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**NAVEEN GUARANTEE**

STARTING FROM JULY

# FREE ELECTRICITY

90% OF FAMILIES WILL BE BENEFITTED

## VOTE FOR SANKHA TWICE



ONE VOTE FOR MP



ONE VOTE FOR MLA



**OPINION 6**  
INDIA TACTFULLY MANAGES  
US-IRAN TENSIONS

**WORLD 8**  
AIRSTRIKE KILLS 27  
IN CENTRAL GAZA

**MONEY 10**  
GOVERNMENT RECOVERS ₹852 CRORE  
UNDER AMNESTY SCHEME

BHUBANESWAR, MONDAY MAY 20, 2024; PAGES 12 ₹4

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RCB'S TURNAROUND  
WILL INSPIRE OTHER  
TEAMS: KARTHIK  
12 SPORTS

## EC shifts focus to urban voters today

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

Amid the sweltering heat and high-pitch political rhetoric and promises by contestants in the fray, over 8.95 crore voters in 49 Parliament constituencies spread in Bihar, Jammu and Kashmir, Ladakh, Jharkhand, Maharashtra, Odisha, Uttar Pradesh, and West Bengal will cast their vote in the fifth phase of polling on Monday. On the eve of phase five of Lok Sabha polls, the Election Commission on Sunday pointed out that Mumbai, Thane and Lucknow have shown apathy towards voting in the past and asked these city dwellers to turnout in higher numbers.

Low turnout of voters is expected on Monday due to extreme heat wave conditions in some States including Bihar, Jharkhand, Odisha, Uttar Pradesh, and West Bengal.

The poll authority noted that in the past these cities have "suffered" from urban apathy in voting. "The Commission specially calls upon these city dwellers to erase the stigma by turning out in higher numbers," it said. So far, the last four phases have registered a voter turnout of 66.95 per cent.

On May 3 too, while referring to voter

STARS IN FRAY		
CONSTITUENCY	CANDIDATE	PARTY
Raebareilly	Dinesh Pratap Singh Rahul Gandhi	BJP Congress
Amethi	Smriti Irani Kishori Lal Sharma	BJP Congress
Lucknow	Rajnath Singh Ravidas Mehrotra	BJP SP
Kaimganj	Karan Bhushan Singh Bhagat Ram Mishra Narendra Pandey	BJP SP BSP
Hajipur	Chirag Paswan Chandra Ram	LJP (Ram Vilas) RJD
Saran	Rajiv Pratap Rudy Rohini Acharya	BJP RJD
Mumbai	Piyush Goyal Bhushan Patil	BJP Congress
Baramulla	Omar Abdullah Fayaz Ahmad Mir Sajjad Gani Lone	National Conference People's Democratic Party People's Conference

turnout in phase two, the Commission had said it was "disappointed" with the turnout level in some metropolitan cities.

The EC had last month assembled many metro Commissioners here to work out a strategy to

fight urban apathy. Urban and youth apathy is described as a phenomenon when young voters and those living in metros fail to turn up at polling stations on election day. As summer is on peak, hot and dry weather is another factor which may impact the voters' turn out in the fifth phase.

For Rahul Gandhi, Rae Bareilly will be the second seat from where he is contesting the national polls. The Congress scion has already contested from Kerala's Wayanad in the second phase. Rae Bareilly is a Nehru-Gandhi family pocket borough that was represented by his mother Sonia Gandhi since 2004.

The BJP has fielded UP Minister Dinesh Pratap Singh. In Amethi, Union minister Smriti Irani, who had defeated Rahul in 2019, is seeking a second term, while KL Sharma, an aide of the Gandhi family, has been fielded by the Congress.

Among other prominent candidates in the fifth phase of Lok Sabha polls are several Union Ministers including Rajnath Singh (Lucknow, UP), Piyush Goyal (Mumbai North, Maharashtra), Sadhvi Niranjani Jyoti (from Fatehpur, UP) and Shantanu Thakur (Bangaon,

WB); LJP (Ram Vilas) leader Chirag Paswan (Hajipur, Bihar), Shiv Sena's Shrikant Shinde (Kalyan, Maharashtra), and BJP's Rajiv Pratap Rudy and RJD president Lalu Prasad's daughter Rohini Acharya (both Saran, Bihar). Uttar Pradesh, which sends the largest number of MPs to Parliament, will see 14 seats voting in the fifth phase with the fate of five Union Ministers at stake.

These seats include Congress pocket boroughs of Rae Bareilly and Amethi. Faizabad, which includes Ayodhya, the nerve centre of the BJP's Hindutva politics will also vote in this phase.

At the height of bitter political rivalry, the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA), Prime Minister Narendra Modi and other BJP leaders tried to fend off the challenge posed by the INDIA bloc parties by raising the pitch on issues of appeasement, dynastic politics, Ram temple, Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), corruption and welfare initiatives taken by his government.

PM Modi, while campaigning in Uttar Pradesh on Friday, also claimed that the Congress and the Samajwadi Party will run a bulldozer over the Ram temple if elected to power, prompting the Congress to complain to the Election Commission on Saturday. He also alleged that the opposition wanted to bring back Article 370.



## Maliwal assault could have been fatal: Cops

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI



Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal's aide Bibhav Kumar sent to five days remand by court

After a late-night hearing on May 18, a city court sent Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's aide Bibhav Kumar to five days in police custody in connection with the alleged assault on AAP Rajya Sabha member Swati Maliwal. Meanwhile, a team of Delhi Police on Sunday seized a laptop and CCTV digital video record (DVR) from the residence of Kejriwal. Along with this, some documents were also taken away by the Delhi Police from the Chief Minister's residence in the alleged assault on May 13 when Kumar, allegedly attacked Maliwal.

The Delhi Police, in its remand paper, has described the alleged assault on Maliwal by Kumar as a "serious case" involving a "brutal assault" that could have turned "fatal." During the hearing, the court observed that "the fact that the video footage was not found in the pen drive provided to the investigating officer (IO) during the course of the investigation and the mobile phone was formatted by the accused speaks volumes."

Magistrate Gaurav Goyal was hearing the application of Delhi Police which was represented by Additional Public Prosecutor Atul Srivastava. The police had sought seven day custody. "Considering the submissions

made on behalf of both the parties, I find there is a necessity of police custody remand in the present case. Accordingly, the application moved by the IO is partly allowed and the accused is remanded to police custody for five days," the court said in its order passed around 12:45 AM Sunday. It noted the prosecution's submissions about the need to take Kumar to Mumbai and other parts of the national Capital to collect evidence, which was not possible without the accused's custody. "Admittedly, the case is at a nascent stage. Allegations made in the FIR are corroborated in her (Maliwal's) statement recorded by the magistrate on oath and further, it is again corroborated in the medico-legal case (MLC) of the victim or complainant," the court said. The magistrate also observed, "I am aware of the view of Constitutional courts that the opportunity must be given to

the investigating agency to complete the investigation in order to reach the truth of the matter but at the same time the rights of the accused are also to be protected."

Asking the Investigating Officer to take Kumar into formal custody, the court directed his medical examination every 24 hours and said the investigating agency would not subject the accused to "any torture." It also allowed Kumar to meet his advocate and wife for half an hour each during the police custody.

Kumar's application for providing requisite medicines was also allowed. The proceedings which commenced around 9:15 PM Saturday saw initial arguments by Srivastava following which the magistrate said, "I find force in the arguments of the APP (Additional Public Prosecutor) that there were sufficient grounds to arrest the accused without notice."

## HAATH BADLEGA HALAAT

VOTE FOR CONGRESS



# In Cuttack Baby kidnapped from Ranchi rescued; 5 held

**PNS ■ CUTTACK**  
A nine-month-old baby, who had been allegedly kidnapped from the Ranchi railway station in Jharkhand and sold for Rs 58,000 in Odisha, was rescued by the Cuttack RPF and the Ranchi police on Sunday.



Five persons were arrested in this connection. The accused were identified as Amit Sanatan Pal (36), Radha Sahoo (38) and Sunil Mishra (18) of West Bengal, Nusrat Jahan (37) and Sohana Begum of Kalapancha under the Charichhak police station in Puri.

Police said one Pradeep

some food, two men and a woman offered tea to his wife which she drank and became unconscious. On his return, he found his wife in a semi-conscious state with his baby missing.

Later, police verified CCTV footages in the Ranchi railway station, basing on which a

team visited different locations, including Cuttack. Subsequently, RPF and Ranchi police found a family comprising two men and a woman staying in a rented house at Jobra to have been missing from the locality for the last few days.

Their mobile phone location was found near the Khurda Road railway station leading to the arrest of Pal, Sahoo and Mishra who confessed to have sold the baby to Nusrat Jahan, said a senior police official.

During interrogation, Nusrat Jahan confessed to have sold the baby to Sohana Begum for Rs 58,500 for a commission of Rs 20,000.

# 3 held for smuggling mangrove tree roots in B'kanika

5 quintals of roots seized, besides choppers, axe, gas lighter

**PNS ■ KENDRAPADA**

The forest personnel of Kanika range under the Bhitarkanika National Park arrested three persons for trespassing into the park area in order to collect Batara and Garani roots. These roots are of mangroves trees, used to prepare fake sandalwood and sold in the local markets.

Seven bags of Batara roots, three bags of Garani roots, weighing about five quintals, two choppers, an axe, a gas lighter and two mobile phones were seized from the trio's pos-



session, informed Kanika ranger Manas Kumar Das. The arrestees were identified as Hrushikesh Majhi, Bhajahari Majhi and Ajay Mahalik of Chaudia village under Bansa police station limits in Bhadrak district. They confessed to their crime. Narrating how they make fake sandalwood, they said after collecting the roots, they dip them in sandal scented water for a week and later, spray scent on the roots, which becomes duplicate sandalwood. The trio was produced before a local court under various sections of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972 and were remanded in jail custody after their bail petitions were rejected by the court, stated Ranger Das.

# BJP heavyweights hold meet in K'pada



Urge people to vote for party MLA, MP candidates

**RAJESH BEHERA ■ KENDRAPADA**

The heavyweight leaders of BJP, including Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan, former Union Minister Pratap Sarangi, MP Aparajita Sarangi, national vice president Bajijyant Panda, State president Manmohan Samal on May 18 visited Kendrapada and urged people to vote for the BJP. This is for the first time in Kendrapada that the four BJP party stalwarts were seen together on a dais.

Pradhan said that Odia Asmita was at stake and Odia people were fed up with the 'Naveen Government.' Now, the people of Odisha want a change. In Kendrapada, the Naveen Government failed to set up a needle industry here, though it is called the citadel of BJD and Bijubabu's Karmabhumi.

If the BJP Government is formed in Odisha, then

Kendrapada will witness large scale industrialisation, he said. He further said that in the coming election, the people of the State have made up their mind to see a real Odia in the CM's post. He appealed to the people to bless Modi for the third term and support the BJP candidates and MP candidate, Bajijyant Panda, to form a double engine Government in Odisha.

"The whole nation is going to be fully developed and self-reliant by 2047 under the leadership of Narendra Modi and Modiji has been working tirelessly. The whole nation has taken a vow to strengthen Modi's hand; so double lotus will bring double development in Odisha," said Panda.

Pratap Sarangi said the Modi wave is strong across the nation and Odisha too wants to change its Government. Aparajita Sarangi stated that this time the slogan given by Narendra Modi, "Aab ki baar charso paar" is going to be a reality.

State BJP president, Manmohan Samal stated that the worthless and insignificant BJD Government's downfall was imminent.

# 3 crore patis in fray for Kendrapada LS seat



**RAJESH BEHERA ■ KENDRAPADA**

If one goes by the affidavit of the candidates during filling of nomination papers for the Kendrapada Lok Sabha seat, then there are at least three crorepati candidates in the fray. They are Bajijyant Panda of BJP, Anshuman Mohanty of BJD and Sidharth Swarup Dash of Congress.

While Bajijyant is the richest among the 13 crorepati

who are contesting elections, he possesses a movable property worth of Rs 115.02 crore in his name whereas his wife, Jagi Mangat Panda, has a movable property of Rs 6.57 crore. Whereas, Bajijyant has immovable assets worth Rs 26.48 crore, he also has a liability of Rs 98.50 lakh pending against his name.

Similarly, Anshuman (40) who is contesting the Parliamentary election on BJD ticket, has a movable prop-

erty worth of Rs 80.59 lakh whereas his wife Swetalina Dash possesses movable assets worth Rs 62 lakh. Anshuman has immovable properties worth of Rs 1.28 crore, including Rs 26.47 lakh of self-acquired assets and Rs 1.01 crore of inherited assets, whereas his family has immovable properties worth of Rs 2.08 crore. He has liabilities of Rs 50 lakh as loans from banks and financial institutions.

Congress candidate for Kendrapada LS seat, Sidharth Swarup Dash possesses movable assets worth Rs 53.65 lakh in his name whereas his wife Tanmayee Dash possesses movable assets of Rs 2.44 crore. Sidharth, however, does not have any immovable properties. His liabilities are worth Rs 2.13 lakh, including loan from bank, financial institutions and others) in his name whereas his spouse has liabilities of Rs 13.09 lakh.

# Poll observers' meet

Webcasting in 60% booths in Jagatsinghpur

**KAHNU NANDA ■ JAGATSINGHPUR**

An election review meeting was held under the chairmanship of Election Commission of India (ECI) deputed general observer Dr H P Tumod in collectorate here on Thursday. The meeting overall discussed pre-poll arrangements made by the district administration in Jagatsinghpur district.

Dr Tumod urged at the meeting to ensure strict adherence to the model code of conduct enshrined by ECI during elections and all poll stakeholders must obey the orders and instructions of the ECI in letter and spirit for free and impartial elections.

Collector cum district electoral officer Anupam Saha presented an extensive poll preparation plan initiated by the administration in the subjects of

electoral roll preparation, postal ballot, and management of EVM and VVPAT machines, including model polling booths, Sakhi booths, youth and eco-friendly booths, SVEEP programme and arrangements at the polling stations. The observers, verifying the arrangements, emphasized that training to the presiding and polling officers are an important component for conducting elections smoothly and peacefully. At least 60 percent of polling booths will be covered by webcasting in the district. The observers also discussed the storage of EVMS after elections and counting of votes which will be held on June 4. The meeting was attended by ADMs from Pradip and Jagatsinghpur, municipality executive officer and CDO cum EO Zilla Parishad.

# Hota urges supporters to vote for BJP in Hindol

**PNS ■ DHENKANAL**

BJP leader Er Debashisha Hota is convincing his lakhs of supporters to cast their votes for the BJP candidates on May 25 for Dhenkanal Lok Sabha and all seven Assembly seats. Recently, he held a meeting at Gunadei under the Hindol Assembly seat.

Scores of people, including youth, women, tribals, artists, landless labourers, farmers, teachers and project-affected by different companies from all over Hindol Assembly Constituency attended. Hota

spoke about the pro-people schemes of the Modi Government and how they have been highly beneficial for the people living on the edge.

He also described the achievements of the Modi Government, including the construction of Ram Mandir at Ayodhya, abrogation of Article 370 from Jammu & Kashmir, implementation of Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019 and ban of Triple Talaq.

He said Odisha also needs to be provided good governance and urged the people to vote in favour of BJP.

# Rajnath slams Cong, BJD for 'no dev in Odisha'

**PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR**

Defence Minister and senior BJP leader Rajnath Singh on Sunday targeted the ruling BJD and the Congress while addressing a mega public meeting in Rairakhol in Sambalpur district.

In his address, Singh stated that the Congress ruled Odisha for 50 years and the BJD for 25 years. But Odisha has not developed much in the last 75 years as poverty is yet to be eradicated. All the important documents, manuscripts art and culture have been lost. "I have been told that even the keys of Puri Jagannath Temple's Ratna Bhandar are also missing", he said.

"India has touched new heights under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership. Earlier, the world was not taking India seriously, but now things have changed dramatically. It was PM Modi who played a crucial role in ensuring the safe return of citizens



and students in the backdrop of the Russia-Ukraine war which was stopped for 4.5 hours," said Singh.

Be it the abrogation of Article 370 or the construction of the grand Ram Temple in Ayodhya, whatever promises made by the BJP have been fulfilled, said Singh.

The previous governments even failed to eradicate poverty. The Modi government has been working for the poor and other backward classes. Be it pucca houses, cooking gas,

toilets and other facilities, the BJP government has done a lot of work to bring a massive transformation in the lives of people.

"It was the BJD government that tried to stop the benefits of Central schemes from reaching the beneficiaries in Odisha. The work for providing pucca houses, toilets and cooking gas has not progressed much under the BJD rule. Several poor people are deprived of availing the benefits of Ayushman Bharat here," said Singh.

# Oil refinery workers pledge support for BJD candidates



**PNS ■ PARADIP**

On Friday, the Eastern India Oil Refinery Workers' Union held a rally at the Jagatsinghpur District Truck Owners' Association office premises. The rally was presided over by the union's president Santosh Kumar Pattnaik.

Key attendees included Jagatsinghpur Lok Sabha MP candidate Dr Rajashree Mallick, Paradip MLA candidate Gitanjali Routray, district women BJD president Sabita Mohapatra, district supervisor

Santosh Bej, Paradip supervisor Girish Babu, Kujang Block Campaign Committee chairman Raghunath Sahu, State Youth BJD secretary and Paradip coordinator Rashmi Ranjan Das, joint secretary Rajesh Bhuyan, Jagatsinghpur district BJD secretary Rabi Narayan Jena and district BJD secretary Bikram Mohanty. Labour leader Chinmay Das delivered the welcome speech, introduced the guests and highlighted the public welfare programmes of the Eastern India Oil Refinery Workers' Union

under the leadership of Pattnaik. The speakers, including Pattnaik, urged the attendees to support the BJD candidates by voting for the joint Conch symbol, ensuring a decisive victory for both MLA and MP candidates. The rally saw enthusiastic participation from labour union workers and members of civil society, who collectively decided to support the BJD candidates in the upcoming elections, demonstrating their commitment to the leadership of Naveen Pattnaik.

# 50 Vaisya Samaj families face 'boycott' in Ganjam

For last 2 years by own community

**RAJEEV RATHAN ■ BRAHMAMPUR**

More than 50 families of the Haladia Tailik Vaisya Samaj in Ankushpur under Ganjam district have been subjected to a social boycott by their own community for the past two years. In this regard, a delegation of the victims lodged a complaint with the Brahmampur SP, on Friday.

These families are excluded from participating in marriage ceremonies, events, and other essential activities, facing ostracisation within their village. Among the 400 families residing in Ankushpur, these 50 families are particularly targeted, enduring kangaroo courts imposed by influential individuals within their caste.



Stayee Bikasha Lakshya (SBL) NGO recently received a distress call from the affected villagers. The plea, submitted in May, outlines the severe social ostracization and arbitrary fines these families have faced, which severely disrupt their lives and violate their basic human rights.

SBL president Rabindra Mishra spoke to the media, stating that this form of social boycott is more perilous than the coronavirus and contra-

venes Articles 14, 19, and 21 of the Indian Constitution. He emphasized the necessity of eradicating such practices.

Despite efforts by elected village leaders, including the president, secretary, and treasurer of the NGO, the situation remains unresolved. SBL president Mishra, secretary Uma Sankar Sahu, advisor Professor SN Tripathy and members Pradeep Beura, Narayan Pradhan, Kapil Behera, Kirtan Sahu, and

Kampanidhi Sahu, have formally requested the Brahmampur SP to address these issues urgently. They have also sent copies of their appeal to the Sadar Inspector-in-Charge, Inspector General of Police, Brahmampur, Director General of Police, Odisha, Chief Secretary of Odisha, and the Chief Minister of Odisha, urging immediate action to ensure the safety, security, and upholding of human rights for the ostracized families.

# At 76.56%, N'pada dist records 4% higher voting than in 2019

As distress migration was checked due people's engagement in PMAY house building, farming

**AJIT PANDA ■ NUAPADA**

The first phase of voting in Odisha is over. The turnout of voters in Khariar and Nuapada Assembly Constituencies, two of the seven segments of Kalahandi Parliamentary constituency which went for voting in the phase, was 78.25 % and 74.76 % respectively.

Nuapada district as a whole recorded 76.54% voting. The voting percentage is about 4% more this time than in the 2019 general election. As in previous elections, women participation in voting was higher than men this time. The



increase in voting percentage no doubt is due to continuous efforts by the Election Commission of India (ECI) to encourage voters to participate in large numbers. Two other factors which can be attributed to the increase in polling percentage are reduction in migration this year as workers were engaged in construction of their houses under PMAY and supply of irrigation water in the right canal for Rabi cultivation in Khariar constituency for which the people were tied to their farming works.

As many as 40,352 families were allotted houses under

PMAY scheme this year after a gap of two years and it can be roughly said that two third of the beneficiaries are seasonal migrants. Under PMAY - MGNREGA convergence, the beneficiaries get 95 days of wage employment under MGNREGS when they work in the construction of their own houses. The district has already released the first instalment wage of 30 days to 39,000 beneficiaries under the scheme.

The right canal of Lower Indra Irrigation Project has provided irrigation to 3,500 acres area for Rabi cultivation benefiting about 2,500 fami-

lies. Most of these farm households would have migrated after harvesting of Kharif crops had they not got irrigation in the ongoing Rabi season.

This shows how timely intervention to address pressing issues help people a lot to ascertain their rights in a democratic setup. However, for the politicians, these are not the issues that draw their attention. As the voters even after the end of voting are tight-lipped and are not revealing to whom they have voted, the candidates are engaged in speculation. Some of them, as police reports reveal, have become vindictive. There are allegations that BJD candidate Adhiraj Panigrahi has threatened some people for not supporting him during the election. One case has also been lodged against BJD candidate Hitesh Bagarti. Situation seems to be tense and there is speculation it may remain so till the day of counting.

# CISF to take over counterterrorism role at Parliament as CRPF withdraws

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**

More than 3,300 CISF personnel will take over the complete counterterrorism and anti-sabotage security duties at the Parliament complex from Monday following the withdrawal of over 1,400 CRPF staff from the country's most important symbol of democracy, official sources said.

The parliament duty group (PDG) of the CRPF wound up its entire administrative and operational paraphernalia -- vehicles, weapons and commandos -- from the complex on Friday and its commander, a deputy inspector general (DIG)-rank officer, handed over all the security points in the complex to the incoming CISF group, the sources said.

A total of 3,317 Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) personnel are being inducted for securing both the old and new Parliament buildings and the associated structures in this complex located in central Delhi after the govern-



ment directed it to take over the task from the CRPF following the December 13 security breach incident of last year, a senior officer told PTI.

In a major security breach on the anniversary of the 2001 Parliament terror attack, two persons jumped into the Lok Sabha chamber from the public gallery during Zero Hour on December 13, 2023, released yellow smoke from canisters and shouted slogans before being overpowered by MPs.

Outside the Parliament premises around the same time that day, two other persons sprayed coloured smoke from canisters while shouting slogans.

Following this incident, a committee under the chairmanship of CRPF DG was setup to look into the overall security issues of the Parliament complex and make suitable recommendations.

The CISF counterterrorism security unit will take over the full charge of the Parliament complex from 6 am on Monday, May 20, the officer

added that the PDG unit is expected to be merged with the six battalion strong VIP security wing of the CRPF, while the PSS staff could be tasked afresh for rendering security and protocol duties at other central government installations.

Some PSS staff could be retained for manning the lobbies of the house for marshal duties but a final decision is yet to be taken, he said.

The CISF contingent, according to sources, has been deployed on a temporary manner called the 'internal security duty pattern' and it is expected that it will be granted a full-fledged sanction as new government assumes office after the ongoing general elections, sources said.

The CISF personnel have been imparted refresher training in baggage screening, personal frisking, bomb detection and disposal, quick reaction terrorist counter, sniper task and public interaction and courtesy before being sent for the Parliament duty.

They have also trained recently with the 'black cat' commandos of the National Security Guard (NSG) who were air-dropped from an IAF helicopter on the new Parliament complex to simulate a terrorist attack, the sources said.

A CRPF officer said PDG troops who left the Parliament complex on May 17 clicked selfies and took photographs as a token of remembrance of "efficiently" guarding the country's highest temple of democracy.

"During the 2001 terrorist attack, CRPF personnel showed extreme bravery along with personnel from other agencies to defeat the dastardly assault with one personnel laying down her life in the line of duty while some others receiving gallantry medals and in 2023 they were not responsible for the breach that took place."

"The PDG personnel felt sad that they had to surrender this duty despite giving their best," the CRPF officer said.

# Ladakh at receiving end for past ten years, alleges Congress

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI**

A day before polling for the Ladakh Lok Sabha constituency, the Congress on Sunday alleged that over the last 10 years, the Union Territory has been at the receiving end of the Modi Government's "malicious and step-motherly treatment".

Congress chief spokesman Jairam Ramesh said Ladakhis have been protesting in freezing temperatures over the lack of control over their land and water. "The protests have been ongoing for months, including all 8 tribes and over 30,000 people, coming together for hunger strikes and huge marches," he said.

The Modi government's only response has been continued silence and apathy, Ramesh claimed. In a social media post, the Congress general secretary noted that on May 20, Ladakh will go to the polls, and "over the last 10 years, Ladakh has been at the receiving end of the worst of



the Modi government's Anyak Kaal - from complete apathy to malicious and step-motherly treatment".

"In August 2019, the Modi government stripped all representation from the people of Ladakh by downgrading them to a Union Territory without a legislature," he said.

"The greed of the Modi Sarkar and its crony corporate friends is threatening Ladakh's fragile ecosystems. Corporates in sectors like mining have their eyes set on Ladakh's natural resources, and if the Modi Sarkar is allowed back into power, there is nothing stopping

them from extracting wealth from the land and the people," Ramesh claimed.

The entire region is being "remote-controlled" from Delhi through a lieutenant governor, he alleged. A huge influx of tourists and urbanisation is putting pressure on Ladakh's resources, creating water shortages, the former environment minister said.

"Further, the Modi government's weakness has caused great harm to Ladakh's security and economy: The Modi government's cowardice has allowed China to seize 2,000 sq. Km of land in Ladakh, taking away 26 out of 65

# 46th Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting to begin in Kochi from today

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI**

The 46th Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting begins in Kochi on Monday under the shadow of the Ukraine-Russia conflict, an issue that has been affecting the discussions for the past two years.

The 10-day deliberations among signatory nations to the Antarctic Treaty are expected to focus on collaboration between parties on research and exchanging information on plans for sustainable management of resources in the icy continent.

Also on the agenda for the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting (ATCM) is the development of a framework for regulating tourism in Antarctica, given the pristine and delicate nature of the continent, and applications by Belarus and Canada for consultative status at the deliberations.

"We expect the Ukraine conflict to figure in the talks and we have to ensure that it



doesn't affect the meeting in a big way," a senior official closely involved in the ATCM's organisation said.

Russia and Ukraine have consultative status or full decision-making roles at the ATCM, which takes all decisions by a consensus.

Russia's increase in surveys of the Antarctic region for oil and gas reserves has also caused some anxiety among the partner nations, some of

which believe that Moscow may stake claim to large swathes of the continent.

Union Earth Sciences Minister Kiren Rijiju is scheduled to formally inaugurate the ATCM at the Lulu Bolgatty International Convention Centre in Kochi on Tuesday. The ATCM and the 26th Meeting of the Committee for Environmental Protection is hosted by the Union Ministry

of Earth Sciences through the National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research.

The meeting is also expected to deliberate on the development of a framework for tourism in Antarctica -- the only continent without any indigenous population. For the 2022-23 season, the International Association of Antarctica Tour Operators reported 32,370 cruise-only visitors, 71,346 landed visitors and 821 deep-field visitors.

The ATCM has 56 member-nations, of which 29 have consultative status or decision-making powers.

The remainder have non-consultative status. Canada and Belarus are seeking consultative status but their petitions have run into opposition.

Officials said the argument against Canada's candidature is that the North American nation does not have a research station in Antarctica while the scientific output of Belarus is not considered to be adequate for granting consultative status.

# Global life expectancy to increase between 2022 and 2050: Study

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI**

The latest findings from the Global Burden of Disease Study (GBD) 2021, published in The Lancet, forecast that global life expectancy will increase by 4.9 years in males and 4.2 years in females between 2022 and 2050.

Increases are expected to be largest in countries where life expectancy is lower, contributing to a convergence of increased life expectancy across geographies.

The trend is largely driven by public health measures that have prevented and improved survival rates from cardiovascular diseases, COVID-19, and a range of communicable, maternal, neonatal, and nutritional diseases (CMNNDs), said the study.

It indicated that the ongoing shift in disease burden to non-communicable diseases (NCDs) -- like cardiovascular diseases, cancer, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, and diabetes -- and exposure to NCD-associated risk factors -- such as obesity, high blood pressure, non-optimal diet, and smoking -- will have the greatest impact on disease burden of the next generation.

As the disease burden continues to shift from CMNNDs to NCDs and from years of life lost (YLLs) to years lived with disability (YLDs), more people are expected to live longer, but with more years spent in poor health.

Global life expectancy is forecasted to increase from 73.6 years of age in 2022 to 78.1 years of age in 2050 (a 4.5-year increase).

Global healthy life expectancy (HALE) -- the average number of years a person can expect to live in good health -- will increase from 64.8 years in 2022 to 67.4 years in 2050 (a 2.6-year increase).



To come to these conclusions, the study forecasts cause-specific mortality; YLLs; YLDs; disability-adjusted life years (DALYs), or lost years of healthy life due to poor health and early death; life expectancy; and HALE from 2022 through 2050 for 204 countries and territories.

"In addition to an increase in life expectancy overall, we have found that the disparity in life expectancy across geographies will lessen," said Dr. Chris Murray, Chair of Health Metrics Sciences at the University of Washington and Director of the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME).

"This is an indicator that while health inequalities between the highest- and lowest-income regions will remain, the gaps are shrinking, with the biggest increases anticipated in sub-Saharan Africa."

Dr. Murray added that the biggest opportunity to speed up reductions in the global disease burden is through policy interventions aimed to prevent and mitigate behavioral and metabolic risk

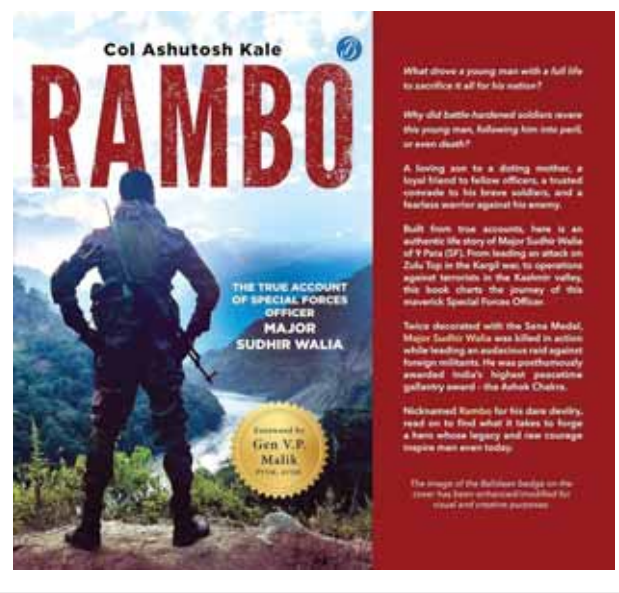
# Book on life of martyr Major Sudhir Walia released

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI**

Former Army chief General V P Malik here released a new book titled 'Rambo' on the life of Major Sudhir Walia who was posthumously awarded nation's highest peace time bravery award Ashok Chakra.

Amongst a gathering of army veterans, Malik talked about the bravery of Walia, a Special Forces Officer, who had served as his ADC (Aide de Camp) when he took over as the Chief of the Indian Army.

In his foreword to the book, the former army chief writes, "My loss was personal." Written by Colonel Ashutosh Kale, who commanded the 3rd Grenadiers, the book is about



the daredevilry of Walia, attack on Zulu Top in the Kargil war and operations against terrorists in the Kashmir valley amongst other things.

The book offers readers an unprecedented look at the covert operations and the personal sacrifices of India's elite soldiers. It is a testament to the courage and dedication of Major Sudhir Walia, whose legacy continues to inspire Indians till now.

This is an in-depth look at Major Walia's various missions, from the jungles of Sri Lanka to the Lolab Valley and covert operations against Afghan terrorists. These operations, often shrouded in secrecy, are vividly recounted through firsthand accounts and meticulous

research.

Major Walia's daring actions, such as his final mission in the forests of Haphrudra in Kupwara, where he eliminated fifteen terrorists despite being gravely injured, underscore his indomitable spirit. His refusal to be evacuated and continued leadership until his last breath earned him the Ashok Chakra, India's highest peacetime gallantry award.

Gracing the book launch occasion were Lt General Pushpinder Singh, Colonel of the Parachute Regiment, Lt General Paramjit Singh Sangha, former Deputy Chief of Army Staff amongst many other notable personalities from the army and the media as well as Major Sudhir Walia's family.

# Parade organised to mark successful training completion of Garud commandos

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI**

To mark the successful completion of training of Air Force Special Forces 'Garud' commandos, Maroon Beret Ceremonial Parade was held on Saturday at Garud Regimental Training Centre (GRTC), Air Force Station Chandinagar.

Air Marshal PK Vohra, Senior Air Staff Officer, Western Air Command was the Reviewing Officer for the parade, officials said here.

The Reviewing Officer congratulated the Garuds on successful completion of their training. He emphasised the importance of rigorous training and honing of Special Forces skills to keep pace with the changing security scenario.

He presented Maroon Beret, Garud Proficiency Badge and Special Forces Tabs to the successful Garud trainees and gave away trophies to the meritorious trainees. The best



all-rounder trophy was presented to Flight Lieutenant Shashwat Rana.

As part of the ceremony, Garuds demonstrated combat firing skill, hostage rescue, firing drill, assault explosives, obstacle crossing drill, wall climbing, slithering, rappelling and military martial arts.

The Maroon Beret Ceremonial Parade is a significant event that marks the culmination of an extremely demanding training schedule. These newly passed out trainees enter the elite Garud force and add strength to the operational capability of IAF.

# World Abdominal Cancer Day walk brings together thousands of people

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI**

The International Multicity Awareness Walk held on World Abdominal Cancer Day on Sunday brought together thousands of people across 25 cities worldwide including Mumbai, Bangalore, Surat, and Jaipur in India, as well as internationally in Oxford, London, Manchester, and New York.

However, the participants had the common message of promoting health and fitness to particularly keep the abdominal cancer at bay.

Organized by the Abdominal Cancer Trust in the national capital, the event featured prominent figures such as Dr Imroz Khan and Dr. Mukesh Kumar, Co founder of World Health and Wellness Fitness who joined in the walk to raise awareness about abdominal cancer prevention and early detection.

Dr. Sundeep Jain, founder of Abdominal Cancer Trust, high-



lighted the significance of lifestyle choices in safeguarding one's health, emphasizing that a healthy lifestyle can significantly reduce the risk of abdominal cancer.

The Trust is engaged in providing support including medication to the patients afflicted with abdominal cancer.

The 5th edition of the event was particularly special, with Jai Shri Periwali praising the unique approach of raising cancer awareness through a walk. Participants were encouraged to stay vigilant about abdominal cancer symptoms and to seek medical consultation promptly.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

## An intricate puzzle

### Kejriwal aide's arrest sparks AAP-BJP war of words amid Maliwal's assault allegations

The alleged assault case involving former Delhi Commission for Women chief and AAP Rajya Sabha MP Swati Maliwal, in which she has named Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's PA Bibhav Kumar, keeps getting murky. The development came within days of Kejriwal's return to campaigning from Tihar Jail, where he had been incarcerated for his alleged role in the Delhi excise policy case. Now the arrest of Bibhav Kumar for the alleged assault has sparked a series of protests and political manoeuvres. The case centres around Maliwal who, interestingly, herself has been under scrutiny by the Anti-Corruption Bureau for alleged appointment irregularities in DCW. After first admitting to the assault, AAP now alleges that Maliwal was blackmailed with the fear of arrest in the case. Bibhav's arrest is linked to this ongoing investigation, adding fuel to an already volatile situation. In response to his aide's arrest, Kejriwal — accompanied by AAP MPs, MLAs and supporters — led a protest march to the BJP headquarters to show solidarity with Bibhav and "expose" the BJP's political vendetta.



In a video message to the Prime Minister, Kejriwal asked the latter to arrest all top AAP leaders at once instead of doing that one by one. Kejriwal also emphasised that the action against Bibhav and Maliwal were attempts to stifle AAP's efforts to combat corruption and improve governance. On the other hand, the BJP has asserted that the law against corruption is being followed diligently. Its leaders argue that investigation is a necessary step in ensuring transparency and accountability in public offices. Interestingly, the Congress has chosen to remain silent on this issue.

This non-committal stance could be seen as a strategic decision to avoid getting embroiled in the confrontation between AAP and BJP, both of whom are its political rivals in Delhi.

Timing is everything in politics; the cauldron is coming to a boil with less than a week to go for voting in Delhi on May 25. Meanwhile, the ongoing tussle between AAP and BJP is emblematic of the larger power struggle between the parties. This incident is likely to have ramifications beyond immediate political dynamics, potentially influencing voter perception and future elections. It would not be wise to assign motives to Maliwal at this point; besides, the case is now sub judice but one can safely say from experience that several of her past statements have been rather awkward. Once she tweeted she was a "proud daughter" and, on another occasion, said she was sexually abused by him when she was a child. The situation also brings to the fore issues of misuse of investigative agencies and the limits of political accountability. As both parties continue to trade barbs, the people of Delhi watch closely, hoping for resolutions that prioritise effective governance and justice over political expediency. As Buddha once said, three things cannot be hidden for long — sun, moon and the truth! We would know soon whether it was a political conspiracy or really a assault by her own party members!

## PICTALK



Women carry stajice flowers in bamboo baskets, in Senapati district of Manipur

# India tactfully manages US-Iran tensions



BHOPINDER SINGH

### As India forges a vital partnership with Iran through the Chabahar port agreement, it must adeptly balance its regional interests against the backdrop of American concerns

Iran has had an unwarranted grip on the sensibilities of the US administrations, irrespective of their partisan divide. The moment for the bilateral fracture in American imagination starts from the Iranian Revolution in 1979 and the subsequent US Embassy hostage drama. The wounded memory for the Iranians is deeper and traced to the CIA-aided coup against the popular Prime Minister, Mosaddegh, in 1953. Undoubtedly, the religious puritanism of Ayatollah Khomeini's regime after the revolution pitted it ideologically against the 'West', but the public memory of the US support to Saddam Hussein (later ousting him) in the decade-long Iran-Iraq war, is now conveniently forgotten by the duplicitous American regimes. Later, Americans linked Iran to 9/11 and the birthing of Al Qaeda/ISIL, even though Iran didn't have anything to do with either. If anything, Iran and its proxies fought ISIL in Syrian-Iraqi swathes and were instrumental in decimating the same, though later the Americans killed the Iranian General Qasem Soleimani. Because sectarian undercurrents and the chessboard of American 'allies' (Israel and Arab Sheikdoms) have a checkmate from Iran and its proxies in Syria, Lebanon and Yemen - the unjustified demonizing of Iran continues. While countries like Saudi Arabia and Pakistan have contributed far more towards religious extremism and terror, they continue to receive American support, while the Iranians face crippling sanctions. Americans had unilaterally reneged on the Iran Nuclear Deal even when all other signatories i.e., P+1 countries and the UN watchdog agency IAEA (International Atomic Energy Agency) had confirmed that Iran had complied with all provisions. Pressure from Israel and Sheikdoms ensured that Iran continued getting conflated with everything going wrong in the Middle East, even if Iran did, or did not have any role in the same. While the Hamas group was supported by Iran (as indeed by Saudia Arabia and others, till recently), there is no credible evi-



dence to link Iran with the planning or execution of the 7th Oct 2023 attack, but the phantom of Iran linkages persisted. Pushed to a corner to retaliate to salvage its sovereign pride the Iranians did retaliate, albeit, after getting forced to do so after its senior military officers were killed in Syria, by Israelis. The must-needed justification to 'prove' Iran's purported machinations and belligerence was offered and the Americans lapped it up with both hands - that it is the election year and flexing muscles against the 'enemy' i.e., Iran, brings its electoral benefits, vitiates the situation even further. Now Joe Biden who had earlier come to power with the promise to restore the Iran Nuclear Deal torn by the unhinged Donald Trump, is all but a forgotten memory. Today, Biden is trying to outdo Donald Trump in 'taking on' the Iranians, with even more sanctions. The White House issued a Statement, "Less than a week ago, Iran launched one of the largest missile and drone attacks the world has ever seen against Israel. Together with our allies and partners, the United States defended Israel. We helped defeat this attack. And today, we are holding Iran accountable-imposing new sanctions and export



WHILE INDIA NEEDS TO MAINTAIN ITS RELATIONS WITH THE US TO COUNTERANCE THE CHINESE THREATS, IT ALSO HAS ITS REGIONAL CONCERNS WHICH REQUIRE DE-HYPHENATION FROM US CONCERNS WITH IRAN

controls on Iran". The import of the same goes beyond the USA as it now seeks to potentially sanction any country dealing with Iran e.g., India, which has recently signed a 10-year contract to manage the strategic Chabahar port in Iran. This gateway to Afghanistan and Central Asian Republics bypasses Pakistani land routes, offers an invaluable Indian footprint on the other side of Pakistan (counters China-developed, Gwadar Port, in Pakistan) and strengthens Indian ties with the civilisational land of Iran. With the Taliban in Afghanistan tiring of Pakistan and the Iranians signing this deal, Delhi is justifiably excited about the evolved prospects of countering the Sino-Pakistani assertions in the theatre. While India needs to maintain its relations with the US to counterance the Chinese threats, it also has its regional concerns which require de-hyphenation from US concerns with Iran. India cannot be a blind minion of the US as it has its own bilateral and regional imperatives that warrant 'strategic independence' in decision-making, as was done by buying Russian oil and maintaining cordial relations with Moscow, whilst nuancing concerns for

Ukraine. To be fair, the Americans have recognised the Indian positions and compulsions which are not aimed at diminishing the US interest, but only towards protecting its own, hence the restraint in actuality, even as the war of words persists. In any case, the Biden administration will be at its voluble worst and indulge in sabre-rattling (especially on matters about Iran) and therefore important to understand their compulsion of tonality. It is with this backdrop that the Statement of the US official must be understood, when pressed about the Indian agreement with Iran, "You've heard us say this in several instances, that any entity, anyone considering business deals with Iran, they need to be aware of the potential risk that they are opening themselves up to and the potential risk of sanctions". The Americans will say what they have to and the Indians will do what they have to, as it is a well-understood position on both sides. India's strategic equation with Iran is not designed to diminish the US interest. (The writer, a military veteran, is a former Lt Governor of Andaman & Nicobar Islands and Puducherry. The views expressed are personal)

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### FOLLOW THE CODE OF CONDUCT

Madam — Apropos the news article "Mamata Promises to back INDIA in Power," published on May 16. The Chief Minister of Bengal, Mamta Banerjee, had earlier decided to go solo in the elections. Even the ruling party Trinamool Congress's (TMC) leader's atrocities against women of the Sandeshkhali haven't lowered the spirit of Didi (Mamta Banerjee). Annoyed with the saffron party at the centre and blaming it for hatching a conspiracy in the Sandeshkhali incident, the chief minister has decided to support the INDIA bloc from outside if it comes to power in the centre. Accusing Narendra Modi of not fulfilling any of the promises to the nation, Didi said Publicity and lies are his two weapons. According to the chief minister, the PM is a prachar Babu who does only 'prachar' and nothing else. Using such terms against the PM of the nation is a violation of the code of conduct. All political leaders should maintain the sanctity of the Constitution and follow a code of conduct while speaking publicly.

Abhilasha Gupta | Mohali

### CHABAHAR PORT PACT

Madam — It refers to the news article "India And Iran Sign Chabahar Port Pact," this is my response. The Chabahar Port is a cornerstone of India's regional strategy, offering several critical advantages. It serves as a vital gateway for expanding trade with Central Asia, providing a direct, cost-effective route to the region's abundant resources. Additionally, Chabahar acts as a strategic counterbalance to China's influence, particularly in light of China's control of Gwadar Port in Pakistan. The port also offers a reliable alternative trade route to Afghanistan, bypassing the often volatile land routes through Pakistan and ensuring uninterrupted trade and aid flows. This collaboration with Iran further strengthens India's diplomatic ties and bolsters its position in the Asian geopolitical landscape. India's commitment to the Chabahar

### Chhetri retires



Apropos the news article, "Stalwart Chhetri announces retirement," published on May 17, this is my response. The news of Sunil Chhetri's retirement has hit the Indian football community hard. As the much-admired and treasured Indian captain announced his decision to step away from international football after the FIFA World Cup qualification match

against Kuwait on June 6, emotions ran high across the country. Chhetri was the face of Indian football in a remarkable career spanning over 20 years. With a legacy that has left an indelible mark on Indian football, the 39-year-old maestro's journey has been an inspiration to millions, reshaping perceptions of this beautiful game in the nation along the way. Since his debut in 2005, Chhetri has amassed a multitude of accolades, including setting records for the highest number of appearances and goals scored for India. With 94 goals in 150 matches, Sunil Chhetri holds the third position on the list of most international goals, trailing behind only the two superstars, Lionel Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo. "A simple ball unites us all," the saying goes. Needless to say, Sunil Chhetri was a perfect example of this soccer quote.

Ranganathan Sivakumar | Chennai

project, despite the potential risk of US sanctions, underscores its strategic autonomy. India's External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar defended the Chabahar Port deal with Iran despite US sanctions warning, emphasising its regional benefits. India views the port as crucial for accessing Central Asia while bypassing Pakistan. Despite US pressure, India asserts its strategic independence through the deal to counter China's influence in the region.

Amarjeet Kumar | Hazaribagh

### CRUELTY AGAINST ANIMALS

Madam — Apropos the feature article, "Assault most foul for kindness to animals," by Hiranmay Karlekar, published on May 18, this is my response. Compassion for all living creatures has been the philosophy of India. In most Indian households, rural and urban, when people cook, they reserve a portion of the food for cows, dogs and birds. However, human beings, born as a superior species, consider themselves the sole claimant to this planet and its related div-

idents. Dog lovers aiding animals face assaults by impostors posing as human saviors, reflecting a concerning trend of violence.

Animals may be mute but we as a society have to speak on their behalf as animals breathe like us and have emotions. Even though India, with its population of over 1.42 billion, still faces significant challenges in addressing animal cruelty. Every minute, an animal in India faces abuse, despite existing laws like Sections 428 and 429 in Animal Laws. The State Government does not take animal abuse cases too seriously, making it difficult to calculate just how common they are. India was given a "C" under the Animal Protection Index (API) and is also a moderate performer under the Sanctioning Cruelty category. Unfortunately, these animal abuse statistics have shown, that animal cruelty is a real issue in India that takes millions of victims every year.

Abhijit Roy | Jamshedpur

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

# Promise and challenges of drones in agriculture

### Drone technology shows promise in agriculture, offering efficiency and cost savings. Yet apprehensions galore hinder its adoption



HIMANSHU VERMA

Drone technology has gained popularity in the agriculture industry in recent years. Drones provide farmers with several advantages, such as higher yields, lower costs, and enhanced efficiency. However, there are worries that farmers would be hesitant to use drone technology because they don't know enough about it or are afraid of losing their jobs. We will examine the advantages of drone technology for the agricultural industry as well as any obstacles that might be preventing farmers from implementing it. Drones' advantages in the agriculture industry



Drone flying over a field.

1. **Increased efficiency:** Farmers can collect data and monitor crops more successfully because of drones' ability to cover huge expanses of land swiftly and efficiently. Early problem detection can result in quicker and more efficient responses.

ers from using this tool. These are a few of the main obstacles:

- 1. Fear of losing one's job:** Since fewer people will be required to undertake physical labour on farms as a result of the adoption of drone technology, many farmers are worried about losing their jobs.
- 2. Lack of expertise:** Farmers may lack the expertise or training required to use drones safely. They might not be confident in their abilities to utilize it, which might make it difficult for them to accept this technology.
- 3. Cost:** Since drones may be pricey, many farmers might not be able to afford to invest in this technology.
- 4. Regulatory obstacles:** Farmers may find it challenging to use this technology if there are regulatory obstacles to the usage of drones in agriculture. Drone technology usage in rural India's agriculture industry is still in its infancy. This technology is attracting curiosity, but there are also worries about job loss and a lack of education and training. Nonetheless, initiatives are being made to overcome these obstacles and

promote the use of drone technology. The Digital India programme is a major endeavour that seeks to furnish rural regions with digital infrastructure. The initiative's emphasis on education and training may aid in addressing farmers' deficiencies in knowledge and experience. Furthermore, several efforts and organisations are working to further the application of drone technology in agriculture. To promote precision agricultural technology, such as drones, the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) developed the Centre for Precision and Farming Technology. Farmers may be reluctant to accept this technology, though, due to worries about job loss and a lack of education and training. Farmers must have the support and training; they need to use this technology efficiently, as well as an understanding of its potential advantages. (The writer is an assistant professor of agronomy, college of Agriculture & environmental technology, Surajmal University, Uttarakhnad; view are personal)



## FIRST COLUMN

### CONNECTING THE MIND AND BODY

Harnessing the potential of mind is the key to true happiness



RAVI VALLURI

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

The human mind is an enigma and a reservoir of potential. But the moot question is how do we tap this potential? The mind is a movie theatre where we script and enact innumerable movies and soap operas. Technology alone cannot be a substitute for the enormous potential of the mind. It needs to be cultured, harnessed and harmonized with needs and wants.

We need to distinguish the brain from the mind. The brain is an organ that serves as the centre of the nervous system in all vertebrate and most invertebrate animals. Only a few invertebrates such as sponges, do not have a brain, diffuse or localized nerve nets are present instead. Mind on the other hand, is the faculty of consciousness and thoughts. It is an individual's intellect or memory of his attention span or will.

Sri Sri Ravi Shankar has captured it very succinctly. He says the mind is like the sky and thoughts are like clouds. Your thoughts make or mar the progress and development of the mind.



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

The human mind vacillates between the past and the future. In the past, the mind is regretful and if it is in the future, it is anxious. In either situation, the mind is not at peace or in the present moment and thus remains unhappy.

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

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

This energy can be channelled in innumerable ways. There may be some who may practice meditation, breathing techniques or simply observe silence to quieten the mind. The path is chosen based on our personality type. Several others through unflinching prayers and reading inspirational literature can silence the mind. But the aim is to be in the present and lead a happy life. Let our minds not be judgmental and complain and cling to negativities. Willy-nilly we provide the hook to hang the coat of negativity.

"Life gives you plenty of time to do whatever you want to do if you stay in the present moment," writes Deepak Chopra.

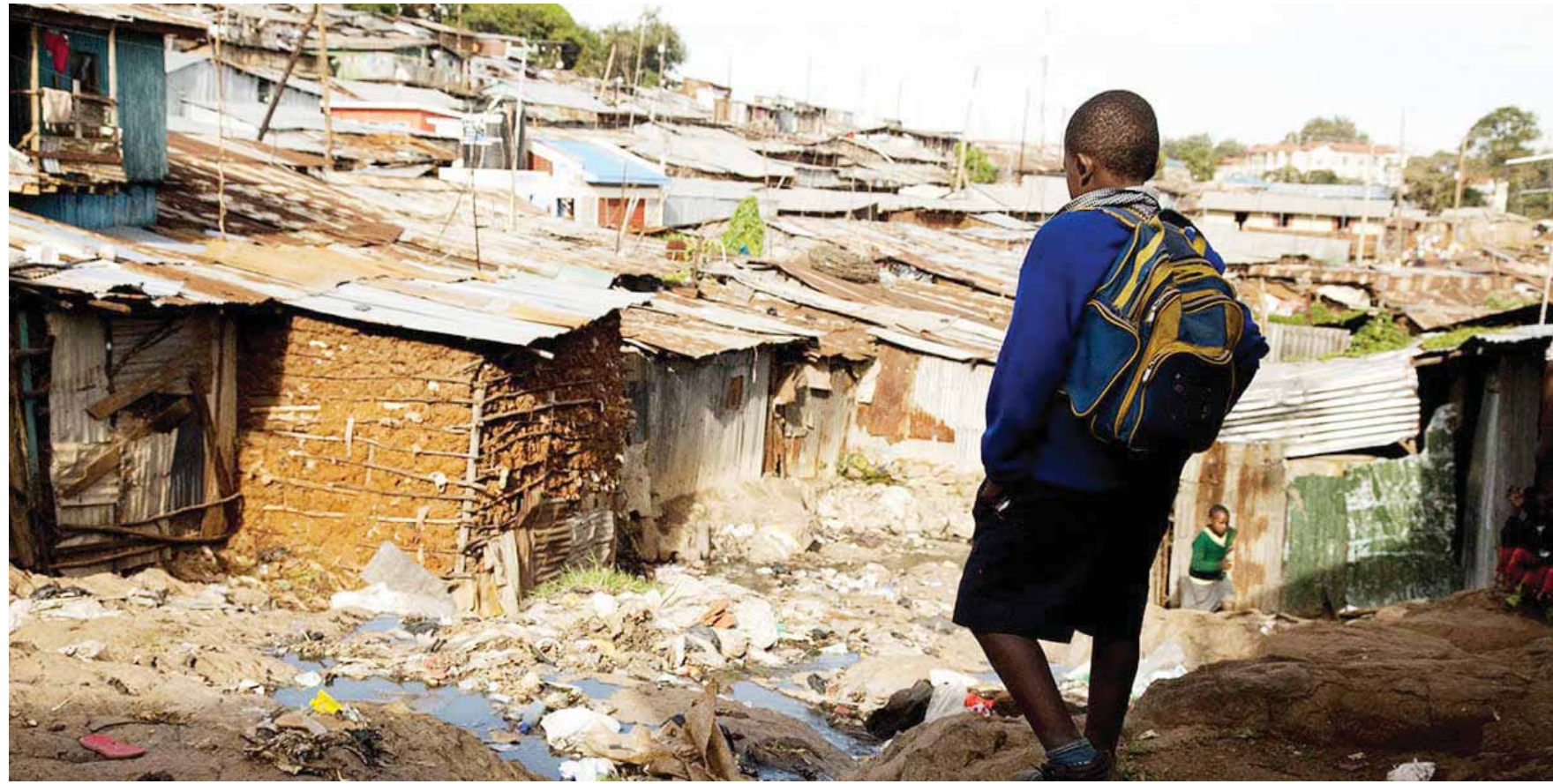
(The writer is the CEO of Chhattisgarh East Railway Ltd. and Chhattisgarh East West Railway Ltd. He is a faculty of the Art of Living; views are personal)

# Economic crisis takes a backseat in elections



SHIVAJI SARKAR

As India's election fever rises, the spotlight shifts from core economic issues to religious controversies and symbolic debates



In this dance of democracy, scarce resources are seemingly rambling up the election tempo. The religious slant on employment and sillier issues like the mangal sutra raised are for diverting from the core issue that has as yet to be answered by the pre-poll slogan of "we are the fifth largest economy". Aren't we that large? Some stats say that but the country has tougher stats to counter like the difficult balance of payments and still grim, Manipur the embattled State, for the failure of the provincial Government has over 67000 people displaced during the last year because of the ethnic conflict. There are also reports that farmers plough into the Punjab BJP poll campaign and express similar wrath in Haryana as well. They tell a political party to be people-friendly as also kisans are not born for doles. And Agniveers on their death are not being given a salute is a national cry.

Jobs not being there is the reality. Urban joblessness has risen to 6.7 per cent from 6.5 per cent in March 2024. The men's unemployment has jumped to 6.3 per cent from 5.8 per cent. Periodic labour survey data is a pointer to difficult job scenarios. This is reflected in the elections by the Bihar caste survey that indicates more difficult situations for marginal castes, a detested reality. Caste denotes empowerment as well as deprivation.

Would a Congress manifesto professing over 50 per cent reservation serve the issue? The BJP contests it. It is accused of wanting to rob reservations. It is repeatedly denied by RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat. No party has answered if jobs are not there, how would a reservation help? National Commission for Backward Classes has warned West Bengal and Punjab Governments for not "fully using the space available under the 50 percent ceiling for reservations for scheduled castes, tribes and backward classes and OBCs". It asked Bengal to increase it by 5 per cent and Punjab by 13 per cent. It finds that



THE MAHANAVRATNA AND NAVRATNA INDUSTRIES WERE DOING WELL WHEN MOST OF THESE WERE AXED OR SABOTAGED, LIKE AIR INDIA AND HMT, TO FACILITATE THE GROWTH OF THE PRIVATE SECTOR, WHICH EARNED HUGE PROFITS BUT DID NOT CREATE JOBS

Bengal filled up 45 per cent of the quota and Punjab only 37 per cent. The worst may be Arunachal Pradesh. Yet another sex racket is busted with eight Government officials among 21 arrested.

The International Labour Organisation finds 28 million men women and children are in forced labour due to a cycle of poverty. Of these 63 percent are in the private sector. Forced labour generates \$ 236 billion in illegal profits globally every year.

"We now know that the situation has only got worse. The international community must urgently come together to take action to end this injustice," said the ILO Director General.

The report, titled 'Profits and poverty: The economics of forced labour, also estimates that traffickers and criminals are generating close to \$10,000 per victim, up from \$8,269 (adjusted for inflation) a decade ago. The survey also said that forced commercial sexual exploitation contributes to more than two-thirds (73 per cent) of overall illicit profits, despite accounting for only 27 per cent of all victims in privately imposed work. "Total annual illegal profits from forced labour are highest in Europe and Central Asia (\$84 billion), followed by Asia, including India and the Pacific (\$62 billion), the Americas (\$52 billion), Africa (\$20 billion) and the Arab States (\$18 billion)," the report said.

The ILO cautions India. It also warned on conditions of Indian labour in the Arab countries.

In a scenario, where people compromise with their dignity, the ILO doubts the figures on India's galloping progress. The supposed \$ 3 trillion economy, highly burdened

with debt, has an annual repayment of over Rs 10.4 lakh crore.

Economic issues remain at the forefront of the voters. Globally shrinking jobs, particularly in IT, has rattled many Indians. Political parties offering sops of reservations or apprenticeships of Rs 1 lakh a year (approx. Rs 8000 plus a month) sells well among the burgeoning numbers of jobless, who are already hit by one of the highest inflation of 55 per cent in ten years. It is not easy for them to manage it amid farmers' distress and the trade deficit widening to a four-month high at \$ 19.1 billion. Exports rise by one per cent to \$35 billion and imports by over 10 per cent to \$ 54.1 billion. This upsets the Government's calculations on the impending forex reserves.

How would the country improve the job scenario? The age-old move to wean the workers away from the farms has failed. Still, agriculture employs over 54 per cent of the Indian workers. The Nehruvian economy created robust public sector organisations. In 1994-2000, PSUs employed 19.4 million (about 2 crores) people or 69 per cent of the total employed. The other 31 per cent were employed in the central and State Governments. Some 3.4 million jobs were added to non-farm payrolls and unemployment at 5.6 per cent had fallen from 6.6 per cent.

In sharp contrast, in 2021-22, PSU employment reduced to 8.61 lakh. And it is gradually reducing. According to official statistics, employment in the organized sector is now a mere 8.34 per cent, of which the public sector accounts for 5.77 per cent and the private sector only 2.58 per cent in the total employment generated.

The Government's massive infra investment of Rs 11 lakh crore this fiscal may have added some jobs in the construction sector but these short-term jobs are not considered quality work. Apart from infra investments are subject to erosion in many ways, right from excess cost estimation to longer gestation.

So the promise of reservation is a dream. According to CMIE, employment in India increased by a mere 5.8 million till March 2023. An additional 119 million people were not added to the potential labour force during the same. The estimates show that self-employment has been the chief driver of the Indian job market, which was hit hard by demonetisation crushing a parallel self-sustained economy.

Poll promises apart, the country is in the grip of a severe economic crisis. Ideally, more PSUs are required to stop labour exploitation in the private sector as well as their disinclination to create jobs. The Mahanavratna and Navratna industries were doing well when most of these were axed or sabotaged like Air India and HMT to facilitate the growth of the private sector, which earned huge profits but did not create jobs.

Reversing it would require revival and reforming the Planning Commission and reshaping the economy in the public sector where the private sector would have to compete on equal terms. Reservations to benefit the deprived castes then only would yield results. Would a revamp be possible?

(The author is a senior journalist; views are personal)

# Complex challenges necessitate consciousness and policy shift

India's pressing issues demand pragmatic action and a collective mindfulness shift for lasting, transformative change

India faces multitudes of challenges arising from different quarters. It is tempting to think of these problems as belonging to society, polity, economics etc. But essentially all problems have their roots in the mind of the human being and arise from a lack of adequate understanding of the self. The solutions therefore have to be both in the external and the internal domain. Let us look at the five major conflicts and challenges plaguing India. A vision for the future would involve constructively responding to these problems.

**1. Climate Change** It is well-established that climate change is an anthropogenic phenomenon. Ladakh is already agitating about the palpable changes that climate change is inflicting on the



ACHARYA PRASHANT

region's ecology. Five years is too long a time if India does not immediately take corrective steps. There is a terrifying lack of public awareness on this issue leading to political inaction. How are we planning to deal with swaths of terrible heat waves that are going to engulf the country? What will diminishing crop yields and extreme weather events do to the poor? Do we not know the origins of the toxic air that we

are consuming or the water distress we are facing? We continue to wreck the Himalayas with deforestation and the construction of massive carbon-emitting infrastructure, despite knowing that this is causing erratic rain patterns, melting of the glaciers and eventual destruction of life as we know it.

Blind lust for consumption comes from the blind belief that consumption is an indicator of the fulfilment or success of one's life. The sheer size of our population coupled with this notion of consumerism is a recipe for self-destruction. In the next 5 years, we need education and mass-awareness programs on this biggest threat that mankind faces and also genuine efforts towards correcting the consumption-

based flawed philosophy of life, through programs on self-awareness.

**2. Animal Rights** The same lust that threatens to destroy the planet also co-opts the rights of all living creatures on Earth. The problems of animal rights violations, ecology loss and biodiversity extinction - all arise from the same source. When we talk of animal rights, it is today unfortunately a struggle for the basic right to survive. Close to 50% of all living species on the planet have gone extinct in the last 50 years. Most of it is because of violent human action. 100-1000 species go extinct every day. Also, this is 100 to 1000 times faster than the natural extinction rate. As Indians and as humans, we can survive either physically or

spiritually with the kind of carpet 'speciecide' we have launched against the entire planet. In its scale and brutality, it exceeds any act of violence the Earth has ever seen. It is especially lamentable to see that India, with its Ahimsa, is among the worst perpetrators of atrocities towards life-forms. Be it meat exports, the expansion of the dairy industry, or the organised destruction of animal habitats through so-called developmental activities, it only augurs doom for all.

In the next 5 years, I wish to see direct and strong action on this front, which can only result from an arousal of public consciousness.

**3. Education** Public statistics on the State of India's education portray the

deep waters that the country is in. There are startling revelations on the basic quantitative and linguistic abilities of school students, not to mention the unemployability of college pass-outs. Compared to the developed world and the mass of developing countries, this highlights the utter lack of importance that Indian society places on education. The problems of today can have only spiritual solutions and we have kept the young population oblivious of spirituality. Our education has become very dangerously anti-life. A human being is alive only if he can reflect and understand. There is a need to urgently ramp up the basic education infrastructure of the country and also to prioritize the integration of life

education into the modern education system.

In the next 5 years, we need to see an education system that places deep emphasis on both Vidya (knowledge of the self) and Avidya (knowledge of the world).

**4. Protection of rights of the marginalised communities** More than half of the world's wealth resides in the hands of less than 1% of individuals. The situation in India is no different. When national resources are commanded by just a few individuals, the outcome is that much of the world is plagued by poverty, even starvation. The glamorization of wealth and the promise of pleasure has made the middle classes disconnected and indifferent to the stark realities of the world.

In the next few years, the rights of the vulnerable sections must be defended in all ways - through education, legal frameworks and socio-religious reform.

**5. Creative and dignified employment for the youth** Work is not something that you can choose as per the prevailing norms in your academic institution family or community. I would want to see, in the next 5 years, the creation of an academic, social and economic environment that brings creative vocation to the youth, not just as a means of livelihood but as the fulfilment of life itself.

(The author is a Vedanta teacher, author and the founder of Prashant Advait Foundation; views are personal)







# Government recovers ₹852 crore under amnesty scheme for exporters

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**  
 The government has recovered about Rs 852 crore under the amnesty scheme for exporters for one-time settlement of default in export obligation by the holders of advance and EPCG authorisations, an official said. The figures are likely to increase further as the exercise is on for the compilation of the data, the official added. The government has fixed March 31 as the last date for payment of customs duty plus interest. "Under the scheme, 6,705 applications were filed and as per the provisional figures, an amount of about Rs 852 crore has been recovered. This figure is further expected to increase," the official said. Meanwhile, several small exporters have requested the

government to continue the scheme for a one-time settlement of default in export obligation till September. Ludhiana-based Hand Tools Association President SC Ralhan has said several small exporters have not been able to avail of the benefits of the scheme due to fulfilling their obligations to make payments to MSMEs within 45 days. In the new foreign trade policy (FTP), the scheme was announced for exporters for one-time settlement of default in export obligation by the holders of advance and EPCG (export promotion for capital goods) authorisations. Under the scheme, all pending cases of the default in meeting export obligation (EO) of certain authorisations can be regularised by the authorisation holder on payment of all customs duties



that were exempted in proportion to unfulfilled EO and interest at 100 per cent of such duties exempted. India's merchandise exports rose by 1 per cent to USD 34.99 billion in April, even as the trade deficit widened to a four-month high of USD 19.1 billion during the month, according to government

data. Imports also increased by 10.25 per cent to USD 54.09 billion in the month under review from USD 49.06 billion in April 2023 due to a significant jump in gold imports. The country's total exports in goods and services for 2023-24 stood at USD 778.21 billion, the "highest" so far. Merchandise exports in the last fiscal were aggregated at USD 437.1 billion, while services exports stood at USD 341.1 billion. In line with the "Vivad se Vishwas" initiative, which sought to settle tax disputes amicably, the government has introduced the special one-time Amnesty Scheme under the FTP 2023 to address default on export obligations. The scheme is intended to provide relief to exporters, who have been unable to meet their

obligations under EPCG and Advance Authorisations, and who are burdened by high duty and interest costs associated with pending cases. The objective of the EPCG scheme is to facilitate the import of capital goods to produce quality goods and services to enhance India's export competitiveness. The scheme allows import of capital goods for pre-production, production and post-production at zero customs duty. On the other hand, advance authorisation is issued to allow duty-free import of input, which is physically incorporated in export products. However, exporters availing benefits under these schemes have to fulfil certain export obligations. Failure to fulfil the obligations attracts penal provisions.

# Ministry holds discussions on formulating SOPs to negotiate FTAs

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**  
 The commerce ministry has held detailed discussions with senior officials of different departments and trade experts on formulating standard operating procedures (SOP) for negotiating free trade agreements (FTAs), an official said. To discuss the various aspects of these agreements, the commerce ministry has organised a two-day 'Chintan Shivir' on FTA strategy and SOPs for trade negotiations on May 16-17. Suggestions that came up during the discussions included comprehensive consultations with public and private sector players and sharing details of the proposed FTAs with the line ministries, the official said. "Consultations should be held at every stage of FTA negotiations. Representatives of certain ministries suggested the commerce ministry to share FTA details with them in a timely manner so that they can prepare their views on those agreements," the official added. The exercise assumes significance as India is engaging with several trade partners to negotiate free trade pacts. Former commerce secretaries, trade experts and government officials from ministries, including finance, IT and electronics, and mines, participated in the deliberation. In the Chintan Shivir, various issues were discussed, including India's trade strategy and vision 2047; economic assessment and modelling of FTAs; inclusion of new disciplines into FTAs such as labour, environment, gender, and indigenous people; services and digital trade; and SOPs for FTA negotiations. A separate session was also organised on leveraging India's FTAs to address new forms/kinds of measures like CBAM (carbon border adjustment mechanism), supply chain disruptions, critical minerals, and artificial intelligence.

# Zinc demand in India likely to double in next 5-10 years

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**  
 The demand of zinc is expected to double in India in the next five to 10 years on the back of huge investments in infrastructure sector, including steel, International Zinc Association said on Sunday. The demand for zinc in India depends largely on the growth of the steel market as zinc is mainly used to galvanise steel to protect it from corrosion. "I see a doubling of the demand (for zinc) in the next five to 10 years. The market for primary and refined zinc in India is currently close to 800 to 1,000 tonnes (per annum) and has a great opportunity to increase with all the developments that we are witnessing in India. We see huge investments in additional steel capacity and...Steel



still needs to be protected by galvanized coatings. We see a lot of plans and investments going on for new galvanizing lines. So I expect a strong role for zinc in India," International Zinc Association Global Director Martin Van Leeuwen told PTI in an interaction. The current demand for zinc in India is 800 to 1,000 tonnes per annum. There are very low zinc users in India, he said, adding that per capita consumption of zinc in the country is around 0.5 kg and is far behind the world average. "If you look at zinc use in India, it is around half a kg per capita. To put that in perspective, the global average is about four kg per capita. And in developed countries like Korea, Europe, US it can go up to six

or seven kgs per capita," he explained. When asked about the outlook for zinc in the current calendar year, he said that with the world switching over to green energy and strong growth in solar photovoltaics (PV), there seems a great opportunity for zinc in 2024. "The energy transition...Is getting us to some wonderful opportunities for use of zinc. We are seeing investments in solar PV and wind energy and especially those two require a lot of zinc to protect steel supports... Zinc is also used to protect the towers, the wind towers for wind energy, especially those towers that are positioned at sea...We see great improvement and a great opportunity for zinc," he explained.



# Bank of Maharashtra tops among PSU banks in business growth in FY24

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**  
 State-owned Bank of Maharashtra recorded the highest growth rate last fiscal in terms of total business and deposit mobilisation among public sector lenders at a time when most banks are facing difficulty in achieving double-digit growth. The Pune-headquartered lender has registered a 15.94 per cent rise in the total business (domestic) in FY24, followed by the country's largest lender State Bank of India (SBI) with 13.12 per cent growth, according to published financial numbers of the public sector banks (PSBs). However, SBI's total business (deposit and advances) was about 16.7 times higher at Rs 79,52,784 crore compared to Rs 4,74,411 crore of Bank of Maharashtra (BoM) in absolute terms. Similarly, BoM continued to maintain its top spot in terms of growth in deposit mobilisation, with a 15.66 per cent rise in FY24. It was followed by SBI (11.07 per cent), Bank of India (11.05 per cent) and Canara Bank (10.98 per cent). Out of 12 public sector banks, only these four lenders could log a double-digit growth in deposits in the financial year 2023-24.

In terms of low-cost CASA deposits, the Bank of Maharashtra continued to top the chart with 52.73 per cent growth, followed by the Central Bank of India with a 50.02 per cent rise at the end of March 2024. A higher level of current account and savings accounts helps banks to keep their cost of funds low. With regard to loan growth, the Kolkata-based UCO Bank was a tad higher at 16.38 per cent, followed by BoM at 16.30 per cent. SBI also reported 16.26 per cent growth in advances in FY24. Loan growth of remaining public sector banks was lower than 16 per cent during the fiscal. On the asset quality side, the Bank of Maharashtra and SBI reported the lowest gross non-performing assets with 1.88 per cent and 2.24 per cent respectively, as of March 31, 2024. In terms of net NPAs, BoM and Indian Bank reported the lowest numbers, with 0.2 per cent and 0.43 per cent, respectively. In terms of capital adequacy ratio, the Bank of Maharashtra was leading PSBs at 17.38 per cent, followed by Indian Overseas Bank at 17.28 per cent and Punjab & Sind Bank at 17.16 at the end of FY24.

# Mutual Funds invest ₹1.3 lakh crore in equities in 2024

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**  
 Mutual funds (MFs) showed strong confidence in Indian equities this year, injecting around Rs 1.3 lakh crore, driven mainly by significant retail investor interest and the robust performance of the stock market. Mutual funds, which manage long-term wealth for domestic investors, prioritise the Indian market's underlying growth potential and are less rattled by short-term events like elections, which allows them to keep investing in equities, Tradejini COO Trivesh D said. Additionally, the growing interest in systematic investment plans (SIPs) on the back of astonishing compounding stories by influencers and industry veterans has perked investors, who otherwise wish to stay away from the markets, to start participating through these mutual funds, he added. According to the data from the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi), MFs invested Rs 26,038 crore in the first fortnight of the ongoing month and Rs 20,155 crore in April. Moreover, the highest MF buying for 2024 was experienced in March, as they put in a net of Rs 44,233 crore. Also, they invested Rs 14,295



crore in February and Rs 23,010 crore in January. With the latest deployment, mutual funds investment in equities reached around Rs 1.3 lakh crore in 2024 (till May 16), the data showed. In stark contrast, foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) have been withdrawing money from equities and pulled out over Rs 25,000 crore this year so far, owing to a volatile global environment, uncertainty over rate cuts, and profit booking. This is a great sign for the Indian markets, symbolising the falling dependency on foreign money and the strengthening of retail individuals and DIIs, including mutual funds, to keep markets afloat. This steady flow from mutual funds and other domestic institutional investors (DIIs) has supported the equity markets over the past few years. Notwithstanding occasional challenges, the Indian stock markets have generally shown a positive trajectory, thus catching investors' interest. Equity has been one of the best-performing asset classes in recent years, and consequently receiving robust flows from domestic investors like mutual funds, Himanshu Srivastava, Associate Director Research, Morningstar Investment Research India, said. For domestic investors, local markets are the most accessible investment option, which is why they continue to invest in them, he added. "The Indian market's fundamentals remain robust. The GDP is projected to grow

at a steady rate of 7 per cent for FY25, and the fiscal deficit has decreased to 5.8 per cent, the lowest level in five years. "Additionally, the steady increase in SIP contributions, which reached a new peak of Rs 20,371 crore in April 2024, indicates that investors are becoming more disciplined and confident in the market," Feroze Azeez, Deputy CEO, Anand Rathi Wealth Ltd, said. Sectorally, mutual funds hold maximum exposure to financial services, followed by IT and pharmaceuticals. Additionally, mutual funds have been increasing their allocation to pharmaceutical, power, construction projects and automobiles in the last one year. Interestingly, mutual funds' ownership in NSE-listed companies reached an all-time high of 8.92 per cent in three months ended March 2024, propelled by net inflows of Rs 81,539 crore during the quarter. In comparison, the holding of mutual funds was 8.81 per cent in the quarter ended December 2023, according to primeinfobase.Com, an initiative of Prime Database. On the other hand, the share of FPIs declined to an 11-year low of 17.68 per cent as of March 2024, down from 18.19 per cent as of December 2023.

# High airfares remain a challenge, says Thomas Cook India

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**  
 High airfares remain a challenge that impacts India's leisure and business travellers, Thomas Cook India's Executive Chairman Madhavan Menon said. In an interview with PTI, he shared that airline capacity too continues to be a challenge despite an increase in scheduled flights. "We hope to see the demand-supply constraints ease a bit with new aircraft being introduced into the network, but this will be over the long term," Menon said. On the company's expansion plans, he informed that Thomas Cook India is working on expanding and strengthening its physical network with a combination of owned and franchise outlets and accelerating its digital footprint in the country. "With a focus on viable source markets, we continue our retail expansion with a combination of owned and franchise outlets, across metros/mini-metros and regional India. "Additionally, for our foreign exchange business, we have leveraged existing franchise outlets to set up foreign exchange counters within the same premises. This enables us to ramp up the scale of our



distribution with speed," Menon added. On the challenges faced by it in India, Menon said that while visa concerns on appointment slots or turnaround time are heightened during the peak season, we have seen an improvement over the last year. "High airfares remain a challenge that impacts India's leisure and business travellers. Airline capacity too continues to be a challenge, and this is despite an increase in scheduled flights," Menon said. He asserted that easier visa regimes in terms of eVisas, Visa on Arrival and the announcements on free-visa entry for Indians help boost visitations by Indian consumers.

# Reliance seeks access to ATF pipelines, storages of PSU oil firms

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**  
 Reliance Industries Ltd has sought access to pipelines and storages that public sector oil companies have built over the years for supplying jet fuel (ATF) from depots and oil refineries to airports, as it looks for a larger pie of fuel trade at some of Asia's busiest airports. Reliance, which produces a fourth of India's aviation turbine fuel (ATF), wants access to storage depots outside the Delhi airport as well as to pipelines leading to Mumbai, Bengaluru, and Hyderabad airports. It currently supplies small volumes of ATF when compared with supplies made by state-owned firms. The firm made the suggestion in its comments to oil regulator PNGRB's draft regulation calling for supply of ATF in all existing and future airports through pipelines that can be accessed by any supplier so as to bring in competition and cut fuel cost. While the fuel market is open,

airplanes at the country's busiest airports are fed by pipelines that were built by state-owned Indian Oil Corporation (IOC), Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd (BPCL) and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd (HPCL) over decades. Reliance, which has been for more than a decade now seeking access to pipelines that supply ATF to airports especially at Mumbai, stated that "the common carrier pipeline scope (which gives third parties access to pipelines built by PSUs) should encompass the associated storage facilities and pumping stations at the 'off-site' oil terminal facilities as they form an integral part of the ATF supply chain." "This will promote a competitive market for supply and distribution of ATF to the airport 'on-site' storage facilities," it said. Out of the 17.12 million tonnes of aviation turbine fuel (ATF) produced by public and private sector refineries, 8.2 million tonnes is consumed within the country and the rest is exported.



Reliance's twin refineries at Jamnagar produce close to 5 million tonnes of ATF, a large part of it is exported. ATF demand in India is growing in double digits as more people fly. It rose by 11.8 per cent in the fiscal year ended March 31, 2024. At Delhi International Airport, the country's biggest hub of airlines, IOC and BPCL supply the bulk of the 2.7 million kilolitres per annum jet fuel requirement. This

is because they not just own the pipeline but also storages outside the airport. Third parties have access to pipelines going into the airport but in absence of storage they can't supply much. Reliance said it was "necessary to declare off-site ATF storage facilities at Bijwasan (outside the airport) as common user facility so that other suppliers or interested airlines can position ATF at the Bijwasan common user facility through rail wagons and use the common carrier pipeline from Bijwasan." For Mumbai, the second biggest hub, the firm wanted two ATF pipelines of HPCL and BPCL that bring fuel from the two refineries of the PSUs in the city, to be operated on a common carrier basis by giving other companies the right to use them. For Bengaluru, which is home to the third largest airport in the country, Reliance wanted tie-in connection to the common carrier pipeline from the upcoming ATF tank farm at PLS marketing terminal at Devangonthi as bringing products through tanker trucks to the airport fuel farm was not feasible in view of traffic woes. While the pipeline supply to Hyderabad airport is operated on a common carrier open access basis, Reliance wanted the capacity of the pipeline to be increased to accommodate future demand and allow access to the storage tanks and rail wagon unloading facilities at Malkapur. It made similar

suggestions for Kochi and Lucknow airports. "Pipelines are an efficient, economical and safe mode of bulk transportation from supply installations to demand centres and these measures (proposed by PNGRB) will promote competition, ensure compliance with environmental and safety statutes and avoid infructuous investments by optimum utilisation of product storage and pipeline infrastructure," Reliance said. Such competition, it said, will benefit airline companies, which incur one-third of their cost on fuel. The Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board (PNGRB) had invited comments from the public and various stakeholders including oil marketing companies (OMCs), airport operators, and airlines operators for development of aviation turbine fuel (ATF) pipelines connecting various greenfield and brownfield existing and upcoming airports in India.

**BUSINESS BRIEF**

**CONFERENCE ON EFFICIENT FOOD PROCESSING HELD**  
 The Ministry of Food Processing Industries (MoFPI), Government of India, and the National Institute of Food Technology Entrepreneurship and Management, Kundli (NIITEM-K), an Institute of National Importance, organized a two-day national conference on Efficient Food Processing for Environmental and Climate-Change Trends (EFFECT), which concluded on May 16 at the NASC Complex, Pusa, New Delhi. The event brought together esteemed dignitaries and experts to address the pressing challenges facing the food processing industry in the wake of climate change. In his keynote address, Dr. R. T. Patil, Former Director of ICAR-CIPHET and advisor at Tanusha Foods (Bhopal), emphasised the need for the food processing industry to proactively address challenges such as rising temperatures, water scarcity, and energy fluctuations through strategic adaptation measures.



**Enjoy These Fruits With Anti-Inflammatory Punch**

Eating at least one-and-a-half to two cups of diverse fruits every day can boost antioxidant activity. Fruits are particularly abundant in anti-inflammatory compounds, which are important in protecting our bodies from heart disease, diabetes, and certain forms of cancer and bowel disease. You'll learn how plant-based chemicals called phytochemicals act as antioxidant and anti-inflammatory agents, helping to bring down levels of inflammation and to counteract inflammation's harmful effects. And you'll find dozens of anti-inflammatory foods with added health benefits that include lowering cholesterol, reducing the risk of Alzheimer's disease and of stroke, improving blood pressure. These also add protection against heart disease, and even reduce pain and soreness after exercise.

**How to get enough healthful fruits in your diet?** While all fruits tend to be rich in disease-protective nutrients, some have received particular attention in the nutrition world for their anti-inflammatory benefits.

**BERRIES** From strawberries and blackberries to cranberries and blueberries, these gemlike fruits are particularly potent in antioxidant and anti-inflammatory activity. Along with fiber and vitamin C, berries possess plant pigment phytochemicals, such as anthocyanins and ellagic acid, which may be behind their health benefits. Studies have linked increased berry consumption with lower risks of heart disease, Alzheimer's disease, and diabetes.

**APPLES** Maybe it's true what they say about an apple a day. A study of nearly 35,000 women, found that consumption of this fruit—along with its relative, pears—was linked with a lower risk of death from heart disease. The star components of apples—fiber, vitamin C, pectin, and polyphenols—have been associated, primarily in animal studies, with anti-inflammatory effects and an increase in beneficial microbes in the gut.

**STONE FRUITS** Cherries, peaches, apricots, and plums are all examples of stone fruits. These fruits contain fiber, vitamin C, potassium, and a variety of phytochemicals associated with their colors. For example, cherries have garnered the lion's share of the research among stone fruits. Some studies suggest that cherries can reduce pain and soreness after exercise as well as a reduced risk of gout attacks. The high levels of phenolic compounds in cherries, which have been linked to reduced inflammation, may be behind those benefits.

**CITRUS** Oranges, grapefruit, lemons, and limes are famously rich in vitamin C. They also contain fiber, potassium, calcium, B vitamins, copper, and anti-inflammatory phytochemicals such as flavonoids and carotenoids. Though there is little human research on citrus, the nutrients found in citrus fruits have been associated with heart-protective effects.

**POMEGRANATES** Those tiny pomegranate seeds contain big rewards of vitamins C and K, potassium, fiber, and potent phytochemicals such as anthocyanin and resveratrol. These nutrients may be behind the potential benefits of eating pomegranates.

**GRAPES** These succulent fruits are bursting with fiber, vitamins C and K, and powerful phytochemicals.

(Source: Websites)

# KEEPING HYPERTENSION AT BAY

Hypertension or High Blood Pressure is on the rise, posing a significant public health challenge. Despite its prevalence, many cases go unnoticed and untreated with fatal risks. **ARCHANA JYOTI** highlights the urgent need for comprehensive measures to address this silent epidemic

Forty-five-year-old Sunit Dhawan works a desk job with long hours and minimal physical activity. He has a high-stress lifestyle, often skips meals, and when he eats, his diet consists mainly of fast food and high-sodium snacks. He drinks several cups of coffee a day and smokes a pack of cigarettes daily. He feels his life is normal except that he experiences frequent headaches, occasional dizziness, and feels fatigued most of the time.

After a routine check-up, his doctor diagnosed him with hypertension. His blood pressure was consistently measured at 150/95 mmHg.

Prema Sharma (70) has a family history of hypertension. She has been managing her blood pressure for the past 20 years. She leads a relatively active lifestyle for her age, enjoys gardening, and walks her dog daily. However, she tends to indulge in salty snacks and has a sweet tooth.

Prema doesn't exhibit many overt symptoms due to her long-term management of the condition, but she occasionally experiences shortness of breath and mild swelling in her ankles. During her regular follow-up, her blood pressure was recorded at 160/100 mmHg, indicating poorly controlled hypertension.

Similarly, Naveen Shukla (28) who is a healthy young adult recently started experiencing frequent severe headaches and blurred vision. He has no family history of hypertension and maintains a balanced diet and regular exercise routine. Upon investigation, Naveen's blood pressure was found to be consistently high at 145/90 mmHg. Further tests revealed that he has a kidney condition causing secondary hypertension.

Doctors are increasingly noticing a large number of such cases of hypertension among diverse age groups. @These cases illustrate how hypertension can affect individuals differently based on their age, lifestyle, and underlying health conditions, highlighting the importance of personalized management plans,@ said **Dr Tarun Kumar**, Professor of Cardiology at Delhi-based central government RML Hospital. He rings alarm bell as he said, hypertension or high blood pressure leads to 10.8 per cent of all deaths in India. Left unchecked, hypertension can result in severe health issues such as heart attacks, strokes, kidney failure, and premature death.

Hypertension is defined as having systolic blood pressure (SPB) =140 mmHg or diastolic blood pressure (DPB) =90 mmHg. It is considered 'controlled' when the systolic blood pressure (BP) is maintained below 140 mmHg and diastolic BP below 90 mmHg, with medications and lifestyle modifications.

"The prevalence of hypertension increases with age from 7.5 per



DR TARUN KUMAR



DR VIVEK TANDON



DR ARJUN GUPTA



SAIMA WAZED

**DASH stands for Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension (high blood pressure). The diet is simple:**

- Eat more fruits, vegetables, and low-fat dairy foods.
- Cut back on foods that are high in saturated fat, cholesterol, and trans fats
- Eat more whole-grain foods, fish, poultry, and nuts.
- Limit sodium, sweets, sugary drinks, and red meats.

cent among adults aged 18-39 to 33.2 per cent among those aged 40-59. More than 90 per cent of adults with hypertension are either undiagnosed or untreated", he said. For both women and men, the prevalence increases sharply with age. The increase is for all categories of hypertension, including pre-hypertension, for both sexes. About one-fourth of women and men aged 40-49 have hypertension. According to the health experts, contributing factors include genetics, obesity, sedentary

**HOW TO MANAGE, PREVENT HYPERTENSION**

**Some essential lifestyle modifications are:**  
**Maintain a Healthy Weight:** Shedding excess pounds can relieve strain on your heart and reduce blood pressure.  
**Manage Stress Effectively:** Chronic stress can elevate blood pressure, so incorporate relaxation techniques into your routine to combat stress.  
**Monitor Caffeine Intake:** While moderate caffeine consumption is generally safe, excessive intake can cause temporary spikes in blood pressure. Be mindful of your caffeine consumption.  
**Reduce Processed Food Consumption:** Processed foods high in sodium can elevate blood pressure. Opt for whole,

lifestyle, high salt intake, stress, and excessive alcohol consumption. While Sunit has been advised to adopt a heart-healthy diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and lean proteins, reducing sodium intake and at least 30 minutes of moderate exercise, such as brisk

unprocessed foods to better control blood pressure levels.  
**Prioritize Adequate Sleep and Regular Exercise:** Aim for 7-9 hours of quality sleep each night and engage in regular physical activity to strengthen your heart and improve circulation, thus lowering blood pressure.  
**HEAT WAVES & HYPERTENSION** People with a history of high blood pressure should monitor their BP during heat waves conditions. They should also drink plenty of fluids to stay hydrated, avoid the midday heat, eat a healthy diet, apply sunscreen if outdoors and wear a hat. In most cases, stay inside a cool environment in your home.

walking, five times a week. Prema's doctor adjusted her medication dosage and added a diuretic to help manage fluid retention. Since, she has chronic hypertension, she has also been advised to monitor her BP at home and keep a log for her next appointment. Among lifestyle

support, Prema has been asked to engage in a community support group for individuals with hypertension to stay motivated and informed.

For Sunit, smoking cessation has been advised besides relaxation techniques such as yoga or meditation. Naveen has been referred to a nephrologist for management of the underlying kidney condition. He has been shared with lifestyle modification plan incorporating a healthy diet and exercise.

**Dr. Vivek Tandon**, Additional Director of Interventional Cardiology at Fortis Hospital Greater Noida, too emphasized the need for increased awareness and accurate diagnosis. "Hypertension is a silent killer that affects a significant portion of the population, yet many remain unaware of their condition."

Dr Tandon cites studies that say that approximately 33% of urban residents suffer from hypertension, while about 25 per cent of the rural population is affected. Only 40 per cent of the urban population and 25 per cent of the rural population are aware of their hypertensive status.

Just 38 per cent of the urban and 25 per cent of the rural population receive treatment. Among those treated, only 20 per cent in urban areas and 10 per cent in rural areas achieve adequate control, he said. "Accurate measurement and consistent management are vital in preventing the severe health consequences associated with high blood pressure," said Dr Tandon.

Dr Tarun agreed as he pointed out that even the theme of the World Hypertension Day on May 17, say 'Measure Your Blood Pressure Accurately, Control It, Live Longer.' For instance, one should never check BP while crossed legs( it can add 2-8 mm Hg), placing the cuff over your clothes (adds 5-50 mm Hg), unsupported arm (adds 10 mm Hg), using a small sized cuff (adds 2-10 mm Hg), unsupported back/feet (adds 6.5 mm Hg), talking during measuring BP (adds 10 mm Hg) and last but not the least with full bladder prior to measuring BP that can add up to 10 mm HG). The normal blood pressure is 120/80 mm/Hg or slightly lower.

Dr Tarun also said they recommend DASH (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension (high blood pressure). The diet is simple.

WHO Regional Director for South-East Asia, **Saima Wazed** warned that at least more than 294 million people are living with hypertension in the Southeast Asia Region itself. Limited access to affordable healthcare services is a significant contributor to low Universal Service Coverage Index scores in many countries, impeding access to quality healthcare, she said. In fact, the South-East Asia Region has identified the prevention and control of hypertension as one of the priorities.

Dr Tandon pitched in for effective strategies such as increasing public awareness through media, community programs, and educational workshops about the importance of regular blood pressure checks. Expanding healthcare infrastructure in rural areas to ensure more people have access to medical services is also essential. Implementing policies that make hypertension medications and treatments affordable and accessible can alleviate economic constraints."

According to a study, high BP in childhood may raise heart attack, stroke risk by 4 times, exposing them to significant risks, including heart, kidney, and brain damage.

Nutrition Advocacy in Public Interest (NAPI) convenor **Dr Arun Gupta**, blamed on misleading labels and the addictive nature of ultra-processed foods for the menace. He said that the all-pervasive nature of junk food advertising is misleading consumers into eating unhealthy, additive, ultra-processed foods. @There is a need for stringent policy in this regard if the Government is really serious about the health of its people,@ he said.

## Doctors' drive, paired with patients' strength, reaps rewards

Extraordinary moments emerge in tough times, shining like sunshine through clouds. Let's celebrate the remarkable among us—the doctors rising to challenges and patients showing incredible resilience. **ARCHANA JYOTI** brings these inspiring stories to light, restoring hope and joy

Real stories of those who make a real difference, shine their brightest in the darkest times. In the process, one should also not miss the rainbow: a symbol of hope and a promise of brighter days. Take the case of little Radha's transplant triumph. Teenager Radha's struggle with liver failure due to Wilson's disease appeared insurmountable. A few years ago, Radha who is now 13 year-old was diagnosed with the rare disease, and ever since then, she has battled with the aberrant accumulation of copper in her organs, particularly her liver. However, under the careful guidance of Dr. Naresh Bansal, Senior Consultant, Institute of Liver Gastroenterology and Pancreatic Biliary Sciences and his team at the Sir Ganga Ram Hospital in Delhi, her journey saw moments of despair turn into hope. When hepatitis A dealt a



heart pressure was also elevated requiring pediatric cardiologist, Dr. Neeraj Agarwal from Sir Ganga Ram Hospital to intervene. The PICU team under the guidance of Senior Consultants Pediatrics at the hospital Dr. Anil Sachdeva, Dr. Dhiren Gupta, Dr. Neeraj Gupta, and Dr. Nishant Wadwa

**SUCH CASES HIGHLIGHT SYMBIOTIC RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DOCTORS AND PATIENTS IN ACHIEVING POSITIVE HEALTH OUTCOMES. IN THE PROCESS, ONE SHOULD ALSO NOT MISS THE RAINBOW: A SYMBOL OF HOPE**

fought restlessly to stabilize this 13 year old female child. The twelve-hour long procedure under Dr. Ushast Dhir, Chairman of liver transplant and hepatobiliary Surgery, Sir Ganga Ram Hospital involving the mother as donor, who donated a portion of liver, showed the

unshakable resolve of medical science and was a masterwork of accuracy and competence. Radha recovered very well and is now back home. Her incredible recovery stands as a testament to the human spirit's resilience and the miracles modern medicine can achieve. It was more than that, indeed. In a noble gesture, the doctors of Sir Ganga Ram Hospital (SGRH) had raised Rs 20 lakhs from crowdfunding and corporate donations to finance the transplant since the family was unable to pay for it because of their poor economic condition. Likewise, when a massive adrenal tumor threatened the health of a 59-year-old patient, a surgical team led by Dr. Piyush Varshney, Additional Director of Urology, Fortis Hospital Noida, employed the state-of-the-art da Vinci robotic system to tackle the

challenging tumor, measuring 12x11.5x8 cm. Dr Varshney said, 'The patient showed no symptoms, and his tumor, Adrenal Incidentaloma was detected incidentally during a routine ultrasound. Surgical removal is often necessary when these tumors exceed 4cm in size. These tumors are often highly vascular and pose surgical challenges due to their location near the spleen, pancreas, and kidney. "The da Vinci system's precision allowed us to successfully remove the entire tumor within two hours with minimal blood loss, and we discharged the patient on the second postoperative day." This groundbreaking procedure not only saved the patient's life but also showcased the potential of cutting-edge medical techniques to overcome daunting challenges.



# RCB'S TURNAROUND WILL INSPIRE OTHER TEAMS, SAYS DINESH KARTHIK

**PTI ■ BENGALURU**  
**R**oyal Challengers Bengaluru's remarkable turnaround to win six games on the trot and barge into the Indian Premier League playoffs this year will inspire other teams in future, believes wicketkeeper-batter Dinesh Karthik.  
 RCB, who lost seven of their first eight games including six defeats in a row, came back roaring from the brink of elimination in the 17th edition of IPL to make the final four.  
 The Faf du Plessis-led side on Friday got the better of defending champions Chennai Super Kings by 27 runs to seal the fourth spot in the points table.  
 "People will always remember certain journeys. The way we have come back after eight games, we needed to win six, people will remember this team," Karthik was quoted as saying in a RCB release.  
 "Every year in this tournament, when you hit the seven-game mark, there will be one or two teams which would have probably won one



or two and they will look to us and say, 'RCB did it. That was special. We are going to try and repeat what RCB did.' "That is what we all play cricket for, sport for, where people follow us and believe us that they can do something special. It is hard. It is not going to be easy, I can tell any team that. What we have achieved today is very, very special," Karthik said.  
 RCB will now face the team which finishes third, one among Sunrisers Hyderabad

and Rajasthan Royals, in the Eliminator to be played at Ahmedabad on Wednesday.  
 "We have it within our grasp to do something that people will remember us for many decades. It will be a journey where people will say, 'wow, that RCB team was special'. We are on that journey," Karthik said.  
 Karthik said RCB's confidence was the differentiating factor between them and CSK, a team which has a better bilateral record.  
 "Coming into this game, there was a sense of quiet confidence about us, playing the defending champions, and the way we played we should be really proud," Karthik said.  
 The senior wicketkeeper pointed out RCB's fielding and aggressive batting, despite rain intervention, as the factors which worked for them.  
 "We can proudly say we are the best fielding team in this tournament without a doubt," he said.  
 "Even though it turned, we had a rain break, we had to go, start again, just the way Virat (Kohli) and Faf played the next three overs made it feel like 140-150 could be a decent total.  
 "Most teams would have thought about that and we would have thought about that for a second as well," he said.

# Rayudu does not feel Dhoni has played his last match, puts ball in BCCI court

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**  
**F**ormer India batter Ambati Rayudu doesn't feel MS Dhoni has played his last match in the IPL and wants the BCCI to continue with the contentious impact player rule as it could help the long-serving legend to keep going in top-flight cricket.  
 Dhoni's Chennai Super Kings bowed out of this edition of the Indian Premier League following a 27-run defeat to Royal Challengers Bengaluru in a much-anticipated southern derby in Bengaluru on Saturday.  
 The five-time defending champions needed 17 in the final over to qualify for the playoffs on better net run rate, but bowler Yash Dayal, after being hit for monstrous six by Dhoni, held his nerves to help RCB prevail.  
 Later, speaking on Star Sports Cricket Live, Rayudu said, "I don't think this is his last game. I just don't see him wanting to end on this note."  
 Even as the RCB players broke into wild celebrations, Dhoni shook hands with the opposition's reserves and support staff before quietly disappearing into the dressing room.  
 Rayudu said, "He looked a little frustrated, even when he got out. That's very unlike MS



Dhoni, he just wanted to qualify and finish on a high. But you never know with MS Dhoni, he might come back next year."  
 Rayudu, who played under Dhoni at CSK, brought the BCCI into the picture.  
 "... With the impact player role as well, it gives him the opportunity to be able to come in those last few overs and truly make that impact.  
 "BCCI better not remove the impact player role because we still want to see MS Dhoni play. So, it's up to BCCI now. Do we want to see MS Dhoni play or not."  
 While the match ended in agony for Dhoni and Co, RCB continued their revival with a sixth straight win in a row, a remarkable feat that saw them rise from the bottom of the table to make the playoffs.  
 Speaking of Dhoni, former Australian opener Matthew Hayden said, "Yeah, I suppose the thing is when you come to the end of your career, whether it is the last part of his career or not, what you don't want to see is diminishing returns as an athlete.  
 "Firstly, as a leader, he is The Thala of the Chennai Super Kings. This is telling me that nothing here is about becoming anything else other than first place. He's desperately using his brains, all of that cricket knowledge.  
 "And of course, the power is there and that's always been MS Dhoni. He's always hit balls at this stage of an innings. At the front, you can understand how players can hit it. But at the back, it's really hard to hit balls."  
 Dhoni made 25 off 13 balls with the help of three fours and a huge six, showing that he can still send the ball a long, long way.

# God's plan: Year after Rinku's rapidfire, Yash Dayal redeems himself

**PTI ■ BENGALURU**  
**Y**ash Dayal couldn't shake the haunting memory of Rinku Singh's five consecutive sixes last year as MS Dhoni lofted his full-toss over the Chinnaswamy roof, before regaining his composure to complete the 20th over and clinch RCB's berth in the 2024 IPL playoffs.  
 Dayal, who cut a forlorn figure after being hammered for five sixes in a row by his Uttar Pradesh mate Rinku last season, redeemed himself on Saturday night by defending 17 in the final over against the likes of Dhoni and Ravindra Jadeja.  
 "God's plan baby," that was how Rinku summed the reversal of fortunes for Dayal.

The 26-year-old from Prayagraj was released by Gujarat Titans after the 2023 season but he found a new IPL home in RCB, who showed faith in him by paying a handsome Rs 5 crore at the auction.  
 Dayal not only repaid the faith but also erased the scars of last season.  
 "When I got hit the first ball (by Dhoni), subconsciously you reach that place (Rinku's five sixes off him). But I did well this whole season and I kept telling myself that I just had to bowl a good ball.  
 "I didn't have to look at the scoreboard, I just had to bowl well. I used that confidence in execution," said Dayal who kept RCB's remarkable comeback story alive in this



Yash Dayal celebrates after a successful over during the match.

executed well, the seniors were standing, they did not scold me or anything. That was a positive thing and it helped me a lot on the ground."  
 In what arguably has been the toughest season for bowlers, Dayal has managed 15 wickets in 13 games at a decent economy rate of 8.94.  
 Dayal was supposed to bowl the penultimate over but a last-minute change of plan saw him bowling one of the most important overs of his life.  
 "Actually, I was going to bowl the second last over. But suddenly DK bhैया and Faf spoke. I don't know what they talked about. They said that Lockie will bowl and then I'll bowl the main over. I was fine

with both."  
 Dayal feels the constant support that he has received from RCB has led to desirable results.  
 "I have got proper backing from RCB. When I came at the start, the management told me that I am an important player. I will be backed from the starting to the end, which is a very good thing.  
 "All the youngsters who were picked, they were told the same thing. That is now visible in the results also."  
 The home crowd was RCB's 12th man as usual and with a play-off berth on the line, the atmosphere fired up the team even more. It is difficult to keep emotions in check at such a juncture but

Dayal tried to calm himself down.  
 "There are so many people around you, there is a whole crowd. So, somewhere or the other, the mind gets diverted. But as a player, we are built for this."  
 He also gave due credit to the army of RCB loyalists.  
 "I had never felt like this since childhood. Whenever I used to watch a RCB match on TV, I never thought that I would be part of this team. Today I am here and I was feeling unreal on the ground. It is an unbelievable crowd and very supportive," added Dayal.  
 What was the turning point of the game? "I think Dhoni bhैया's wicket was the turning point, as the first ball went for six."

## OTHERS SPORTS

# Satwik, Chirag win Thailand Open title

**PTI ■ BANGKOK**  
**I**n a confidence-boosting performance ahead of Paris Olympics, star Indian shuttlers Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty on Sunday won the Thailand Open Super 500 badminton tournament with a straight-game win over Chen Bo Yang and Liu Yi of China, here.  
 Satwik and Chirag, the world number three pair, prevailed 21-15 21-15 over Liu and Chen, ranked 29th, for their ninth BWF world tour title in men's doubles.  
 It was also the second title of the season for the Asian Games

champions following their triumph at the French Open Super 750 in March. They had also finished runners-up at Malaysia Super 1000 and India Super 750.  
 "It has been a lucky tournament for us. The journey started from here. We lifted this title in 2019 and again we are lifting it here now. After 2019, we went on to win many tournaments and, hopefully, it will give more boost to us in the upcoming important tournaments," Satwik said after the win.  
 "They keep on playing fast and we knew we couldn't relax. Overall, I think it's the best match we played throughout the tournament. We kept



Satwik and Chirag celebrate their victory at the Thailand Open Super 500 badminton tournament.

and hopefully we will play well there." For Satwik and Chirag, the title comes at a crucial juncture of their careers as they had some low returns in the last couple of tournaments.  
 The Indian pair lost in the second round at All England Championships and then missed the Asia Championships due to an injury to Satwik. The Thomas Cup campaign was also not too fruitful as they lost a couple of narrow matches to top pairs.  
 Satwik and Chirag had come into the Thailand Open final without dropping a game and were favourites to claim the title, while Liu and Chen also produced some stunning wins in the run-up to the summit clash and

had the reputation of never losing a final.  
 However, it was always going to be a tough task to tame the top-seeded Indians, who didn't allow the Chinese to get into long rallies or sustain any pressure.  
 Satwik and Chirag made a superb start by quickly opening up a 5-1 lead. Chen and Liu clawed back with a four-point burst.  
 At 7-7, the Chinese pair won a 39-shot rally and surged ahead to 10-7 before spraying one long. Liu and Chen played a few intense rallies but Chirag unleashed a bullet return to draw level at 10-10 but Liu ensured they had a slender edge at the break.



# Messi held scoreless but Inter Miami extends unbeaten string

**AP ■ FORT LAUDERDALE**  
**L**ionel Messi was kept off the scoresheet for the second consecutive match, but Inter Miami extended its unbeaten string with a 1-0 win over DC United.  
 Leo Campana scored four minutes into second half stoppage time as Miami, 6-0-3 since a 4-0 loss at the New York Red Bulls on March 23, avoided a second consecutive scoreless draw. Campana, who entered the match a minute earlier, received a pass from Sergio Busquets on the right wing and converted on a shot that landed inside the left post.  
 Miami had used its allotted five substitutions but was allowed an additional replacement when United's Martin Rodriguez left the match because of a concussion. Second half stoppage lasted 10 minutes.  
 "I know that lately I have not been getting too many minutes but it is my responsibility to be ready," Campana said in Spanish. "Whether it's 30, 20, 15 or one minute you have to be ready. Thankfully, we had the time to score the goal."  
 For a team known for its high-powered offense that has

produced a league-high 36 goals, Miami secured its second straight shutout.  
 "We were not as fluid offensively and they formed a solid defense," Miami coach Gerardo "Tata" Martino said. "Defensively we worked very well."  
 The win improved Eastern Conference-leading Miami to 9-2-4 with 31 points. DC United dropped to 4-5-5 and 17 points.  
 Messi returned to the lineup after missing Wednesday's match at Orlando because of knee soreness.  
 The Argentine star forward had at least one goal and assist in five consecutive matches until a 3-2 win at Montreal on May 11. Messi began Saturday with a league-leading 12 assists.  
 Tightly marked for most of the match, Messi found a slight opening in the 71st minute, but his shot from 22 yards sailed high above the crossbar.  
 Miami goalkeeper Drake Callender preserved the shutout when he stopped a shot from United's Jacob Murrell in the 86th minute and then denied Cristian Dajome's inside the box four minutes later.

**PTI ■ SHARJAH**  
**I**ndian Grandmaster Aravindh Chithambaram defeated local star A R Saleh Salem to emerge as the sole leader on 4.5 points after the end of the fifth round of Sharjah Masters chess tournament here.  
 Chithambaram is now followed by four players, the Iranian duo of Amin Tabatabaei and Bardiya Daneshvar and Americans Hans Moke Niemann and Sam Shankland who all have four points apiece. Top seed Arjun Erigaisi is in the next pack of eight players having 3.5 points each and giving him company here is another Indian in Sankalp Gupta.  
 With four rounds still to be played in the USD 52000 prize money tournament, as many as 16 players have an identical three points each. The list includes Indians Abhimanyu Puranik, Leon Luke Mendonca, P Iniyan and V Pranav.  
 It turned out to be a tough day at the office for many but Chithambaram was in his element as he simply crushed

# Aravindh Chithambaram beats Salem to claim sole lead in Sharjah



Aravindh Chithambaram sits at the chessboard during the Sharjah Masters chess tournament.

superior. The game lasted 48 moves.  
 Erigaisi was in a spot of bother at some point against Volodar Murzin, the upcoming talent from Russia who has to play under FIDE flag here. After attaining an optically better position in the middle game out of a Queen pawn game, Erigaisi was on the defensive as Murzin made some steady recovery. He had to liquidate to a rook and pawns endgame where the draw was a just result.  
 Sankalp continued with his impressive run, holding highly regarded Teimour Radjabov of Azerbaijan to a draw while Abhimanyu Puranik could not keep up with his form and lost to Amin Tabatabaei of Iran.  
 Important and Indian results Round 5 (Indians unless specified): Aravindh Chithambaram (4.5) beat

A.R. Saleh Salem (Uae, 3.5); Hans Moke Niemann (Usa, 4) drew with Alexey Sarana (Srb, 3.5); Erigaisi Arjun (3.5) drew with Volodar Murzin (Fid, 3.5); Abhimanyu Puranik (3) lost to Amin Tabatabaei (Iri, 4); Sankalp Gupta (3.5) drew with Samuel Sevian (Usa, 3); Shreyas Royal (Eng, 3) drew with Nihal Sarin (3); Leon Luke Mendonca (3) drew with Nikolas Theodorou (Gre, 3); P Iniyan (3) drew with Teimour Radjabov (Aze, 3); V Pranav (3) beat Nodirbek Yakubboev (Uzb, 2); Abhimanyu Mishra (2.5) drew with Bharath Subramaniyam (2.5); Benjamin Gledura (Hun, 2.5) drew with Pranav Anand (2.5); Aditya Mittal (2.5) drew with Siddharth Jagadeesh (Sgp, 2.5); B Adhiban (3) beat Pouya Idani (Iri, 2); Abhijeet Gupta (2.5) drew with Mahdi Gholami Orimi (Iri, 2.5); D Harika (1.5) lost to Emre Can (Tur, 2.5); Yilmaz Mustafa (Tur, 1.5) drew with Raja Rithvik (1.5); S P Sethuraman (1) lost to Yagiz Kaan Erdogmus (Tur, 2).

Salem in all departments of the game.  
 It was a King's Indian defense by Salem who played black and the middle game saw Chithambaram exerting

pressure on the queen side. It was on the 17th move that the Chennai-based GM unleashed a brilliant tactical sequence, giving up two minor pieces for a rook.  
 As things turned out, white's position remained better for the rest of the game and Salem was outdone eventually in the endgame wherein white's rook proved