skies today is a proud moment

for all of us. Modi recently highlighted the opposition's deceitful intentions and reaffirmed the BJP's dedication to Haryana's development. Earlier this month, former Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar led a mega rally endorsing Lok Sabha candidate Mohan Lal Badoli, marking a significant moment in Haryana's political landscape. The rally, attended by over 15,000 supporters, showcased the deep-rooted admiration for Khattar's leadership. The Modi-Manohar effect has propelled Haryana towards economic prosperity and social development. Initiatives like *Beti Bachao Beti Padhao* and PM-KISAN have brought transformative changes. Haryana's rise as an investment hub, with significant contributions in textiles and agriculture, underscores its progressive vision and commitment to holistic development.

Rishabh Khanna | Chandigarh

wants' echoes Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs but also underscores the unsustainable wastage of resources.

High consumption depletes non-renewable resources, leading to scarcity and environmental degradation, including pollution, deforestation and climate change. Income disparities exacerbate these issues, as benefits are unevenly distributed, increasing economic inequality. To balance economic growth with sustainability, India must promote environmentally friendly consumption through education, incentives and regulations, investing in renewable resources and green technologies and implementing policies that encourage sustainable practices. Prioritising sustainability can ensure growth benefits society while preserving the environment for future generations.

Yashika Mehta | Mumbai

REVIVE FARMING, SAVE ENVIRONMENT

Madam — Apropos the news story "Recycle nutrients to mitigate fertiliser crisis," published on June 1, this is my response. As someone who follows environmental issues closely, the growing concerns about the disruption of natural

nutrient cycles due to human activities are alarming. Historically, sustainable farming practices effectively maintained the balance of essential nutrients like nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium.

The staggering Rs. 2 lakh crore annual subsidy on fertilisers in India underscores the scale of this problem. Compounded by the separation of livestock farming from crop production, vast amounts of nutrients now pollute water bodies, causing eutrophication and damaging ecosystems. It's encouraging to see advancements in wastewater treatment and nutrient recovery. Cities like Delhi and Hyderabad are expanding their treatment capacities and exploring nutrient recycling. However, the challenge remains immense. Implementing efficient nutrient recovery systems and adopting best practices from Europe could significantly reduce environmental pollution and support sustainable agriculture, potentially transforming India's agricultural landscape and mitigating the ongoing nutrient crisis.

Aarav Singhania | Jaipur

Tobacco addiction grows steadily among the youth

With 24 per cent of children under 16 already using tobacco, the urgency for immediate intervention and education cannot be overstated

The escalating trend of addiction among the youth in India is a serious challenge to public health. Each year, tobacco consumption claims the lives of 1.2 million people in the country. The theme of World No Tobacco Day 2024, 'Protecting Children from Tobacco Industry Interference,' underscores the urgent need to shield the younger generation from the harmful influence of the tobacco industry. Tobacco use is the leading cause of preventable deaths and diseases worldwide. It significantly contributes to heart disease, cardiovascular issues and brain strokes. The Global Adult Tobacco Survey 2016-17 revealed that approximately 29 per cent (270 million) of Indian adults use tobacco products, including cigarettes, gutkha, supari tobacco, jarda, bidi and hookah. Alarmingly, about 24 per cent of children under 16 years old in India consume tobacco in some form, leading to devastating health outcomes. The National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5) indicates that about 38 per cent of Indian men are addicted to



tobacco. Notably, tobacco consumption is higher in rural areas (42.7 per cent) compared to urban regions (28.8 per cent). Among women, tobacco use stands at approximately 8.9 per cent, with rural women showing higher consumption rates than their urban counterparts. These statistics are a cause for significant concern. World No Tobacco Day, celebrated by the World Health Organization and global partners, aims to raise awareness about the detrimental effects of tobacco use and promote cessation. The 2024 theme focuses on protecting children, as the majority of regular smokers start before the age of 18. This highlights the necessity of safeguarding adolescents from the perils of tobacco. Smoking damages the alveoli in the lungs, leading to lung diseases, with most lung cancer cases linked to cigarette

smoking. Tobacco increases the risk of cancers such as oral, throat, oesophageal, bladder, kidney and lung cancer. It also leads to chronic diseases like COPD, heart attacks and strokes. Smoking is responsible for approximately 90 per cent of cancer deaths. The risk of death from heart disease and strokes rises significantly among tobacco users. Smokers are prone to numerous diseases, with a general decline in overall health. Additionally, tobacco use reduces fertility in both men and women and can cause severe complications during pregnancy. Smoking and use of tobacco can lead to severe lung diseases, including COPD, Asthma, TB and Lung Cancer causing significant suffering. Smokers are significantly more likely to die from COPD and are at a higher risk of developing TB. People should avoid tobacco products and seek medical help if addicted. Various resources, including nicotine replacement therapy, prescription medications, counselling services, support groups and smartphone apps, are available to help individ-

uals quit tobacco. Among youth, smoking is often wrongly perceived as a sign of masculinity. Additionally, tobacco use is not universally seen as a vice. The Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products Act (COTPA) 2003 aims to protect consumers, reduce tobacco use and prevent related diseases. It includes measures such as banning smoking in public places, regulating sales near educational institutions and issuing health warnings to inform the public. The Telangana Government in May 2024 has recently banned all tobacco products for one year, realising the grave consequences of tobacco usage.

The rising addiction among youth threatens their future health. Young people must resist industry influences that target youth and promote e-cigarettes and flavoured nicotine pouches and candy which are also harmful and lay the foundation for tobacco use later on.

(The author is a public health expert working as an Assistant Professor at MLB Medical College, Jhansi UP; views are personal)



SUDHA SHARMA



FIRST COLUMN

MIND MANAGEMENT IS CRUCIAL FOR HAPPINESS

We can truly celebrate only if we are able to silence our mind



RAVI VALLURI

What is the difference between PK and PIKU? Two letters, 'I' and 'U'; I is us and U are them (an extra-terrestrial Aamir Khan). Their CPU is cerebral and our CPU is at the level of abdomen. Or say for vast multitudes the focus is at the abdomen. It would be quite captivating watching the main protagonists PK (of the eponymous movie) and Bhaskor (of Piku fame) sharing their thoughts and respective metabolisms in a spaceship. Food has a tremendous impact on our system, which we do not quite comprehend. Improper diet first takes a toll on the metabolism and then attacks other organs of the body. Simply put, intake of toxic foods generates repugnant thoughts and results in a weak mind and body.

The human mind is an enigma and a reservoir of potential. But the moot question is how do we tap this potential? The mind is a movie theatre where we script and enact innumerable movies and soap operas.

Technology alone cannot be a substitute for the enormous potential of the mind. It needs to be cultured, harnessed, and harmonized with needs and wants.

We need to distinguish brain from the mind. The brain is an organ that serves as the center of the nervous system in all vertebrate and most invertebrate animals. Only a few invertebrates such as sponges, do not have a brain, diffuse or localized nerve nets are



present instead.

Mind on the other hand is the faculty of consciousness and thoughts. It is an individual's intellect or memory or his attention span or will. Sri Sri Ravi Shankar has captured it very succinctly. He says mind is like the sky and thoughts are like clouds. Your thoughts make or mar the progress and development of the mind.

To be happy in life humans need to calm the obdurate and recalcitrant mind. Further keep reminding ourselves that we are blessed, grateful and have abundance in our lives. Life is full of valleys and peaks. It can never be a rising curve or a straight line permanently.

The human mind vacillates between the past and the future. In the past, the mind is regretful and if it is in the future, it is anxious. In either situation the mind is not at peace nor in the present moment and thus remains unhappy.

Incidentally there is a deep connect between the stomach and mind. That is why it is called the gut feeling or the sixth sense. Our solar plexus keeps sending us signals. It depends as to whether we are conscious and wakeful enough to grasp those signals.

We humans can truly celebrate only if we are able to silence our mind. There are techniques to do it and develop a relaxation room or space in our minds and harness the energy so that it does not get enervated. By practicing Suryanamaskars and Padmasadhana as crafted by Gurudev we can enhance our Prana, (chi) or energy levels substantially.

(The writer is the CEO of Chhattisgarh East Railway Ltd. and Chhattisgarh East West Railway Ltd. He is a faculty of the Art of Living; views are personal)

New sankalps from the sadhana in Kanyakumari



NARENDRA MODI

Kanyakumari has always been close to Modi's heart; on his recent visit to India's southernmost part, he gets into a pensive mood to reflect on Bharat's future

My dear fellow Indians, the biggest festival of democracy, the 2024 Lok Sabha Elections, are concluding today in our nation, the Mother of Democracy. After a three-day spiritual journey in Kanyakumari, I have just boarded the plane for Delhi. Through the day, Kashi and numerous other seats have been in the midst of voting. My mind is filled with so many experiences and emotions... I feel a boundless flow of energy within myself. The 2024 Lok Sabha elections are the first in the Amrit Kaal. I began my campaign a few months ago from Meerut, the land of the First War of Independence of 1857. Since then, I have traversed across the length and breadth of our great nation. The final rally of these elections took me to Hoshiarpur in Punjab, the land of the great Gurus and a land associated with Sant Ravidas ji. After that, I came to Kanyakumari, at the feet of Maa Bharti. It is natural that the fervour of the elections was echoing in my heart and mind. The multitude of faces seen in rallies and road shows came in front of my eyes. The blessings from our Nari Shakti... the trust, the affection, all of this was a very humbling experience. My eyes were getting moist... I entered into a sadhana (meditative state). And then, the heated political debates, the attacks and counter-attacks, the voices and words of accusations which are so characteristic of an election... they all vanished into a void. A sense of detachment came to grow within me... my mind became completely detached from the external world. Meditation becomes challenging amidst such huge responsibilities, but the land of Kanyakumari and the inspiration of Swami Vivekananda made it effortless. As a candidate myself, I left my campaign in the hands of my beloved people of Kashi and came here.

I am also grateful God for instilling me with these values from birth which I have cherished and tried to live up to. I was also thinking about what Swami Vivekananda must have experienced during his meditation at this very place in Kanyakumari! A part of my meditation was spent in a similar stream of thoughts.

Amidst this detachment, amidst the peace and silence, my mind was constantly thinking about the bright future of Bharat, the goals of Bharat. The rising sun at Kanyakumari gave new heights to my thoughts, the vastness of the ocean expanded my ideas, and the expanse of the horizon continuously made me realize the unity, the Oneness, embedded in the depths of the universe. It seemed as if the observations and experiences undertaken in the lap of the Himalayas decades ago were being revived.

Kanyakumari has always been very close to my heart. The Vivekananda Rock Memorial in Kanyakumari was built under the leadership of Shri Eknath Ranade ji. I had the opportunity to travel extensively with Eknath ji. During the construction of this Memorial, I had the opportunity to spend some time in Kanyakumari as well. From Kashmir to Kanyakumari... this is a common identity that is deeply ingrained in the heart of every citizen of the country. This is the 'Shakti Peeth' (seat of Shakti) where Maa Shakti incarnated as Kanya Kumari. At this Southern tip, Maa Shakti performed penance and waited for Bhagwan Shiva, who was residing in the Himalayas at the northernmost parts of Bharat.

Kanyakumari is the land of confluences.



The sacred rivers of our country flow into different seas, and here, those very seas converge. And here, we witness another great confluence—the ideological confluence of Bharat! Here, we find the Vivekananda Rock Memorial, a grand statue of Saint Thiruvalluvar, Gandhi Mandapam, and Kamarajar Mani Mandapam. These streams of thought from these stalwarts converge here to form a confluence of national thought. This gives rise to great inspirations for nation-building. This land of Kanyakumari gives an indelible message of unity, especially to any person who doubts Bharat's nationhood and the sense of unity.

For thousands of years, Bharat has been moving forward with this sense of meaningful purpose. Bharat has been a cradle of ideas for thousands of years. We have never considered what we have acquired as our personal wealth or measured it purely by economic or material parameters. Therefore, 'Idam-na-mama' (this is not mine) has become an inherent and natural part of the character of Bharat.



THE RISING SUN AT KANYAKUMARI GAVE NEW HEIGHTS TO MY THOUGHTS, THE VASTNESS OF THE OCEAN EXPANDED MY IDEAS, AND THE EXPANSE OF THE HORIZON CONTINUOUSLY MADE ME REALISE THE UNITY, THE ONENESS, EMBEDDED IN THE DEPTHS OF THE UNIVERSE

Bharat's welfare benefits our planet's journey to progress as well. Take the freedom movement as an example. Bharat gained independence on August 15, 1947. At that time, many countries around the world were under colonial rule. Bharat's independence journey inspired and empowered many of those countries to achieve their own freedom. That same spirit was seen decades later when the world came face to face with the once in a century COVID-19 pandemic. When concerns were raised about the poor and developing countries, Bharat's successful efforts provided courage and assistance to many nations.

Today, Bharat's governance model has become an example for many countries around the world. Empowering 25 crore people to rise above poverty in just 10 years is unprecedented. Innovative practices such as Pro-People Good

Governance, aspirational districts, and aspirational blocks are being discussed globally today. Our efforts, from empowering the poor to last-mile delivery, have inspired the world by prioritising individuals standing at the last rung of society. Bharat's Digital India campaign is now an example for the entire world, showing how we can use technology to empower the poor, bring transparency, and ensure their rights.

Inexpensive data in Bharat is becoming a means of social equality by ensuring the reach of information and services to the poor. The whole world is witnessing and studying the democratization of technology, and major global institutions are advising many countries to adopt elements from our model.

Since the success of the G-20, the world has been increasingly envisioning a bigger role for Bharat. Today, Bharat is being acknowledged as a strong and important voice of the Global South. The African Union has become a part of the G-20 group at the initiative of Bharat. This is going to be a crucial turning point for the future of African countries.

The development trajectory of Bharat fills us with pride and glory, but at the same time, it also reminds the 140 crore citizens of their responsibilities. Now, without wasting a single moment, we must step forward towards greater duties and larger goals. We need to dream new dreams, convert them into reality and begin living those dreams.

We must see Bharat's development in a global context, and for this, it is essential that we understand Bharat's internal capabilities. We must acknowledge Bharat's strengths, nurture them, and utilize them for the benefit of the world. In today's global scenario, Bharat's strength as a youthful nation is an opportunity from which we must not look back.

The world of the 21st century is looking towards Bharat with many

hopes. And we will need to make several changes to move forward in the global scenario. We also need to change our traditional thinking regarding reform. Bharat cannot limit reform to just economic reforms. We must move forward in every aspect of life towards the direction of reform. Our reforms should also align with the aspirations of a 'Viksit Bharat' (developed India) by 2047.

We should take pride in every moment that God has blessed us with birth in the land of Bharat. God has chosen us to serve Bharat and fulfil our role in our country's journey towards excellence.

We must redefine our heritage in a modern way while embracing ancient values in a modern context. As a nation, we also need to reassess outdated thinking and beliefs. We need to free our society from the pressure of professional pessimists.

We must remember that freedom from negativity is the first step towards achieving success. Success blossoms in the lap of positivity. My faith, devotion, and belief in the infinite and eternal power of Bharat are growing day by day. Over the past 10 years, I have seen this capability of Bharat grow even more and have experienced it firsthand.

Just as we utilized the fourth and fifth decades of the 20th century to impart a new momentum to the freedom movement, we must lay the foundation for a 'Viksit Bharat' in these 25 years of the 21st century. Today, we have the same golden opportunity. Let's dedicate the next 25 years solely for the nation. Our efforts will create a strong foundation for the coming generations and the coming centuries, taking Bharat to new heights. Looking at the energy and enthusiasm of the country, I can say that the goal is not far away now. Let us take swift steps... let us come together and create a Viksit Bharat.

(These thoughts were penned by PM Modi on 1st June during his return flight from Kanyakumari to Delhi)

Kerala Govt faces backlash over flawed liquor policy

Criticism has arisen over the demand for bar owners to pay ₹2.5 lakh each to circumvent a Government-mandated monthly closure

The demand that all bar owners in the State should pay Rs 2.5 lakh per establishment instead of cancelling a Government order that makes it mandatory for all watering holes to down shutters on the first of every month and restrictions on opening more bar hotels underscore the opinion that it is time for the Kerala Government to come out of liquor business.

The latest controversy about the demand made by the powers that be to the bar owners to pay exorbitant money as a bribe for altering the excise department's laws establishes that the CPI(M)-led LDF and Congress-led UDF are swindling the State alternately, a charge made time and again by Prime Minister Narendra



KUMAR CHELLAPPAN

Modi during his campaign speeches in the State.

The Government has no business to be in business and is more so in the case of the liquor business. Unlike other States, Kerala and Tamil Nadu follow liquor policies that promote high-level corruption. The Governments in these two States are the monopolies in the liquor trade. The Beverages Corporation of Kerala (BEVCO) and Tamil

Nadu State Marketing Corporation (TASMAC), the State-owned entities are the only bodies that can buy and sell liquor. Bar restaurants owned by the private sector should procure the liquor supplied by these two bodies. Long back there were private liquor outlets in these States doing roaring business.

After the "nationalisation" of the liquor business in Kerala, the tippers face severe hardship in getting their daily quota of spirits and they are also forced to consume what the brands that BEVCO 'impose' on them. Earlier, the tippers had the choice of getting their favourite brands and drinking too. After the taking over of the liquor business by the Government, the brands to be

sold in the States are decided by the party in power and there is no transparency in the selection of liquor to be traded through the outlets or restaurants (bars). The liquor manufacturers who pay the ruling parties get the contract and laugh at the banks.

The Government claims that the nationalisation is the prelude to the introduction of total prohibition in Kerala. This is a dream that will never materialise unless other States bring in legislation banning liquor. Neighboring Karnataka is a tippler's paradise as the private outlets sell all popular brands patronized by the consumers.

While arrack, the country spirit is banned in Kerala and Tamil Nadu, the same is available in the rest of the country

much to the delight of the working class. Those who toil in farmlands from morning to evening need a bit of relaxation after a hard day's work and hence it is not proper on the part of the Government to ban the stuff.

Pinarayi Vijayan, chief minister of Kerala, is on record stating that toddy is a most nutritious drink and not alcohol. Tamil Nadu has banned toddy tapping forcing the poor workers to rush to TASMAC with their hard-earned wages to buy the spirit for the evening. If arrack is not banned in these States (where spurious arrack is available from bootleggers) the workers need not have spent the day's earnings in State-owned liquor outlets.

The notion that liquor would

imperil health has to go. Many findings have been confirmed through scientific research that a moderate quantity of liquor is good for health. There is a Chinese adage about liquor: "A man takes a drink. The drink takes more drinks. Finally, the drinks take the man". If the authorities could make the man consume fewer drinks, that would be the best solution to alcoholism. But it should not be by killing the goose that lays the golden eggs. We live in an era when Indian-made scotches have beaten the spirits brewed in Scotland and the USA to emerge as their rivals in the global market.

Colombo and suburbs, hardly an hour of air journey from Kochi is a study in contrast. Though there are many liquor

outlets in Sri Lanka, one cannot come across long queues of tippers in front of these shops. Devan Ramachandran, a judge of the Kerala High Court, said recently that the drinkers need much better treatment from the BEVCO outlets. He was drawing the attention of the Government to the plight of tippers who have to wait for hours in the queue braving the scorching sun and heavy downpours to get their daily evening quota. Sunil Kumar, a fellow journalist, said that the Government's stringent and outdated regulations alone are responsible for making people consume more and more liquor. He says that the decision to down the shutters of liquor outlets on the first day of every month is a regressive

measure as it forces the drinkers to buy an additional bottle in the previous evening to stock for the next day. But what happens is that they consume that extra bottle on the same evening leaving them "high and dry" on the day of shutdown. Let the tippers have the freedom to gulp down their quota.

It is impossible to have total prohibition in the country. Pilloo Modi, the veteran parliamentarian said during a debate on prohibition that he could stay away from alcohol for any number of years. But I cannot live even for a minute without the right to consume liquor," Pilloo Modi had said. Let better sense prevail.

(The writer is a special correspondent with the Pioneer; views are personal)



NDA will get more seats than predicted by exit polls: Athawale

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Union minister Ramdas Athawale on Sunday said the ruling National Democratic Alliance (NDA) will get more number of Lok Sabha seats than predicted by the exit polls. Addressing a press conference here, Athawale expressed confidence that the BJP-led NDA will get more than 400 seats in the 543-member Lok Sabha.

On Saturday, exit polls predicted that Prime Minister Narendra Modi will retain power for a third straight term, with the BJP-led NDA expected to win a big majority in the Lok Sabha polls.

While India Today-Axis My India has forecast 361-401 seats for the BJP-led alliance and 131-166 seats for the opposition INDIA bloc in the 543-member Lok Sabha, the ABP-C Voter predicted 353-383 seats for the ruling alliance and 152-182 seats for the INDIA bloc.

Today's Chanakya predicted 335 seats to the BJP and 400 to the NDA, with a margin of 15 seats either way. It predicted 107 seats to the opposition alliance with a possibility of its tally going up or down by 11 seats.

The BJP had given the slogan of '400 paar' for its alliance in



the Lok Sabha polls. Athawale said the exit polls have predicted the NDA will win 350 to 375 seats, but the BJP-led alliance will get more seats. "In Maharashtra, the ruling Mahayuti win will 35 to 40 seats (out of 48), and in the country, the NDA will get more than 400 seats," said the Republican Party of India (A) chief, whose party is a constituent of the NDA.

The Mahayuti in Maharashtra comprises the Shiv Sena led by Chief Minister Eknath Shinde, BJP, and the NCP headed by Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar.

Athawale said that last year,

the BJP got more success than what the exit polls predicted in the assembly elections to Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh.

"Now the exit polls have given the NDA 375, but the ruling alliance will cross 400 seats," he said. Athawale said the Congress-led opposition tried to create confusion among Dalits by saying the Constitution will be changed, but the NDA has been able to clear the air among people.

This mischievous campaign of the Congress and its allies was countered well and hence Dalits, Bahujans, Buddhists and the followers of

Babasaheb Ambedkar supported the ruling alliance, he claimed.

PM Modi addressed 18 rallies in Maharashtra and informed the people about the work of his government, Athawale said and expressed confidence that the ruling alliance in the state will win 35 to 40 seats.

In Maharashtra, there is a neck-and-neck fight between the ruling and opposition alliances, but the Mahayuti will win, the Union minister said.

The RPI (A) activists supported the Mahayuti candidates and campaigned wholeheartedly, he added.

Nine counting centres set up for five LS seats in JK; one in Delhi

PTI ■ JAMMU

With two days left for the declaration of results of the Lok Sabha polls, nine centres have been set up counting of votes in five Lok Sabha constituencies in Jammu and Kashmir, officials said on Sunday.

In addition, one counting centre has also been set up in Delhi for the counting of Kashmiri migrant votes which were polled by the displaced community at specially set up polling stations in Srinagar, Baramulla and Anantnag-Rajouri Lok Sabha seats, they said.

The counting of votes, scheduled for Tuesday, also covering Udhampur and Jammu parliamentary seats in J-K, will decide the fate of 100 candidates, including senior BJP leader and Union minister Jitendra Singh, two former chief ministers - Omar Abdullah of National Conference (NC) and Mehbooba Mufti of Peoples Democratic Party (PDP).

The other bigwigs include former ministers Raman Bhalla and Choudhary Lal Singh of Congress, GM Saroori of DPAP, Aga Ruhullah Mehdi and Mian Altaf of NC, Ashraf Mir of Apni Party, Sajjad Lone of Peoples Conference. Former MLA Engineer Rashid is fighting from Tihar Jail.

Officials said all arrangements including security and deployment of staff have been made at all the 10 counting



centres. The Combined Voter Turnout (VTR) at the polling stations for the entire Union territory (five Lok Sabha seats) was 58.46 per cent - the highest poll participation in the last 35 years.

The voter turnout of 50.86 per cent from the three parliamentary constituencies in the Kashmir Valley witnessed a jump of 30 percentage points from the 2019 general elections when it was 19.16 per cent. Srinagar, Baramulla and Anantnag-Rajouri in the valley recorded VTR of 38.49 per cent, 59.1 per cent and 54.84 per cent respectively, which has been highest in the last three decades.

The other two constituencies in the UT, namely Udhampur and Jammu in the Jammu region, recorded 68.27 per cent and 72.22 per cent voter turnout respectively.

The counting of votes in Udhampur constituency where Union minister Jitendra Singh is seeking his third consecutive

term will be held at government degree college, Kathua.

Apart from Singh, there are 11 other candidates that includes Lal Singh, also a two-time former MP, and GM Saroori in the fray. Seven of the candidates are independents. The counting of votes in Baramulla constituency will be held in Government Degree College (Boys), Baramulla. Omar Abdullah is pitted against 21 candidates in the constituency, prominent among them being Lone and Rashid.

Among the 14 independents who are contesting in the seat, two are women. In Anantnag-Rajouri constituency, divided by the mighty Pir Panjal range, officials said the counting of votes will be held at Government Degree College (Boys) Anantnag and Government PG College Rajouri. Mehbooba Mufti is seeking a victory from this constituency and is facing a major challenge from NC's Mian Altaf.

There are also 10 independents and eight other candidates, including the BJP-supported Apni Party's Zaffar Manhas. The counting of votes in Srinagar parliamentary constituency, which has the highest number of 24 candidates, including 16 independents, will take place at Sher-i-Kashmir International Convention Cent (SKICC) along the banks of Dal Lake.

NC's Ruhullah, Mir of Apni Party and PDP youth leader Waheed Para are the strong candidates from the constituency. Counting of votes for the Jammu constituency, where BJP's Jugal Kishore is eyeing a hat-trick of wins, will be carried out at the premises comprising Government Polytechnic College and Government MAM college. Raman Bhalla, the working president of the J&K unit of Congress, is among the 21 other candidates in the fray from the seat.

Officials said counting of Kashmiri migrant votes will take place at Government College for Women Gandhi Nagar, Jammu, Government Girls Higher Secondary School, Udhampur and J&K House, New Delhi. J-K Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) Pandurang K Pole had a comprehensive review of preparedness of the districts ahead of the final counting of votes at Nirvachan Bhawan here on Saturday, they said.

No worries on LS polls outcome, expecting good results: KCR

PTI ■ HYDERABAD

Amid exit poll reports indicating a "poor show" by the BRS in the recently concluded Lok Sabha elections, former Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao on Sunday downplayed it, saying whatever be the outcome, the party will work for the people.

Addressing the leaders and workers of the party on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the formation of Telangana state, Rao, also known as KCR, said the BRS's defeat in the recent assembly polls was a temporary setback. Attacking the Congress government in the state, Rao said the present regime has become unpopular in a short span of time, and that the anger among people is such that the discontent will "explode like a bomb" shortly.

"What will happen in the Parliament elections? It (result) can be any number. Somebody said we (BRS) would get 11 seats. Some other person said we get only one seat. Somebody said 2 to 4. This has become gambling. Let us see. There was a good response among the public during my bus yatra (poll campaigning). We can expect a good result. Whatever be the outcome, there is no need to worry," he said.

"Whatever be the outcome, BRS is the protection shield for Telangana," he further said. Several exit poll predictions indicated that there will be tough fight between the Congress and the BJP while the BRS would be marginalised in the recently held Lok Sabha elections. Telangana has 17 Lok Sabha seats.

Alleging that some people are saying that they'll finish off the BRS, KCR said the 'pink party' is "like an ocean", and no one can destroy it. "There is a bright future for us, and don't get confused with political results. This decennial celebration should become an inspiration for us," the BRS supremo advised his party cadres.

Rao said the defeat in the assembly elections was a temporary setback that would occur to any political party during its journey and exuded confidence that BRS would come back to power again in the next assembly elections. Even six months after coming to power, the Congress government has not announced even a single policy for sectors such as industry, IT, and agriculture, he said. He recalled that the whole of Telangana region, before becoming a state, was plagued with suicides, famine, power cuts, hunger deaths of weavers, and that there have been major improvements since then.

Telangana suffered destruction of 100 years in 10 years: CM

PTI ■ HYDERABAD

Claiming that Telangana suffered "destruction of 100 years" during the 10-year BRS rule, Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy on Sunday said his government is working for the state's cultural and economic revival and expressed his desire to make it a destination for the world.

Addressing the 10th Telangana formation day celebrations organised by the state government here, he thanked Congress leader Sonia Gandhi and former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh for fulfilling the decades-long demand of statehood for Telangana during the previous UPA regime at the Centre. He also defended his government's decision to invite Sonia Gandhi to the event though she did not attend. A video message of Sonia Gandhi was played at the event. He recalled the crucial role played by Sonia Gandhi, former Lok Sabha Speaker Meira Kumar and also late BJP leader Sushma Swaraj in the passage of the bill for formation of Telangana state in Parliament in 2014. "We invited Sonia Gandhi, who fulfilled the Telangana people's aspirations, as a guest to the state formation day celebrations. Someone asked in what capacity she was invited. Does it require permission to invite the mother to the child's home?" he asked. As long as the history of Telangana exists,



Sonia Gandhi will be recognized and respected as "mother" of the Telangana society, he said. Taking strong exception to the Congress government's decision to invite Sonia Gandhi to the Telangana formation day celebrations, the BJP had said the government should inform people in what capacity Sonia Gandhi is being invited. Recalling the role of Sonia Gandhi, Meira Kumar and also Sushma Swaraj in passage of Telangana bill in Lok Sabha in 2014, Revanth Reddy thanked them on behalf of the state's people. Sushma Swaraj, who was Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha then, had extended cooperation for the passage of the bill, he said. He targeted the previous BRS government, without naming the party, for the alleged destruction in the state. "During the 10 years of rule, Telangana has suffered 100 years of destruction. It was not just physical destruction but also fundamental freedom has been assaulted. Social justice was denied. The

music was composed by Oscar-winning music director M M Keeravani. Pointing out that an emblem reflect a nation's history, Revanth Reddy said the government is working on a new emblem taking into consideration the suggestions and advice from various sections. Quoting the Sanskrit phrase "Janani j a n m a b h o o m i s c h a s w a r g a d a p i g a r i y a s i", he said an average Telangana rural woman will be the replica of "Telangana Talli" (mother) who is hard working and generous. Taking this into consideration, the "Telangana Talli" statue will be designed. He alleged that the state's economy was completely ruined when his government came to power in December last year. The state's debt burden mounted to Rs seven lakh crore. The government is laying a strong foundation for the state's progress by conceiving long term plans for future generations. "We are preparing the "Green Telangana - 2050 Master Plan" for the entire Telangana."

He highlighted his government's welfare and development initiatives, including Musi Riverfront Development project in Hyderabad, stringent measures to check the menace of drugs, recruitment of 30,000 youth in 70 days, depositing Rs 7,500 crore in the accounts of 69 lakh farmers and uninterrupted power supply.

Will win Nagaland lone LS seat, says Congress

PTI ■ KOHIMA

The Congress on Sunday expressed confidence about winning the lone Lok Sabha seat in Nagaland and forming the next government at the Centre.

Addressing a press conference, AICC in-charge of Nagaland Girish Chodankar said the exit poll figures were imaginary and all would be clear in the next two days. "We will not only win the lone Lok Sabha seat in Nagaland but the INDIA bloc will get majority seats in the country, while many other parties will also support the alliance.

"India has voted against fake promises, misgovernance, unemployment, price rise and inflation. People have voted for the future of India and we are confident that we will prove the exit polls wrong," the Congress leader said.

Chodankar, who arrived in Kohima on Saturday evening, said that it was decided at the extended executive meeting of state Congress that the party will contest the elections to the urban local bodies in the state scheduled on June 26. Except for the eastern Nagaland areas, Congress will contest in most wards of the three municipalities and 36 town councils, he said. Chodankar said that if the Eastern Nagaland People's Organisation (ENPO) reconsiders its decision to participate in the civic polls,

Congress would field candidates there as well.

State Congress president S Supongmeren Jamir said that those aspiring to contest the elections on a Congress ticket can submit applications till June 7. BJP worker killed in Bengal post-poll violence Kolkata, Jun 2 (PTI) A BJP worker was killed by a group of men in West Bengal's Nadia district in post-poll violence, with the saffron party pointing fingers at the ruling Trinamool Congress. The TMC, however, claimed that the killing was a fallout of a family feud.

Police sources said the incident happened at Kaliganj in the northern part of the district when BJP worker, Hafijur Sheikh, was playing carrom with others on Saturday night.

It is alleged that 10-12 people came on motorbikes and first shot Sheikh and then hacked him, killing him on the spot. Local people demonstrated for over two hours and did not allow the police to lift the body. The body was later sent for post-mortem examination. The BJP's Uttar Nadia unit president Arjun Biswas alleged that TMC goons killed the party worker. District TMC leader Rukbanur Rahman, however, blamed family feud behind the murder and the Trinamool Congress has no role in it. Family members of the deceased demanded immediate arrest of the culprits.

People voted for Modi's guarantee, NDA will win 400 seats: Tripura BJP chief

PTI ■ AGARTALA

People have voted for "Modi's guarantee", and this will ensure 400 seats for the BJP-led NDA on June 4, the party's Tripura unit president Rajib Bhattacharjee claimed on Sunday.

Speaking to reporters, Bhattacharjee claimed the opposition bloc INDIA will be defeated in the elections as it had no promise or programme for the people.

"Almost all the exit polls have predicted a landslide victory for the BJP-led NDA. My prediction is that the NDA will cross the 400-mark target set by PM Narendra Modi," he told reporters.

"The opposition bloc has no programme for the people. They will be defeated in the



elections," he said, adding that several opposition leaders were sent to jail because of corruption, while the remaining were waiting for the same fate after June 4.

Former CM Manik Sarkar of the CPI(M) said it was better to wait for the actual results. "They have conducted exit polls and presented those before the people. On the other hand, the INDIA bloc after a meeting said it will win close to 300 seats based on reports from various states. Let's wait for June 4," he said.

Senior Congress MLA Gopal Chandra Roy said that exit polls have often failed to predict the actual outcomes of elections. "In 2004, there was no indication that the Congress was returning to power but it had happened. Therefore, I will not make any comment on the exit polls, but the Congress is hopeful that the INDIA bloc will form the next government in Delhi," he said.

BJP seeks repoll at multiple booths in Bengal Diamond Harbour LS seat

PTI ■ KOLKATA

The BJP has sought repoll at several booths in the Diamond Harbour Lok Sabha seat in West Bengal's South 24 Parganas district, alleging that malpractices were carried out during the voting process on Saturday.

In a letter to the West Bengal chief electoral officer (CEO) on June 1, BJP leader Shishir Bajoria said booth agents of the saffron party were driven out, CCTV cameras were found facing in directions other than the polling cubicle and voters were prevented from reaching booths. "On behalf of Abhijit Das (Bobby), candidate of BJP of the Diamond Harbour Lok Sabha constituency, we request you to grant repolling



in several booths", the letter said. Repoll was sought in booths in the assembly segments of Budge Budge, Falta, Maheshtala, Diamond Harbour, Bishnupur, Satgachia and Metiabruz. Sitting TMC MP Abhishek Banerjee was seeking reelection from Diamond Harbour.

One arrested in attack on BJP MP Ram Kripal Yadav

PTI ■ PATNA

A person was arrested on Sunday in connection with the attack on the convoy of BJP MP Ram Kripal Yadav in Patna, police said.

The accused was identified as Bikash Yadav, a resident of Masaurhi, they said, adding that a special team was formed to nab the eight other accused who were on the run. Yadav alleged that he and his cavalcade were attacked by supporters of the RJD about an hour after polling was over in his Patliputra Lok Sabha constituency. He claimed that some of his supporters were also injured in the attack that took place around 7.30 pm in the Masaurhi area of Patna. Deputy CM Samrat Chaudhary demanded strict action against those involved



in the attack. "The incident is highly condemnable. The way the convoy of our MP was attacked by RJD supporters, shows that the party headed by Lalu Prasad believes only in violence. We demand strict action against those involved in the incident from the Election Commission,"

Chaudhary told reporters. "The attack was aimed to harm Yadav. But he escaped unhurt. However, our several supporters were injured in the incident," he added.

Yadav, a former Union minister, said he could never imagine the way shots were fired targeting him and his convoy.

"I never stay inside the security cover because my voters and party workers protect Ram Kripal Yadav. I have never indulged in the politics of violence. I could never imagine the way shots were fired at me and my convoy on Saturday. My workers were beaten, they could have died," he said.

"I met injured supporters who are undergoing treatment and enquired about their condition," he added.

Hezbollah fighters shoot down Israeli drone in Lebanon

AP ■ BEIRUT

The militant Hezbollah group said it shot down an Israeli drone over southern Lebanon and fired rockets at an Israeli military base on Saturday, hours after Israeli drone strikes killed at least one person and wounded several 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 on 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.

The Hermes 900 Kochav is a medium altitude and long endurance drone that can carry four anti-tank guided missiles.

Hezbollah said on Saturday that its fighters also attacked an Israeli army base in the border town of Kiryat Shmona with Burkan rockets "scoring direct hits, igniting a fire and destroying part of it".

Burkan rockets can carry a warhead that weighs between 300 kilograms and 500 kilograms.

The Israeli army confirmed a rocket hit a military base in Kiryat Shmona, without giving details.

Israeli media reported the rocket attack on Kiryat Shmona, and released images showing significant damage to infrastructure. No casualties were reported.

Earlier on Saturday, an Israeli drone strike on a motorcycle near the southern Lebanese village of Kharbet Selm wounded two people, state-run National News Agency said. The agency reported another drone strike on Saturday afternoon in a village near the southern city of Nabatiyeh.

34 taken into custody after pro-Palestinian protest at Brooklyn Museum

New York (AP): New York City police said on Saturday that they took 34 people into custody following a pro-Palestinian protest at the Brooklyn Museum, which reported damage to some artwork and harassment to security staff by demonstrators. Hundreds of protesters marched to the museum on Friday afternoon, set up tents in the lobby and unfurled a "Free Palestine" banner from the building's roof before police moved in to make arrests. New York City police officers tackled and punched some protesters during scuffles that broke out in the crowd outside the museum

while some demonstrators hurled plastic bottles at officers and shouted insults. Other protesters held banners, waved Palestinian flags and chanted boisterously on the steps of the grand Beaux Arts museum, which is the city's second largest. City police said of the 34 people detained, six were arrested and charged with crimes ranging from trespassing to assault. Another 23 were released after receiving tickets or summonses for misdemeanours, including trespassing, making graffiti, damaging property and resisting arrest. Police did not say what happened to the remaining five people.

Museum spokesperson Taylor Maatman said in a statement that the museum closed an hour early because of concerns about people's safety and the art collections. "Unfortunately, there was damage to existing and newly installed artwork on our plaza, and our public safety staff were physically and verbally harassed," Maatman said. The rally started across the street from the Barclays Center, home of the NBA's Brooklyn Nets. Marchers banging drums and chanting then made their way to the museum about a mile away.

Parade for Israel in NYC focuses on solidarity

New York (AP): An annual New York City parade for Israel that draws thousands of people is scheduled to hit the streets Sunday with heightened security and a focus on solidarity during the war in Gaza. The parade comes almost eight months after the unprecedented Oct. 7 attack by Hamas, the deadliest in Israel's history. The parade in the past was dubbed "Celebrate Israel," but organizers said the exuberant atmosphere would be paused this year given the war and Israeli hostages still being held in captivity, as well as outbursts of antisemitism worldwide. The parade, now called "Israel Day on Fifth" because of the route along Fifth Avenue from 57th Street to 74th Street in Manhattan, will instead focus on solidarity, strength and resilience, said Mark Treyger, CEO of the Jewish Community Relations Council. "This is not a mood of confetti and music," Treyger said. "This is more of

a mood of unwavering, iron-clad solidarity with hostages to bring them home, and also our unwavering love and pride in our Jewish identity." The parade, which is in its 59th year, kicks off at about 11:30 a.m. Sunday and is expected to draw more than 40,000 participants, including Israeli dignitaries, celebrities and some of the hostages' families. There was never a thought of cancelling the parade this year, Treyger said, despite what he termed an astronomical rise in antisemitism. "This is a moment that we have to meet," he said. But there will be significant security. New York Police Department officials said Friday they plan to implement measures typically used for high-profile events such as New Year's Eve and July 4. That includes drones, K-9 units, bike patrols, fencing and barriers and designated entry points for spectators all along the parade route.

Iran's ex-President registers for June 28 presidential election

AP ■ DUBAI

Iran's hard-line former President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad registered Sunday as a possible candidate for the presidential election, seeking to regain the country's top political position after a helicopter crash killed the nation's president.

The populist former leader's registration puts pressure on Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. In office, Ahmadinejad openly challenged the 85-year-old cleric, and his attempt to run in 2021 was barred by authorities.

The firebrand, Holocaust-questioning politician's return comes at a time of heightened tensions between Iran and the West over Tehran's rapidly advancing nuclear program, its arming of Russia in its war on Ukraine and its wide-reaching crackdowns on dissent. Associated Press journalists in



Tehran saw Ahmadinejad arrive at the Interior Ministry and begin the registration process. Before his arrival, his supporters chanted and waved Iranian flags. An election is planned June 28 to replace Khamenei's hard-line protégé President Ebrahim Raisi, who died in a helicopter crash in May along with seven other people.

Ahmadinejad previously served two four-year terms from 2005 to 2013. Under Iranian law, he became eligible to run again after four years out of office, but he remains a polarizing figure even among fellow hard-liners.

His disputed re-election in 2009 sparked massive "Green Movement" protests and a sweeping crackdown in which thousands of people were detained and dozens were killed.

Abroad, he became a caricature of Western perceptions of the Islamic Republic's worst attribute, questioning the Holocaust, insisting Iran had no gay or lesbian citizens and hinting Iran could build a nuclear weapon if it chose to do so.

But Ahmadinejad remains popular among the poor for his populist efforts and home-building programs. Since leaving office, he's raised his profile via social media and written

widely publicized letters to world leaders. He's also criticized government corruption, though his own administration faced graft allegations and two of his former vice presidents were jailed.

Khamenei warned Ahmadinejad in 2017 that his standing for office again would be a "polarized situation" that would be "harmful for the country."

Khamenei said nothing during Ahmadinejad's 2021 attempt, when his candidacy was rejected by the 12-member Guardian Council, a panel of clerics and jurists ultimately overseen by Khamenei. That panel has never accepted a woman or anyone calling for radical change to the country's governance.

That panel could reject Ahmadinejad again. However, the race to replace Raisi has yet to draw a candidate with clear, overwhelming support from Khamenei.

UN development specialist arrives in Haiti to take up PM's post

Miami (AP): A UN development specialist tasked with restoring order to Haiti arrived on Saturday to take up his new post as prime minister.

A transitional council seeking to pave the way for an election in Haiti named Garry Conille this week. He replaces interim prime minister Michel Patrick Boisvert, who he met upon arrival on Saturday to the capital, Port-au-Prince, according to a government statement.

Conille has been UNICEF's regional director for Latin America and the Caribbean since January 2023 and previously served as Haiti's prime minister from October 2011 to May 2012 under the then president Michel Martelly.



President Joe Biden bikes at Gordons Pond State Park near Rehoboth Beach, Del on Saturday.

AP/PTI

Trump's attacks on US justice system after guilty verdict could be useful to autocrats like Putin

AP ■ NEW YORK

After his historic guilty verdict in his hush money case, Donald Trump attacked the US criminal justice system, making unfounded claims of a "rigged" trial that echoed remarks from the Kremlin.

"If they can do this to me, they can do this to anyone," Trump said Friday, speaking from his namesake tower in New York on Friday.

Thousands of miles away, Russian President Vladimir Putin was probably "rubbing his hands with glee," said Fiona Hill, a former senior White House national security adviser to three US presidents, including Trump.

Hill and other analysts say Trump's attacks could be useful to Putin and other autocrats as they look to boost their standing among their

own citizens, potentially sway the upcoming US presidential election in which Trump is the presumptive Republican nominee, and undermine the United States' global influence. Some autocratic countries reacted swiftly in support of Trump.

Moscow agreed with Trump's assessment of Thursday's verdict, calling it the "elimination of political rivals by all possible legal or illegal means," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said. In September, Putin said the prosecution of Trump was political revenge that "shows the rottenness of the American political system."

After the verdict, Hungary's prime minister, Viktor Orban, called Trump a "man of honour" and urged him to "keep on fighting."

China's state-owned Global Times newspaper suggested Trump's conviction adds to the

"farclical nature" of this year's US presidential election, adding that it will aggravate political extremism and end in "more chaos and social unrest."

Putin is especially likely to see the latest turmoil as an opportunity, analysts say. He has long sought to widen divisions in Western societies in an attempt to advance a Russian worldview.

Since the invasion of Ukraine, and ahead of crucial elections throughout the West this year, Russia has been accused of carrying out multiple attacks of sabotage and of targeting dissidents abroad to stoke anxieties and sow discord.

Moscow was accused of meddling in the 2016 US election that Trump won by creating a troll factory, hacking Hillary Clinton's campaign, spreading fake news and trying to influence Trump-linked offi-

cialists. What mischief does he have to make when you have people within the American system itself denigrating it and pulling it down?" Hill said of Putin.

Political chaos can benefit autocratic leaders by distracting Washington from key issues, including the war in Ukraine. Russia's goal is to move voices from the "fringes of the political debate to the mainstream," said David Salvo, Managing Director of the Alliance for Securing Democracy at the German Marshall Fund in Washington, DC. The Kremlin does that partly by pushing Russian points of view under the guise of news and social media posts that look like they originate in the West. Salvo noted that disagreements in Congress that delayed an aid package to Ukraine followed a Russian social media campaign aimed at Americans.

S Africa's ANC rejects calls for Ramaphosa's resignation in coalition talks

Cape Town (AP): South Africa's African National Congress party will not consider any demands from possible coalition partners that President Cyril Ramaphosa step down, a top official said Sunday, as the ANC attempted to present a united front after a stinging election result ended its 30-year majority.

As South Africa heads for a series of complex talks to form a national coalition government for the first time and establish stability, ANC secretary-general Fikile Mbalula said Ramaphosa would remain as party leader and any demands from others that he resign for talks to go ahead was "a no-go area."

"President Ramaphosa is the president of the ANC," Mbalula said in the ANC leadership's first public comments since the landmark election results. "And if you come to us with that demand that Ramaphosa is going to step down as the president, that is

not going to happen."

Mbalula said the ANC was open to talks with every other political party in an effort to form a government, but "no political party will dictate terms to us, the ANC. They will not... You come to us with that demand, forget it."

Mbalula conceded the ANC, which has dominated South African politics since the end of apartheid in 1994, "suffered heavily" in the election but said it was "not booted out."

The ANC received just over 40% of votes, falling well short of the majority it has held for all of South Africa's young democracy. It will still be the biggest party by some way. But it needs to talk with others to form a government and to reelect Ramaphosa for a second and final term. South Africa's president is elected by Parliament after national elections.

"The results send a clear message to the ANC," Mbalula

said. "We wish to send a message to the people of South Africa: We have heard them." He said the ANC was committed to forming a government that reflects the will of the people and is stable.

The new MK Party of former President Jacob Zuma, which won 14% in the election in a surprise showing that makes it the third biggest in parliament, has said Ramaphosa must go as leader of the ANC and the country for it to enter any coalition talks with the ANC. The ANC has many options for coalition partners among South Africa's other parties, including one with the main opposition Democratic Alliance, which won 21% of votes. "We'll talk to everybody," Mbalula said. "We are talking to everybody because the election did not give us outright majority. Talks about talks are in full swing. We are engaged and we are open to engagement."

1 dead, 8 injured in Istanbul building collapse

Istanbul (AP): An apartment building collapsed in the Turkish city of Istanbul on Sunday, killing one person and injuring eight, authorities said. The collapse renewed fears about the resilience of buildings in a city prone to earthquakes.

TV images showed firefighters shifting rubble by hand from the flattened five-story building in Kucukcekmece, on the city's European side. Seven people were initially pulled from the debris, including two who were seriously injured, Istanbul Governor Davut Gul said while visiting the scene. His office later said one more injured person was rescued and a body was recovered.

The governorship said the 36-year-old structure collapsed at 8:40 am (0540 GMT). The cause was not immediately clear but there was no sign of an explosion or seismic activity. Only the top two floors were being used as residences, with the rest of the building being occupied by businesses.

Images from a camera across the street showed passengers waiting to board a public minibus at the time of the collapse narrowly escaped being struck by falling debris. More than 59,000 people were killed last year when a magnitude 7.8 earthquake struck parts of southern Turkey and neighbouring Syria. The disaster highlighted the poor enforcement of building regulations in Turkey.

Istanbul, with an official population of 16 million, lies near the North Anatolian Fault. A 1999 earthquake centred to the south of the city killed at least 18,000 people. The municipality has said there are 200,000 buildings housing 3 million people that are in urgent need of improvement.

China's Chang'e-6 successfully lands on Moon's far side

PTI ■ BEIJING

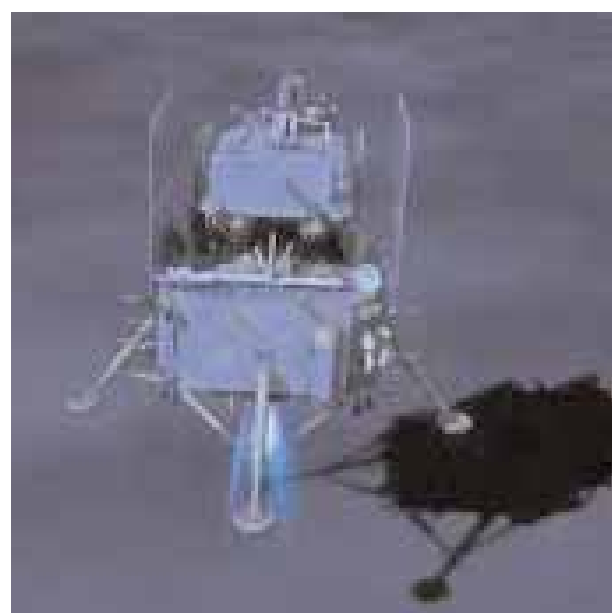
A Chinese spacecraft successfully touched down on the far side of the Moon on Sunday, in the first endeavour of its kind to collect samples from this rarely explored terrain. The Chang'e-6 landed at the designated landing area at 6:23 am (Beijing Time) in the South Pole-Aitken (SPA) Basin for the first time in human history, the China National Space Administration (CNSA) announced.

Chang'e-6 consists of an orbiter, a returner, a lander and an ascender.

Since its launch on May 3 this year, it has gone through various stages such as Earth-Moon transfer, near-Moon braking, lunar orbiting and landing descent.

The lander-ascender combination separated from the orbiter-returner combination on May 30, the CNSA said.

For the powered descent, regarded as the most complex manoeuvre, an autonomous visual obstacle avoidance sys-



tem was used to automatically detect obstacles. A visible light camera selected a comparatively safe landing area based on the brightness and darkness of the lunar surface, state-run Xinhua news agency reported.

lunar south pole region last year when its Chandrayaan-3's lander, carrying the Pragyaan rover successfully landed there. The Chang'e-6 landing site is at an impact crater known as the Apollo Basin, located within the SPA Basin.

The choice was made for the Apollo Basin's potential value of scientific exploration, as well as the conditions of the landing area, including communication and telemetry conditions and the flatness of the terrain, Huang Hao, a space expert from the China Aerospace Science and Technology Corporation (CASC) said.

The terrain on the far side of the Moon is more rugged than the near side, with fewer continuous flat areas Huang told Xinhua.

However, the Apollo Basin is relatively flatter than other areas on the far side, which is conducive to landing. The lander is equipped with multiple sensors, including microwave, laser and optical imaging sensors which can measure distance and speed, and identify

obstacles on the lunar surface, Huang said.

To prevent interference to optical sensors by lunar dust during landing, the lander is also equipped with gamma-ray sensors to accurately measure the height through particle rays, ensuring that the engine can be shut down on time and the lander can touch down smoothly on the lunar surface, he added.

After the landing, the probe is scheduled to complete sampling within two days. It has adopted two methods of Moon sampling, which include using a drill to collect subsurface samples and grabbing samples on the surface with a robotic arm.

Due to the Moon's obstruction, the Earth-Moon communication window period on the far side of the Moon, even with the help of the Queqiao-2 relay satellite service, is still shorter than that on the near side. Therefore, the sampling time of Chang'e-6 will be reduced to about 14 hours, compared with the 22 hours used by its predecessor Chang'e-5, the report

said.

The CNSA said earlier that the mission is poised to make breakthroughs in key technologies, such as automatic sample collection, take-off and ascent from the far side of the Moon. Meanwhile, the probe will carry out scientific exploration of the landing zone.

The CNSA announced that scientific instruments from France, Italy and the European Space Agency/Sweden will be on board the lander of the Chang'e-6 mission and a Pakistani payload on the orbiter. This is the first time China has included an orbiter from its all-weather ally Pakistan in its Moon mission.

According to reports from Pakistan quoting the Institute of Space Technology (IST), the satellite ICUBE-Q has been designed and developed by IST in collaboration with Shanghai Jiao Tong University and Pakistan's national space agency Suparco.

The Chang'e lunar exploration probe is named after the Chinese mythical Moon god-

dess.

The Chang'e 5 brought samples from the Moon's near side. Chinese said during the analysis of the samples it was found they contained water in tiny beads embedded in lunar dirt. China also plans to have a lunar station on the Moon in future. A major space power, China in the past successfully launched unmanned missions to the Moon which included landing a rover. China has also sent a rover to Mars and built a space station which is currently in operation.

Earlier, China announced plans for a manned lunar landing by 2030.

The country's plans include landing astronauts on the Moon by 2030 and building a research base at its south pole - a region believed to contain water ice.

Sunday's landing comes as a growing number of countries, including the United States, eye the strategic and scientific benefits of expanded lunar exploration in an increasingly competitive field.

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RBI unlikely to cut interest rate on June 7, say experts

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Reserve Bank of India (RBI) is unlikely to cut the benchmark interest rate at its upcoming monetary policy review meeting, taking place soon after the announcement of the Lok Sabha election results, amid inflation challenges, said experts.

The Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) may also refrain from rate cut as economic growth is picking up, notwithstanding the elevated interest rate of 6.5 per cent (repo) prevailing since February 2023. The meeting of the Reserve Bank Governor Shaktikanta Das headed MPC is scheduled for June 5 to 7. The decision will be announced on June 7 (Friday). Results of the Lok Sabha elections will be announced on June 4.

The central bank last hiked the repo rate to 6.5 per cent in February 2023 and since then it has held the rate at same level in its previous six bi-monthly policies.

If the interest rate remains untouched again on June 7, it would be the eighth time for the RBI to maintain the status quo on the benchmark repo rate.

On expectations from the June policy, Madan Sabnavis, Chief Economist, Bank of Baroda, said economic conditions have largely remained unchanged since the last policy. High-frequency indicators like PMI and GST collections do show that growth is on course. He further said concerns on inflation remain even though the last couple of numbers have come at less than 5 per cent. The ongoing heat wave has affected prices of



vegetables in particular and while the IMD has predicted a normal monsoon, it would be prudent to wait and monitor how it progresses.

"Under these conditions, a status quo on policy rate and stance may be expected. It would be interesting to see, however, if RBI changes forecasts of GDP and inflation

for FY25," Sabnavis opined. Sanjay Nayar, President of industry body Assocham, too said the central bank is expected to keep the repo rate unchanged in the ensuing MPC meeting as retail inflation remains above the target of 4 per cent. "Though inflation has started receding, the macros would

become clearer only after the monsoon season plays out in September. To get a sustainable balance between cyclical consumption-driven growth and inflation, investment growth to propel the supply side..." he added. The government has mandated the Reserve Bank to ensure the consumer price index (CPI) based inflation remains at 4 per cent with a margin of 2 per cent on either side.

The retail inflation based on the Consumer Price Index (CPI) was 4.83 per cent in April this year.

Aditi Nayar, Chief Economist, ICRA, said the recent inflation data and the outlook for prices of food and commodities had suggested a status quo on the rates and stance in the upcoming June 2024 monetary policy review. "This has been further

cemented by the higher-than-forecast expansion in the Indian economy in Q4 FY2024, which led to the full year GDP growth printing above 8 per cent. As a result, the likelihood of a stance change in August 2024 followed by a rate cut in October 2024 has eased, unless an abundantly well distributed monsoon quells food prices in a sustainable fashion," she added.

The MPC is entrusted with the responsibility of deciding the policy repo rate to achieve the inflation target, keeping in mind the objective of growth. Ranen Banerjee, Partner and Leader Economic Advisory, PwC India, opined that given the uncertainty and risks on the inflation front, commodity prices and oil prices trending higher, the MPC will be constrained to

have a status quo on the policy rates.

"There is no urgency on rate action too as the growth is sustaining and the US economic data also suggests that the US Fed will not cut rates before October 2024. The yields have softened without any rate action given the expected lower borrowings by the government from the high dividends from RBI," he said. There could however be some action by way of reduction in the CRR given the liquidity challenges, Banerjee added. Manish Jaiswal, Group COO, Eldeco, also expects the RBI to keep the repo rate steady at the forthcoming monetary policy meeting.

"This policy aims to stabilize the real estate market, make homes more affordable, and sustain growth. Stable home loan rates improve consumer

confidence and enable more informed investment decisions. This favourable environment enables us to launch new projects and encourages buyers to invest confidently, thereby driving real estate sector growth and contributing to India's economic progress," he said.

The MPC consists of three external members and three officials of the RBI. External members of the rate-setting panel are Shashanka Bhide, Ashima Goyal, and Jayanth R Varma. In an off-cycle meeting in May 2022, the MPC raised the policy rate by 40 basis points and it was followed by rate hikes of varying sizes, in each of the five subsequent meetings till February 2023. The repo rate was raised by 250 basis points cumulatively between May 2022 and February 2023.



AC makers clock two-fold jump in sales in May amid scorching summer

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

A blistering summer has led to an almost two-fold jump in sales of air-conditioners in May even as leading manufacturers have been grappling with delays in installation and replenishing inventories of hot-selling energy-efficient models.

The mercury is hovering above 45 degrees at several places including the national capital, which has been under the grip of a severe heatwave for the past few days. At the same time, AC makers are navigating exceptional demand, recording their best-ever sales in a month so far. Leading brands like Voltas, LG, Daikin, Panasonic, and Blue Star witnessed robust sales in May and the industry expects an overall growth of 30 to 35 per cent in 2024 compared to their sales of last year.

Voltas recorded a two-fold jump in the sales of residential AC in May and expects the positive momentum to continue in the remaining period of the April-June quarter, said its MD & CEO Pradeep Bakshi.

"As we reflect on May 2024, Voltas has a remarkable surge in sales, showcasing a stupendous volume growth of 100 per cent compared to the same period last year. This milestone is particularly significant as May historically stands as one of the highest contributing month in the AC and cooling products industry," Bakshi told PTI. The Tata Group firm is optimistic to achieve 2 million units of AC sales

mark within the first six months of this calendar year. Similarly, LG Electronics India said it is witnessing an "exponential growth" in room AC business and has "surpassed the last 5 years' records with a multi-fold surge in demand".

"This year created many sales records starting from the south region and now North India. We are expecting a minimum 100 per cent growth in north India. Similar growth trends are expected to be seen in eastern states also," said LG Electronics India Senior VP Sanjay Chitkara. The company is "bullish on AC sales" as temperature is continuously rising, he added.

Blue Star Managing Director B Thiagarajan said in March this year the room AC industry had a 40 per cent growth and it was expected that due to general elections in May, there will be some hiccups in the market but it did not happen.

"In April the demand went skyrocketing. Then we thought that it would slow down in May but it did not because of sales from the northern region," he said adding that the industry sales are up 70 per cent. In May due to high sales, "installation delays are happening and the service calls are unprecedented. This is because of heat and the industry was never prepared for such kind of growth," he said.

According to Thiagarajan, this is a "golden period" for the industry, in which it will have over 35 per cent volume growth in 2024.

Deep tech startup policy likely in forthcoming Budget

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The commerce and industry ministry may propose a dedicated policy for deep tech startups to promote innovation, for the forthcoming Budget to be announced by the new government, an official said.

Voting for the Lok Sabha polls is over and the counting is scheduled for June 4. The new government is likely to take oath this month. The new government may announce the full Budget for 2024-25 in July.

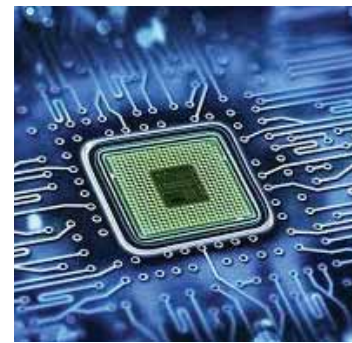
The official said that startups have to convert their innovation into intellectual property rights and for that extensive R&D is required. The policy is in the final stages and

the ministry may forward this proposal for the full Budget announcement, the official said.

In July last year, a draft National Deep Tech Startup Policy (NDTSP) was released for stakeholders' comments.

It is aimed at addressing the challenges confronting deep tech startups through definitive policy interventions to create a conducive ecosystem.

It also aims to harness the transformative potential of technological advancement across diverse sectors, serving as a catalyst to stimulate ripple effects throughout the economy and laying the groundwork for new industry creation.



Deep technology refers to innovations founded on advanced scientific and technological breakthroughs. Due to their disruptive nature, they have the

potential to solve India's most pressing societal issues.

According to the draft, the priority is to strengthen the research and innovation ecosystem leading to scientific breakthroughs and technological advancements, boosting India's knowledge-driven economy.

The main elements which are required to promote R&D and innovation include the creation of intellectual property rights, funding, infrastructure, standards and certification, and capacity building. In March at a Startup Mahakumbh programme, Secretary in the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) Rajesh Kumar Singh stated, "The

Government of India is in the process of creating a separate dedicated deep tech startup policy. The policy paper is now in the final stages of inter-ministerial discussion. We hope to bring it forward soon." "We will move towards creating funds of funds. Hopefully, you will see a separate window for deep tech startups," Singh had said.

The Prime Minister's Science, Technology, and Innovation Advisory Council (PM-STIAC), in its 21st meeting on July 7, 2022, recommended the creation of a national consortium and a working group to propose a comprehensive policy framework to address the needs and strengthen the Indian deep tech startup ecosystem.

Properties worth ₹1.17 lakh crore sold by 18 listed realty firms in FY24

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Eighteen major listed real estate developers sold properties worth ₹1.17 lakh crore during the last fiscal with Godrej Properties becoming the largest player posting ₹22,527 crore of sales bookings.

Except for a few realty players, all major developers have achieved higher sales bookings in 2023-24 compared to the preceding financial year.

This was largely driven by strong demand for residential properties, especially luxury homes, across major cities. Many developers clocked record pre-sales in the 2023-24 fiscal, riding on a surge in consumer demand.

According to the data compiled from regulatory filings, eighteen major listed realty firms have reported combined sales bookings of about ₹1,16,635 crore in the 2023-24 fiscal, up 33 per cent from nearly ₹88,000 crore in the preceding year. Of these combined sales bookings of nearly ₹1.17 lakh crore, bulk of pre-sales came from the residential segment.

Industry experts attribute this surge in sales bookings of major listed players to strong housing demand post-COVID pandemic and the



shifting of demand towards those companies and brands which have better track records of executing projects. In terms of sales bookings, Godrej Properties has become the largest listed player in the 2023-24 fiscal with pre-sales of ₹22,527 crore.

Prestige Estates Projects, based in Bengaluru, clocked sales bookings of ₹21,040 crore to become the second-largest listed player in terms of sales bookings.

DLF, the country's largest realty firm in terms of market capitalisation, achieved sales bookings of ₹14,778 crore in the last fiscal year. Selling properties under the 'Lodha' brand, Mumbai-based Macrotech Developers clocked pre-sales of ₹14,520

crore. Gurugram-based Signature Global, which was listed last year, performed exceedingly well and achieved sales bookings of ₹7,270 crore last fiscal, more than double from the preceding fiscal.

Bengaluru-based firms Sobha Ltd and Brigade Enterprises sold properties worth ₹6,644 crore and ₹6,013 crore during the last fiscal. Another Bengaluru-based realty company Puravankara Ltd was not far behind and achieved sales bookings of ₹5,914 crore.

Mumbai-based Oberoi Realty, which is in the luxury segment, sold properties worth ₹4,007 crore last fiscal. Kolte-Patil, which is based in Pune, sold properties worth ₹2,822 crore last fiscal.

Mahindra Lifespaces Developers Ltd and Keystone Realtors (Rustomjee) clocked sales bookings of ₹2,328 crore and ₹2,266 crore, respectively.

Sunteck Realty, headquartered in Mumbai, sold properties worth ₹1,915 crore last fiscal. Ashiana Housing, based in the national capital, achieved sales bookings of ₹1,798 crore.

Ahmedabad-based Arvind Smartspaces Ltd sold properties worth ₹1,107 crore, while Ajmera Realty & Infrastructure Ltd, with headquarters in Mumbai, reported pre-sales of ₹1,017 crore.

Lucknow-based Eldeco Housing & Industries Ltd sold properties worth ₹388 crore while Mumbai-based Indiabulls Real Estate Ltd ₹280 crore.

Sales booking data of some listed players, like Omaxe, was not available. Real estate developers, which are not listed on stock exchanges, do not report their quarterly and annual sales bookings.

Tata Realty & Infrastructure Ltd, Adani Realty, Piramal Realty, Hiranandani Group, Embassy Group and K Raheja Group are major players in unlisted space.

Gautam Adani overtakes Ambani to become richest Asian

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Gautam Adani has retaken the tag of richest person in Asia after a surge in stock price of the listed companies in his apples-to-airport conglomerate helped him overtake Reliance Industries head Mukesh Ambani.

Adani with a net worth of USD 111 billion is now ranked as the 11th richest in the world, ahead of Ambani whose USD 109 billion wealth placed him at No. 12, according to the Bloomberg Billionaires Index. Shares of all Adani Group companies surged on Friday by up to 14 per cent after US brokerage Jefferies put a bullish view on the group that is back to an expansion spree with a planned USD 90 billion capital expenditure over the next decade.

An addition of ₹84,064 crore in market value took the market capitalisation of 10 Adani group listed firms to ₹17.51 lakh crore at the close of trading on Friday. This helped Adani, a first generation entrepreneur and chairman of the namesake conglomerate, overtake Ambani, who is currently on a cruise in Europe for a second, multi-million-dollar pre-wedding celebration of his youngest son Anant.



Adani, 61, had in 2022 become Asia's richest man after his personal wealth rose even as the global economy suffered a period of slowing growth. But in January 2023, his sprawling USD 21 billion conglomerate that owns many of India's airports, the nation's largest private-sector port, the media giant New Delhi Television, largest renewable energy firm, data centres and many other holdings was hit by a damning report by prominent short-seller Hindenburg Research. Hindenburg alleged Adani's business empire was built through fraud, sending stock prices of his group crashing by USD 150 billion at its lowest point and him out of the world's top 20 billionaires. Ambani, who had to give away his Asia's richest tag to Adani in 2022, was again the top billionaire.

India receives highest FDI from Singapore in 2023-24

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India received the highest foreign direct investment (FDI) from Singapore in 2023-24 even as overseas capital inflows into the country contracted by about 3.5 per cent due to global economic uncertainties, according to the latest government data.

Though FDI from Singapore has dipped by 31.55 per cent to USD 11.77 billion in 2023-24, India has attracted the maximum inflows from that country, the data showed. During the last fiscal, FDI equity inflows decreased from major countries, including Mauritius, Singapore, the US, the UK, UAE, Cayman Islands, Germany, and Cyprus.

However, investments increased from the Netherlands and Japan. Since 2018-19, Singapore has been the largest source of such investments for India. In 2017-18, India attracted the

maximum FDI from Mauritius.

According to experts, after the India-Mauritius tax treaty amendment, Singapore has emerged as the preferred jurisdiction for investment in India.

Rumki Majumdar, Economist, Deloitte India, said that as one of the world's prominent financial hubs, Singapore attracts global investors who want to invest in Asia. "Recently, India's initiatives such as amendments by the SEBI to the REIT Regulations 2014 have created new opportunities for Singapore-based investors, which is why India is likely seeing high FDI from Singapore," Majumdar said.

She also hoped that FDI into India would pick up in the latter half of 2024-25. Sanjiv Malhotra, Senior Advisor, Shardul Amarchand Mangaldas & Co, said that Singapore and Mauritius are



jurisdictions used by global investors to route their money into developing economies such as India.

"While there are many geo-economic and political factors why Singapore has gained more prominence in the recent past, the primary reason for it topping the FDI charts for India is tax," Malhotra said, adding Singapore has a very competitive domestic tax regime and efficient regulatory set-up.

Historically, the double tax avoidance agreement between India and Singapore provided for many beneficial provisions including capital gains exemption in India for investments made from Singapore and even though this provision has been amended, Singapore still is a credible place to create operations with substance to invest further in South-East Asia (including India), he added.

Malhora added that in 2023-24, India witnessed a drop in FDI primarily due to the global uncertainty on account of the disturbances in the Middle-East and Europe.

"Hopefully FDI inflows to India may improve in 2024-25 (from 2023-24) but they may still remain below 2022-23 levels. A stable government post elections surely will help the cause of more FDI into India but I see the global headwinds to be too strong as of now," he said.

Anindya Ghosh, Partner, INDUSLAW, too said that prior to 2016, Mauritius was a preferred jurisdiction for foreign investment in India due to the significant tax advantage it offered as a low-tax jurisdiction for routing investments.

However, in 2016, India amended its tax treaty with Mauritius to introduce a source-based taxation regime for capital gains, eliminating

the tax advantage and reducing the attractiveness of Mauritius as an investment hub for India. After the India-Mauritius tax treaty amendment, Singapore has emerged as the preferred jurisdiction for foreign investment in India due to various factors, Ghosh said.

She added that many multinational companies have their regional headquarters or holding companies based in Singapore, making it a convenient location for channelling investments into India. She added that global economic conditions, geopolitical tensions, and domestic policy developments may influence the overall FDI inflows in 2024-25.

FDI equity inflows in India declined 3.49 per cent to USD 44.42 billion in 2023-24 as against USD 46.03 billion in 2022-23. The total FDI -- which includes equity inflows, reinvested earnings and other

capital -- declined marginally by one per cent to USD 70.95 billion during 2023-24 from USD 71.35 billion in 2022-23.

In 2021-22, the country received the highest ever FDI inflows of USD 84.83 billion. Sectorally, inflows contracted in services, computer software and hardware, trading, telecommunications, automobile, pharma and chemicals.

In contrast, construction (infrastructure) activities, development and power sectors registered a healthy growth in inflows during the period under review.

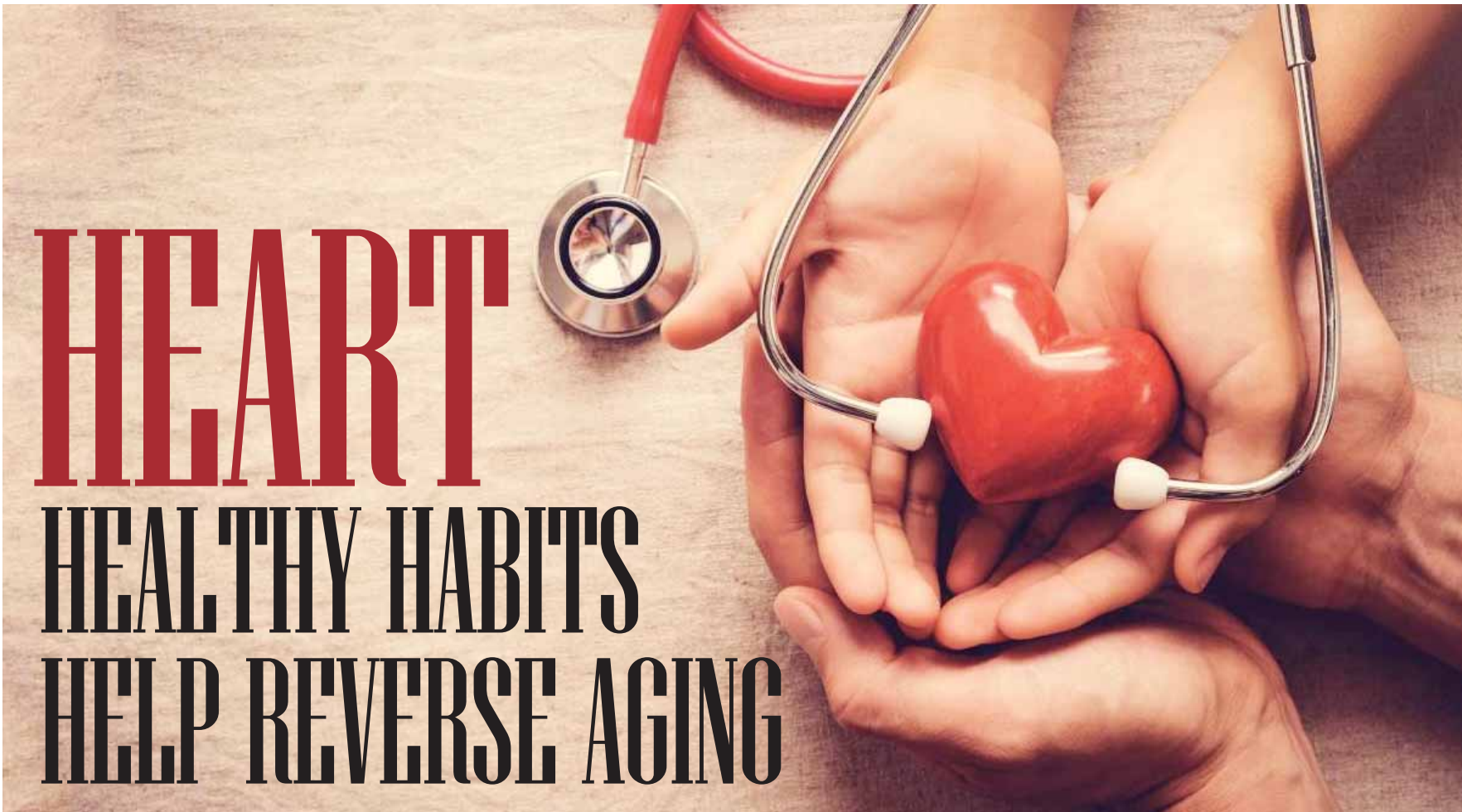
FDI from Mauritius dipped to USD 7.97 billion in the last fiscal from USD 6.13 billion in 2022-23.

The US is the third largest investor in India in 2023-24 with USD 4.99 billion foreign investments, though it is down from USD 6 billion in 2022-23. It was followed by the Netherlands (USD 4.93

billion), Japan (USD 3.17 billion), the UAE (USD 2.9 billion), UK (USD 1.2 billion), Cyprus (USD 806 million), Germany (USD 505 million), and Cayman Islands (USD 342 million).

As per the data, Mauritius accounts for 25 per cent of the total FDI which India has received during April 2000 to March 2024 (USD 171.84 billion), while Singapore's share is 24 per cent (USD 159.94 billion). The US accounted for 10 per cent of total overseas investments with USD 65.19 billion during the period.

Foreign investments are crucial for India to overhaul its infrastructure such as ports, airports and highways to push growth. FDI also helps improve the country's balance of payments situation and strengthen the rupee value against other global currencies, especially the US dollar.



HEART


HEALTHY HABITS HELP REVERSE AGING

According to a study published in the Journal of the American Heart Association (JAMA), adopting heart-healthy behaviours might reverse the aging process in cells i.e. biological aging. **ARCHANA JYOTI** dwells into these findings in the context of India which is witnessing the silent epidemic of cardiovascular diseases

The study has shed light on how heart-healthy behaviors can significantly reduce biological aging, ultimately decreasing the risk of heart disease, stroke, and overall mortality. The study identifies DNA methylation as a crucial mechanism through which cardiovascular health impacts biological aging. The findings hold significance for India where, as per a Lancet study alarming obesity rates have been reported, with 70% of the urban population overweight. India ranks third globally in obesity, following the US and China. Approximately 8 crore Indians are obese, with 1 crore aged 5-19. What is biological aging? The basic idea behind biological aging is that aging occurs as you gradually accumulate damage to various cells and tissues in the body. The poor lifestyle expedites biological aging.

UNDERSTANDING BIOLOGICAL AGING AND DNA METHYLATION
Biological Aging vs. Chronological Aging: Biological aging refers to the condition of the body's cells and tissues, which may differ from chronological age, the actual number of years a person has lived. Genetics, lifestyle, and environmental influences contribute to biological aging. **DNA Methylation:** DNA methylation is a chemical process that modifies the function of genes without changing the DNA sequence. It plays a key role in regulating gene expression and is a promising biomarker for estimating biological age. The patterns of DNA methylation can reflect cumulative exposure to various factors that influence aging, making it a critical focus in

TIPS FOR HEART WELLNESS



Eat better: Follow a healthy, balanced diet consisting of unprocessed, nutrient-rich foods, including vegetables, fruits, whole grains, beans, legumes, nuts, plant-based proteins, lean animal proteins, skinless poultry, fish, and seafood.

Be more active: Aim for at least 150 minutes of moderate or 75 minutes of vigorous physical activity per week.

Quit tobacco: Smoking cessation is always recommended by experts to avoid numerous health problems.

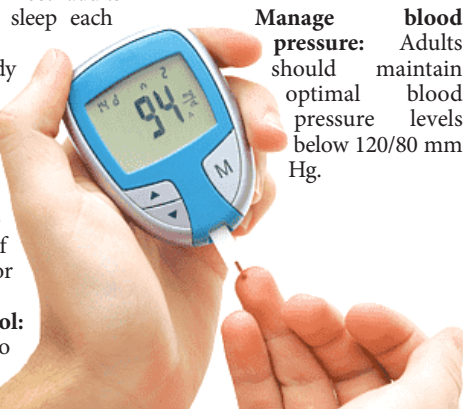
Get healthy sleep: Most adults need 7-9 hours of sleep each night.

Manage weight: Body mass index (BMI) is often used to assess a person's weight or body composition, though this is not the only indicator of healthy weight or obesity.

Control cholesterol: It's important to manage your levels of low-density-lipoprotein (LDL or "bad") cholesterol for overall health.

Manage blood sugar: Tracking your levels of hemoglobin A1c can help you keep your blood sugar levels in check.

Manage blood pressure: Adults should maintain optimal blood pressure levels below 120/80 mm Hg.



studying the impact of lifestyle on health. **Key Study Findings**
Study Population and Methods: The research utilized data from 5,682 adults (mean age of 56 years, 56% women) from the Framingham Heart Study, a long-term project focused on identifying heart disease risk factors. Participants' cardiovascular health was evaluated using the American Heart Association's Life's Essential 8 tool, which scores health on a scale of 0 to 100. This tool assesses eight key factors: diet, physical activity, sleep, smoking status, BMI, cholesterol, blood sugar, and blood pressure. **Biological Age Estimation:** Researchers employed four DNA methylation-based tools

(DunedinPACE Score, PhenoAge, DNAmTL, GrimAge) and one tool assessing genetic predisposition to accelerated aging (GrimAge PGS). These tools provided a comprehensive assessment of biological age influenced by both genetic and lifestyle factors. **IMPACT OF HEART-HEALTHY BEHAVIOURS**
Risk Reductions:
For each 13-point increase in the Life's Essential 8 score:

- The risk of developing cardiovascular disease for the first time was reduced by approximately 35%.
- The risk of death from cardiovascular disease was reduced by 36%.
- The risk of death from any

cause was reduced by 29%. **Enhanced Impact for High-Risk Individuals:**

- Individuals with a genetic predisposition to accelerated aging experienced even greater benefits from higher Life's Essential 8 scores. DNA methylation changes mediated a significant portion of the risk reduction:
- 39% reduction in the risk of cardiovascular disease.
- 39% reduction in the risk of cardiovascular death.
- 78% reduction in the risk of all-cause death.
- Overall, about 20% of the association between Life's Essential 8 scores and cardiovascular outcomes was attributed to the impact of cardiovascular health factors

on DNA methylation. For those with higher genetic risk, this association increased to almost 40%.

MECHANISM OF ACTION
DNA Methylation as a Mediator: The study indicates that DNA methylation could serve as a mediator between heart-healthy behaviors and reduced biological aging. This biological mechanism explains how lifestyle improvements can translate into tangible health benefits, influencing gene expression and promoting better cardiovascular outcomes.

Role of DNA Methylation-Based Biomarkers: While commercially available DNA methylation-based biological age calculators exist, the study suggests focusing more on improving cardiovascular health through lifestyle changes rather than solely relying on these tools.

CONCLUSION
 The research highlights the profound impact of heart-healthy behaviors on biological aging and cardiovascular health. By addressing modifiable lifestyle factors, individuals can significantly reduce their risk of heart disease, stroke, and mortality, promoting healthier aging. The study encourages adopting and maintaining healthy lifestyle practices to enhance longevity and quality of life. As research continues to expand across diverse populations, these findings could inform broader public health strategies and personalized medicine approaches to combat cardiovascular disease and promote overall health.



AUTISM

A SPECTRUM OF EXPERIENCES

As autism, a neurological condition, becomes more prevalent, fostering awareness and acceptance is crucial. Early identification, often by age two or three, relies on behavioral assessments. An inclusive society that supports individuals with autism helps them thrive and enriches our communities, says **DR PRAVEEN SUMAN**

In a world that celebrates diversity, it is crucial to deepen our understanding of autism, a neurodevelopmental disorder that affects millions of individuals globally. Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), is characterized by a range of challenges with social skills, repetitive behaviors, speech, and non-verbal communication. With prevalence rates rising, it's more important than ever to foster awareness and acceptance.



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Autism is typically identified in early childhood, often by the age of two or three, though some individuals may receive a diagnosis later, especially if symptoms are less severe. Early signs include delayed speech, difficulties in social interactions, and restricted interests. Diagnosis is based on behavioral assessments and developmental history, as no medical tests like blood tests can diagnose autism. The term "spectrum" is used because ASD varies widely in its manifestations and severity. Some individuals with autism may require substantial support in their daily lives, while others may live independently and pursue successful careers. Common traits across the spectrum include difficulty in understanding social cues, preference for routines, and sensitivity to sensory stimuli. One of the challenges for individuals with autism and their families is navigating a world designed for neurotypical people. Social situations, education systems, and workplaces often need to adapt to accommodate the unique needs of those with ASD. There is no cure for autism, but various interventions can help improve the quality of life for those affected. Early intervention, particularly therapies focused on speech, occupational, and behavioral skills, has been shown to significantly benefit children

with autism. Educational support is also crucial. Inclusive education models, where children with autism learn alongside their neurotypical peers, have gained popularity. These models promote social interaction and understanding, benefiting all students involved. For adults with autism, support systems vary widely. Employment programs tailored to the strengths of individuals with ASD, such as those focusing on detail-oriented tasks, have proven successful. Despite advancements, individuals with autism often face social stigma and misunderstanding. Misconceptions can lead to isolation and discrimination. Families frequently encounter financial and emotional burdens due to the cost of therapies, special education, and medical care. Advocacy for better insurance coverage and government support is ongoing. As our understanding of autism deepens, so too does our appreciation for the diversity of the human experience. By fostering acceptance and providing appropriate support, we can create a more inclusive society where individuals with autism thrive.

PTSD in Women: Unseen Challenges and Critical Health Impacts

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder significantly impacts women's health, presenting unique and often unseen challenges, says **DR JYOTI KAPOOR**, emphasising the importance of recognising these distinct issues to provide effective support and treatment

A complex mental health condition, PTSD can affect anyone who has experienced a traumatic event. However, research has shown that the disorder can have a particularly significant impact on women's health. From heightened risk factors to unique symptom presentations, understanding how PTSD affects women is crucial for providing effective support and treatment.

Gender Disparities in PTSD Prevalence: Studies consistently show that women are more likely than men to experience PTSD in their lifetime. This heightened vulnerability can be attributed to various factors, including the prevalence of traumatic experiences such as sexual assault, intimate partner violence, and childhood abuse, which disproportionately affect women. **Impact on Physical Health:** PTSD doesn't just manifest in psychological symptoms; it also takes a toll on physical health. Women with PTSD are more likely



to experience a range of health issues, including chronic pain, cardiovascular problems, gastrointestinal disorders, and autoimmune diseases. The chronic stress associated with PTSD can weaken the immune system and disrupt various bodily functions, contributing to these health complications. **Reproductive Health Challenges:** PTSD can intersect with women's

reproductive health in several ways. Research suggests that women with PTSD may have higher rates of menstrual disorders, infertility, and pregnancy complications. Additionally, the stress of living with PTSD can exacerbate symptoms of premenstrual syndrome (PMS) and menopause. **Increased Risk of Substance Abuse and Self-Harm:** Many women with PTSD turn to

WHAT IT'S ALL ABOUT

PTSD is a mental health condition that develops following exposure to a traumatic event, either through direct experience, witnessing it, or learning about it happening to a close friend or family member. The symptoms must persist for at least one month and significantly impact the individual's ability to function in daily life or work.



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substance abuse as a way to cope with their symptoms. Alcohol and drugs may provide temporary relief from distressing thoughts and emotions, but they can exacerbate mental health issues and lead to addiction. Furthermore, women with PTSD are at higher risk of engaging in self-harming behaviors, such as cutting or burning themselves, as a maladaptive coping mechanism.

Relationship and Social Implications: It can strain relationships and social connections, leading to isolation and loneliness. Women with PTSD may struggle to maintain healthy interpersonal relationships due to symptoms such as hypervigilance, avoidance, and emotional numbing. This social withdrawal can further exacerbate feelings of alienation. **Barriers to Treatment:** Despite the

significant impact of PTSD on women's health, there are several barriers to accessing effective treatment. Stigma surrounding mental health issues, particularly in certain cultural and societal contexts, may prevent women from seeking help. Additionally, the shortage of specialized services and the high cost of mental health care can pose significant obstacles to treatment access. **Tailored Approaches to Treatment:** Effective treatment for PTSD in women requires a tailored approach that addresses the unique biological, psychological, and social factors at play. Psychotherapy, particularly trauma-focused therapies like cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) and eye movement desensitization and reprocessing (EMDR), has been shown to be highly effective in reducing PTSD symptoms. Medications such as antidepressants may also be prescribed to alleviate symptoms of depression and anxiety commonly associated with PTSD.

Importance of Social Support: Building a strong support network is crucial for women coping with PTSD. Peer support groups, community organizations, and online forums can provide a sense of belonging and validation. Cultivating supportive relationships with friends, family members, and healthcare providers can also play a pivotal role in recovery. **Education and Advocacy:** Raising awareness about the impact of PTSD on women's health is essential for reducing stigma and improving access to care. Education campaigns aimed at healthcare providers, policymakers, and the general public can help dispel misconceptions and foster empathy for those living with PTSD. Additionally, advocating for policies that prioritize mental health services and address the root causes of trauma can create a more supportive environment for women seeking treatment.

USA THUMP CANADA BY SEVEN WICKETS

BEGIN TRYST WITH TOP FLIGHT CRICKET IN STYLE

PTI ■ DALLAS

USA announced their arrival in top-flight cricket in spectacular fashion as Aaron Jones introduced himself with a 40-ball 94 in a seven-wicket hammering of Canada in the opening match of the T20 World Cup here. Batting first, Canada posted 194 for five, but USA turned what could have been a tricky chase into a cruise, completing the task with as many as 14 balls to spare. America's very own Jones, who was born in Queens, a New York City borough, smashed 10 sixes and four boundaries to make a statement on behalf of the team full of expatriates. While Jones was without an iota of doubt the star batter of the match, Andries Gous too made an impression with his 65 off 46 balls. Gous hit seven fours and three sixes during his stay in the middle, after USA lost two wickets with just 42 runs on the board. It was fitting that Jones finished the chase with a pair of sixes. Before that, left-arm seamer Kaleem Sana gave Canada the perfect start, dismissing the dangerous Steve Taylor for a duck. Gous joined skipper Monank



Patel, and the duo tried to up the scoring rate with a flurry of boundaries. Canada, however,

maintained discipline with the ball and soon struck again with Monank's wicket. The batter fell a run-a-ball

16 while trying to take on Dillon Heyliger. A 19-run over against Nikhil Dutta, featuring a six each

for Gous and Aaron Jones, helped pick the USA rate up. Jones continued to attack, hitting Canada skipper Saad

Bin Zafar for a six and a four in the 10th over. The duo continued going for their shots, and pumped up

the USA scoring rate. From 81/2, USA added 45 runs over the next three overs. Jones hit three sixes off Saad in the 13th over, reaching the fastest T20I fifty for his side in the same over, from merely 22 balls. Gous reached a fifty off his own in the next over, and survived a scare after he hit one straight to Dilpreet off Gordon, but the pacer had bowled a no-ball. His partner, Jones took advantage of the free hit and hit his eighth six off the next ball. The duo brought up their 100-run stand off merely 45 balls. Earlier, Canada were off to a decent start with the opening duo of Navneet Dhaliwal and Aaron Johnson (23) putting on 43 runs in just over five overs at the Grand Prairie Stadium. Mumbai-born left-arm spinner Harmeet Singh effected the first breakthrough of the tournament proper when he dismissed Johnson in the sixth over. Pargat Singh, another player Canadian player of Indian origin, fell cheaply for five runs when he was run out in the eighth over. However, Dhaliwal found an able ally in Nicholas Kirton, who got his runs at a brisk pace while hitting three

boundaries and two sixes. Dhaliwal found the fence thrice and cleared it six times during his 66-run partnership with the left-handed Kirton. After the others have failed, it took former New Zealand player Corey Anderson to break the partnership between Dhaliwal and Kirton as he had the former caught by Jessy Singh at the start of the 15th over. The dismissal of Dhaliwal did not have any bearing on Canada's game plan thanks to wicketkeeper Shreyas Movva's enterprise. The right-handed batter blazed away to 32 off 16 balls, striking two sixes and as many fours during his cameo to lift Canada's scoring rate. Dilpreet Bajwa chipped in with a five-ball 11 after Kirton's departure, as Canada posted a challenging total on the board. The USA however, after a wobble initially, completed the task to open their account in their very first match in the World Cup. The third-wicket stand between Jones and Gous produced 131 runs, laying the foundation of a fine victory on their home turf. The USA and the West Indies are jointly hosting the T20 showpiece.

Amit Panghal clinches Paris Olympics spot



PTI ■ BANGKOK

Amit Panghal's comeback to the Indian team culminated in an Olympic quota as the world championships silver medalist boxer qualified for the Paris Games with a quarterfinal win in the 2nd World Qualification Tournament here on Sunday. Panghal, India's lone male world championship silver medalist, notched a hard-fought 5-0 win over China's Chuang Liu for a ticket to his second Olympic Games. He thus joins the quartet of Nishant Dev (71kg), Nikhat Zareen (50kg), Preeti Pawar (54kg) and Lovlina Borgohain (75kg). All of them have booked Olympic berths. Panghal had only one shot at making the Paris Olympics and the 2018 Asian Games champion made the most of his opportunity. The going has been tough for Panghal as he lost his place in the national team on the basis of BFI's evaluation system to world

championship bronze medalist Deepak Bhorla, who competed at the earlier two qualifying events. Since the Tokyo Olympics, the only big-ticket event that the Haryana boxer has competed in was the Commonwealth Games in 2022, where he won the gold medal. He also emerged victorious at the prestigious Strandja Memorial tournament earlier this year. The quarterfinal bout began on a rather sedate note with both boxers trying to assess each other. One minute into the bout, Liu went after Panghal. At an height disadvantage, the Indian struggled to find his range, and he did manage to land a couple of scoring shots but didn't engage much. Trailing 1-4, Panghal, a three-time Asian Championship medalist, changed his strategy. He went on the offensive, beginning the second round on a positive note. The Chinese boxer retaliated by launching some counterattacking blows but Panghal continued with his punches and ended the round on a high, forcing all five judges to rule in his favour. In the last three minutes, Liu changed his game and moved closer to Panghal. It was an energy sapping affair as both fighters traded punches, going hammer and tongs at each other. In the end, the former world number one prevailed. Later in the day, Jaisime Lamboria (57kg) and Sachin Siwach (57kg) will also look to secure Olympic quotas.

Sri Lanka look to muffle big guns in South Africa batting

PTI ■ NEW YORK

Sri Lanka will rely on their exceptionally varied bowling attack to tame the unrestrained batting power of South Africa in their Group D T20 World Cup opener here on Monday. They will be eager to get onto the points table at the earliest too as some tricky teams like Netherlands, Bangladesh and Nepal are clubbed with them in the group. South Africa have spread all their cards on the table as the team selection indicated the most likely route they would take in this ICC showpiece. A batting line-up consisting of captain Aiden Markram, wicketkeeper batter Heinrich Klaasen, Quinton de Kock, David Miller and Tristan Stubbs could be a nightmare for any bowling attack. Klaasen and Stubbs have been in roaring form of late. In this World Cup cycle, the right-hander has averaged 41 and struck runs at 182. In the IPL 2024 too, Klaasen made 471 runs from 16 matches at a strike rate of 171 for the Sunrisers Hyderabad. Stubbs has been equally impressive for the Delhi Capitals, amassing 378 runs from 14 matches and he made them at a strike-rate of 190. Both these gifted power-strikers come in the middle-order when the spinners will be in operation, and to add to Lanka's worries, they are phenomenal against the tweakers, especially Klaasen. In the run-up to the World Cup, the 32-year-old from Transvaal has averaged 59 against spin and made runs at an eye-watering strike-rate of 191. It will certainly worry a set of



Lankan spinners such as captain Wanindu Hasaranga (economy 7.42) and Maheesh Theekshana (6.71), both of whom had to battle injuries in the recent past. So, Sri Lanka, who have not reached the knockouts of a T20 WC after their triumph in 2014, will be eager to try a couple of overs from pacers Matheesha Pathirana and Dilshan Madushanka in that phase when Klaasen and Stubbs are looking for acceleration. However, Lanka might take heart from the fact that the Proteas went down 0-3 to the West Indies in a recent T20I series at Kingston. Lanka will also hope that the New York pitch will continue to offer some help to the bowlers as it had happened in Saturday's warm-up match between India and Bangladesh, where a few deliveries did not rise above the ankle and knee level. Beyond that, the Lankans are also one of the teams that have played a good number of T20Is this year. In 2024, they have series wins over Zimbabwe and Afghanistan at home and Bangladesh away. In fact, they have won six of the last nine T20Is. But those external factors will

not have much bearing on a fresh day and Lanka know that their batters too will have to come good against the African rival. They have the experienced Angelo Mathews, the explosive Kusal Mendis and the rock-solid Dhananjaya de Silva to bank on while the former captain Dasun Shanaka can make a few quick runs down the order. The SA attack does not have that much variety in their bowling unit as it largely revolves around Kagiso Rabada and left-arm wrist-spinner Tabraiz Shamsi. Anrich Nortje is still finding his range after coming back from an injury and had an underwhelming IPL where he conceded more than 11 runs an over. The SA management will hope that the pacer will regain his rhythm in the biggest stage and that will have a major say in avoiding another below-par outing in a World Cup. SQUAD: South Africa: Aiden Markram (c), Otttniel Baartman, Gerald Coetzee, Quinton de Kock, Bjorn Fortuin, Reeza Hendricks, Marco Jansen, Heinrich Klaasen, Keshav Maharaj, David Miller, Anrich Nortje, Kagiso Rabada, Ryan

Rickelton, Tabraiz Shamsi, Tristan Stubbs. Sri Lanka: Wanindu Hasaranga (c), Charith Asalanka, Kusal Mendis, Pathum Nissanka, Kamindu Mendis, Sadeera Samarawickrama, Angelo Mathews, Dasun Shanaka, Dhananjaya De Silva, Maheesh Theekshana, Dunith Wellalage, Dushmantha Chameera, Nuwan Thushara, Matheesha Pathirana, Dilshan Madushanka. Travelling Reserves: Asitha Fernando, Vijayakanth Vijayakanth, Bhanuka Rajapaksa, Janith Liyanage. Match starts at 8 PM IST. Oman face Namibia In a Group B clash at Bridgetown, Namibia, a dominant force in the African Qualifiers, will be hoping for a winning start against Oman. However, it would not be that easy for Namibia as Oman had run them close in April, before conceding the five-match series 2-1. Hence, Oman, who are making their third appearance in a T20 WC, will be hoping for a better outcome this time. SQUAD: Oman: Aqib Ilyas (c), Zeeshan Maqsood, Kashyap Prapajati, Pratik Athavale, Ayaan Khan, Shoaib Khan, Mohammad Nadeem, Naseem Khushi, Mehran Khan, Bilal Khan, Rafullah, Kaleemullah, Fayyaz Butt, Shakeel Ahmad, Khalid Kail. Reserves: Jatinder Singh, Samay Shrivastava, Sufyan Mehmood, Jay Odedra. Namibia: Gerhard Erasmus (c), Zane Green, Michael Van Lingen, Dylan Leicher, Ruben Trimpelmann, Jack Brassell, Ben Shikongo, Tangeni Lungameni, Niko Davin, JJ Smit, Jan Frylinck, JP Kotze, David Wiese, Bernard Scholtz, Malan Kruger, PD Blignaut.

We have not really nailed down our batting unit: Rohit Sharma

PTI ■ NEW YORK



The Indian team is yet to "nail" its batting line-up for the T20 World Cup and much shouldn't be read into the think tank's decision to send Rishabh Pant at number three in the warm-match against Bangladesh, said skipper Rohit Sharma. India emerged winners by 60 runs at the Nassau County International Cricket Stadium, restricting Bangladesh to 122 for nine after posting 182 for five in the allotted 20 overs on Saturday. On Pant batting at No.3, Rohit said, "Just to give him an opportunity. We have not really nailed down what the batting unit will look like. Even the bowlers did pretty well. All in all happy with how things went." Pant struck a fluent 53 off 32 balls, while Hardik Pandya smashed 40 in 23 deliveries after Suryakumar Yadav helped himself to an 18-ball 31. "Quite happy with how things went. Pretty much got what we wanted from the game. Like I said at the toss, it was important to get used to the conditions. "New venue, new ground, drop-in pitch - important to get used to it and we managed pretty well," Rohit said after the match. Left-arm seamer Arshdeep Singh shone with the ball, picking 2/12 in three overs while all-rounder Shivam Dube grabbed 2/13 in three overs. Asked about Arshdeep, Rohit said, "He has shown us, in whatever games he has played, he has the skills up-front. He

has got a very good skill-set (at the death too). "We saw it today. He bowled pretty well, swung the ball up front, and then bowled one at the backend. We have got 15 good players here. We have to see what the conditions are and then see what combination is best for us." A little spongy at times: David Head coach Rahul Dravid said the pitch was a bit soft and spongy, while lauding the performance of his players. "It's great to get a good hit-out. Obviously, it looks like a good facility in terms of as quickly as they have put up. The ground is a bit soft and the guys could feel that on the hamstring and the calves. "So, that's the area we need to ensure that we are working around and ensuring that the guys are looking after does feel a little bit heavy underneath," Dravid said in a video posted by the BCCI. India ticked multiple boxes during their comfortable win over Bangladesh in the warm-up match, but none bolder than the fifty by Pant which has all but sealed his place as the first-choice wicketkeeper batter in the ICC showpiece.

Dortmund rues missed chances in Champions League final loss

AP ■ LONDON

The scrappy German team missed a slew of big chances against Real Madrid in the Champions League final before losing 2-0 at Wembley Stadium on Saturday. "You have to use your chances in the final," midfielder Emre Can said. "Unfortunately we didn't." The loss comes a year after Dortmund failed to clinch the Bundesliga title on the last day of the season, and 11 years after losing to Bayern Munich 2-1 the

last time they reached the Champions League title game, also at Wembley. In 2013, Dortmund coach Edin Terzic was in the stands as a fan of the black-and-yellow. Last year, Terzic had tears in his eyes after Dortmund missed the chance to win the Bundesliga when it was held by Mainz to 2-2. On Saturday night, more heartbreak. "I'm proud but disappointed and empty," Terzic said. "After a Champions League final that we lost, it is quite hard to find the right words."

Karim Adeyemi was in alone on goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois in the 21st minute with Dortmund's yellow-clad, flag-waving fans poised to erupt. But the winger pushed the ball too far to his left as the 6-foot-6 Courtois used all of his length to get down and reach for the ball at the top of the area. Adeyemi got a left-footed shot off, but Dani Carvajal was there to block it. Two minutes later, Niclas Fullkrug poked a shot past Courtois but it bounced off the right post and across the goalmouth.



Dortmund had another chance just before the half-hour mark when Adeyemi's shot was saved by Courtois. Fullkrug wasn't able to get a clean header on the rebound. Marcel Sabitzer forced another save from Courtois in the 41st. "We managed to escape from the first half, when we could have been losing 2-0 easily," Courtois said. "We never stop and found a way to put it in." Carvajal's header broke the deadlock in the 74th and Vinicius Junior sealed it seven minutes from time.

Madrid star Jude Bellingham summed it up nicely: "Dortmund had the better of the game, the better chances, but if you don't kill us then we will come back." Fullkrug had another good chance in the 63rd but his header was straight at Courtois, who punched it away. The Germany forward finally did put the ball in the net with a bullet header but he was well offside and the score remained 2-0. Fullkrug faulted himself for not converting his opportunities and said he feels particularly bad for

Marco Reus, who played his final game for Dortmund. Reus is leaving Dortmund after 12 years at the club. Reus and Mats Hummels were members of the last Dortmund team to make it this far. They lost the 2013 Champions League final to Bayern Munich. "They told us about the game and how it felt," Fullkrug said. "I'm very sad for them." Still, he's optimistic for the future. "We can go on very confident. We played against the biggest team - a lot of the biggest teams in Europ

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