

OPINION 6
DYNAMIC CONTOURS OF
ELECTORAL POLITICS

WORLD 8
ISRAELI ARMY TELLS PALESTINIANS
TO EVACUATE PARTS OF RAFAH

MONEY 10
BSNL TO LAUNCH 4G SERVICES
ACROSS INDIA IN AUGUST

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Poll battle enters crucial Phase III

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

With stakes being high for the BJP which had won an overwhelming majority of these seats, including all in Gujarat, Karnataka, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh, in the 2019 general elections, political bigwigs Union Ministers Amit Shah, Jyotiraditya Scindia, Mansukh Mandaviya, Parshottam Rupala Congress stalwart Digvijay Singh, to NCP's (Sharad Pawar faction) Supriya Sule and Samajwadi Party's Dimple Yadav are amongst several others from ruling and Opposition side who are in the fray for the voting to be held in 93 constituencies spread over 12 States and Union Territories on Tuesday in the third phase of Lok Sabha polls.

Over 1,300 candidates, including around 120 women, are in the fray for the 93 parliamentary seats in 12 States and Union Territories. Modi and Shah will cast their votes at booths in Ahmedabad city that fall under Gandhinagar Lok Sabha seat.

After the third phase of polling, more than half of India will be covered. A total 283 will be covered after the third phase of polling.

According to EC, over 17.24 crore voters will cast their vote in the third phase for 93 parliamentary seats. A total of 1,041 inter-State and 275 International Border check posts are keeping strict vigil on any illicit flow of liquor, drugs,



cash and freebies. Strict surveillance has been kept at sea and air routes.

With the BJP bagging Surat unopposed, 25 seats in Prime Minister Modi's home State of Gujarat will go to polls on May 7, besides 11 seats in Maharashtra, 10 seats in Uttar Pradesh, the remaining 14 of the 28 in Karnataka, seven in Chhattisgarh, five in Bihar, four each in Assam and West Bengal, and all two in Goa.

The Union Territory of Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu (2 seats) and nine seats in Madhya Pradesh, including Betul where elections were deferred, will also go to polls on Tuesday and over 11 crore people will be eligible to vote.

Campaigning for the third phase witnessed the

Constitution and reservation issue dominating the poll discourse. The stakes are significant for the BJP and its allies, which had, in 2019, won 75 of the 93 seats going to polls on Tuesday, while the INDIA Bloc parties had won only 11.

Four seats had gone to the undivided Shiv Sena, two were won by independents, and one by the AIUDEF.

With the first two phases registering a dip in voter turnout as compared to 2019, the question is whether the third phase will buck the trend amid hot weather and heat waves in these States.

After the third phase, voting will be completed in 283 out of

243 seats in the Lok Sabha. The next four phases will be on May 13, May 20, May 25 and June 1.

Counting of votes is on June 4. Jammu and Kashmir's Anantnag-Rajouri Lok Sabha seats were also to vote in the third phase of polling.

However, due to several connectivity issues, the Election Commission of India rescheduled it to May 25.

During the campaign, the BJP had to face the ire of the Kshatriya community over a remark made by Rupala in Rajkot.

He had claimed several rulers from the community had "roti and beti" (marriage and trade) relations with the British and other foreign invaders.

STARS IN FRAY

CONSTITUENCY	CANDIDATES	PARTY
Gandhinagar	Amit Shah	BJP
	Sonal Patel	Congress
	Mohammedanish Desai	BSP
Baramati	Supriya Sule	NCP (Pawar)
	Sunetra Pawar	NCP
Guna	Jyotiraditya Scindia	BJP
	Rao Yadendra Singh	Congress
Rajgarh	Dhaniram Chaudhary	BSP
	Rodmal Nagar	BJP
Berhampore	Digvijay Singh	Congress
	Dr. Rajendra Suryavanshi	BSP
Berhampore	Nirmal Kumar Saha	BJP
	Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury	Congress
Berhampore	Yusuf Pathan	TMC
	Shivraj Singh Chouhan	BJP
Vidisha	Pratap Bhanu Sharma	Congress
	Kishan Lal Ladiya	BSP
Vidisha	Seema Sharma	SP
	Prahlad Joshi	BJP
Dharwad	Vinod Asooti	Congress
	Pallavi Dempo	BJP
South Goa	Capt. Viriato Fernandes	Congress
	Jaiveer Singh Thakur	BJP
Mainpuri	Dimple Yadav	SP
	Shiv Prasad Yadav	BSP
Dhubri	Badruddin Ajmal	AIUF
	Rakibul Hussain	Congress
Dhubri	Zabed Islam	AGP

LG recommends NIA probe against Kejriwal

SAUMYA SHUKLA ■ NEW DELHI

Troubles seem to be mounting for the jailed Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal as Delhi Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena recommended National Investigation Agency (NIA) probe against the AAP chief for allegedly receiving political funding from the banned terrorist organisation 'Sikhs for Justice' to the Home Minister Amit Shah on Monday.

The LG claimed that Kejriwal "has received a staggering amount of \$16 million in funding from Khalistani groups between 2014 and 2022."

The move comes a day ahead of the Supreme Court considering granting Kejriwal interim bail in view of the ongoing Lok Sabha elections. The AAP chief, who is in Tihar jail, was arrested on March 21 by the Enforcement Directorate in connection with an excise policy linked money laundering case.

In a letter to the Union Home secretary, the Lieutenant Governor's secretary said Saxena had received a complaint that the Kejriwal-led AAP allegedly received USD 16 million funding from extremist Khalistani groups for facilitating the release of Devendra Pal Bhullar.

"Keeping in view, the sensitivity and seriousness of the allegations levelled in the complaint, the LG has desired that the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, may consider referring the matter to the NIA for conducting comprehensive investigation into



the matter," the letter to the Home Ministry read.

Bhullar, who is in Amritsar Central Jail, was convicted in connection with the killing of nine people in a bomb blast in 1993 in Delhi. He was sentenced to death by a designated TADA court on August 25, 2001 and is undergoing life imprisonment after the Supreme Court commuted his death sentence.

Reacting to the development, senior AAP leader and Delhi Minister Saurabh Bharadwaj called it "yet another conspiracy against Kejriwal at the behest of BJP."

"They are losing all seven seats in Delhi and are rattled by the fear of defeat in Lok Sabha polls," he claimed, adding that the LG is the agent of BJP and the party had done something similar before also in Punjab elections.

The complaint was filed by World Hindu Federation's National General Secretary Ashoo Mongia.

BJP's all-weather ally in Odisha faces Modi heat

DEEPAK KUMAR JHA ■ NEW DELHI/BERHAMPUR

Less than two months before the announcement of Lok Sabha polls, when the BJP and BJD were discussing an alliance in Odisha and Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik received praise from Prime Minister Narendra Modi at public rallies, the latter asserted on Monday that the expiry date of the BJD Government in Odisha is June 4, the day when Lok Sabha and Assembly election results will be announced.

Addressing his first election rally in the State, Modi said, "Odisha mein BJD ast hain, Congress past hai aur log BJP per ashwast hai. Sirf BJP ummido ka naya suraj ban kar ubhri hain (in Odisha, the BJD is setting sun, the Congress is battered and people are sure of BJP. And the BJP has emerged as the only ray of hope for the people)."

BJD leaders expressed dismay and complete shock over the PM's 'sharp attack' on the



Prime Minister Narendra Modi with NDA candidates and leaders at a public meeting ahead of Lok Sabha polls in Berhampur, Odisha, on Monday

party, as well as Patnaik, who left no stone unturned to support the NDA in Parliament. In February this year, he sent Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw to the Rajya Sabha under the BJD quota.

Patnaik also regarded the BJP with a tacit strategy, as it never aligned with the Congress-led Opposition alliance or any Third Front, which was proposed a year ago by several non-BJP parties to challenge Modi in the Lok Sabha polls.

Both parties were working to forge an alliance after breaking ties 15 years ago, though they cooperated in tandem on legislative matters.

In an apparent dig at Naveen Patnaik, the Prime Minister said, "Odisha needs a CM who understands Odia language and culture."

"The BJP will form a double-engine Government here after the ongoing elections. The expiry date of the BJD

Spotlight on Samajwadi Party's first family

VIRENDRA NATH BHATT ■ LUCKNOW

The stage is set for the third phase of elections in 10 Lok Sabha constituencies which will go to polls on Tuesday, with all eyes on the first family of Samajwadi Party founder Mulayam Singh Yadav who are in the electoral fray.

While SP chief Akhilesh Yadav's wife Dimple is aiming to retain the Mainpuri Lok Sabha seat which she won in the bypolls following the demise of her father-in-law Mulayam, Akshaya Yadav, son of Ram Gopal Yadav, the national principal general secretary of SP, will try to reclaim the Firozabad seat, which he had won in 2014.



Besides, Aditya Yadav, the son of SP national general secretary Shivpal Singh Yadav, is making his electoral debut from the Budaun Lok Sabha seat which was represented by his cousin Dharmendra Yadav in 2014.

The 10 constituencies in UP that will vote in the third phase on Tuesday are

Sambhal, Hathras (SC), Agra (SC), Fatehpur Sikri, Firozabad, Mainpuri, Budaun, Aonla and Bareilly.

In the earlier two phases of elections, polling was held in 16 out of the total 80 Lok Sabha constituencies in UP.

Besides the Yadav family members, polling will be held to seal the fate of Union Minister SP Singh Baghel, UP Tourism Minister Jaiveer Singh, Minister of State for Revenue Anoop Pradhan Balmiki, Baghel, Jaiveer Singh, and Balmiki are

contesting from Agra (SC), Mainpuri, and Hathras (SC) Lok Sabha constituencies respectively.

Rajveer Singh, son of former Chief Minister of UP and Bharatiya Janata Party stalwart Kalyan Singh, is looking to score a hat-trick from the Etah parliamentary constituency, which was also represented in 2009 by Kalyan Singh as a candidate of the Jan Kranti Party. In Bareilly, the main contest has narrowed down to the BJP's Chhatrapal Singh Gangwar and Praveen Singh Aron of the SP after the nomination paper of Bahujan Samaj Party candidate Master Chhotey Lal Gangwar was rejected.

Capital sees 67 per cent surge in wrong side driving prosecutions

SAUMYA SHUKLA ■ NEW DELHI

A staggering surge of almost 67 per cent in the number of prosecutions for 'wrong side driving' was witnessed in the national Capital in 2024, during the period from January 1 to April 30, compared to the same period in the previous year.

While in the earlier year, a total of 18,047 violators of traffic rules were caught by the traffic police in the city, the number saw a considerable jump, taking the total to 30,062 in 2024.

A Delhi Traffic Police official said in response to the alarming increase in incidents of driving against the flow of traffic in the Capital city, the Delhi Traffic Police has launched a robust crackdown campaign to ensure road safety and discipline.

"Over the past few months, there has been a noticeable surge in the number of vehicles violating traffic norms by

driving against the designated flow of traffic. This reckless behaviour not only endangers the lives of the offenders but also poses a significant threat to other road users, leading to a rise in accidents and traffic congestion," said the official.

The police have intensified its measures in order to curb this dangerous practice. Special teams have been deployed across key intersections and thoroughfares to monitor traffic flow and identify violators. Strict legal action, including hefty fines and penalties, is being taken against individuals found driving against the established traffic direction," said the authorities.

Further, top 10 traffic circles have been identified by the police with

Najafgarh area topping the list with 1,3289 violators. Sarita Vihar stands at the second number with 1,333 violators, followed by 1,133 in BhajanPura, 1,093 in Punjabi Bagh, 1,062 in Kalyan Puri, 1,056 in Kotwali, 1,041 in Dwarka, 998 in Sangam Vihar, 968 in Rajouri Garden and 966 in Kamla Market.

"The Delhi Traffic Police has also conducted a comprehensive analysis of the top ten traffic circles with the highest number of challans issued in 2024. This study makes it possible to target enforcement operations to improve road safety and adherence to traffic regulations by identifying the areas with the highest prevalence of these types of offences," a senior police

official said.

In a bid to raise awareness and make citizens understand the importance of adhering to traffic rules and regulations, the traffic police is collaborating with various stakeholders, including civic authorities and educational institutions. "Public outreach programmes, awareness campaigns, and educational initiatives are being conducted to instil a sense of responsibility and civic duty among all road users," the police said.

Further, they urged citizens to prioritise safety and compliance with traffic laws while commuting on the city's roads. "It is imperative for every individual to respect traffic regulations, follow designated traffic flow directions, and contribute towards creating a safer and more orderly environment for all," the statement by the traffic police said.



Marine heatwave scorches pristine coral reefs of Lakshadweep

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

The vibrant corals of the picturesque Lakshadweep sea nestled in India's smallest union territory off the coast of Kerala are losing their sheen as it is experiencing prolonged marine heatwaves since late October 2023.

These marine heat waves, characterised by extended periods of abnormally high ocean temperatures, have pushed the Degree Heating Week (DHW) indicator above

4 °C-weeks, posing a severe threat to coral health, said scientists at the ICAR-Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI) as they observed alarming levels of coral bleaching, indicating significant stress on marine ecosystems in the region.

Coral bleaching occurs when the water temperature becomes excessively warm, causing corals to expel the microscopic algae residing within their tissues. Experts say bleached corals are not



dead but are at risk of starvation and disease. "Such heat stress levels signify

a severe threat to coral health, leading to extensive bleaching where corals lose the symbiotic algae (zooxanthellae), compromising their survival by depriving them of essential nutrients. If the DHW continues to rise, reaching beyond 12 °C weeks, it could

precipitate an unprecedented biodiversity crisis due to multispecies mortality," KR Sreenath, senior scientist at CMFRI, said on Monday.

According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), this level of DHW poses a substantial risk of coral bleaching, threatening the region's diverse marine ecosystems.

Corals are living organisms that make up the reefs and provide the ecosystem for

marine life to thrive, especially fish. Coral reefs are a natural barrier, protecting these islands against the swelling of the seas, and keeping salt water out of the limited freshwater sources in the region.

Shelton Padua, another senior scientist, identified the primary causes of these marine heat waves as excessive heat atmospheric transfer coupled with shifts in ocean currents, leading to unusually high water temperatures.

Come out in large number to strengthen democracy: VD

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Bharatiya Janata Party State President and MP Shri Vishnudutt Sharma, while calling on the voters for the third phase of voting to be held on Tuesday, said that alert and active voters are the biggest protectors of democracy. Voter brothers and sisters of the state should make their role meaningful by voting as much as possible in the voting to be held on Tuesday.

State President Vishnudutt Sharma said that under the third phase of Lok Sabha elections, voters of Morena, Bhind, Gwalior, Guna, Sagar, Vidisha, Bhopal, Rajgarh and Betul Lok Sabha constituencies of the state will exercise their franchise on Tuesday. He said that all the citizens of the

State President of BJP Vishnudutt Sharma said that under the third phase of Lok Sabha elections, voters of Morena, Bhind, Gwalior, Guna, Sagar, Vidisha, Bhopal, Rajgarh and Betul Lok Sabha constituencies of the state will exercise their franchise on Tuesday

region have faith and trust in democracy and democratic processes. Elections are a great festival of democracy and the voters of the state should participate in it thoughtfully and fearlessly and strengthen democracy with their votes. Meanwhile, Sharma said that on behalf of the Bharatiya Janata Party, I pay tribute to Martyr Vicky Pahade, the brave son of Chhindwara who was martyred for the motherland. The entire Bharatiya

Janata Party stands with the family of the Air Force personnel who were martyred for the motherland on the soil of Jammu and Kashmir and the Red Martyr of Chhindwara, Shri Vicky Pahade. State Chief Minister Mohan Yadav reached Chhindwara and paid tribute to the martyr by placing a wreath on his mortal remains. The state government will also take care of the son with a Shradha Nidhi of one

crore. BJP State President Shri Sharma said that we are proud of our army and this loss is irreparable. He said that the BJP government of Madhya Pradesh will not let the martyrdom of its brave soldier go in vain and the state government will also take care of the martyr's son. Chief Minister Mohan Yadav has also sought permission from the Election Commission of India to provide a fund of Rs 1 crore to the martyr's family. It is a matter of great shame that father and son did not even come to pay homage to the martyr. BJP State President Shri Sharma said that it is a matter of great shame that for the Lok Sabha elections held in Chhindwara a few days ago, former Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh Kamal Nath and his MP son

Nakul Nath were roaming from street to street in Chhindwara for one vote each of the people. Were. But as soon as the voting was over, this father-son duo did not reach Chhindwara to pay tribute and console the family even after the martyrdom of the brave son of Chhindwara. Congress can never respect the army and martyrdom. No one knows where the father and son are, but there is a BJP whose leader, Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, goes to the border and celebrates Diwali with the soldiers. Unfortunately, these Congress people ask for proof from Mr Bantadhar Digvijay and Corruptionnath Kamalnath on surgical strike. He has such thinking about the army, which is well understood by the public.



Congress leader Rahul Gandhi with Congress State President Jitu Patwari and party MLA Vikrant Bhuria during an election campaign for Lok Sabha elections in Ratlam, Madhya Pradesh on Monday. Pioneer photo

Houses of those crushed a cop to death by tractor trolley, demolished in Shahdol

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Authorities have demolished the houses of two persons accused in a case of crushing a policeman to death by a tractor-trolley transporting illegally mined sand in Madhya Pradesh's Shahdol district, an official said on Monday.

The police also arrested the absconding tractor-trolley owner, Surendra Singh, late Sunday night, Superintendent of Police Kumar Prateek told. Surendra Singh's son Ashutosh Singh, who was piloting the tractor, and vehicle driver Raj Rawat were arrested earlier in connection with the incident which took place on the intervening night of Saturday-Sunday in Badoli village under Beohari police station limits.

A proposal to give an assistance of Rs 1 crore to the family of the deceased assistant sub-inspector (ASI), Mahendra Bagri, will be sent to the Election Commission for approval (in view of the model code of conduct in force), the Chief Minister's Office said. Bagri and the other policemen gave a signal to the driver to stop the tractor carrying the illegally mined sand. But he did not stop and the vehicle ran over the ASI, the official said. District Collector Tarun Bhatnagar said the tractor driver's house valued at around Rs 4 lakh was demolished on Sunday evening. Two houses, valued at Rs 10 lakh and Rs 4 lakh, of tractor owner Surendra Singh were also demolished, he added. SP Prateek said Beohari police station in-charge Munnalal

Rahangdale has been line-attached (removed from field duty). A proposal to extern the accused father-son duo from the district has been sent for approval of the district collector, he said. A case was registered against the accused on charges of murder and illegal sand mining under provisions of the Indian Penal Code and the Mines Act, the official said. 'Piloting' in Shahdol is used to refer to moving ahead a vehicle while seeing the road is clear and no checking is being done by authorities. In November last year, a local revenue department official was crushed to death by a tractor-trolley used for transporting illegally mined sand from the Son river in Gopalgpur area of Shahdol district.

RNTU's Humanities and Liberal Arts department hosts grand celebration

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Rabindranath Tagore University's Humanities and Liberal Arts Department recently orchestrated a spectacular festival, 'Fete de Shakespeare,' honoring the indelible legacy of the legendary playwright, William Shakespeare. The event, held at the university premises, brought together students, faculty, and esteemed guests in a jubilant commemoration of Shakespeare's enduring genius. Dr Ruchi Mishra Tiwari, the esteemed curator of the program, extended a warm welcome to all attendees, emphasizing the platform it provides for students to showcase their talents and creativity. The significance of cele-



brating such festivals in preserving Shakespeare's legacy was elucidated by the esteemed Pro Vice Chancellor, Sangeeta Jauhari, underscoring the ongoing relevance of Shakespeare's work in contemporary society. In a poignant address, Prof. Rajnikant, the Vice-Chancellor of RNTU,

emphasized the timeless human values embedded in Shakespeare's dramas, advocating for their continued exploration and appreciation. This year's edition of the Shakespeare festival saw a remarkable collaboration with the Cinelit Society, an endeavor lauded by its founder members, Dr. Uzma Khan and Rachna Bajpai, who highlighted the society's diverse activities, including competitions at both school and college levels. The event witnessed the participation of esteemed guests, including Dr. Nidhi Tiwari, head of the Social Science Department at the Regional Institute of Education, who illuminated Shakespeare's advocacy for marginalized voices, citing the relevance of his messages in contemporary discourse. The festival's highlight was a captivating drama performance by humanities students, a rendition of 'The Merchant of Venice,' directed by Mr. Manoj Nair of the Tagore National School of Drama, which received a resounding standing ovation from the audience.

In addition to the theatrical extravaganza, the event marked the release of the latest edition of the 'Campus Mimamsa' newsletter, meticulously crafted by students of journalism under the expert guidance of Mr. Yogesh Patel, Assistant Professor of Journalism and Mass Communication. The occasion concluded with a heartfelt vote of thanks delivered by Shaivy, a member of the Cinelit Society, expressing gratitude to all participants and supporters. The 'Fete de Shakespeare' festival drew an enthusiastic audience comprising deans, heads of departments, faculty, and students of RNTU, underscoring the university's commitment to fostering cultural enrichment and academic excellence.



Poll officials carry election material distributed to them by buses for their respective polling booths for an election duty ahead of the third phase of Lok Sabha elections in Bhopal on Monday. Pioneer photo

Delegates from Sri Lanka, Philippines observe voting material distribution

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

An international 11 member delegation from Sri Lanka and Philippines has come to Bhopal to see all the processes of Lok Sabha Elections-2024 and understand the various stages related to it. This delegation reached the voting material distribution site in Bhopal on 6th May in the morning, saw the voting material distribution process and sought detailed information about it. During this, Joint Chief Electoral Officer Manoj Khatri, Collector and District Election Officer Kaushalendra Vikram Singh, CEO District Panchayat Rituraj Singh were present along with the delegation. The international delegation was given step-wise detailed information about the entire election process by Collector Singh and Master Trainer.



They were also given information about other election related processes including EVM, VVPAT, polling team formation, voting material distribution, monitoring and security related arrangements. Various questions related to the election process were asked by the members of the international delegation, and were resolved by Collector

Singh. The international delegation met and discussed with the polling parties at the material distribution site and sought various information related to the process. Members of international delegation The international delegation including Socorro B Inting, Associate Commissioner of the

Philippines 'Commission on Elections' in the International Delegation, Director Celia B Romero and Executive Assistant Leslie NC Conquilla have come to Bhopal. Similarly, Justice Wevage Priyasath Gerard Dep, Chairman of Sri Lanka's 'Presidential Commission of Inquiry to Make Recommendations for Election Law Reforms', Commission Member Sundaram Arumainayagam, Commission Member Alisandaralage Senanayake, Commission Member Ahmed Lebbe Mohammed Salim, Commission Member Nimalka Fernando, Commission Member Vitharanage Deepani Samantha Rodrigo, Commission Member Alan Carmichael Vere Tambinayagam David along with Commission Secretary Madhava Devasurendra have also come to Bhopal.

Third phase of polling scheduled in 9 constituencies of MP today

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

In the third phase of Lok Sabha elections-2024, voting will be held in nine Lok Sabha parliamentary constituencies of the state on Tuesday. Voting will be held from 7 am to 6 pm in Lok Sabha Parliamentary Constituency No. 1 Morena, No. 2 Bhind (SC), No. 3 Gwalior, No. 4 Guna, No. 5 Sagar, No. 18 Vidisha, No. 19 Bhopal, No. 20 Rajgarh and Betul Parliamentary Constituency No. -29 All the polling parties have reached their respective polling centers for voting. On reaching the polling station, all the polling personnel were welcomed by the local people with flowers and refreshments. Holiday declared on the day of voting For the convenience of voters, there will be a public and general holiday on polling day (May 7) in the above nine Lok Sabha parliamentary constituencies of the third phase. The state government has declared a public holiday and general holiday in the respective Lok Sabha parliamentary con-

For the convenience of voters, there will be a public and general holiday on polling day (May 7) in the above nine Lok Sabha parliamentary constituencies

stituencies on the day of polling in exercise of the powers conferred by Section 25 of the Negotiable Instruments Act. Citizens will be able to get information about voting percentage through voter turn-out app. On the day of voting (May 7), updated information about voting percentage will be available on the Voter Turnout App of the Election Commission of India. Through this, citizens will be able to get information about the voting percentage recorded every two hours. Citizens will have to download the Voter-Turnout App by visiting Google Play Store.

Fire at Union Carbide factory in afternoon

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

A fire broke out in the Union Carbide factory on Monday. A fire broke out in a plastic tank in the factory at around 3.30 pm. On receiving information from a passerby, the Municipal Corporation's fire brigade team reached the spot and brought it under control. Devendra Kansote, who lives in street number 10 of JP Nagar, located in front of the Union Carbide factory complex, said that he was passing in front of the factory. Then smoke was seen rising from the factory premises. When he went near the boundary wall of the Union Carbide factory, he saw flames rising from a tank inside. He immediately informed the fire control room of the Municipal Corporation about the incident. Fire brigade arrived after about 10 minutes and controlled the fire in the factory premises after half an hour of effort. After the fire was controlled, when the fire brigade investigated the cause of the fire, it was revealed that the fire started in a plastic tank. Meanwhile, a second incident of fire was reported in Noor Mahal road on Monday afternoon, an electric transformer caught fire due to the flames of burning scrap.

Shirodhara facility in AYUSH deptt helping patients in AIIMS Bhopal

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

High level health facilities are available in AIIMS Bhopal. One such method is Ayurveda. Shirodhara is a healing method in Ayurveda, which originated in India thousands of years ago. It focuses on rebalancing the life forces, called doshas, in the patient's body. One such story is of 46 year old Naman (name changed). Who was not able to sleep properly at night for the last 6 years. The whole night was spent tossing and turning. Also took sleeping pills. But till the time the medicine is continued, it is fine, but later again the same old story. Later, he visited the OPD in the AYUSH department of AIIMS Bhopal. Dr Danish Javed advised him to get Shirodhara done. After only one month of treatment, there was a significant change in the patient's condition. After almost 3 months of treatment, Naman now sleeps peacefully at night.

Shirodhara is an Ayurvedic treatment technique in which medicated oil, milk or buttermilk is dropped on the patient's forehead. Shirodhara is made up of two Sanskrit words - Shiro (head) and Dhara (flow). This involves pouring liquid - usually oil, milk, buttermilk, or water - on the patient's forehead. It is often combined with body, scalp or head massage. Oil, milk or buttermilk processed from herbs is put in a vessel which has a small hole in the middle and from the same hole the oil is dropped on the forehead (between the two eyebrows). To protect the eyes it, it is covered with a bandage. Shirodhara has a relaxing, soothing and calming effect on the body and mind. Research also shows that Shirodhara reduces fatigue, is beneficial in sleep problems, relieves headache, reduces stress, anxiety and depression, improves concentration and helps in reducing blood pressure. In the last one month alone, about 70 patients took advantage of it.



BHEL successfully manufactured and tested Large Spherical Valve of Arun-3 Hydroelectric Project, Nepal. Water Turbine Manufacturing Department successfully manufactured & tested the largest ever spherical main inlet valve (weight - 213 tons) for Arun-3 4x225 MW Hydroelectric Power Plant, Nepal which was handed over to the customer on Monday. On this occasion SM Ramanathan, Executive Director BHEL, Bhopal; VS Rao (General Manager Hydro), Manoj Nilarwar (Additional General Manager, GJB), Sanjeev Saxena (Additional General Manager, GJB) and all Hydro Group employees were present. Pioneer photo

Disability is not a hindrance in conducting polling: Goswami

PNS ■ DHAR

In the third phase of Lok Sabha elections-2024, Divyang (Disable) polling personnel Shri Vimal Goswami has been assigned the duty of conducting voting in the polling centre located in Maula of

Khategaon assembly of Dewas district under Vidisha Lok Sabha constituency. Despite being Divyang in both legs, Goswami left with the polling team on Monday with great enthusiasm to conduct the voting. He said that disability is not a hindrance in conducting

polling. Goswami said he wanted to see how the voting process would be. He said that generally Divyang polling personnel try to get their polling duty cancelled citing their disability, but he is very happy while leaving for his duty with the polling party.

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Third phase of Assam polls to decide fate of 47 candidates in four seats

PTI ■ GUWAHATI

The political fate of 47 candidates in four Lok Sabha seats will be decided on Tuesday when the third and final phase of the elections in the State will be held. Polling will begin at 7 am and conclude at 5 pm in the four constituencies — Kokrajhar (ST), Dhubri, Barpeta and Guwahati. All eyes will be on the prestigious Guwahati seat where both BJP and Congress have put up woman nominees — Bijuli Kalita Medhi and Mira Borthakur Goswami — respectively. The other prominent candidates are AIUDF chief Badruddin Ajmal who is seeking re-election for the fourth successive term from Dhubri, Congress MLA Rakibul Hussain, eight time Asom Gana Parishad legislator Phanibhushan Choudhury and CPI(M) MLA Manoranjan Talukdar. Barpeta has the highest of 14 candidates and Guwahati the lowest of eight in the fray while six women are contesting in the final phase. The BJP has put up only one candidate in this phase for the Guwahati seat, while its alliance partners AGP are contesting in two — Dhubri and Barpeta — and the UPPL in Kokrajhar. The Congress and the Voters Party International (VPI) are fighting in all four seats, while the BPF, the Trinamool Congress, Bharatiya Gana



Parishad, SUCI(C) and Republican Party of India (Athawale) are contesting in two each. The AIUDF, CPI(M), Gana Suraksha Party, Hindu Samaj Party, Asom Jana Morcha, National Road Map Party of India, Rashtriya Ulema Council, Ekam Sanatan Bharat Dal and Bahujan Maha Party are contesting in one seat each while 16 independents are also in the fray. A total electorate of 82.11 lakh including 41.27 men, 40.84 women and 112 belonging to the third gender will be eligible to exercise their franchise in 9,516 polling stations.

Polling will be held amid tight security with 60 companies of security forces deployed across the five constituencies. In Guwahati, held by the BJP, a direct contest is on the cards between BJP's Bijuli Kalita Medhi and Congress candidate Mira Borthakur Goswami, both debutants in Lok Sabha polls. The contest in Barpeta is expected to be triangular among NDA partner Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) candidate Phanibhushan Choudhury, CPI(M)'s Manoranjan Talukdar and Deep Bayan of the Congress. In Dhubri, 13 candidates are in the fray with AIUDF

strongman Badruddin Ajmal, seeking a fourth term, locked in a triangular contest with Congress MLA Rakibul Hussain and NDA partner AGP's Zaved Islam. In Kokrajhar (ST), a triangular contest is also on the cards among UPPL's Jayanta Basumtary, Congress' Garjen Mushahary and Bodoland People's Front's (BPF) Kampa Borgoyary. The sitting independent Kokrajhar MP Naba Kumar Sarania, representing the seat reserved for Scheduled Tribes since 2014, had filed his nomination papers which was rejected following the striking down of his Scheduled Tribe (ST) status. Assam Chief Electoral Officer Anurag Goel said that all arrangements have been completed for conducting the polls in a free, fair, safe and peaceful manner. In the first phase of polls held on April 19, 78.25 per cent of the electorate exercised their franchise to decide the fate of 35 candidates for the Kokrajhar, Jorhat, Dibrugarh, Sonitpur and Lakhimpur constituencies. In the second phase held on April 26, 81.17 per cent of the voters cast their votes to decide the fate of 61 candidates for Karimganj, Silchar(SC), Diphu (ST), Nagaon and Darrang-Udalguri. In the outgoing Lok Sabha, BJP held nine seats, Congress three, AIUDF and an independent one each from the state.

Polling in both LS seats in Goa today

PTI ■ PANAJI

More than 11 lakh voters are eligible to exercise their franchise in elections to both the Lok Sabha seats in Goa on Tuesday, where the Congress and BJP are locked in a straight fight. The coastal state has two Lok Sabha constituencies — North Goa and South Goa. "We are all ready with all the required facilities at polling stations. I appeal to all the voters to cast their ballots from 7 am to 6 pm," North Goa district collector Sneha Gite said. The polling booths are set up as per the Election Commission's guidelines. Considering the hot weather conditions, voters will be provided refreshments and water at polling booths, she said. North Goa will see the BJP's sitting MP Shripad Naik take on Congress's Ramakant Khalap, while in South Goa, the saffron party has fielded entrepreneur Pallavi Dempo against Navy-veteran-turned politician Viriato Fernandes of the Congress. The South Goa Lok Sabha seat is currently held by Congress' Francisco Sardinha. Sixteen candidates, eight each in North and South Goa Lok Sabha constituencies, are in the fray. As per the data on the website of the office of Goa's Chief Electoral Officer, the state has 11,79,644 voters, including 5,80,710 in North Goa and 5,98,934 in South Goa, as on April 19. Of the total number of



voters, there are 5,71,617 men, 6,07,715 women and 12 members of the transgender community. Besides, there are 300 service voters, including 133 in North Goa and 167 in South Goa, the data stated. The run-up to the elections saw rallies by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah for the BJP, and the Congress roped in its senior leaders Shashi Tharoor and Pawan Khera for campaigns in Goa. A total of 1,725 polling stations have been set up across the coastal state, including 863 in North Goa and 862 in South Goa, state Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) Ramesh Verma said in a media statement.

"Of these, 43 model polling booths have been identified in North Goa and 45 in South Goa. The move is aimed at streamlining the voting process and reducing the waiting time," he said. Medical camps will be held at eight model polling stations in urban areas where there is a higher percentage of elderly voters, Verma said. "After casting their vote, senior citizens can avail health checks by doctors from the Directorate of Health Services," he said. To empower women voters and promote gender equality, 40 dedicated polling stations, also known as 'pink booths', have been set up in both districts, the official said. "These polling stations will

be exclusively managed by women personnel, ensuring a safe and supportive environment for female voters to exercise their democratic right," he said. Verma said environment sustainability has been prioritised, and 40 'green' polling stations have been set up. "The eco-friendly booths are decorated using sustainable materials such as bamboo and coconut leaves sourced from local vendors, reflecting a commitment to reducing the ecological footprint of the electoral process," he said. Divyang polling stations have also been set up — five in North Goa and three in South Goa, he added.

Congress treated tribals as vote bank; BJP under Modi gave them respect: Arjun Munda

PTI ■ KHUNTI (JHARKHAND)

Union minister Arjun Munda on Monday claimed that the Congress and INDIA bloc converted tribals into "mere vote bank", while the BJP under Prime Minister Narendra Modi ensured that these people get due respect. Attacking the Congress, the former three-time Jharkhand chief minister claimed that the party believed that tribals who lived in jungles were criminals by nature and the Atal Bihari Vajpayee government first took interest in their welfare. "The Congress in its 60 years regime treated tribals as mere vote banks whereas the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) under Prime Minister Narendra Modi is committed to ensure that they get due recognition and respect. This is why the Prime Minister chose Khunti to launch major schemes including a Rs 24,000 crore programme for PVTGs (Particularly

Vulnerable Tribal Groups) from Khunti," Munda said in an interview with PTI. Munda, Union tribal and agriculture minister, is contesting Lok Sabha elections from Khunti reserved seat that is identified with tribal icon Birsa Munda. In 2019, Munda won the Khunti LS seat, facing the problems of human trafficking, poverty, opium cultivation and Naxalism, with a slender margin of 1,445 votes, and is once again locked in a direct fight with Congress candidate Kalicharan Munda. "This is true that tribal society has been used as a vote bank only. There were no schemes, no policies for them. When their rights and systems were adopted later, Congress ensured that tribal issues came under the Home Department. They believed that those who resided in jungles were criminal by nature," he claimed. It was the then Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee

who took interest in their welfare and later Modi ensured justice to them, Munda said. He claimed the tribal society understood the game plan of Congress that it wanted to keep them away from development to reap the benefits of their innocence and now they are aware of their rights and understood who was working for them. "They will vote for BJP under a dynamic and visionary leader like Prime Minister Modi. We are confident to cross the 400 mark this time and in Jharkhand, we will win all 14 Lok Sabha seats irrespective of tribal or non-tribal seats," Munda claimed. To a question, he admitted that Khunti and Simdega are known for human trafficking, particularly of girls. "I have undertaken an innovative step to boost confidence and provide employment to girls here. I had initiated moves like learning while earning - a programme to ensure



employment for tribal girls. "I am happy that an unprecedented experiment is becoming successful as thousands of girls have been trained by Tata Electronics. Now mobile parts of mobile phones like Apple are being made by Khunti girls," he said. Massive horticulture initiatives are also being taken to bring youths engaged in drug trafficking and extremism to the mainstream, he said.

to this. But we are now committed to ensuring a sound agriculture infrastructure in the belt for cash crops and horticulture so that these can be sent to the national market. Jharkhand will be accorded special attention." On lac and tussar silkworm cultivation, he said steps were being undertaken to promote these in national and international markets, while a large laboratory is being set up at Khunti under Honey Mission. On the opposition's promise to introduce MSP on all agro-produce, he said it may be a populist measure in the short term, but how much it will be beneficial in the long run is a matter of research. "They are promising this on the eve of this election whereas they were in power for 60 years. They would have done it long back," the BJP leader said. On the BJP's promise of providing ration for 80 crore people for the next five years,

he said "We have sufficient stock and there is no need for imports." Asked how confident he was of his win since the margin last time was only 1,445 votes, the minister said, "I accept the contest was close last time. But the people of Khunti are deciding the best for them." He listed the development measures that have taken place at Khunti, such as setting up Eklavya Model Schools and raising the number of students and teachers in existing ones. Hitting out at the JMM-led alliance in the state, Munda said that they deliberately delayed release of funds and implementation of central schemes to show the BJP in a bad light. Countering JMM-led alliance's accusation that funds were not released under Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojna and hence the state had to launch Abua Awas Yojan from their funds, he said the ground reality is different as

they failed to utilise Rs 5,000 crore funds properly for water supply. Likewise, the allotment of Adarsh Gram Yojana model project was pending for three years and was just released ahead of elections, he alleged. "Illegal transfer of tribal land is rampant in Jharkhand, it is a major issue and the state government should have checked it. Unfortunately, the former CM himself faces such charges of grabbing land," he said referring to an allegation against Hemant Soren. People have no sympathy for him, Munda claimed. On the INDIA bloc's accusation that the Centre has been using CBI and ED to harass opposition leaders, he said if they felt so, they could seek justice from the court of law. Munda attacked the state government for keeping control over sand, saying that it was a minor mineral and Gram Sabha has rights over minor minerals in the traditional system.

Congress dream to win elections on false promises will be shattered: Anurag Thakur

PTI ■ HAMIRPUR (HP)

Union Information and Broadcasting Minister Anurag Thakur on Monday said the Congress leaders are living in a fool's paradise and their dream "to win the elections on false promises" will be shattered once the poll results are announced on June 4. The BJP leader also took potshots at Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, saying he has forgotten his own slogan "daro mat" and running from one seat to another while fearing defeat in the Lok Sabha elections. "First he ran from Amethi to Wayanad and now he is contesting from Rae Bareilly and the Congress is sure to be wiped out from Rae Bareilly also," he told PTI. Thakur, who is contesting from the Hamirpur Lok Sabha seat, claimed that the people of the constituency were with him and his victory margin this time would be more than the previous margin of about four lakh votes. Thakur, a four time MP, expressed optimism that the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) would win more than 400 seats. Escalating his attack on the opposition, the BJP leader



said the Congress gave thousands of acres of India's land to foreign powers during its 60 years of rule. They gave Katchatheevu Island to Sri Lanka, while Prime Minister Narendra Modi strengthened the army in the past 10 years, he said. Thakur alleged the hand of foreign powers is clearly visible in the Congress manifesto. The limit was crossed when their evil eye fell on the ancestral property which belongs to your children and the Congress leaders Rahul Gandhi and Mallikarjun Kharge are yet to come out with a clarification on this issue, he said. Thakur further said the Congress leaders are spreading lies that the BJP would abolish reservation and the Constitution if it comes to power. "But the people of the country know who imposed the emergency and who changed the Constitution of the country 62 times," he said.

Shivaji descendant hopes to breach Pawar fortress in Satara

PTI ■ SATARA (MAHARASHTRA)

One is a descendant of Chhatrapati Shivaji underplaying that emotive connection, the other a close aide of NCP founder Sharad Pawar banking on the formidable leader. Both contestants vying to be MP from Satara say what matters is the common person and ground level issues such as jobs and education. The BJP has nominated Udaynaraje Bhosale, the 13th descendant of the Maratha warrior king, to take on former MLA Shashikant Shinde of the NCP (Sharadchandra Pawar). "I have never used Chhatrapati Shivaji's name in elections or in my life. I live in a democracy. If I am from that family, so be it. But I live as a common man," Bhosale told PTI. According to Shinde, voters in Satara want a common person to represent them. He is banking on Sharad Pawar, who remains a formidable political player and is still capable of checkmating rivals. "The new generation needs an industrial hub, better education, an IT park and health infrastructure. We have thousands of sugarcane farmers but the ban on sugar exports by the Centre has made them angry," he told



candidate of the undivided NCP, but resigned within a few months and joined the BJP. In the ensuing bypoll, he lost as a BJP candidate to NCP's Shrinivas Patil. A photo of a rain-soaked Sharad Pawar, then 79, delivering a speech in Satara was said to have ensured Patil's victory and changed the NCP's fortunes in the Maharashtra assembly polls that year. A lot has changed since then, with NCP seeing a vertical split. One section of the original party, headed by Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar, is now a constituent of the BJP-led Mahayuti, which also has a section of the original Shiv Sena. Sharad Pawar, who now heads the NCP (SP), is a part of the opposition coalition Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA), which also comprises Shiv Sena (UBT) and Congress. Traditionally, Satara was a Congress stronghold, with Shiv Sena representing the seat for a few years. After Sharad Pawar broke ranks with the Congress and formed the NCP in 1999, it became his party's strong base. Bhosale, currently a Rajya Sabha member, rejected the suggestion that the Sharad Pawar factor might be behind his past victories. "I had won on my own

strength and not on anyone's name. You can ask anyone here. People ensured my victory because of the work I have done." He said he talks about the promises he has fulfilled when he meets people. "I have done work worth about Rs 10,000 crore in the last five years." The BJP's campaign in Maharashtra has been led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who draws massive crowds, and Union Home Minister Amit Shah. A few voters questioned the work done by NCP, expressing hope that Bhosale would be able to solve their issues. Many were reluctant to express their views. Most, however, agreed that Satara has a huge tourism potential due to its historical links though it is yet to be tapped. According to Shinde, a lot of people from Satara are in the armed forces. "In some villages, every household has a member in the military. But no fresh recruitment is happening in the police or military. Our boys have no option but to enrol as Agniveers (who serve in armed forces for four years). So people are angry." Shinde represented the Koregan assembly constituency in Sangli district in 2009 and 2014 as a member of the undivided NCP.

There will be jungle raj in country if INDIA Bloc comes to power: Shah

PTI ■ SAMASTIPUR (BIHAR)

There will be 'jungle raj' in the country if INDIA bloc partners - Congress and RJD - are voted to power, Union Home Minister Amit Shah said here on Monday. He also claimed that cash recovery in Jharkhand proves INDIA bloc leaders are corrupt. Addressing an election rally in favour of senior BJP leader and Union Minister of State for Home Affairs Nitayanand Rai, in Bihar's Samastipur district, Shah said, "The latest recovery of Rs 30 crore and more from the house of a minister in Jharkhand proves INDIA bloc leaders are corrupt." He also said, "If they come to power, there will be a complete 'jungle raj' in the country as well as in Bihar." Notably, the Enforcement Directorate on Monday claimed to have recovered a huge amount of "unaccounted" cash during searches at the premises of a domestic help allegedly linked to the secretary of Jharkhand minister Alamgir Alam. "Who will be the PM of the INDIA bloc? Will Sharad Pawar be the prime minister? Will Mamata Banerjee become (the PM) or MK



Stalin or Uddhav Thackeray? I will take another name. Please don't laugh. Can Rahul baba become the PM?" Shah said. He also alleged that leaders of the RJD and the Congress did not attend the consecration ceremony of the Ayodhya Ram temple because of vote bank politics. RJD's Lalu Prasad and Congress always opposed the construction of Ram temple in Ayodhya, he claimed. Shah also said Congress has always opposed reservation to backward classes. Sarairanjan block comes under the Ujjairpur Lok Sabha constituency where Rai is seeking reelection. Rai, who is the NDA nominee, is pitted against RJD's Alok Mehta, who is the candidate of Mahagathbandhan, the prototype of the INDIA bloc in Bihar.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Holding up the mirror

The roots of Khalistani extremism in Canada run deep; S Jaishankar just made it public

In a recent critique of the Trudeau administration, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar accused Canada of granting visas to individuals linked to organised crime, despite warnings from New Delhi, while also legitimising extremism, separatism, and advocates of violence under the guise of free speech. Regarding the escalation of pro-Khalistani activities in Canada and the recent arrest of three individuals in connection with the killing of India-designated terrorist Hardeep Singh Nijjar, Jaishankar remarked that certain individuals have organized politically, influencing politicians to believe they hold sway over community support, thus carving out a space for themselves in the politics of democratic nations. This has been the Indian answer to Canadian charges of killing a Canadian Sikh on its soil. S Jaishankar has effectively retorted to the Canadian charges by saying that the Canada government gives visas to dubious people from India despite the Indian government's warnings. The roots of Khalistani separatism gained significant traction in the 1980s culminating in violence and the tragic events of Operation Blue Star and the anti-Sikh riots of 1984. The wounds inflicted during this period continue to fester, providing fertile ground for extremist ideologies to thrive, particularly among Sikh diaspora communities. Canada, with its sizable Sikh population, became a hub for Khalistani activists and sympathisers, offering refuge to those fleeing persecution in India while inadvertently providing a platform for the propagation of separatist ideologies.



The liberal immigration policies and multicultural ethos of Canada provided a conducive environment for the Khalistani movement to gain momentum, with several prominent figures finding sanctuary and support within its borders. However, the issue transcends mere ideological sympathies and delves into the realm of organised crime and terrorism. Over the years, there have been numerous instances of Khalistani elements in Canada being implicated in activities ranging from fundraising for militant outfits to carrying out targeted attacks against perceived enemies of the movement. India has repeatedly raised concerns about Canada's perceived leniency towards individuals with ties to Khalistani extremism. Minister for External Affairs, S Jaishankar's criticism reflects India's growing unease over the role of certain segments within the Canadian establishment in enabling and even legitimizing Khalistani activities. He has done the right thing in showing the mirror to the Canadian government which had accused India of a Sikh Canadian on its soil. Canada, on its part, has taken some steps to address these concerns but the fact is Canada's Govt has been largely sympathetic to such elements. Only a couple of days back Khalistani slogans were raised in the presence of Canadian prime minister Justin Trudeau. Canada must strike a delicate balance between upholding its commitment to freedom of speech and association while preventing its territory from being used as a staging ground for violence and terrorism.

PICTALK



Polling officials travel via a boat to reach their respective polling booths, a day before the voting, in Kamrup

Dynamic contours of electoral politics



VINAYSHIL GAUTAM

In a nation where election season seems perennial, the traditional distinction between campaign fervour and governance blurs into a continuous political landscape

The election season is here. The reaction to the statement could well be that election season is now almost there around the year. There are some elections in some parts of the country going on constantly. In short, almost every season has become an election season. It would be tempting to ask oneself if this is a good thing or a bad thing. It's normal to be judgmental in matters which appear to be significant. However, it would not matter which way the judgment goes because the judgment would not affect the actual run of the situation.

That may be another matter. However, the present election fever is unique in its type because it affects every part of the country and is not confined to a small region or another. The concern of the day is national rather than regional, as it often is. This makes the issues of national significance to figure out a choice in the fray. National issues could come up in many areas, such as defence, taxation, education and interstate movements. The special entry provisions that govern certain regions of the country, or indeed the kind of inter-regional transportation structure, including waterways, as it affects human movement, trade, or commerce. The list enumerated itself is loud and can be added to. However, it makes a basic point. The issues in this election are issues that cut across states, have pan-India bearings, or affect the identity of citizens in the country. All this adds to the exclusivity of the election. Conceptually, what has been set in the preceding few lines is correct. But operationally, there are many other shades and colours. A dominant theme affecting these elections seems to be religion, whereas worship is always a private thing. In India, methods of worship have often served as a method of aggregation of identity. This is a particularly unique gift of the way independence was achieved in this country. No country in the world in the post-colonial era was ever partitioned based on religion, as India was, as a prerequisite for independence. How this helped anyone or any



cause is not quite clear. If the basis of partition was religion, there was something strange about one country proclaiming its identity to be one religion and another country emphatically proposing that it would not have any religious identity. That, however, was the choice of August, 14 and 15, 1947, by the two countries that brought into existence freedom, or more technically, the withdrawal of colonial rule. The British were particular in pointing out that they were giving back power from where they had taken it when they started the rule of then-united India. The rest has to say is history. But post August 15, 1947, saw an experience throughout the subcontinent that was unique and has been termed by some historians as the 'unification of India'. There was a British India and a princely India. The British India territories would have elected government, yet the princely India would have their choice of secession to India or Pakistan. The rest, as they say, is history. Barring Multan, North West Frontier territory, Jammu and Kashmir, Junagarh and Hyderabad, the merger issues were largely smooth and without too much contention. Even the territories named above had a choice exercised sooner than what seemed most like-



THE DISCONNECT BETWEEN ELECTORAL PROMISES, THE ISSUES THAT WIN VOTES AND HOW THE ELECTED PARTY ACTUALLY GOVERNS AND IMPLEMENTS THEIR AGENDA ONCE IN POWER LEADS TO MANY UNEXPECTED AND PERPLEXING OUTCOMES

ly possible. The result was the emergence of a unified India and a unified Pakistan. Jammu and Kashmir remained the only state in which a deliberate contention was kept alive. Indeed, there was no contentious issue if the terms of the Freedom Act were followed, but in one way or another, the matter continues to evoke emotions, in a unique way, in several people. It is not just religion at play, there are several factors, including geopolitical ones. It is also possible not to recognize how the matter has been made increasingly complex by an unnecessary play of force, some of whom have no locus standee at all in the case. One would have thought that elections held at a national level, so often, so regularly and so fairly across the length and breadth of the country, would have rendered the whole issue of controversy in Jammu and Kashmir needless. Alas, that is not the case. Elections have a certain pattern in this country: give and take a few arguments here and there. However, choices have to be exercised and the numerical outcome of those choices determines how the country is governed. So the question arises as to what the net findings of the propositions thrown up as electoral issues are. In many states, local

issues seem to be inclined to determine the balloting that would take place for national representation. This appears to be the case, especially in Karnataka, Bihar, Manipur and some other states. The essence of the matter is that choices have to be exercised and the arguments of the choices need only to be communicable in terms of the strength that the community appears to endorse in the legislature. It is worth remembering that, at the end of the day, once the election results are announced, there is no accountability for the correlation between how choices made on issues during elections will be exercised when the party concerned, which wins the election, administers the issue. It may well be said that elections as a process still await better mellowing and maturing to make them an internally consistent one. At the moment, it is satisfying to note that by and large, the process of exercising choices, its panning out in the legislature and its administrative implementation are increasingly becoming worthwhile efforts and, a coherent method of administering, sensibly, a large country, such as India. (The writer is a well-known management consultant of international repute. The views expressed are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

SAFFRON: A BLOSSOMING OPPORTUNITY

Madam — Apropos the news article, "Saffron cultivation: Replicate Poonch's success story," published on May 4, this is my response. The story of saffron cultivation in Poonch, Jammu and Kashmir, is not just about agriculture; it's a narrative of resilience and transformation. Ajaz Ahmad's journey exemplifies a shift from traditional farming to embracing the potential of saffron. His vision of Poonch becoming a saffron hub reflects the region's evolving agricultural landscape. However, challenges loom large. Environmental shifts, like erratic rainfall and untimely snowfall, threaten saffron production in Kashmir. Such concerns emphasise the need for sustainable farming practices and governmental support, not just in terms of subsidies but also in ensuring security and mitigating wildlife threats. Yet, amidst these challenges, saffron's allure persists. Its medicinal properties and premium market value make it a lucrative venture for farmers. With initiatives like the National Saffron Mission, there's hope for revitalising saffron cultivation and uplifting Kashmir's socio-economic fabric. As saffron blooms in Poonch, it signifies not just a crop but a promise of prosperity for the region.

Virat Chatterjee | Pune

PROGRESS, CHALLENGES AND HOPE

Madam — Apropos the news article, "Narendra Modi introduces India to its Ashtalakshmis," published on May 4, this is my response. Reading about the political landscape and developmental challenges across India, especially in the neglected North East, evokes a mix of emotions. From the perpetual promises of politicians during election seasons to the persistent issues of floods, droughts and insurgencies, it's a reminder of the complex tapestry of our nation's journey. The failure to address fundamental issues like water scarcity and regional development highlights systemic shortcomings that transcend party lines. However, amidst these challenges, there's

Call for transparency



Apropos the news article, "Covishield's Shield in Question," published on May 5, this is my response. The unfolding saga surrounding the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine underscores a pressing need for transparency and accountability in vaccine distribution and oversight. Alex Mitchell's harrowing experience, alongside numerous others, sheds light on the gravity of poten-

tial side effects and the imperative of informed consent. As legal battles loom against pharmaceutical giants, questions mount regarding regulatory diligence and corporate responsibility. The admission of rare but severe side effects prompts reflection on the balance between vaccine benefits and risks. The petition, led by advocate Vishal Tiwari, encapsulates the public's demand for rigorous scrutiny and redress mechanisms. Calls for expert medical panels and a vaccine damage payment system underscore a quest for justice and safeguarding public health. Amidst the cacophony of voices, from grieving parents to sceptical netizens, one message resonates: transparency breeds trust. As the global vaccination campaign continues, robust surveillance, thorough investigation and proactive communication remain indispensable in navigating the complexities of vaccine safety.

Arnab Reddy | Hyderabad

a glimmer of hope. The efforts made by the current government, particularly in the North East, show a commitment to inclusive growth and infrastructure development. Modi's North East Story sheds light on the transformative changes underway, offering a narrative of progress and resilience. It's heartening to see dynamic leaders and policymakers taking proactive steps to uplift these regions while preserving their unique cultural heritage. The book's portrayal of the North East's beauty and potential serves as an invitation for all Indians to engage with and support the holistic development of these often-overlooked states.

Ishika Verma | Jaipur

BLUEPRINT FOR SUCCESS

Madam — Apropos the news article, "Leveraging NCERT textbooks for CUET," published on May 4, this is my response. The Common University Entrance Test (CUET) stands as a significant milestone for students aspiring to secure undergraduate admissions in India. Amidst the rigorous preparation for CUET 2024, lever-

aging NCERT textbooks emerges as a strategic move. These textbooks, integral to classrooms nationwide, offer more than just academic aid. They serve as a robust foundation, aligning seamlessly with CUET syllabi and offering structured content presentations. From basic principles to advanced concepts, NCERT textbooks provide a roadmap. Their clarity, supplemented by visuals and practice exercises, enhances comprehension and problem-solving skills. Moreover, their standardised content ensures equitable access to quality education, levelling the playing field for CUET aspirants. To optimise CUET preparation, students should adopt a subject-wise study approach, leverage visual aids, prioritise practice and revision and supplement with additional resources. By harnessing the potential of NCERT textbooks, students can bolster their confidence and maximise success in the CUET 2024 Exam.

Sanya Khanna | Chandigarh

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

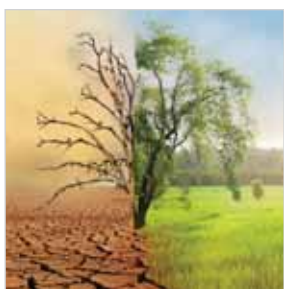
Climate startups: Innovative climate crisis warriors

Startups, pivotal in the shift to a net-zero future, can revitalise economies and communities while providing innovative solutions



SAIRAM SUBRAMANIAN

Deus ex machina is a technique often deployed by writers to solve a seemingly hopeless situation by external, magical and often unimaginable intervention. It is debatable if Deus ex machina exists in real life, nonetheless, Startups being creatures with innovation, disruption and problem-solving in their DNA can offer faster, creative and localised solutions, for the increasingly hopeless real-world crisis of Climate Change.



Be it a startup supplying an animal feed supplement that can cut down bovine emissions significantly, another one using Biotech and robotics technologies for developing GMO seeds and seaweeds that act as powerful carbon sinks, a climate tech company developing agro-forestry at a global scale or simpler everyday solutions that aim to greenify consumer finance or track individual efforts to reduce emissions, they can consolidate as a powerful force against climate change. World Economic Forum estimates that startups create value, nearly on par with the GDP of a G7 economy and the

OECD suggests that young firms create almost half of the new jobs, suggesting their burgeoning economic power and potential to create impact at scale.

The race to net zero is propelled by energy and technology transition which on one hand is an opportunity for startups and a threat to local economies and livelihoods on the other. Take the case of coal being phased out; this might result in the currently bustling mining centres turning into silent junkyards. The modern world's triumphs in Silicon Valley or a Shanghai SEZ may guide the establishment of new climate innovation hubs. Brain port Eindhoven in the Netherlands is one such example showcasing the transition from conventional industries to futur-

istic setups. The questions on the proliferation of such a model 'Can' be addressed by a few suggestions of 'How': Blended Finance for Climate Innovation Hubs Practical experience suggests that 'Impact Capital' often expects social impact plus commercial returns. For startups social impact then becomes an additional responsibility and not an opportunity to improve margins or a business avenue to seriously pursue climate-positive opportunities over the long term. Blended finance can incentivise climate startups to agglomerate within the Climate Innovation Hubs. Monetising Sustainability — Startups should have opportunities to monetise their efforts on reducing emissions, either in the form of reduced taxes and lower cost of capital or claim premiums for climate-positive brand value. Reputation Capital — Unless climate-positive efforts are rewarded by markets in the form of valuations or additional capital or brand value, climate-positive behaviour will continue to be talk and no walk. Research &

Development (R&D) Support — While large corporations have reserves that can be deployed for R & D, startups have only access to highly demanding capital that usually funds sales for growth and rarely for investments for innovations (unless the startup is incubated in a technical university). While the existing carbon economy still grapples with the issues of just transition, the political economy of climate change signals shifts in geo-political equilibrium and technological leapfrogging in climate solutions is yet to emerge, startups as business organisations are only going to achieve greater proportions of power, prosperity and influence in the world. With focused support from policymakers, development finance institutions and international researchers, the global startup ecosystem can be geared up to take on threats of climate change head-on. Who knows we may have a Deus ex machina in the real world of climate change. The writer is a Chevening Scholar and an International Development expert; views are personal



FIRST COLUMN
RETHINKING ECONOMIC GROWTH

Excessive consumerism contradicts our spiritual values ingrained in our heritage



RAJYOGI BRAHMAKUMAR **NIKUNJ JI**

The US economy is very often seen as the engine of the world economy, and that is why any sign of slowdown in the US raises serious concerns about harmful spillovers to the other economies. Any keen student of current economics would know well that the economic policies of America, especially during the last few years, have not worked well. In fact, the defeat of the most powerful leaders in the presidential elections that were held in the past few decades is attributed mainly to the failure of their economic policies which created many problems for the country. However, most people do not realise that the economic problems faced there, emanate not merely from wrong policies, adopted recently.

Their roots are hidden in some wrong economic, political and cultural concepts and the models built on them over a period of time. For example, the mounting unemployment and the huge foreign debts are not the phenomena that have sprung up overnight and the phenomenon of estimated 11.5% Americans, living in poverty, also has not arisen in the short period of only one or two years. The roots of their sad economic state go at least to as far a period as the end of the World War-II when they adopted a very lavish life-style and an utterly consumeristic attitude and built their economy on militarism, giant industries, transactional and multi-national business corporations, import of raw materials at cheaper rates from the undeveloped countries and export of their goods to such nations and economic capture of foreign markets through their multinational corporations. In short, they thrived on the basis of this economic system as long as other industrial nations did not come up strongly to stand up to them or the weaker nations did not stand up against



their economic exploitation or injustice. Nevertheless, their economic system was not, based on some morally sound and enduring economic principles. As mentioned earlier, it was based on commercialism, competition, consumerism and exploitation of weaker nations and on hot or cold war with an adversary nation, or on considering their nation as the strong military-man of the world, ready for hot or cold war. Now, when some other industrial nations have grown stronger, they cannot compete with them and have, therefore, to close down or to retrench workers as was done recently by many industrial giants. Also, now when there is no war—hot or cold—they are forced by economic reasons to sell their military hardware as they recently sold fighter jets to many Asian countries in order to keep the workers in employment. Their country has had either the ills of recession, or inflation, or heavy taxation, or it had to resort to deficit budgets, foreign debts, protectionist policies, etc. to keep the economy going. It would have, therefore, been appropriate if developing nations like India had learnt some lessons from the failures of the so-called developed models of economy and had, instead, kept in mind their own national ethos and ancient heritage which suggests that a right system of economy is one which is based on social justice, and on economising rather than borrowing and deficit-financing. We should also keep in mind our own national situation which necessitates national and regional self-sufficiency and affords opportunities of full employment to its citizens and promotes balance between rural and urban economy, equitable distribution of income and wealth and prevention of the growth of very wide disparities in income and wealth. We must remember that unbridled consumerism and commercialism and also large-scale borrowing are against the value-system which is embedded in our spiritual heritage and will, sooner or later, lead us to grave economic crisis. So, let us all learn to lead a life of simplicity and frugality and be honest and just to all.

(Writer is a spiritual educator & popular columnist; views are personal)

Reimagining Tagore's educational philosophy



RAJDEEP PATHAK

Rabindranath Tagore, the polymathic Nobel Laureate from Bengal, is celebrated not only for his literary brilliance but also for his visionary ideas on education

Rabindranath Tagore (May 7, 1861 to August 7, 1941), the polymathic Nobel Laureate from Bengal, is renowned not only for his literary brilliance but also for his progressive ideas on education. His philosophy of education, rooted in the principles of creativity, freedom, and humanism, continues to resonate with contemporary educational discourse. In today's rapidly changing world, where traditional educational paradigms are being challenged and redefined, Tagore's insights offer valuable perspectives for reimagining education in a manner that fosters holistic development and meaningful engagement with the world.

At the heart of Tagore's educational philosophy is the belief in the innate creativity and potential of every individual. He envisioned education as a process of nurturing this inherent creativity rather than imposing predetermined knowledge. In his seminal work, "Siksha: Herok Ek Jibon" (Education: A Continuum of Life), Tagore emphasized the importance of cultivating curiosity, imagination, and critical thinking skills in learners. He advocated for an education system that encourages students to explore, question, and construct their understanding of the world, rather than passively receiving information.

Further, central to Tagore's philosophy of education is the concept of "Shantiniketan," or the abode of peace - and later Sriniketan - which he established as an experimental educational institution in rural Bengal. Shantiniketan epitomized Tagore's holistic educational philosophy, integrating intellectual, artistic, and spiritual facets of human life. Education transcended traditional confines, embracing nature, arts, and community involvement. Tagore emphasized fostering reverence for nature, aesthetic sensibility, and interconnectedness with all life. He advocated for intellectual development through imagination, free thought, and perpetual curiosity. This personalized approach prioritized holistic growth, including physical development through exercises, yoga, and sports, echoing Tagore's belief: "The highest education is that which does not merely give us information but makes our life in harmony with all existence."

According to Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore, "A teacher can never truly teach, unless he is still learning himself. A lamp can never light another lamp, unless it continues to burn its own flame". In his essay 'Ashram Shiksha' (Ashram's Teaching), Tagore extolled the virtues of patience in teaching, advocating that only those imbued with affection for their students deserve the mantle of a teacher. He rejected authoritarian teaching methods, viewing them as indicative of governance inadequacy. K M O'Connell (University of Toronto, Canada) had written that Rabindranath Tagore stands with the pioneering educators, like, Rousseau, Pestalozzi, Froebel, Montessori, and Dewey Malcolm Knowles, who have striven to create non-authoritarian learning systems appropriate to the surroundings.

Furthermore, Tagore's educational philosophy emphasizes fostering a love for humanity and advancing universal brotherhood through recognizing the interconnectedness of all beings and promoting empathy across cultures. Central to his approach is establishing harmony



HIS NOTION OF FREEDOM IN EDUCATION EMPHASISES LINKING NATURE, SOCIETY, AND LEARNERS' EXPERIENCES. HE ADVOCATES FOR LEARNING IN NATURAL ENVIRONMENTS TO NOURISH BODY AND SOUL, PRIORITISE CREATIVITY, AND ENGAGE CRITICALLY WITH TRADITIONAL VALUES AND BELIEFS

between individuals, nature, and the divine. Tagore advocates for freedom in education to unlock individuals' inherent potential and stresses the significance of moral and spiritual development alongside academic learning. His vision aims at cultivating well-rounded individuals capable of selfless service and social integration, ultimately contributing to a conscientious and harmonious society.

In today's context, characterized by rapid technological advancements, globalization, and environmental challenges, Tagore's emphasis on holistic education is more relevant than ever. The prevailing thought on standardized testing and rote memorization (read learning) often stifles creativity and critical thinking, leaving students ill-prepared for the complexities of the modern world. Tagore's philosophy, instead, calls for a shift towards a more student-centered, inquiry-based approach to learning that empowers learners to navigate uncertainty, think critically, and adapt to change. Tagore's educational philosophy, as elucidated in his essay "The Centre of Indian Culture," emphasizes the imperative for education to reflect and engage with the socio-cultural milieu in which it operates, asserting that genuine education must be attuned to its contextual realities to foster healthy growth.

This sentiment resonates in Sunil Banga's (Lancaster University Management School) analysis - in his paper "The global relevance of Tagore's cosmopolitan educational philosophy for social justice in a post-Westphalian world" published in Journal of Philosophy of Education (August 2023, Oxford) - which underscores Tagore's cosmopolitan approach to education as a potent instrument for social justice and equity in today's

world. Banga highlights Tagore's commitment to societal transformation through education, evident in his advocacy for women's empowerment, condemnation of oppression, and advocacy for India's independence (read freedom). Despite emerging from the colonial era, Tagore's philosophy remains pertinent, particularly his emphasis on education as a catalyst for moral and social development, aiming towards societal harmony and integration to address contemporary global challenges.

Moreover, Tagore's emphasis on the integration of arts, music, and literature into the curriculum offers a counterbalance to the narrow focus on STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) education prevalent in many educational systems today. Arts play a crucial role in fostering creativity, empathy, and emotional intelligence, which are essential for navigating the complexities of human relationships and societal challenges.

Sunil Banga underscores Tagore's educational paradigm as an early advocate of global interconnectedness. Tagore posited that education's primary objective was the attainment of self-realization, which he termed 'Atma Shakti,' wherein individuals harmonize with nature and society. Drawing from Hindu literature, Tagore envisions a 'universal man' embodying faith in universalism and humanity. He further advocates for personality development through arts and music, leading to a transcendent understanding of human nature. He contends that humans, upon achieving self-realization, unite with 'God' or 'Manav Brahma,' thereby becoming the 'complete man' and 'soul.'

Rabindranath Tagore's educational philosophy underscores the integral role of education in fos-

tering connections between individuals and humanity while promoting holistic development.

In essence, at the heart of Tagore's vision of cosmopolitan education is the idea of freedom - freedom to engage critically with traditional values and beliefs; and freedom to imagine citizenship in a globalized world, that enables an exploration and negotiation of multiple allegiances in sympathy with others. His notion of freedom in education emphasizes linking nature, society, and learners' experiences. He advocates for learning in natural environments to nourish body and soul, prioritize creativity, and engage critically with traditional values and beliefs.

Rabindranath Tagore's philosophy of education provides a compelling framework for reimagining education in the 21st century. His emphasis on creativity, freedom, holistic development, and social engagement offers valuable insights for addressing the multifaceted challenges of today's world.

By embracing Tagore's vision, educators can create learning environments that empower students to become compassionate, critical thinkers capable of shaping a more just, sustainable, and humane society and boosting student's morale.

On the occasion of Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore's 163rd Birth Anniversary, we may well reflect on his philosophy advocating for an education that transcends mere impartation of knowledge, rather instills a profound harmony with all existence. Revisiting Tagore's principles may serve as a guiding light for Indian educational institutions in this globalised age.

(The writer is Programme Executive, Gandhi Smriti and Darshan Samiti; views are personal)

Vision for India: A State-led roadmap for effective governance

Amid India's socio-economic shift, Karthik Muralidharan's new book shines as a guide for the nation's trajectory

It was during the mid-1960s that I had a first-hand experience with Kochi, popularly known as the Queen of the Arabian Sea. Other than Kochi Port, the small aerodrome and the star hotel of yore years Sea Lord and Malabar, there was nothing attractive about the city. Scavengers carrying night soil collected from homes and hotels on their heads were the first sight that welcomed people during the daybreak. Some discernible changes are there in Kochi and other cities in the State. Scavengers are gone and their places have been taken over by cycle rickshaws with the hoarding "For cleaning septic tanks, please contact us...". In the hinterland, farmers wearing loin-cloths plough their farmland with bullocks



KUMAR CHELLAPPAN

despite India being one of the largest manufacturers of tractors of all kinds. The mention of the word farmer brings to mind the images of loin-clothed men beating their bullocks to force them to plough the fields. You go to Madurai in Tamil Nadu, which the DMK touts as a role model of Dravidian development. What welcomes you to the small towns and villages are thoroughfares and

ring roads being used as public comfort stations by the residents. Dravidian leaders do not like the idea of Swachh Bharat and insist that their followers use roads, rivers and beaches as public toilets.

It is in these contexts that a book for the economic and social development of India has hit the shelves. Karthik Muralidharan, renowned economist and Tata Chancellor's Professor of Economics at the University of California, San Diego, has authored a book "Accelerating India's Development - A State-led Roadmap for Effective Governance"; a blueprint for the Comprehensive Development of India. Productivity, competitiveness, the number of jobs created and the skill of the labour force are

some of the most important ingredients of the economic growth of a country. It is for the Central and State Governments to generate enabling conditions for speedy economic and social development, according to Muralidharan. The author says that land, labour, capital, policies on taxation, bankruptcy, environmental regulation and promoting competition are the enabling services that ensure speedy economic and social development. Muralidharan, who has no love lost for the Modi Government at the Centre, says the present Central Government is always ahead in resolving issues that retard economic progress. "India's public discourse on growth

mainly focusses on Central Government actions to promote it, though many of the key issues above are in the domain of State Governments. It is critical to analyze and improve the effectiveness of State level actions for boosting productivity and job quality. State-led initiative and innovations followed by rapid replication of successful ones can play a key role in accelerating both growth and development in India," writes Muralidharan in the chapter "Jobs, Productivity and Economic Growth".

What makes the book interesting is Muralidharan's call for improving job quality rather than job quantity. It is not the number of jobs created but the quality of jobs that determines the welfare of the people, says

Muralidharan. "A job is not just a source of income. It also provides identity, dignity and social engagement. With over 95 per cent of India's population relying primarily on labour income for sustenance, improving job quality will directly improve the welfare of hundreds of millions of Indians," says the economist. This is an open call to finish once-and-for-ever jobs like scavenging, ploughing the land with bullocks and other mean works. The earlier we introduce Artificial Intelligence and robots for such jobs, the better. Instead of using this technology to deceive the public with deep fake videos and political rivals, it would be better if we use this technology to uplift the status of jobs. Millions of Indians are reliant

on casual wage labour for sustenance. An average income earner supports 2.7 dependents. "This is why improving living standards in India depends critically on improving worker productivity and creating more high-quality jobs to generate higher, more reliable incomes," Muralidharan writes. The skill development programme initiated by the present government should be invigorated and made compulsory for students and school dropouts.

The Agniveer scheme is an innovation that inspires the mind. One need not go to engineering colleges or medical colleges to emerge as a skilled professional in high-quality jobs. There is a severe shortage of electricians,

plumbers and mechanics with expertise in household jobs. Even as the central and State governments can increase the number of medical colleges, no stone should be left unturned in increasing the number of ITIs and technical schools. Equal priority should be given to increasing the agricultural productivity in which India lags behind China Vietnam etc. The situation is favourable to India. Skill development, Agniveer and increase in agriculture productivity should be implemented with full vigour. There is hope for India to become the world leader by 2047.

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

Rublev overcomes fever and praises doctors after winning Madrid Open for the 1st time

AP ■ MADRID

Despite sleepless nights struggling with a fever, Andrey Rublev found a way to fight back and win the Madrid Open for the first time. Rublev was feeling sick all week but rallied to beat Felix Auger-Aliassime in three sets on Sunday and clinch his second Masters 1000 title. Rublev won 4-6, 7-5, 7-5 after Auger-Aliassime double-faulted on the last point of the final at the clay-court tournament in the Spanish capital. "I would say this is the most proud title of my career," Rublev said. "I was almost dead every day. I was not sleeping at night. The last three, four days I didn't sleep." Rublev gave "full credit to the doctors," who were "doing some tricky things" just to make sure he could play. "I have no words," the eighth-ranked Rublev said. "If you knew what I had been through in the past nine days you would not imagine that I would be able to win a title." The 26-year-old Russian won his first Masters 1000 title at Monte Carlo last year. Auger-Aliassime was playing in his first final at this level. Rublev entered Madrid on a four-game losing streak after early exits at Indian Wells, Miami, Monte Carlo and Barcelona. One of his victories in



Madrid came in the quarterfinals against home-crowd favorite Carlos Alcaraz. He now has 16 career titles, and two this season after Hong Kong in January. He had arrived with a 5-1 record against Auger-Aliassime, including a win in their sole matchup on clay.

Auger-Aliassime's path to the final saw second-ranked Jannik Sinner withdraw because of an injury ahead of the quarterfinals, and Jiri Lehecka retired against the Canadian in the first set of the semifinals. Other injuries hit the men's draw in Madrid, starting with Novak Djokovic's withdrawal before

the tournament. Daniil Medvedev retired in the quarterfinals, while Alcaraz was hampered by a sore right arm and Rafael Nadal bowed out of what was likely his last appearance in his home country. Iga Swiatek won the women's title for the first time in her career on Saturday.

Klopp keeps the drama going to end as Liverpool beats Spurs 4-2

AP ■ LIVERPOOL

The smile is back on Jurgen Klopp's face - even if his Liverpool players seem intent on testing his nerves right to the end. The Premier League title may be all but beyond the Merseyside club, but that doesn't mean the drama is over for Klopp, who will step down at the end of the season.



Last week he was arguing on the sideline with Mohamed Salah as Liverpool effectively dropped out of the title race. And while Salah opened the scoring in a 4-2 win against Tottenham at Anfield on Sunday, it was Harvey Elliott who appeared to bring the broadest smile to Klopp's face with a wonderful long-range goal in what looked like being a cakewalk for Klopp's team. "What a goal," the Liverpool manager said. "In the game you only see it flying in and I thought, That was a good shot." The goal I saw afterwards, there was not a lot of space left or right. It went exactly where it should be. Top goal." Elliott's strike, after goals from Salah, Andy Robertson and Cody Gakpo, fired Liverpool into a 4-0 lead before the game had even reached the hour mark. What followed was the unlikeliest of fightbacks from Spurs that might have made this another frustrating day in what has ultimately been a disappointing finale for Klopp at the end of nearly nine trophy-filled years. Goals from Richarlison and Son Heung-min made it a much closer contest than it had ever looked like being. And it needed two outstanding saves from Alisson, a goal-line clearance from Joe Gomez and a VAR call to prevent it from being closer still. "It's a little bit of a mirror of the season. Really, really, really, good until we were really rubbish and then, we were okay again," Klopp said. "A nervy finish didn't stop the home fans from beckoning Klopp to produce his trademark post-match triple fist pump to the crowd after his penultimate home game in charge, with Feyenoord coach Arne Slot set to take over next season. Mathematically, at least, it is not over for third-place Liverpool, which sits five

points adrift of leader Arsenal with two games remaining. But, in reality, a late-season slump has killed Klopp's hopes of walking away with a second Premier League crown of his reign. His team had been heavily rebuilt over the past two seasons and was not expected to contend at the top so soon. But this season at one point offered Liverpool the hope of a quadruple of trophies. Now it feels like it is ending on an underwhelming note. Still, Klopp, who delivered the English League Cup in February, will walk away from a team that is on the up and leave his successor with plenty of young talent to work with. The 21-year-old Elliott is a prime example and he showcased his ample potential with an assist and a goal as Liverpool threatened to run riot. His perfectly placed curling cross provided Gakpo with the simple task of heading in Liverpool's third and then he swept an unstoppable shot from around 20 yards (meters) into the top corner and beyond Tottenham goalkeeper Guglielmo Vicario. "Harvey is exceptional. Still so young. So exceptional," Klopp said. "In the midfield position, it was probably one of the top three performances from him today. The goal was exceptional. Everyone needs moments to gain more confidence. It was a good moment. That helps definitely." **VILLA SLIPS:** A bad week for Aston Villa got worse after a surprise 1-0 loss at Brighton. Unai Emery's team lost 4-2 at home to Olympiakos in the first leg of their Europa Conference League semifinal on Thursday. And on a day when it could have secured its

Mbappé plays his final CL game in Paris with PSG; defence back in spotlight

AP ■ PARIS

Mbappé plays his final CL game in Paris with PSG. But it's the defence that is back in the spotlight. No doubt Kylian Mbappé will be greeted with loud cheers and applause when he takes to the Parc des Princes pitch on Tuesday night. It will be his final Champions League match in the French capital in a Paris Saint-Germain shirt. Mbappé is leaving the club this summer after a seven-season stint, hoping the journey concludes with a Champions League triumph in Wembley on June 1. But first things first, as Mbappé tries to engineer a fightback in the second leg of their semi-final against Borussia Dortmund, trailing 1-0 from the first leg in Germany last week. The France striker was a disappointment in the first leg and PSG now expects a strong reaction from the club's all-time leading scorer to overturn the deficit, especially after he failed to score in his last two appearances against Dortmund. "We're confident we'll come back from that score and qualify for the final," Mbappé said on Sunday, as quoted by French media. In support of Mbappé, PSG has plenty of firepower upfront, with Ousmane Dembele, Bradley Barcola, Gonçalo Ramos or Randal Kolo Muani available. Coach Luis Enrique has more worries in defence after former

Bayern Munich defender Lucas Hernandez was ruled out for the remainder of the season with an anterior cruciate ligament rupture that required surgery. The injury was a tough blow for PSG, which has conceded 14 goals in the competition this season but finally stabilized the heart of its defence with the



pairing of Marquinhos and Hernandez. After Hernandez came off injured last week against Dortmund and was replaced by Lucas Beraldo, the Brazilian substitute's lack of experience was obvious. Luis Enrique will, however, have to consider giving him a starting role or put his trust in

Milan Skriniar, who is back from injury and lacks both competition and rhythm. Another option would be to pair Danilo Pereira with Marquinhos to add strength and presence in the air, particularly on Dortmund's set pieces. Solid defending will again be crucial for PSG, which faces a team with great attacking qualities and 11 different scorers on the European stage this season. The winner will play Real Madrid or Bayern Munich in the final in London. The old rivals drew 2-2 in their semi-final first leg in Germany. PSG, which enjoyed a rest day over the weekend after wrapping up the Ligue 1 title, has never won Europe's top club competition.

Arsenal needs a favour from Tottenham in title race

AP ■ LONDON

Four straight losses — the team's worst run of results for 20 years. Two clean sheets since the end of October. Those looking at Tottenham Hotspur to provide a late twist in the Premier League title race are, given the current evidence, going to be disappointed. Manchester City's May 14 trip to the Tottenham Hotspur Stadium, for its next-to-last game of the season, appeared to many the last possible stumbling block for the champions in their bid to reel in Arsenal and secure an unprecedented fourth straight title. After all, not only have Spurs plenty to play for — they're still just about fighting for Champions League qualification — but they haven't lost, or even conceded a goal, against City in their four league meetings at Tottenham's new stadium

since it opened in 2019. Arsenal, though, is surely losing hope of a favour from its north London neighbour. Similarly, Tottenham fans might be starting to lose hope that Ange Postecoglou is the man to bring a winning culture to the club without a trophy since 2008. It all started well for the first-ever Australian to coach in the Premier League. Tottenham was top of the league in early November, unbeaten and playing the attacking football its supporters always crave. No manager had ever taken 26 points from his first 10 games in the Premier League before Postecoglou came along with a high defensive line and an aggressive, front-foot style. Postecoglou, it seemed, was the perfect antidote to Jose



Mourinho and Antonio Conte, pragmatic and defence-first coaches whose spells in charge of Tottenham promised so much but ended so sourly. Fast-forward six months and it feels like the season cannot

end soon enough for Spurs, who are limping to the finish line, and Postecoglou, who is beginning to understand the

size of the task he took on almost a year ago. "We need change. Change has to happen," Postecoglou said ahead of Tottenham's 4-2 loss at Liverpool on Sunday. It was a fourth defeat in a row, something that hasn't happened since those grim final days of Jacques Santini at Spurs in late 2004. Over the past month, there has been a 4-0 loss at Newcastle, a 3-2 home loss to Arsenal when Tottenham was three goals behind at halftime, a 2-0 loss at Chelsea and then a defeat at Anfield that saw a lethargic-looking Spurs fall 4-0 down after 59 minutes. And, this is the team Arsenal hopes can halt the City juggernaut next week? Tottenham should still seal fifth place, and qualification for the Europa League,

because either side of the visit of City are matches against Burnley and already-relegated Sheffield United - the bottom two teams in the league. Spurs are seven points behind fourth-place Aston Villa and four ahead of sixth-place Newcastle. It raises the question of whether the first season under Postecoglou has been a success. Spurs fans likely would have taken a fifth-place finish after seeing England captain and record scorer Harry Kane leave for Bayern Munich last August. With Hugo Lloris and Eric Dier also departing during the season, a huge amount of experience was lost and it's in these tough final weeks of the season where that lack of senior leaders in the squad has been exposed. It also seems that, as a whole, the fan base is still behind Postecoglou and his refreshing outlook, even if his insistence on sticking to his attacking principles can come across as naive as it is bold. "I believe what I believe down to my core. I'll stand on the highest ground, die a noble death, believing in what I believe," he said. "Maybe, the Premier League is a step too far. Who knows? Maybe, maybe - but I will still be on that hill, wounded, my dying breath saying, I believe, I do believe." Whether Postecoglou will bring more balance to his managerial philosophy next year remains to be seen. For the moment, Arsenal will just be praying that Tottenham - the team it wants to see lose any normal week of the season - can pull off an improbable victory over City to change the course of the title race ahead of the final round on May 19.



Frank Nsubuga set to become oldest player at this year T20 World Cup

PTI ■ KAMPALA (UGANDA)

Uganda off-spinner Frank Nsubuga is set to become the oldest cricketer to play in the upcoming T20 World Cup at the age of 43. On Monday, the Uganda Cricket Association announced a 15-member squad for the marquee event set to be held in the Americas from June 2, the nation's first-ever appearance in the main round of the competition. Riazat Ali Shah has been named his deputy. Reserve players: Ronald Lutaaya and Innocent Mwebaze.

Namibia, to seal their berth. They will get their campaign underway versus Afghanistan on June 3 in Guyana, having been clubbed in Group C, which also includes New Zealand, Papua New Guinea and hosts West Indies. Uganda squad: Brian Masaba (c), Riazat Ali Shah (vc), Kenneth Waiswa, Dinesh Nakrani, Frank Nsubuga, Ronak Patel, Roger Mukasa, Cosmas Kyewuta, Bilal Hassun, Fred Achelam, Robinson Obuya, Simon Sesazi, Henry Ssenyondo, Alpesh Ramjani and Juma Miyaji.

India's first ever hybrid pitch unveiled in Dharamsala

PTI ■ DHARAMSALA

India's first-ever 'hybrid pitch' was unveiled at the Himachal Pradesh Cricket Association (HPCA) stadium in a grand ceremony here on Monday. The event was attended by IPL Chairman Arun Dhumal and cricket dignitaries including Paul Taylor, a former England cricketer and SIS's international cricket director. "The introduction of hybrid pitches is set to revolutionize cricket in India, following their success in iconic venues like Lord's and The Oval in England," said Dhumal, who hails from Himachal Pradesh. The hybrid pitch, which combines natural turf with synthetic fibres, promises enhanced durability and consistent playability, reducing the strain on ground staff and maintaining quality playing conditions. With only 5% synthetic fibres, the pitch ensures that the natural characteristics essential for cricket are preserved. Taylor expressed gratitude towards the HPCA for their collaboration on this pioneering project. "With the ICC's approval, we're excited to see the positive impact these pitches will have on the sport, starting with



installations in Mumbai and Ahmedabad next," he said. The 'Universal Machine', a critical component in installing the hybrid surface, was developed by SISGrass in 2017 and has been instrumental in the rollout of similar pitches across England's county cricket grounds. This innovation aligns with the ICC's recent sanctioning of hybrid pitches for

T20 and one-day international matches, with plans to expand their use in four-day county championships starting this year. The integration of technologies like SISAir, a root aeration system, further underscores the commitment to enhancing cricket infrastructure in India. This system improves the pitch's health and resilience, benefiting players with better and safer playing conditions.

Premier League referee to wear camera to offer insight into demands of being a match official

AP ■ LONDON

The referee for Monday's Premier League match between Crystal Palace and Manchester United will wear a camera on his head for a program that will be broadcast later this year offering an insight into the demands of being a match official. The league said the head-mounted device — or "RefCam" as it is being called — worn by Jarrod Gillett at Selhurst Park will be integrated into the referee's usual communications system. The technology is being used on a one-off basis, the league said, as part of filming for a short program promoting match officials. The footage will not be broadcast live. "Fans will be able to view it later in the year as part of a program ... Aimed at offering further insight and education into the demands of officiating in the Premier League," the competition said.



MUST WIN GAME FOR DC

Delhi Capitals would require Rishabh Pant's killer instinct and Jake Fraser-McGurk's unbelievable flair in their bid to stay alive in the IPL playoff race when they square off against a rampaging Rajasthan Royals in a must-win game here on Tuesday.

might not be enough for qualification, but Pant would look to only "control the controllables," a policy advocated by his mentor Mahendra Singh Dhoni. On a flat Feroz Shah Kotla deck, the challenge will be two-fold for the DC skipper.

All eyes on Fraser-McGurk and Pant against rampaging Royals



have new Aussie sensation Fraser-McGurk, who has gone off the boil in the last couple of games. These two batters can individually change the complexion of a game, but DC will be wary of the Royals' bowling attack, which will pose a very different challenge at the Kotla compared to Sai Man Singh.

It is time that Khaleel (ER 9.47) and Mukesh Kumar (ER 11.05) also show more consistency. South African pacers Lizaad Williams (ER 12 in 2 games) and Anrich Nortje (ER 13.36) have simply not looked the part.

be 'Nightmare 2.0' for the hosts. TEAMS: Delhi Capitals: Rishabh Pant (c), David Warner, Abhishek Porel, Ricky Bhui, Yash Dhull, Shai Hope, Prithvi Shaw, Tristan Stubbs, Kunal Kushagra, Swastik Chikara, Ishant Sharma, Jhrey Richardson, Rasikh Dar Salam, Vicky Ostwal, Anrich Nortje, Mukesh Kumar, Kuldeep Yadav, Praveen Dubey, Khaleel Ahmed, Sumit Kumar, Axar Patel, Mitchell Marsh, Lalit Yadav, Jake Fraser-McGurk. Rajasthan Royals: Sanju Samson (c), Jos Buttler, Shimron Hetmyer, Yashasvi Jaiswal, Dhruv Jurel, Riyan Parag, Donovan Ferreira, Kunal Rathore, Ravichandran Ashwin, Kuldeep Sen, Navdeep Saini, Keshav Maharaj, Sandeep Sharma, Trent Boult, Yuzvendra Chahal, Avesh Khan, Rovman Powell, Shubham Dubey, Tom Kohler-Cadmore, Abid Mushtaq, Nandre Burger.

We are focussed on following template set by Gambhir: Harshit Rana

Young pacer Harshit Rana feels Kolkata Knight Riders are reaping the rewards by following the winning template set by two-time IPL winner and current mentor Gautam Gambhir as they continued their sensational run to grab the top position in the IPL points table.



"We have not cared even for a bit on how expensive Mitchell Starc has been in IPL 2024. He has full faith in him and he won us the last game and we have no doubts on him whatsoever. "He has such a great influence on the younger players, he has such a huge wealth of knowledge," Rana said.

bouncers and yorkers and mixing it up and not being predictable against him. We did that but he played quite a brilliant innings to be honest," he said. "It wasn't like he was slogging and everything was going top edge or anything like slicing the ball. He was properly middling it and that's the case like from the beginning of the season. "He's been middling it. Everything going his way. So yeah, it was a great knock by him."

Versatility of Jadeja makes him class act, says Finch

Former Australia skipper Aaron Finch has termed India all-rounder Ravindra Jadeja a "class player" because of his versatility which brings in a lot of balance in all the teams that he represents. Jadeja scored 40-odd runs and took three wickets in Chennai Super Kings' victory over Punjab Kings on Sunday.



is just superb. It just shows why he's one of the best players in the world," the Australian said. Finch also spoke highly about Kolkata Knight Riders' Sunil Narine. The 2021 World T20-winning Australian skipper feels that it is extremely difficult to contain Narine for a long period of time.

he'll try and do something and play a big shot. But this season, he's not only getting off to explosive starts but also batting smartly and seizing control of the innings," Finch said. The 35-year-old Narine smashed 81 off just 39 balls to power KKR to a comfortable 98-run win over Lucknow Super Giants on Sunday night. In the process, Narine also became the fourth player to score more than 450 runs and take 10 plus wickets in a single IPL edition.

OTHER SPORTS



Indian women and men 4x400m relay teams qualify for Paris Olympics

PTI | NASSAU (BAHAMAS)

The Indian men's and women's 4x400m relay teams qualified for Paris Olympics after finishing second in their respective second-round heats at the World Athletics Relays here on Monday.



when anchor-leg runner Jacob took the baton from Arokia who the Delhi boy ran a fantastic race to overtake his Mexican opponent and finish second. It was not about the timing but more about Olympics qualification for the Indian men's team which ran 3:00.25 at the Tokyo Olympics for the then Asian record before bettering it during the 2023 World Championships with yet another Asian record of 2:59.05. Monday's timing was well below the team's best.

4x400m races on Sunday. India had featured in mixed 4x400m relay in the Tokyo Olympics where the event made its debut. The Indian women's 4x400m relay team will be returning to Olympics after missing out in Tokyo Games. The Paris participation will be the eighth time for the Indian women's 4x400m team, the first being in 1984 Games. For the men's 4x400m, this will be the fourth time India will be taking part in the Olympics, the first being in the 2000 Sydney Games.

Jyoti to lead Indian junior women hockey team for Europe tour

PTI | NEW DELHI

Defender Jyoti Singh was on Monday named the captain of the Indian Junior Women's team by Hockey India with midfielder Sakshi Rana as her deputy in a 22-member squad which will tour Europe from May 21 to 29.

latter playing host on this occasion on May 24. This will be followed by consecutive games against Germany on May 26 in Breda and May 27 in Germany respectively. India will then return to Breda to play their final game of the tour on May 29 against Oranje Rood. "Playing against good teams from other countries helps in developing an understanding of different approaches to the game. An exposure tour like this provides all of us with a tremendous opportunity to take our game to the next level," vice-Captain Sakshi Rana said.

The top two teams in each of the three heats in the second round were to qualify for the Olympics to be held from July 26 to August 11. It was a sort of a surprise that the women's 4x400m team qualified for the Olympics as the focus was more on the men's 4x400m team which has broken Asian record in back-to-back global events — Tokyo Olympics and 2023 World Championships — as well as winning 2023 Asian Games gold. The Indian women's team had finished fifth in the first-round qualifying heat on Sunday with a time of 3 minutes and 29.74 seconds. The men's team had failed to finish in the first-round qualifying heat after second leg runner Rajesh Ramesh pulled out midway due to cramps. Arokia Rajiv took the place of Ramesh in the team and he ran the third leg after Anas and Ajmal. The Indian men's 4x400m team was on third position

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