

OPINION 6 COMMUNAL FRICTION MUST END NOW

WORLD 8 CONDITION OF SLOVAKIA PM FICO IMPROVES

SPORT 11 ZVEREV'S STOCK RISING FOR FRENCH OPEN

CHANDIGARH, TUESDAY MAY 21, 2024; PAGES 12 ₹2

Established 1864

the pioneer

www.dailypioneer.com

SALT LESS KKR TAKE ON SUNRISERS HYDERABAD 12 SPORTS



Polling goes south as mercury heads north

AAP's trouble mounts over foreign donations

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

As swathes of north India stewed in brutal heat during the peak of summer, voter apathy continued in the fifth phase of the 2024 Lok Sabha elections...

The highest polling percentage was in West Bengal (73 per cent), while the lowest was in Maharashtra (49.04 per cent). This was the smallest phase in terms of the number of constituencies for which voting took place.

This is a record of sorts for the constituency in north Kashmir for any general election held so far. The best turnout in the last thirty-five year history of polling in Baramulla seat was 61.09 per cent, in the 1984 general

elections. This comes after Srinagar recorded 38.49 per cent polling during the fourth phase. Baramulla is one of the three seats in the Kashmir division of J&K-other than Srinagar and Anantnag-Rajouri-where the BJP has not fielded any candidates. In 2019, the constituency recorded a turnout of 34.6 per cent, whereas in 1989, it was at a mere 5.48 per cent, the commission said.

As per the EC's voter turnout App, Ladakh recorded at 67.15 per cent, Jharkhand at 63.00 per cent and Bihar 52.60 per cent, Jammu and Kashmir 54.67 per cent, Odisha 60.72 per cent, Uttar Pradesh 57.79 per cent. In Maharashtra, the Dindori seat recorded highest voter turnout of 57.06 per cent, Bhiwandi recorded 49.43 per cent, Dhule 48.81 per cent, Dindori 57.06 per cent, Kalyan 41.70 per cent, Mumbai South 46.91 per cent, Mumbai North Central 47.46 per cent, Mumbai North East 48.67 per cent, Mumbai North West 49.79 per cent, Mumbai South Central 48.26 per cent, Nashik 51.16 per cent, Palghar 54.32 per cent, Thane 48.04 per cent and Kalyan 41.70 per cent.

In 14 Lok Sabha seats of Uttar Pradesh, Amethi and Raebareilly, two well-known constituencies in the State recorded voter turnout



UP Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath addresses a campaign meeting in support of BJP candidate for East Delhi seat Harsh Malhotra for Lok Sabha polls, in New Delhi, on Monday

at 54.17 per cent and 57.85 per cent respectively. Union Minister Smriti Irani from the BJP is contesting here while Congress leader Rahul Gandhi is contesting from Raebareilly.

After the fifth round of polling in the ongoing Lok

Sabha election, the Congress on Monday said only 15 days remain for Prime Minister Narendra Modi's departure, claiming that winds of change are blowing across the country and the INDIA Opposition Bloc is set to sweep the ruling NDA away.

Modi has alleged that poor campaigning by the Congress and its allies could be a reason for low voter turnout in the ongoing Lok Sabha polls with even their party workers not turning out to vote for them and this could politically benefit the BJP. Scattered incidents of violence marred the polls in seven parliamentary constituencies of West Bengal where TMC and BJP workers clashed in various parts of Barrackpore, Bongaon, and Arambagh seats. The poll panel said it has received 1,036 complaints from different political parties alleging EVM malfunctioning and agents being stopped from entering booths.

In a social media post, the Uttar Pradesh unit of the Congress, said, "Booth number 5, Rasulpur in Sareni in Rae Bareilly is closed since 8 am (and) voters are going back. So this is how (the target of) 400 (seats) will be crossed!"

Samajwadi Party candidate from Gonda constituency Shreya Verma complained to the Election Commission that fair polling is not taking place at booth numbers 180 and 181 in the Mankapur area.

In Maharashtra, Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Aaditya Thackeray claimed there were a lot of complaints from electors about facilities outside polling booths.

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

In yet another setback to Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and his party, of which he is the national convener, the Enforcement Directorate (ED) has alleged that the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) received Rs 7.08 crore in foreign funds from 2014 to 2022, allegedly violating the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA), the Representation of People Act (RPA), and the Indian Penal Code (IPC).

In its dossier to the Union Home Ministry, the ED has revealed that the AAP received funds from multiple donors in USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Kuwait, Oman and other countries. According to the ED, the real identity of foreign donors was concealed in AAP's books to circumvent restrictions on foreign donations to political parties, with donations directly deposited into AAP's IDBI bank account.

The ED investigation revealed that multiple donors have used the same passport numbers for donation, e-mail IDs, mobile numbers and credit cards to donate to the AAP. The ED has shared all the information with the Union Home Ministry relating to its investigations with details of donors, such as names of the



donor, country of donor, passport number, amount donated, mode of donation and bank account number of receiver, billing name, billing address, billing telephone numbers, billing e-mail, time & date of donation and payment gateway used etc, gathered during the investigation under PMLA, 2002. The ED, in its investigation, claimed several instances of irregularities in the collection of foreign funds by the AAP and its leaders and accused some of them, including AAP MLA, Durgesh Pathak, of siphoning off the funds collected during a fund-raising event in Canada in 2016, for personal benefits. The directorate has substantiated the allegations through the contents of e-mails exchanged between various AAP volunteers and functionaries, including Aniket Saxena (coordinator of AAP overseas India), Kumar Vishwas (then convener of AAP overseas India), Kapil Bhardwaj (then AAP member) and Durgesh Pathak. The investigations so far revealed that not only amounts were collected through fund-raising campaigns in the USA and Canada and identities of actual donors have been concealed in the books of accounts maintained by the AAP in order to circumvent the restrictions imposed under FCRA on donations by foreign citizens to a political party. But also the analysis of data of foreign donations revealed that multiple donors have used the same passport numbers for donation, used the same passport numbers, e-mail IDs, mobile numbers and credit cards to donate to AAP.



BJP National president JP Nadda chairs party's national general secretaries' meeting, at party headquarters, in New Delhi, on Monday

Two rounds to go, Nadda takes stock of BJP poll fortunes

PIONEER NEW SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Amid the hectic Lok Sabha polls campaigning for the remaining two phases, an urgent meeting of top BJP leaders, including general secretaries was convened by party president JP Nadda on Monday at the party headquarters.

Party sources said the meeting was called to review the party's performance so far in the election and devise a strategy for the remaining phases. BJP national general secretary (organisation) BL Santhosh, national general secretaries Arun Singh, Tarun Chugh, party IT department head Amit Malviya, national media in-charge Anil Baluni, and Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw were among those who were in the meeting. Sources said Nadda asked all senior leaders and office bearers of the party to play a "more effective role" and make an "active contribution" in the implementation of the party's poll strategy on the ground. BJP chief also reviewed the fifth phase of polling and also discussed the future strategy of the party with regard to the ongoing elections, the sources said.

Iran Prez dies in chopper crash after stinging Israel

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE/AGENCIES ■ NEW DELHI/DUBAI



Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi, the country's Foreign Minister and several other officials were found dead on Monday, hours after their helicopter crashed in a foggy, mountainous region of the country's north-west, state media reported. Raisi was 63. Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei hours later announced Iran's first vice president, Mohammad Mokhber, would serve as the country's acting president until elections are held. Khamenei also announced five days of public mourning. India announced one-day State mourning on Tuesday as a mark of respect for President Raisi.

The Union Home Ministry said the national flag will be flown at half-mast on all buildings where it is regularly flown across India and there will be no official entertainment during the period of State mourning. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and Congress president Malliarjun Kharge expressed shock and sadness at the demise of the Iranian President. Modi said, "India stands with Iran in this time of sorrow."

spokesperson said. Meanwhile, state TV gave no immediate cause for the crash that occurred in Iran's East Azerbaijan province. Among the dead was Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian, 60. The helicopter also carried the Governor of Iran's East Azerbaijan province, other officials and bodyguards, the state-run IRNA news agency reported.

It was last month when tension had increased in the region after Iran and Israel had clashed in worrying, unprecedented fashion. But temperatures cooled after the intervention of the US and other world powers.

No relief on the horizon till May 24

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

There seems to be no respite from the sweltering heat for the residents of Northwest India, including Delhi, with the India Meteorological Department (IMD) issuing a stark warning on Monday of impending heatwave to severe heatwave conditions over the next five days in the region. As temperatures increased to alarming 48-degree Celsius mark in Delhi's Najafgarh and red alerts issued for the national Capital and extensive regions of northwest India, the severity of the situation cannot be overstated. This has also pushed the country's peak power demand to hover near the projected 235 GW level in



Women cover themselves with dupattas to beat blistering heat on Monday in New Delhi

May, following excessive use of cooling appliances like air conditioners and desert coolers. According to the Union Power Ministry data, the

peak power demand or the highest supply in the day has already reached 233 GW on May 6 compared to 221.42 GW recorded a year ago. The IMD said scorching

heatwave conditions will persist in Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh-Delhi, and West Rajasthan; in some parts of West Uttar Pradesh, East Rajasthan, and northwest Madhya Pradesh during May 20 to May 24, 2024. Also, the heatwave conditions are likely to be over North Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat during the period. Health experts said this extreme weather not only poses significant health risks but also disrupts daily life and challenges the day to day activities of the people. "In the face of such adversity, urgent measures are needed to safeguard the well-being of citizens and mitigate the impact of this blistering heatwave," they said.

Advertisement for LIC's Jeevan UTSAV insurance plan. Includes text: 'SABSE PEHLE Life Insurance', 'LIC's Jeevan UTSAV', 'GUARANTEED REASON FOR CELEBRATION', 'with Lifetime Guaranteed Returns', 'Also Available Online', 'Whole Life Insurance with flexibility to choose benefits', 'Limited Premium Paying term 5 to 16 years', 'Guaranteed Additions during Premium Paying term', 'Regular Income Benefit / Flexi Income Benefit', 'Minimum Basic Sum Assured ₹ 5 lacs'. Includes LIC logo and contact information.

Punjab Institute of Management & Technology. Applications are invited for the following in MBA/ MCA/ BBA/ BCA/ BTM/ B.Sc. (Food Technology) Programmes on regular basis.

STATE BANK OF INDIA. RACC Goraya (Code 63432) Main Chowk, GT Road Goraya, Tehsil Phillaur District, Jalandhar-144409. Rule-3(1) Possession Notice (For Immovable Property).

नगर निगम रोहतक. सार्वजनिक सूचना. सर्व संपादन को सूचित किया जाता है कि नगर निगम रोहतक के माफत जन-साधारण को सूचित किया जाता है कि निम्नलिखित कृषि जमीन...

सार्वजनिक सूचना. इस पब्लिक नोटिस के माफत जन-साधारण को सूचित किया जाता है कि निम्नलिखित कृषि जमीन...

सार्वजनिक सूचना. इस पब्लिक नोटिस के माफत जन-साधारण को सूचित किया जाता है कि निम्नलिखित कृषि जमीन...

बैठक सूचना. मैं, बलवान सिंह पुत्र स्व. श्री राम चंद निवासी...

SYMBOLIC POSSESSION NOTICE. ICICI Bank. Branch Office: ICICI Bank Limited shal Tower Plot No-23, New Rohtak Road, Karol Bagh New Delhi-110005.

बैठक सूचना. मैं, कैलाश रानी निवासी, श्री गजन लाल पुत्र श्री हरनाथ सिंह निवासी...

LOST & FOUND. Deepak Kumar S/o Ramlal Yadav, R/O House No. 5653, Sector 38 West, Chandigarh, M.: 9216262026.

OFFICE OF THE SUB DIVISIONAL MAGISTRATE (SOUTH), U.T., CHANDIGARH PUBLIC NOTICE. It is informed through this notice that a request for the issuance of unmarried certificate...

SMFG India Home Finance Company Ltd. (Formerly Fullerton India Home Finance Co. Ltd.) SALE NOTICE FOR SALE OF IMMOVABLE PROPERTIES. E-AUCTION SALE NOTICE OF 15 DAYS FOR SALE OF IMMOVABLE ASSETS...

SYMBOLIC POSSESSION NOTICE. ICICI Bank. Branch Office: ICICI Bank Limited shal Tower Plot No-23, New Rohtak Road, Karol Bagh New Delhi-110005.

CO RTNOTICE. IN THE COURT OF SHRI R. SHERR SINGH Pz dditional Civil Judge (Senior Division) Garhshankar. Canara Bank, a body Corporate constituted under the Banking Companies (Acquisition & Transfer of Undertaking) Act 1970...

सार्वजनिक सूचना. सर्व संपादन को सूचित किया जाता है कि नगर निगम रोहतक की कर शाखा के सम्बन्धित कर रिपोर्ट नई प्रेषित अर्द्धी...

PHYSICAL POSSESSION NOTICE. ICICI Bank. Branch Office: Mohit Singh, ICICI Bank Ltd, 1st Floor, Rajan Sarees Agrasen Chowk Ambala City-134003.

SYMBOLIC POSSESSION NOTICE. ICICI Bank. Branch Office: ICICI Bank Ltd, 3rd Floor, Plot No- 23, New Rohtak Road, Karol Bagh, Delhi- 110005.

VsTP. M/s Kaptan Consultancy Services, Banga Road, Near Khabra Enterprises, Garhshankar Tehsil Garhshankar District Hoshiarpur, Punjab through its Prop. Kujit Singh s/o Jasvir Singh & another.

सार्वजनिक सूचना. इस पब्लिक नोटिस के माफत जन-साधारण को सूचित किया जाता है कि निम्नलिखित कृषि जमीन...

SYMBOLIC POSSESSION NOTICE. ICICI Bank. Branch Office: ICICI Bank Ltd, 3rd Floor, Plot No- 23, New Rohtak Road, Karol Bagh, Delhi- 110005.

Format C-1. (For Candidate to publish in newspapers, TV) Declaration about criminal antecedents of candidates set up by the party.

सार्वजनिक सूचना. इस पब्लिक नोटिस के माफत जन-साधारण को सूचित किया जाता है कि निम्नलिखित कृषि जमीन...

ICICI Bank. Branch Office: Mohit Singh, ICICI Bank Ltd, 1st Floor, Rajan Sarees Agrasen Chowk Ambala City-134003.

Format C-1. (For Candidate to publish in newspapers, TV) Declaration about criminal antecedents of candidates set up by the party. (As per the judgment dated 25th September, 2018 of Hon'ble Supreme Court in WP (Civil) No. 536 of 2011 (Public Interest Foundation & Ors. Vs. Union of India & Anr.)

Table with 3 columns: S No., Pending Criminal Cases, Details about cases of conviction for criminal offences. Includes case details for Alok Srivastava and Namrata Srivastava.

Format C-1. (For Candidates to publish in newspapers, TV) Declaration about criminal antecedents of candidates set up by the party. (As per the judgment dated 25th September, 2018 of Hon'ble Supreme Court in WP (Civil) No. 536 of 2011 (Public Interest Foundation & Ors. Vs. Union of India & Anr.)

Table with 3 columns: S. No., Pending Criminal Cases, Details about cases of conviction for criminal offences. Includes case details for P.S. Ladhawal, P.S. Div.No. 1, and P.S. Civil Lines, Bathinda.

This may be published in Newspapers and TV from the day following the last date for withdrawal of candidature and upto two days before the date of poll. Declaration about criminal cases (As per the judgment dated 25th September, 2018, of Hon'ble Supreme Court in WP (Civil) No. 536 of 2011 (Public Interest Foundation & Ors. Vs. Union of India & Anr.)

Table with 5 columns: Sr. No., Name of Court, Case No. & dated, Status of Case(s), Section(s) of Acts concerned and brief description of offence(s). Includes cases for Ms Aparna Bhardwaj and In the Court of Ld CJM, Panchkula.

Table with 5 columns: Sr. No., Name of Court, Case No. & dated, Status of Case(s), Section(s) of Acts concerned and brief description of offence(s). Includes cases for In the Court of Ms. Rashmeet Kaur and In the Court of Ms Renu Bala Ld. JMJC, Kurukshetra.

Table with 5 columns: Sr. No., Name of Court, Case No. & dated, Status of Case(s), Section(s) of Acts concerned and brief description of offence(s). Includes cases for No, No, and No.



Be it sports or education, discipline is necessary: Gopichand to students

PTI ■ PATNA

Discipline defined him both as a player and coach. So, it was hardly a surprise that Pulela Gopichand stressed on the virtue as he delivered a motivational speech to youngsters preparing for competitive exams here, drawing sporting analogies to drive home his point. The 50-year-old former All England champion, who is also a Dronacharya awardee, was addressing a gathering of students preparing for competitive exams in streams such as engineering and medicine. "Be it sports or education both are same. In both, discipline as well as dedication is necessary.

Sometimes you may be the best with your best performance and sometimes the player in front of you may be better, this does not mean that we should stop working hard. "Even in studies, if the results are not as per expectations then we should not stop. Try to learn more, solve problems, your hard work will never go in vain, one day you will be able to fulfill your dream," he told the gathered students. "Cities like Kota and Patna are modern-day Gurukuls of India nurturing dreamers with potential like you into world champions in field of engineering, medicine and beyond. It takes a good coach to know when he sees a world champion," he added.

Zverev's stock rising for French Open

AP ■ ROME

Top-ranked Novak Djokovic hasn't won a tournament all year. Record 14-time French Open champion Rafael Nadal has been far from his best. Jannik Sinner and Carlos Alcaraz have been out injured. And Daniil Medvedev has won only one clay-court title in his career. Considering the state of his rivals in the top five, Alexander Zverev's credentials entering Roland Garros are looking pretty good following his second Italian Open title. The clay-court Grand Slam in Paris starts this weekend. "I'm somebody that I know when I don't play well, I can lose to anyone, but when I play well, I know I can beat anyone. That's my mindset. That's how I think about it," Zverev said after raising the trophy in Rome. "I know I have to focus on myself, to find my rhythm in Paris the way I did here. Then everything is on my own racket." Zverev won 44 of his 49 service points in a 6-4, 7-5 victory over 24th-ranked Nicolas Jarry 6-4, 7-5 in Rome on Sunday to earn his biggest trophy since a gruesome ankle injury two years ago. It's been a long road of recovery for the fifth-ranked Zverev after tearing three ligaments in his right ankle during the 2022 French Open semifinals against Nadal. In all, Zverev has reached three consecutive semifinals at Roland Garros — which has



led him to declare it's the tournament he wants to win more than any other. "It's the one where I have the most memories, good or bad," Zverev said. "U.S. Open, yes, I was two points away from winning the title. Of course, that's also one that kind of sticks out. (But) Roland Garros, so close to being in the final in 2021, I felt like I was playing some of the best tennis of my life in 2022. Those kind of things, they are still in the back of my mind. That's the one that I want to do well in." That loss in the 2020 U.S. Open final to Dominic Thiem remains the closest that the 27-year-old Zverev has come to

winning a Grand Slam title. Having been in the top five of the rankings for years, claimed Olympic gold in Tokyo three years ago and won the ATP Finals twice, a Grand Slam title is the only big thing missing in his career. And if Zverev is going to contend in Paris, he's going to have to do it while dealing with a major distraction. Zverev has disputed a penalty order from a German court over allegations that he caused bodily harm to a woman and he will go on trial in his home country starting on May 31 — entering the middle weekend of the French Open. Zverev is accused of physically

abusing and damaging the health of a woman during an argument in Berlin four years ago. He said in Rome that he won't attend the start of the legal proceedings. Zverev, who moved up one spot to No. 4 in the rankings released on Monday, shared an emotional moment over the weekend with his father and coach, who is also named Alexander Zverev. While Zverev kept his composure on the court, dad was teary eyed in the stands during the trophy ceremony. "A father is always important, no matter who it is," Zverev said. "Obviously in my career super important. It's funny

because we actually have a great relationship — which is not always the case, a father-son, father-daughter relationship when they're coaching them as well. You see it a lot of times, it's very shaky. But we have a great relationship outside as well." A few years ago, the elder Zverev was missing from the player's box due to medical issues. "I'm going to have him around as long as he wants to," the younger Zverev said. "It's obviously a special moment for all of us, given the circumstances that this is my first Masters after the injury. There was obviously a lot of uncertainties whether I was going to be back at this level." Zverev's mom, Irina, was also court-side, along with the family's two dogs. In Paris, however, the Zverevs won't be the only high-profile entourage. Djokovic has entered a small tournament in Geneva this week to get more match preparation in before heading to the French Open, and Sinner and Alcaraz have been back on the practice courts following hip and right forearm injuries, respectively. "Nole is going to be at his best. You'll see. It's just the way it is," Zverev said. "Rafa is going to play a lot better than he did in Madrid and Rome. I'm certain about that. The other two, they just depend on health. If they're healthy, they're two of the best players in the world for sure and there's no question about it.

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

For a long time, Deepthi Jeevanji's parents were taunted by fellow villagers for having a "mentally impaired" child. But now they are counting the compliments as the same bunch converged at their modest house in Telangana's Kalleda hamlet to celebrate her world record-breaking gold medal in the Para Athletics World Championship in Kobe, Japan. Born to daily wage labourers at in Warangal district of Telangana, the 20-year-old Deepthi on Monday clinched gold with a world record time of 55.07 seconds in the women's 400m T20 category race. She also qualified for the upcoming Paris Paralympics. The T20 category is meant for athletes who have intellectual impairment. Deepthi's coach Nagpuri Ramesh said her parents were at the receiving end of taunts from the villagers, who would often say that she will never get married since she is "mentally impaired". "Deepthi's parents were daily wage labourers and they were

Taunted for being mentally impaired once, Para world champion Deepthi is now feted in village

struggling to run the family. On top of that they faced constant taunts from the villagers that a mentally impaired girl cannot get married," Ramesh told PTI from Hyderabad, where Deepthi trains currently. "After Deepthi won gold in the Hangzhou Asian Para Games last year, the scenario changed. Now, the same villagers are praising them for being parents of Deepthi. They told me this when they came in Hyderabad after the Para Asian Games. "They told me even the district collector and politicians of the area visited their house which was a shock to them, considering how things have changed." She had won gold in 400m T20 category in the Hangzhou Para Asian Games with Asian record time of 56.69 seconds. Deepthi's father J Yadagiri and mother J Dhanalaxmi were so

poor that they did not even have money to afford bus fare to send their child to Hyderabad from Warangal when Ramesh wanted to train her. "She was spotted in a school meet through a PET teacher in Warangal. When I told them to send Deepthi, they said they didn't have money for bus fare. I told them to just board a bus and give me the phone number of the conductor. "After that I explained to the bus conductor to let her board the bus and told him I will pay the fare when she reaches Hyderabad. During the 130km journey from Warangal to Hyderabad I kept calling the bus conductor inquiring about her safety." Ramesh said Deepthi's parents had earlier sold their half acre land due to financial difficulties but they bought an identical piece of land with the Rs 30 lakh reward she got for

the roof of a building but acted as if she didn't feel any pain because of the inability to express her feelings. Chief national badminton coach Pulela Gopichand also played a role in Deepthi's career. It was Gopichand who suggested Ramesh to take her to the National Institute for the Empowerment of Person with Intellectual Disability in Hyderabad. After medical tests, she was certified as "mentally impaired" and that allowed her to compete in para meets. Gopi-Mytra Foundation chipped in as her sponsor and funded two international events for her to get international license, which is a must for para athletes to compete. "She competed in two tournaments, one in Morocco and another in Australia and she got her international license. Around Rs three lakh were spent in the two tournaments and Gopi-Mytra Foundation funded it," said Ramesh, a Dronacharya awardee, who was also the coach of top sprinter Dutee Chand.



winning the Para Asian Games gold medal. "Deepthi's parents are now doing better. They have bought land with the money Deepthi got as reward for her achievements and they have started farming," said Ramesh. After Deepthi was brought to Hyderabad, she was enrolled at the Sports Authority of India's Training Center in Hyderabad where Ramesh is a coach. She was studying in ninth standard at that time. Ramesh, who is also the Athletics Federation of India's national junior team coach, said he had a tough time initially in training Deepthi because she could not communicate. "You cannot teach her too many techniques as she is slow in learning things, if you do that she will get confused," he said. Her parents once told Ramesh that Deepthi fell down from

BCCI lays foundation stone for indoor cricket academies in six North Eastern States

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian Cricket Board (BCCI) on Monday laid the foundation stone for indoor cricket training academies in six North-Eastern states, with the sole emphasis on helping budding cricketers from the region. The indoor cricket academies will serve players from Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and Sikkim and will be based in Shillong, Itanagar, Kohima, Aizawl, Imphal and Gangtok. "Honoured to have laid the foundation stone for BCCI's upcoming state-of-the-art indoor training facilities in the



Association of Bengal (CAB). "Our cricketers from six states — Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, and Sikkim — will soon benefit from world-class indoor nets, indoor swimming pools and fitness centres for year-round training options," Shah wrote. "This, along with the launch of the new pavillion in Mizoram, are big steps towards our vision to enhance cricket infrastructure in the region, exciting times ahead," he added. Meanwhile, the BCCI is already in the process of developing a new National Cricket Academy in Bengaluru with expanded area and facilities.

during the monsoon season. The BCCI had also created North-East Cricket Development Committee, which is being headed by Avishkek Dalmiya, the president of the Cricket

Co-hosts from Caribbean aiming to defy history and win third Twenty20 World Cup title

AP ■ ANTIGUA

After leading the West Indies to two Twenty20 World Cup titles as a captain, Darren Sammy has to defy history to win again as a head coach. No host has won the tournament on home soil in the first eight editions, a trend Sammy hopes to break with the 2024 T20 World Cup being staged in the United States of America and the Caribbean. Sri Lanka went the closest by reaching the final in 2012 before losing to West Indies in Colombo. That win is widely remembered for the Gangnam Style celebrations of the Caribbean players after Sri Lanka was bowled out for 101 in pursuit of a 138-run target. Four years later, a fearless brand of West Indies cricket set the Eden Gardens alight in India. Carlos Brathwaite hit four consecutive sixes against Ben Stokes in the final over to steer the Caribbean team to a second T20 World Cup title. Sammy was appointed head coach of the West Indies limited-overs squads last year. His past teammates Johnson Charles and Andre Russell, T20's most accomplished all-rounder, are the only two-time champions still in the squad. "We know how to select winning teams," Sammy said in a news conference with Caribbean media to announce the squad. "We've done it before and I think, as a selection group, we're really



excited about it." "It's an exciting time, and this preparation did not start now. It started from the last World Cup in Australia," Sammy was quoted as saying by CNC3. "What we've been able to do throughout the last year as a T20 group, the players we've exposed, has brought us to this moment, and I think we're about to knock it out of this world." Curtley Ambrose, the great West Indies pace bowler, was confident the squad could play the consistent, smart cricket required to win a third title. West Indies and England are the only teams to have won the title twice, and no host has ever won, he said, "so all that is motivation for the guys to do well." The last two T20 World Cups in the United Arab Emirates in 2021 and Australia in 2022 didn't go well for West Indies. Kieron Pollard's team was eliminated in the group stage

Sammy said he'd had conversations with Narine since the last Caribbean Premier League season, but couldn't convince him into a West Indies comeback. "As the news clearly stated, Narine is retired." But, led by captain Rovman Powell, West Indies has enough batting firepower to challenge the leading teams and the advantage of playing in the CPL. Young fast bowler Shamar Joseph, who has just played three T20s and is yet to make his T20 International debut, was selected ahead of Matthew Forde as the West Indies looked for extra speed in the bowling attack. "Shamar Joseph has the pace, he has skills with the new ball," Sammy said. "Not saying Matthew Forde doesn't but when you look at the role, it makes it easier for us to now pick the personnel to fit that role." West Indies will be playing its first two Group C games against Papua New Guinea and Uganda at Providence on June 2 and June 9 before taking on higher-ranked New Zealand and Afghanistan at Torouba and Gros Islet on June 13 and June 18. The top two teams from each of the four groups in the league stage will advance to Super 8. The tournament starts June 1 with a North American rivalry between the US and Canada in Dallas and concludes with the final on June 29 at Bridgetown, Barbados.

Indian Open Surfing to kickoff on May 31

PTI ■ MANGALORE

The fifth edition of the Indian Open Surfing (IOS) will be held at the Sasihithlu Beach here from May 31 to June 2, the sport's governing body SFI announced on Monday. The three-day surfing competition will include four categories — Men's Open, Women's Open, Groms (U-16) Boys and Groms (U-16) Girls. "Indian Open Surfing will be the 2nd stop of the National Championship series of the 2024 calendar year, following the International Surfing Festival Kerala 2024, held in March at the beautiful cliff beach of Varkala," the Surfing Federation of India (SFI), the governing body for the sports of surfing and stand-up paddling in the country, said in a media release. The IOS will feature intense rivalry



between surfers from the east and west coasts, as these championships carry important ranking points that will determine the surfers' standings at the end of the season. "Our goal is simple, we want to elevate India to the top in surfing. After a successful start to the National Series in Kerala, we are glad to continue the championships in Mangalore before the championship tour moves to the East Coast," SFI president Arun Vasu said. Ramesh Budihal, Harish M, Srikanth D, and Manikandan M will be the surfers to watch out for in the men's category, having performed exceptionally well in the last national championship recently held in Kerala. In the women's category, Kamali Moorthy, Srishthi Selvam, and Sandhya Arun are among the participants competing for the top honors. Teenage sensation Kishore Kumar will have all eyes on him, having stunned everyone with his recent performances.



Salt less KKR take on Sunrisers Hyderabad in power hitting slugfest

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

High-flying Kolkata Knight Riders and an unpredictable Sunrisers Hyderabad, teams that have built their IPL 2024 campaign on power-hitting, will look to outmuscle each other in Qualifier 1 here on Tuesday. If KKR were the first team to make IPL playoffs this year, SRH gave themselves a huge boost by inflicting a four-wicket loss on Punjab Kings on Sunday to eventually finish second with 17 points, ahead of Rajasthan Royals. While the two top teams from the 70-match league round have enjoyed some time off courtesy incessant rains during their respective clashes over last 10 days, the lack of turnaround time to compete in a high-intensity playoff game will also pose a unique challenge. KKR and SRH will get only a day's time to traverse thousands of kilometres and get here for the first half of the playoffs as they both featured on the final day of the league round on Sunday. SRH would feel they have hit their strides following a comprehensive win over PBKS and having also got recent game-time, which isn't the case for KKR whose last complete game was on May 11. Shreyas Iyer's KKR had won four games on the trot before rains washed away their last two league games and the two-time winners. Table-toppers KKR (19 points) will also have to fill in the huge void at the top with their second-highest run-



scorer and wicketkeeper Phil Salt (435 runs) leaving the camp for national duties with England ahead of the T20 World Cup. Salt had forged a devastating partnership with Sunil Narine (461) at the top and KKR were immensely benefited by their ultra-aggressive approach with the bat, backed up well by a potent middle-order even though skipper Iyer (287) was not a major impact yet. The washed out contest against

RR in particular robbed KKR of an opportunity to give expected replacement Rahmanullah Gurbaz a go at the top with Narine, something that would have settled a few concerns certainly. For KKR, the form of Nitish Rana adds more solidity to the middle-order while a fiery Andre Russell among the finishers promise them vital runs. In many ways, SRH match KKR's firepower on paper and

that is what adds more to the lure of this contest. Travis Head and Abhishek Sharma have both got their runs at a strike rate exceeding 200 while inspiring their side to rewrite a few records. Australian southpaw Head has in many ways redefined aggressiveness with the bat while also remaining successful (533 runs with one century and four fifties). His fearlessness has also brought the best out of the

young Indian batter Abhishek (467), who has clobbered an overall 41 sixes this IPL - 10 more than his overall tally of 31 in the previous six seasons. SRH have also managed to find answers to a couple of questions which were lingering on for a while. At No 3, the 2016 winners have found a dependable option in Rahul Tripathi who can both accelerate as well as weather storms when bowlers are on-song. Additionally, Heinrich Klaasen has rediscovered his form after a dip in the middle of the tournament. With a crucial knock of 42 against PBKS, Klaasen has signalled having found his mojo back, which only makes SRH even more formidable. At Ahmedabad, as seen in the World Cup final last year, teams batting second have had more success, winning four out of six completed games while only twice the team which batted first could defend successfully. Also, against the style of play for both these teams - to bury oppositions under mountains of runs - this venue has had only two scores of 200 or above in 12 innings, which means the bowlers will also have their say. If KKR have a battery of spinners to back their fast bowlers led by Mitchell Starc, SRH's pace bowling attack led by skipper Pat Cummins has time and again produced unified efforts to make their mark. In their only meet earlier this season back in late March, KKR had pipped SRH by four runs in a high-scoring game.



Swapnil Singh contemplated quitting cricket until RCB picked him up in IPL auction

PTI ■ BENGALURU

When Swapnil Singh went unsold in the initial rounds of the 2024 IPL auction, the dejected left-arm spinner felt it was time to end his 18-year-old-career. But then Royal Challengers Bengaluru raised the paddle late in the auction to add a welcome twist to his cricketering journey. "The day of the IPL auction I was travelling to Dharamsala for a game. It was around 7-8 pm after I landed. Nothing had happened by then and the last rounds were on. When I missed out at first, I thought that's it. Frankly I thought it was all over," Swapnil told RCB Bold Diaries. "I thought I would play out the ongoing (domestic) season, and if needed, I would end my career after playing the next season because I did not want to keep playing all my life," he said.

"There are other things to do well in life as well. I was very disappointed," said Swapnil, who made his debut in 2006 and had even shared the dressing room with RCB teammate Virat Kohli at one point in time. Bought at a base price of Rs 20 lakh, the 33-year-old has repaid the faith the franchise showed in him. Swapnil has played a pivotal role in RCB's recent string of wins which have propelled them into the playoffs, with the 2016 finalists set to face a struggling Rajasthan Royals in Ahmedabad in the Eliminator on Wednesday. Swapnil said it was an emotional moment for his entire family after they learnt that he was picked up by RCB. "As soon as my family called, we broke down. Because no one else understands how emotional the journey has been."

Swapnil has also credited former Zimbabwe captain and RCB head coach Andy Flower for showing the faith in him. "Before RCB picked me in the auction, they had organised a trial-cum-camp. I spoke to Andy sir and told him all about how my (domestic) season had gone. I told him, 'Just give me one chance. This might be my last chance. Just have faith in me.' He told he had faith in me. He called me for the camp," Swapnil said. Swapnil also revealed his wish that he expressed to his brother, that he wanted to contribute with the bat in IPL. The moment eventually arrived when he smacked a four and a six against Sunrisers Hyderabad. "I would tell my brother that I have neither scored a four nor a six in the IPL, and I have taken only one wicket. So I really want to hit a four and a six," he said.

OTHER SPORTS

Rohan to pair with either Balaji or Yuki at Paris Games

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India's top doubles player Rohan Bopanna will pick either N Sriram Balaji or Yuki Bhambri as his partner for the Paris Olympics and All India Tennis Association (AITA) will most likely approve his choice even as the combinations will be discussed by the selection committee. Ranked four in the world, 44-year-old Bopanna, being a top-10 player, can pick a player of his choice as per the rules. The men's doubles draw at the Paris Games will be a 32-team affair, where one nation can have a maximum of two teams. The qualification criteria gives top-10 players the privilege to pick their partners, who should be inside top-300 on the ATP and WTA ranking charts. The rankings of June 10 after the

conclusion of the French Open will be considered for qualifications. According to AITA sources, Bopanna had recommended names of Balaji and Bhambri to the national federation for inclusion in TOPS as his potential partners for Paris Olympics. "Usually, it's the player's choice (to pick his partner). The selection committee will ask him about his choice and discuss that. Whoever Rohan wants to play with, will be considered positively," AITA Secretary General Anil Dhupar told PTI when asked if the national federation will allow Bopanna to play with the partner of his choice or impose its own choice on him. Both Balaji and Bhambri have got some decent results on clay in lead up to the Roland Garros, where the action will unfold during the Summer Olympics from July 27. Balaji won the Cagliari Challenger



event with German partner Andre Begemann apart from reaching the semifinals at Francavilla al Mare in Italy. Bhambri won the ATP 250 event in Munich with French player Albano Olivetti in April and reached the semifinals of the Bordeaux Challenger — the only event he competed this month. The nominations for Olympics or other multi-sporting events have often created controversy in Indian tennis. In 2012, a huge controversy had erupted when both Mahesh Bhupathi and Bopanna had refused to pair with Leander Paes, who was forced to play with Vishnu Vardhan. Sania Mirza was then asked to pair with Paes in the mixed doubles event and the top woman player of the country had chastised the AITA for using her as bait to placate Paes. In the 2018 Asian Games, Paes had

pulled out of the continental event just two days before the start of tennis competition, saying he was not given a specialist player to pair with. AITA had nominated Bopanna and Divij Sharan as a team, leaving Paes with no option but to pair with one of the singles players in the squad. It will be Bopanna's last shot at winning an Olympic medal, having come close to a bronze medal with Sania Mirza in the mixed event of the 2016 Rio Games. In the singles, Sumit Nagal will need a good run at the French Open to boost his ranking. He is placed 94 as of Monday. In a draw of 64, the organisers will accept 56 direct entries and out of six ITF places, three men's quotas have been awarded to winners of continental events — Asian Games, African Games and Pan-American Games.

Focus on Sindhu as she looks to end title drought at Malaysia Masters

PTI ■ KUALA LUMPUR

Back from a break, P V Sindhu will look to hit the right notes in her quest for some confidence-boosting wins ahead of Paris Olympics when she spearheads India's campaign in the Malaysia Masters badminton tournament starting here on Tuesday. Sindhu, a former world champion, returns to the international circuit after skipping the Uber Cup and Thailand Open, and she will aim to go deep in the women's singles draw of the BWF World Tour Super 500 event. The 28-year-old from Hyderabad hasn't been able to hit top form after recovering from a knee injury sustained in October last year. A silver and bronze-winner at the Olympics, Sindhu's return hasn't been smooth and she has endured a series of narrow losses. Sindhu has just two quarterfinal finishes to show in her six competitive appearances so far. The last title win for her came in the 2022 Singapore Open though she did come close to claiming the Spain Masters last year when she reached the finals in Madrid. Sindhu, who had also suffered a stress fracture on her left ankle en route to the 2022 Commonwealth Games gold,

will look to hit the ground running when she opens against Scotland's Kirsty Gilmour this week. Top stars such as An Se Young, Chen Yu Fei, Akane Yamaguchi or Carolina Marin are not participating this week and Sindhu will be desperate to test her preparation against the next generation players, who have troubled her recently. With a new set-up under mentor Prakash Padukone, Sindhu has shown glimpses of her menacing game but she hasn't been consistent with her shot-selection. Ashmita Chaliha, Aakarshi Kashyap and Malvika Bansod too will look to produce some good results after having been in the circuit for quite sometime now. Chaliha has played some quality matches against the likes of Han Yue and Aya Ohori, both of whom she had pushed to three games recently. In men's singles, Kiran George is the lone Indian in fray and he will open against Japan's Takuma Obayashi. While Thailand Open champions Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty have opted out and it will be a chance for Krishna Prasad Garaga and Sai Pratheek K to show their prowess in men's doubles. In mixed doubles, the husband-wife duo of B



Sumeeth Reddy and N Sikki Reddy, and Sathish Kumar Karunakaran and Aadya Varyath would be carrying India's hopes. Paralympic athletes, each of them alone in an empty stadium. The campaign slogan - "Il ne me manque rien, sauf vous" (I'm not missing anything, except you) - is a rallying call to get people to come along and watch them compete. The French athletes featured in the campaign are Arnaud Assoumani, a long jump and triple jump specialist who won gold at the 2008 Games in Beijing; wheelchair tennis player Pauline Déroulède, and blind soccer player Gaël Rivière who was a European championship winner two years ago. He plays at club level for Bondy Cécifoot Club - in

the same suburb where France star Kylian Mbappé grew up. National broadcaster France Télévisions will show the campaign in a bid to raise awareness and - ultimately - boost sales. So far, 900,000 of the 2.8 million tickets have been sold. A total of 4,400 athletes will take part in the Paralympics. Tickets are available from 15 euros (USD 16) for track and

field sessions at Stade de France, wheelchair tennis at Roland Garros, or blind soccer at the foot of the Eiffel Tower. The finals cost from 25 (USD 27) euros and it costs 45 euros (USD 49) to watch the closing ceremony. Ticket sales could escalate once posters start appearing around Paris, with organizers aiming to raise awareness and increase fan engagement and solidarity. There will be 651 posters dotted around the city, 972 on the subway and a further 2,520 on the sides of buses. On Tuesday, four Paralympic athletes will walk up the famed steps at the Cannes Film Festival along with Paris 2024 Olympic head Tony Estanguet. Of the tickets sold so far, organizers said 300,000 have been bought by the state and 150,000 by the International Olympic Committee and National Paralympic Committee. Organizers haven't released details for the amount of tickets sold for the opening ceremony, which takes place along a section of the famed Champs-Élysées. Paul McCartney has let the song "We All Stand Together" be used in a promotional film for the International Paralympic Committee. The Paralympics will have a record 164 broadcasters worldwide covering 549 events across 22 sports.



Nagal bows out of Geneva Open after loss to world number 19 Baez

PTI ■ GENEVA

India's top-ranked singles player Sumit Nagal made a first round exit from the Geneva Open after going down fighting against Argentina's Sebastian Baez. The world no.94 went down 6-7 (7) 3-6 to the Argentine, who is a clay court specialist, in a match that lasted one hour, 52-minutes here on Sunday. "Gutted with the loss today. But good preparation ahead of Roland Garros. Paris next," Nagal, who has qualified for the French Open, tweeted after the loss. Nagal started off brightly taking an early 4-1 lead over Baez. He also had a set point. But world no. 19 Baez, who has already won two titles on clay this season, showed his class to force a tiebreaker owing to his fantastic first serve performance. In the second set, Baez continued to bank on his superb first serve, and wrapped up the proceedings in 38 minutes.