

Forest fires continue in State, CM to review status today

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Forest fires continued at different locations across the State on Tuesday. However, factors like the light rains witnessed in some mountainous

Pushkar Singh Dhama postponed his engagements outside the State and is set to review the status of forest fires in the State today.

territory on Tuesday, according to the FSI. More than 1,000 hectares of forest land has been affected by forest fires in the State so far.



regions have brought down the number of large active forest fires to an extent in some areas even as authorities struggled to bring the fires under control in other areas. Considering the seriousness of the situation, chief minister

According to information provided by the Forest Survey of India (FSI) there were 46 large fire events active in various parts of the State on Tuesday. This was the highest number of large fire events active in any State or Union Ter-

Meanwhile, chief minister Pushkar Singh Dhama who is campaigning for BJP candidates in the Lok Sabha elections, deferred his scheduled programmes and is slated to reach Dehradun where he will chair a meeting to review efforts being undertaken to control forest fires on Wednesday. He said that the State government is working on all fronts. In addition to taking the help of the armed forces, officials have also been directed to act on ground zero. The government is also taking strict action against mischievous elements setting the forests on fire, he said. Along with monitoring the status of forest fires in the State the CM will also review preparations for the Char Dham Yatra, potable water supply during the ongoing summer and preparations for the coming monsoon season, officials said.

Mahendra Bhatt appeals to all to work together for controlling forest fires

Warns that politically exploiting disasters to level allegations may be detrimental to public

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The Bharatiya Janata Party State president and Rajya Sabha member Mahendra Bhatt has stressed on the importance of public participation in efforts to control forest fires while exhorting all the cooperate. He expressed satisfaction at efforts being undertaken on a war footing by chief minister Pushkar Singh Dhama to overcome this disaster. Further, Bhatt also appreciated the co-operation provided by the public and expressed hope that the forest fires will be brought under control soon.



tours and returning to the State to be with those fighting the forest fires shows his sensitivity. The forest fires are damaging the forests, farms and the environment while also affecting the lives of the people. In such a situation, the government, non-governmental and voluntary organisations need to work together to check the wildfires, he added.

Bhatt said that the State government is working according to a plan for disaster management. However, the forest fires were exacerbated due to less than expected rain and snowfall in the State during the winter and spring seasons, he said. "The whole State machinery is working round the clock under CM Dhama's leadership to tackle this sit-

uation. Teams of the Forest department, police, Fire Service, National Disaster Response Force and State Disaster Response Force and working untiringly to control the wildfires. The CM himself is taking the situation seriously and minutely monitoring the efforts to tackle forest fires. His decisions to seek the assistance of the armed forces and to impose the Gangster Act on those who repeatedly light forest fires are appreciable," Bhatt said. He further opined that Dhama cancelling his scheduled

also appealed to the Congress and other opposition parties to work by rising above partisan lines in this situation. "Nobody will benefit from politics on an issue which damages the life and property of the people. The politics of considering disasters an opportunity to benefit by levelling allegations may prove detrimental to the public," he said.

Declare forest fires in U'khand a national disaster: Godiyal

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Former Pradesh Congress Committee (PCC) president Ganesh Godiyal has said that forest fires raging in Uttarakhand should be declared a national disaster. He claimed that about 75 per cent of the forests in the State are affected by wildfires. The fire has not only damaged the flora of the forests but large numbers of wild animals have also died in the fire. He said that the wildfires have also taken a toll on human lives and the villagers hit by the forest fires are looking at the government to take prompt action to control the fires. He said that the fires have been raging in the mountainous parts of the State for the last one month but the government is paying no attention to it. The Congress leader said that the government and leaders are busy in the elections and for them the plight of people and wildlife holds no significance.

cognisance of the forest fires raging in Uttarakhand and direct the administration to take immediate action on a war footing to control the fire from spreading. He said that the PM should declare the



Godiyal demanded that the Prime Minister Narendra Modi should take immediate

forest fire in Uttarakhand a national disaster. The Congress leader who is contesting the Garhwal Lok Sabha constituency said that he was raising concern on the forest fires from the month of March and during his election campaign but the government took no notice. He said that the planners should come up with an immediate plan and a long term plan to tackle the menace of forest fires in the State. Godiyal also appealed to the villagers and local people to come out in dousing the forest fires in their vicinity.

AAP questions absence of Forest minister amid wildfires in State

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Am Aadmi Party (AAP) leader Ravindra Anand has questioned the absence of the Forest minister Subodh Uniyal at a time when forest fires are raging in Uttarakhand. He claimed that Uniyal is busy going on tours to other States and foreign countries rather than handling the severe forest fire situation here. His absence shows his inability to handle this problem as the Forest minister, Anand said. He also targeted chief minister Pushkar Singh Dhama and said that though the CM has expressed his disappointment at the officials concerned regarding the forest fires, it appears that Uniyal is not affected by his rage or

concern. Anand said that Dhama should tell the public where Uniyal is and why he is not taking these forest fires seriously. The whole scenario indicates that Uniyal's duty as a Forest minister is only limited to giving orders and reviews while sitting in his AC rooms besides going on foreign tours. The AAP leader said that it is disheartening for the public to see ministers being absent during such a critical time when people and wildlife are losing lives in forest fires. When ministers are not available during such big disasters, how do they expect the public to believe in their government, he questioned.

Four minors detained in Pithoragarh for causing forest fire

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The police detained four minors on Tuesday for allegedly setting fire in the Gangoliath forest range in Pithoragarh district. The four minor boys had set fire in the Gangoliath range on May 3. They were burning some trash and dried leaves on Friday but the fire soon spread and destroyed a big part of the forest, a senior police official from Pithoragarh told The Pioneer.

He said that an FIR was lodged against the accused but it was found during the investigation that the fire was set by some local

teenagers. The police detained them on Tuesday and inquired about the incident as per the rules for juvenile offenders.

They claimed that they were just burning some trash and leaves but the fire suddenly went out of control and spread in the area. The officer said that the police will take further action accordingly as per the law for juvenile offenders. The police have also appealed to the locals to refrain from burning anything in open areas that can potentially cause forest fires, he added.

Effects of forest fires posing health challenge to people: Experts

MANSI BHAMBRI ■ DEHRADUN

Doctors have advised people to take necessary precautions against the effects of the forest fires in different parts of the State. The forest fires have caused smoke, which has led to air pollution in nearby areas, especially in the mountainous regions. Considering this, doctors have said the people in and near the affected areas may face health challenges due to the wildfires.

Medical superintendent at Government Doon Medical College (GDMC) hospital Dr Anurag Aggarwal expressed concern regarding the widespread forest fires reported in various areas of the State. He highlighted that aside from the heat, there are also various man-made factors contributing to the occurrence of these fires. Factors like throwing burning cigarettes and littering indiscriminately are also known to cause such incidents. He stressed the detri-

mental impact of forest fires on public health, citing examples of carbon monoxide poisoning leading to pollution and exacerbating issues like asthma. He cautioned individuals, especially those with allergies, asthma and children, to be vigilant about their health during such forest fire episodes. Further, Aggarwal warned of potential risks like an increased likelihood of brain strokes and heart attacks among the population due to these fire incidents.

Considering this, he recommended that individuals, particularly those residing in mountainous regions, should exercise caution by ensuring that no large quantities of garbage or leaves are deposited in nearby areas. Individuals with asthma should carry their inhalers at all times. Additionally, wearing a mask can serve as a preventive measure against the pollution from forest fires.



Senior eye specialist at GDMC hospital Dr Sushil Ojha told this correspondent that the increasing number of forest fires poses a significant challenge to public health. He indicated that the smoke generated from the fires can lead to symptoms like eye itching, watery eyes and vision problems for individuals. People

with pre-existing weak eyesight are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of forest fires. Therefore, he advised the public to wear sunglasses when outdoors and to wash their eyes with clean water twice a day to mitigate the risk of allergies from forest fire incidents.

Panch Mukhi Doli departs from Guptkashi, more than 21 lakh register for Char Dham Yatra

Govt expects last year's record to be broken this year in Yatra starting on May 10

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

With just a couple of days left for the formal start of the Char Dham Yatra, more than 21 lakh people have registered so far to visit the Char Dham shrines. Meanwhile, the Panch Mukhi Doli of Lord Kedarnath departed from Vishwanath temple in Guptkashi on its second halt at Fata on Tuesday.

wards Kedarnath which is slated to be reopened to the public on May 10. The Badrinath-Kedarnath Temple Committee (BKTC) media in-charge Harish Gaur informed that the Chalvigraph Utsav Doli of Lord Kedarnath is carried on foot by the committee's volunteers and traditional right holders barefoot from his winter abode at Omkareshwar temple in Ukhimath to Kedarnath temple. During its departure from Guptkashi, devotees and school children showered

flowers and hailed the lord at various places. A number of devotees are also accompanying the Doli to Kedarnath, he added.

Meanwhile, more than 21 lakh people have registered to visit the Char Dham shrines and Hemkund Sahib so far. According to information provided by the Tourism department, 21,40,505 people have registered so far to visit the Char Dham and Hemkund Sahib. Till Tuesday, 7, 41, 120 people had reg-

istered to visit Kedarnath while 6,38,725 had registered to visit Badrinath, 3,81,267 to visit Gangotri and 3,35,413 to visit the Yamunotri temple. Further, 43,980 people have registered so far to visit the Hemkund Sahib Gurudwara. Out of the total number of people who have registered so far, 16,54,972 have registered on the web portal, 2,92,753 have registered on the mobile phone application and 1,92,780 have registered through WhatsApp, officials informed. It is pertinent to mention here that more than 56 lakh people had visited the Char Dham during 2023. The State government is expecting that last year's record will be broken by the number of people who undertake the Char Dham Yatra this year.



Devotees carry the Panch Mukhi Doli of lord Kedarnath from Guptkashi towards Fata on Tuesday

Along with Kedarnath, the Gangotri and Yamunotri temples will reopen on May 10 while Badrinath is slated to be reopened to the devotees on May 12.

850 CCTV cameras installed to manage traffic on Char Dham routes

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The Uttarakhand police will manage traffic and other associated issues during the Char Dham Yatra with the help of eight drones and about 850 CCTV cameras installed on the Char Dham routes. The police have also marked about 130 parking spots in seven districts of the Garhwal region for the Char Dham Yatra that have a parking capacity of over 55,000 vehicles including about 17,000 four-wheeler vehicles and 38,000 two-wheeler vehicles.

with the capacity to hold about 1,200 vehicles. Uttarakashi and Dehradun have 13 and 16 parking spaces with a parking capacity of about 2,200 and 1,600 vehicles respectively. Rudraprayag and Chamoli will have 15 and 34 parking spaces that can accommodate about 2,400 and 3,200 vehicles respectively. Besides this, Tehri has 20 parking spaces with 13,300 capacity.

Haridwar with 25 parking spaces will accommodate about 42,000 vehicles. The pilgrims have to face severe parking issues while going to Kedarnath considering which, a parking space has

been prepared in Sonprayag that can hold about 3,000 vehicles. The DIG said that the police have also identified about 70 traffic bottlenecks on Char Dham routes where traffic gets affected the most. This includes 16 bottlenecks on the Char Dham route in Rudraprayag, eight each in Rishikesh and Chamoli, over 15 bottlenecks in Srinagar and Lakshmanjula, six each in Uttarkashi and Tehri and about 10 in Haridwar.

The authorities face traffic congestion the most in Rishikesh, Srinagar and near Kedarnath during Char Dham Yatra every year. Additional police personnel will

be deployed in these bottlenecks to ensure smooth traffic. She informed that all Char Dham routes have been divided into sectors and an official has been assigned to each sector who will be responsible for tackling all road and traffic-related issues.

She said that over 830 police personnel will be deployed this year solely for traffic management on Char Dham routes. The police will also keep an eye on Char Dham routes with the help of about 850 CCTVs. Over 50 per cent of these CCTVs will be directly connected to police control rooms, she added.

130 parking lots with capacity for 55K vehicles marked on Yatra routes

The police have also identified 54 blackspots on the routes prone to accidents, the deputy inspector general (Crime, Law and Order) and nodal officer of Traffic for Char Dham Yatra, P Renuka Devi said. She informed that the police have identified seven parking spots near Char Dham routes in Pauri

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Place: Dehradun

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Shekhar Suman, Radhika Kheda join BJP

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

In a boost to the BJP on the day of the third phase of polling for the Lok Sabha polls, actor and TV personality Shekhar Suman, who recently garnered attention for his role in Netflix's Heeramandi, joined the BJP at the party headquarters in Delhi, adding to the list of other actors including Kangana Ranaut, Arun Govil and Rupali Ganguly, who joined the saffron camp amid the elections. Former Congress National Media Coordinator Radhika Kheda also joined the BJP a day after she resigned from the Congress.

Addressing the media in the presence of senior BJP leaders, including National General Secretary Vinod Tawde and National Media Department In-Charge Anil Baluni, at the party headquarters on Tuesday, Suman said, "Till yesterday, I did not know that I would be sitting here today because many things in life happen knowingly or unknowingly. I have come here with a very positive thinking and I would like to thank God that he ordered me to come here." The actor said he was waiting for Heeramandi to get hit before joining the party. "Log



kahi ye na kahe ki mere paas karne ko kuch nahi tha, isleye politics join ki. Heeramandi has now become a global hit," said the comedian-actor. He said that its probably god's wish behind him joining politics. "Hoiye vahi jo ram rach rakha" said Shekhar Suman quoting Ram Charitmanas. "Till yesterday I did not know that I would be sitting here today because many things in life happen knowingly or unknowingly. I have come here with a very positive think-

ing and I would like to thank God that he ordered me to come here..." added Suman. "You have to follow what Lord Ram has thought. I don't have any negative thoughts, I am thinking only about the country. A man depends on his words but they have no meaning beyond a point. But there is a difference between saying something and doing it. I can give a long address but it will mean anything only after I have done something," the actor added, and thanked

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Home Minister Amit Shah and BJP chief JP Nadda, among others.

Suman is currently enjoying the success of his recently released web series, Heeramandi: The Diamond Bazaar. Sanjay Leela Bhansali's show premiered on Netflix earlier this month and also stars Manisha Koirala, Sonakshi Sinha, Richa Chadda, Sanjeeda Shaikh, Aditi Rao Hydari, Sharmin Segal Mehta, Farida Jalal, Fardeen Khan and Adhyayan Suman in key roles. It explores the various aspects of a woman's trials and tribulations. Before joining the BJP, Radhika Kheda made sensational allegations against Chhattisgarh Congress media chairman Sushil Anand Shukla. The former Congress national media coordinator claimed during her detailed press conference that on April 30, Chhattisgarh Congress media chief Sushil Anand Shukla started misbehaving with and abusing her when he went to talk to him. Radhika Kheda further alleged that the room remained locked for around a minute and she was abused. She all the three men came towards her and no one opened the door even as she kept screaming.

EC directs X to take down Karnataka BJP video on quota row

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Election Commission(EC) on Tuesday directed social media platform "X" to "immediately" take down an animated video shared by the Karnataka unit of the BJP related to the row over reservation for the Muslim community. In a letter to the nodal officer of 'X', the EC took exception to the non-compliance of the directive of the Karnataka Chief Electoral Officer to the social media platform for taking down the video. The panel said the animated video shared by the Karnataka unit of the BJP on its social media handle was violative of the extant legal framework. The EC said the Chief Electoral Officer of Karnataka registered an FIR in this connection and wrote to 'X' on May 5 to take down the objectionable post as per the provisions of the Information Technology Act and the IT (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules 2021. "However, the post has not been taken down yet.

Therefore, 'X' is directed to take down the post immediately," the EC said. The fresh directive to 'X' came on the day votes were being cast in the remaining 14 Lok Sabha seats in Karnataka. Polling in the other 14 parliamentary constituencies of Karnataka was held on April 26. The Karnataka Congress had filed a complaint with the Chief Electoral Officer of the state, accusing the BJP of promoting enmity and hatred between the Muslim and the SC/ST communities. The complaint pertains to an animated video shared by the Karnataka BJP, which has caricatures of Congress leader Rahul Gandhi and Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah. The cartoon shows the leaders putting an egg marked 'Muslim' on a bird's nest and after it hatches, Rahul Gandhi feeds 'funds' to the 'Muslim' hatchling while others strive for it. The 'Muslim' hatchling grows as a result and kicks the three others - SC, ST and OBC - out as Gandhi and Siddaramaiah laugh.

Kharge writes to INDIA Bloc leaders to raise voice over discrepancies in voting data

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge wrote to the leaders of various parties of the INDIA Opposition Bloc on Tuesday, questioning the alleged discrepancies in the voting data released by the Election Commission (EC). In his letter, Kharge urged the INDIA Bloc leaders to raise their voice against such discrepancies, for "our only objective is to protect the culture of a vibrant democracy and the Constitution." "Let us ensure the independence of the Election Commission of India and make it accountable," he said in his letter. "As the Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance (INDIA), it should be our collective endeavour to safeguard democracy and protect the independent functioning of the ECI. All the aforementioned facts force us to ask a question -- could this be an attempt to doctor the final results?" he asked. "We all know how Prime



Minister (Narendra) Modi and the BJP are visibly flustered and frustrated by the voting trends and their receding electoral fortunes in the first two phases. The entire nation knows that an autocratic regime, drunk with power, can go to any extent to stay in the chair," Kharge said. "I would urge all of you that we must collectively, unitedly and unequivocally raise our voice against such discrepancies, for our only objective is to protect the culture of a vibrant democracy and the Constitution," he added. Several opposition parties have raised questions on the delay in releasing the polling data by the EC.

Defence Secretary lauds BRO for playing major role in security of country

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Defence Secretary Giridhar Aramane here on Tuesday lauded the Border Roads Organisation (BRO) and termed it an extremely crucial organisation which, through its infrastructure projects in border areas, is playing a major role in the security of the country. The BRO is also ensuring the socio-economic progress of far-flung areas, he said. He made these observations on the occasion of the 65th Raising Day of the BRO. In his address, the Defence Secretary praised the BRO for fulfilling its responsibilities successfully in inhospitable terrain and tough weather conditions. Aramane commended the

BRO for completing the projects in a time-bound manner, exuding confidence that the Karmayogis will continue to ensure border infrastructure development in a record time. He urged the BRO to infuse latest technology and techniques for faster completion of projects, through which human efforts will be reduced and utilised more efficiently. Automation and mechanisation will be key for the BRO in the future, he said. The Defence Secretary also recalled the valuable contribution of the BRO personnel in the relief and rescue efforts during the Silkyara Tunnel Collapse and the Sikkim Floods. He added that the Organisation will play an important role in the Vibrant Villages Programme which

envisages comprehensive development of select border villages. Speaking on the occasion, Director General, Border Roads Lt General Raghu Srinivasan stated that the pan-India presence of the BRO reflects its commitment to national security, connectivity and development. The event also witnessed the unveiling of a compendium on Sela Tunnel as well as some books including 'Oonchin Sadaken', 'Path Pradarshak' and 'Path Vikas' by the Defence Secretary. He gave away Excellence Awards to the BRO personnel for the year 2023-24 and felicitated the women achievers of the Organisation. The Casual Paid Labourers who worked in various projects such as Sela Tunnel, as well as



during Sikkim floods were also felicitated. Raised with just two projects in 1960 - Project Tusker (now Vartak) in the East and Project Beacon in the North, the BRO has today become a vibrant

organisation with 18 projects operating in 11 States and three Union Territories. It has now established its credentials as the leading infra construction agency in the high-altitude and difficult snow-bound areas.

The BRO executes road construction and maintenance works at altitude ranging from 9,000 ft up to 19,000 ft along the Northern and Western frontiers, primarily to meet the strategic requirements of the Armed Forces. In over six decades, it has constructed over 62,214 kms of roads, 1,005 bridges, seven tunnels and 21 airfields in adverse climatic and geographical conditions along India's borders as well as in friendly countries, including Bhutan, Myanmar, Afghanistan and Tajikistan, thus contributing towards the nation's strategic objectives. In 2023-24, the BRO completed a total of 125 infrastructure projects worth Rs 3,611 crore. This includes the construction of Sela Tunnel in Arunachal Pradesh on

Balipara-Chardwar-Tawang Road. The tunnel was dedicated to the Nation by Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently from Itanagar virtually. The BRO will soon commence the construction on 4.10-km long Shinkun La Tunnel. Once completed, this tunnel will become the world's highest tunnel at 15,800 ft bypassing Mila Tunnel in China at 15,590 ft. The BRO accomplished the completion of two significant airfield projects namely Bagdogra and Barrackpore, marking yet another milestone in its journey of excellence. The foundation stone for Mudh Airfield Project was laid by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh recently. The BRO aims to complete the project within

just two working seasons. Over the few years, the BRO has witnessed an exponential surge in budget expenditure, marking a remarkable leap forward in capabilities and impact. This increased budgetary support has empowered the organisation to undertake crucial projects, accelerate critical infrastructure development, and enhance its operational readiness. The BRO has been at the forefront of promoting gender equality and inclusivity, offering key roles and opportunities to women. Officers like Col Ponung Doming is leading critical projects in Eastern Ladakh. Assistant Executive Engineer (Civ) Nikita Chaudhary has played a pivotal role in successful completion of Sela Tunnel Project.

Tourism Ministry unveils Cool Summers of India campaign

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

As the scorching summer sun bore down on travellers worldwide, the Union Tourism Ministry of India has embarked on a transformative journey to redefine summer vacations by unveiling the "Cool Summers of India" campaign at the three-day Arabian Travel Mart 2024 in Dubai from May 6.

The campaign is an invitation to global tourists to explore the lesser-known destinations of India's diverse landscapes during the summer season. Moving away its focus from traditional tourism strategies, the campaign spotlighted 50 enchanting getaways across four corners of the country from the snow-capped peaks of Gulmarg, Patnitop, Auli in Jammu and Kashmir to the lush valleys of Wayanad in Kerala. The curated list of 50 summer hotspots getaways also include destinations like Pithoragarh, Auli, Chopta



Valley, Binsar in Uttarakhand; Bir Billing, Kinnaur and Tirath Valley in Himachal Pradesh giving travelers a wide range of options to explore, from serene hill stations to lush green valleys. "By diverting attention from overcrowded tourist hotspots to these hidden treasures, the Ministry aims to reach out to a wider audience, including potential foreign tourists as well as alleviate strain on pop-

ular destinations and ensure that India's summer getaways are not confined to domestic travelers alone," said Rajnish Kaistha (Sr. Vice President) of the International Association of Tourist Operators (IATO). The Ministry's tagline says it all. "From the snowy peaks of the Himalayas to the misty hills of the Western Ghats, from the serene lakes of Kerala to the cascading waterfalls of Mizoram, India's got the

coolest summer getaways that'll have you feeling frosty fresh!" Moreover, leveraging social media channels like WhatsApp to disseminate information about these destinations, the Ministry has ensured that the campaign reaches a wider audience, including potential foreign tourists who may not be familiar with the hidden gems of India. The campaign went live on Monday and social media handles of 'Incredible India' have already shared a teaser and some glimpses of this "segmented offering" in its run-up. Arabian Travel Mart is one of the key events in the global tourism arena. It is largely targeted towards drawing the foreign tourists by challenging the notion that India is too hot for summer travel, as the Indian subcontinent has a range of weather, sources had said here on May 3. "The event marks a significant step in strengthening India's presence in the Middle East tourism market," the min-

istry said in a statement adding that an 'Incredible India' pavilion was inaugurated by Satish Kumar Sivan, Consul General of India to Dubai. "The pavilion has made a resounding entry, aiming to capture the entirety of the UAE market. Leading a delegation comprising tour operators, luxury hotels, wellness resorts, and the Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation, India is poised to showcase itself as a 365-day destination," the statement said. India's participation in the Arabian Travel Mart 2024 holds immense potential for the tourism industry and the economy at large, they said. The event provides a platform for the Indian tourism players to exhibit their offerings, forge alliances within the industry and attract visitors from the MENA (Middle East and North Africa) region. This, in turn, is expected to bolster revenue generation and foster job creation within the tourism sector, the statement said.

Talks on nurturing future leaders held at Commandants conclave

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The sixth edition of Commandants' Conclave was held on Tuesday at Military Institute of Technology, Pune and participants brainstormed on charting the course for future defence strategies in nurturing the future leaders of Indian Armed Forces, Defence Ministry said here. Giving details, officials said the meet was held under the aegis of Head Quarters Integrated Defence Staff. The Commandants of esteemed Armed Forces Training Institutions and War Colleges along with other senior leadership of Armed forces attended the conclave. Senior leadership gathered at MILIT, Pune and exchanged insights, shared best practices at institutions and strategised on building future-ready Forces. This landmark event



underscores Indian Armed Forces' commitment to continuous improvement, innovation and collaboration in the face of evolving global challenges. This conclave served as a platform for the commandants and decision-makers of AFTIs to engage in open dialogue and discussions on fostering joint culture of learning and adoption of new technologies in

training the future leaders of the Armed Forces. During the conclave, a wide range of key topics on strategic-resilience, technological advancement, human capital development, interoperability and jointness were discussed to harness innovation, technological advancement and to leverage the best practices of institutions for ensuring world class training at the AFTIs.

Indian Naval ships reach Singapore to enhance ties

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

In an effort to further enhance bilateral defence ties, Indian naval ships Delhi, Shakti, and Kiltan led by Rear Admiral Rajesh Dhankhar, Flag Officer Commanding Eastern Fleet arrived at Singapore on Monday, Navy said here on Tuesday. Giving details, officials said the Indian team was accorded a warm welcome by personnel of Republic of Singapore Navy and High Commissioner of India in Singapore. The visit is part of the operational deployment of the Indian Navy's Eastern Fleet to the South China Sea. Moreover, this visit is poised to further strengthen the long-standing friendship and cooperation between the two mar-



itime nations through a series of engagements and activities. During the ships' stay in harbour, various activities planned to be undertaken include interactions with the High Commission of India, professional interactions with the Republic of Singapore Navy as also academia and community outreach amongst other activities, reflecting the shared

values of both navies. The Indian Navy and Republic of Singapore Navy have had robust relations spanning three decades of cooperation, coordination and collaboration with regular visits, exchange of best practices, and reciprocal training arrangements. The current deployment underscores the strong linkages between both the navies.

Government to formulate standards for over 2,000 medical devices

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Government is in the process of formulating standards for over 2,000 medical devices being produced in the country in order to make them globally competitive. "Zero defect, full effect, this is our mission. Through BIS, we are making product standards for medical devices which would be comparable to ISO. We have already set standards for 1,500 products," Department of Pharmaceuticals Secretary Arunish Chawla said on Tuesday. Highlighting the critical need to focus on quality to ensure that India becomes globally competitive, he noted that the government is in the process of formulating standards for over 2,000 medical devices being produced in the country in order to make



them globally competitive. "Right now our med-tech sector is 75-80 per cent import dependent. In the next five years, we want to bring down this import dependence to less than 50 per cent," Chawla said while speaking to

reporters here on the sidelines of an industry event 'Meditech Stackathon 2024' organized by the Department of Pharmaceuticals in collaboration with the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII).

The formulation of standards for around 500 products is in the process, he added. Government and industry should work together to bring down import dependence in the medical device segment to below 50 per cent over the next five years, said the senior official. CII National Medical Technology Forum Chairman Himanshu Baid highlighted the need for enhanced data collation mechanisms to address gaps in product consumption and production within India. Chawla further stressed on the need to produce quality products for global markets and noted that the government is trying to enhance standards of manufacturing process. Chawla noted that the industry is also focusing on creating quality systems to get export certification which is

followed across overseas markets. He noted that the PLI scheme for medical devices has played a stellar role in the growth of the segment. "Around 150 medical devices, which used to be imported earlier, are now being produced in the country...Even exports have started now of such products," Chawla said. Exports have overtaken imports in consumables and disposables during last year, he said, and urged the industry to continue with the momentum in other pillars of the med-tech sector. India's Med Tech industry is poised to grow to USD 50 billion by 2030 from the current level of USD 14 billion. India currently ranks as the fourth largest market for medical devices in Asia and stands among the top 20 globally. Net imports for 2022-23 stood at USD 4,101 million.



Want 400 seats to ensure Congress does not put Babri lock on Ram temple: PM

PTI ■ DHAR (MP)

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday said he wants the BJP-led NDA to win 400 seats in the ongoing Lok Sabha polls to ensure the Congress does not bring back Article 370 in Kashmir and put a "Babri lock" on the Ram temple in Ayodhya. Addressing a rally at Dhar in Madhya Pradesh, Modi also slammed RJD president Lalu Prasad's statement over favouring reservation benefits to Muslims. He said the opposition INDIA bloc's "conspiracy" is deeper and it wants all reservation of the SCs, STs and OBCs for its vote bank. He also accused the Congress of belittling Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar, adding the opposition party has started saying he had a very little role in framing the Constitution. "The truth is that the Congress parivar deeply hates Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar," Modi said. The PM said the Congress is

spreading rumours that if he gets 400 Lok Sabha seats, he will change the Constitution. It seems as if the Congress people's intelligence is focussed on their vote bank, he said. "It is important for the country's people to know the BJP-led NDA already has 400-plus seats in Parliament. We used this number to scrap Article 370 (which provided special status to Jammu and Kashmir)," the PM said. "Modi wants 400 seats so that the Congress won't bring back Article 370 to spoil the game, Modi wants 400 seats so that the Congress won't put a Babri lock on the Ram temple in Ayodhya," he said. The PM said that about 14 days back, he challenged the Congress to give in writing to the country's 140 crore people that it will not give reservation on the basis of religion. "Secondly, I asked them to give in writing that they will never snatch reservation being given to SCs, STs and OBC and thirdly, to give in writing that they will never give reservation



The PM said he wants 400 Lok Sabha seats to prevent Congress from "dacoity" of the OBC quota to benefit its vote bank. "We have also used these 400

plus seats to extend SC/ST quota for 10 years, appoint a tribal woman as the country's President for the first time and to provide reservation to women," Modi said. The PM said he is asking for 400 seats so that he can stop every conspiracy of the Congress and INDIA alliance. "Modi is asking for 400 seats so that the Congress does not hand over the country's vacant land and islands to other countries, it does not take away reservation given to SC/ST/OBCs and give it to its vote bank, and does not declare all castes of its vote bank as OBC overnight," he said. Targeting Lalu Prasad, Modi said the Congress is making him "dance on their head". "Their leader who has eaten animal fodder, has been convicted by court in a corruption case and is out on bail due to health reasons is saying Muslims should not just get reservation but all the reservation should be given to Muslims." "This means they want all the reservation to Muslims by snatching it from the SCs, STs and OBCs," Modi said. These people are doing this because they are counting their

remaining breaths with the help of this "very vote bank", everything else is over, nothing is left with them, Modi said. "I was saying they will cut some part of the reservation and give it on the basis of religion but the conspiracy is deeper. "They are saying on the day of voting that they want to give all the reservation of SCs, STs and OBCs to the Muslim community," he said. "Do you accept this game of Congress and its allies? Should such people lose their deposits or not?" Modi asked. He said Ambedkar had opposed religion-based reservation. "Should such people be kept away from politics forever or not? This will be the biggest tribute to BR Ambedkar," he said. When Congress was out of power, Ambedkar was given the Bharat Ratna, he added. "The Congress has started saying that he (Ambedkar) had a very little role in framing the Constitution and Pandit Nehru

made the most significant contribution in the making of the Constitution," Modi said. He said the Congress has stabbed Ambedkar and the Constitution in the back. The Congress has sunk so deep into the quagmire of appeasement politics that it cannot see anything else, Modi said. "If Congress has its way, it will say its vote bank has the first right to live in India," he added. "Till Modi is alive, he will foil attempts to erase India's identity in the name of fake and pseudo secularism," the PM said. Modi said the opposition was defeated in the first phase of Lok Sabha polls, destroyed in the second phase, and whatever is left of it in the third phase today will also collapse. "Because the whole country has decided 'fir ek baar', he said, to which people added "Modi sarkar". Modi said these "dynasts wrote false history to glorify themselves and now have started creating lies about the Constitution also."

Women voters of Guwahati LS seat seek better future for kids, secure environment

PTI ■ GUWAHATI

From aspiration of a better future for their children to the hope that the government will "work for the people" to appeal for a secure environment for office-goers, women voted with diverse issues in mind in Assam's Guwahati constituency on Tuesday, where two female candidates are locked in a direct fight. As polling for the prestigious seat commenced along with three other constituencies in the third and final phase in the state, voters braved inclement weather to exercise their right of franchise. Women, who outnumber men by over 34,000 in terms of total voters in Guwahati, had their agenda in mind while choosing their representatives. Out of the total 20,36,846 voters in Guwahati, 10,35,588 are women, 10,01,200 are men and 58 are from the third gender. BJP is seeking to retain the seat for the fourth consecutive term through its candidate Bijuli Kalita Medhi, while the Congress has fielded Mira Barthakur Goswami. Guwahati has been represented by a woman BJP MP since 2009. "It is for a better future for my child that I have voted today. We could not manage to rise much in life, but we do hope that we can give a good education to our son and the government will help us in it," Pushpa Boro, a voter at one of



the five model-cum-all women polling stations, set up in Kendriya Vidyalaya, Khanapara, told PTI. This is the first time she is voting in a Lok Sabha election, and she came with her three-year-old son who had a nice time playing with the balloons which were used to decorate the polling station. Sahitya Akademi awardee Anuradha Sarma Pujari, also a voter in the same polling station, said it is with the expectation of a better future that she cast her vote. "Everyone should come and vote as this is the least we can do for our country. We should vote as politically conscious citizens. We expect the new government will work for a better country and more development," the senior journalist and author added. Nilufar Rahman, a school teacher, hoped for a more secure environment for office-goers like her and with two women candidates in the fray, she was optimistic that they would be considerate of their problems. "As working women, we face many difficulties, including security issues, proper public transport and lack of other facilities. I hope the new MP

Abusing Sanatan culture now a fashion for Opposition: Yogi

PTI ■ SITAPUR (UP)

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Tuesday claimed that abusing Sanatan culture and questioning the existence of Lord Ram and Lord Krishna has become a "fashion" for the opposition leaders. "Supporters of the Samajwadi Party open fire on Lord Ram's devotees and perform 'aarti' for terrorists. They demand the withdrawal of cases against the perpetrators. They celebrate the death of Lord Ram's devotees and shed crocodile tears over the demise of gangsters," he said. Addressing election rallies in the state, Adityanath said after the third phase of polling for the general elections on Tuesday, voting for over half of the Lok Sabha seats would be over and the nation is "resonating with the slogan 'Abki Baar 400 Paar'". "The new India stands resolute against terrorism, responding with strength," he said. At election meetings in Sitapur and Mirrikh parliamentary constituencies, the BJP leader alleged that questioning the existence of God and abusing Sanatan culture has become a "fashion" for the opposition. He urged people to exercise their franchise to show those who insult Lord Ram and Lord Krishna their rightful place. "How can we accept those



who raise questions about Lord Ram and Lord Krishna? Ultimately, it is the people of the country who will respond through their votes," Adityanath said. He said that BJP's double-engine government has taken up several initiatives for the development of Naimisharanya, a pilgrimage spot in Sitapur. "Just as Ayodhya is experiencing a revitalization, Naimisharanya is also undergoing a transformation. Plans are underway to introduce air services and electric bus services along with the construction of guest houses for the visitors," Adityanath said. Addressing another election meeting, the senior BJP leader claimed that while the

Uddhav totally opposite to Balasaheb, says Shinde

PTI ■ THANE

In an all-out attack on his former party chief-turned-rival, Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde on Tuesday accused Uddhav Thackeray of doing "dogli rajneeti" (double-faced politics) and alleged that his predecessor was plotting an attack on his house while pretending to be making a peace offer for his return to the Shiv Sena after they split nearly two years ago. Shinde, who now heads the "real" Shiv Sena, also said Uddhav was totally opposite to the party founder Balasaheb Thackeray and was only interested in furthering his self-interest, unlike his father who always stood by his party's workers and never went back on his words. In an exclusive interview with PTI at his residence here, Shinde alleged that Uddhav Thackeray abandoned Balasaheb's ideology for the greed of the chief minister's chair when he broke ties with the Congress. "We are the real Shiv Sena and taking forward Balasaheb's vision of Hindutva and the state's development," he said. Uddhav Thackeray's outfit cannot be called a "Hindutva" party as they joined hands with the Congress which insults Savarkar and they cannot even refer to Balasaheb as "Hindu Hriday Samrat" anymore, he said. Asked whether Uddhav Thackeray called him to come back and offered him the chief minister's post after his rebellion in June 2022, Shinde said, "He sent an emissary to me and while that person was talking to me, he announced he was throwing me out of the party." "He (Uddhav) was holding a meeting where they called for burning my effigy, attacking my house, those sorts of things were happening. These meetings were happening when they had supposedly sent people to talk to me. 'Dogli rajneeti, chehre pe alag, pet mein alag, honthon pe alag (This is double-faced politics, something on the face and something totally opposite behind it)," the chief minister said. "Balasaheb was something else. He will say whatever he has to say and he will never go back on his words. Whatever he would say once, will become cast in iron. There can't be another Balasaheb Thackeray," he added. The 60-year-old Shiv Sena leader, who became the chief minister soon after parting ways with Uddhav Thackeray and with the support of the BJP, said that when assembly elections happened in 2019, the people's mandate was for the BJP-Shiv Sena government. "But he (Uddhav) abandoned the ideology of Balasaheb Thackeray for the greed of the chief minister's chair. We are now taking forward Balasaheb's ideology and that forms the foundation of this Government."

Voters exercise franchise in nine LS seats of Madhya Pradesh

PTI ■ BHOPAL

At least 62.28 per cent of voters exercised their franchise till 5 pm in nine Lok Sabha seats of Madhya Pradesh in the third phase of the general elections on Tuesday, a poll official said. Of the nine Lok Sabha seats, Rajgarh recorded the highest 72.08 per cent turnout, followed by Vidisha with 69.2 per cent, Guna with 68.93 per cent, Betul with 67.97 per cent, Sagar with 61.7 per cent, Bhopal with 58.42 per cent, Gwalior with 57.86 per cent, Morena with 55.25 per cent and Bhind with 50.96 per cent, till 5 pm, the official said. Former chief ministers Shivraj Singh Chouhan, Digvijaya Singh and state Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) president V D Sharma were among the early voters. Congress leader Digvijaya Singh and Union Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia, who are contesting the polls from Rajgarh and Guna, respectively, will not be able to vote for themselves as the former is a registered voter of Bhopal, and the latter is registered to vote from Gwalior, party sources said. Shivraj Singh Chouhan, the BJP candidate from Vidisha seat, exercised franchise with his wife, Sadhna Singh, and



two sons at a polling booth in his native village, Jait, in Sehore district. Polling began at 7 am and will conclude at 6 pm across 20,456 polling stations, including 1,043 managed by women personnel and 75 by Divyang employees, an election official said. To ensure smooth polling, the administration made the local candidates sit in the police control room in Morena in the Gwalior-Chambal region, which is considered a sensitive area. The police made BJP candidate Shivmangal Singh Tomar, BSP's Ramesh Chandra Garg and Congress candidate Satyapal Sikarwar sit in the police control room, Superintendent of Police Shailendra Singh Chouhan said. The candidates came to the police control room with their consent and sat together, as it

has happened here in the past, he said. A total of 1.77 crore voters will decide the fate of 127 candidates who are contesting from Morena, Bhind (SC-reserved), Gwalior, Guna, Sagar, Vidisha, Bhopal, Rajgarh and Betul (ST-reserved) seats spread across 19 districts of the state. Polling in Betul (ST) constituency was initially scheduled to be held in the second phase on April 26 but was deferred due to the death of a candidate. In all, 127 candidates, including nine women, are in the fray in the third phase of the elections. Bhopal has the highest number of 22 candidates, while Bhind has the lowest at 7. Voters include 92.68 lakh men, 84.83 lakh women, and 491 members of the third gender, while 1.66 lakh voters are 'divyangjan' (people with disabilities), 88,106 are above the age of 85, and 1,804 are 100 plus years old, the poll official said. As many as 5.25 lakh voters are in the age group of 18-19 years. Of the 29 Lok Sabha seats in Madhya Pradesh, polling for 12 seats took place in the first two phases on April 19 and 26. The remaining eight seats will go to polls in the fourth phase on May 13.

Modi praises EC and underlines importance of voting

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday cast his vote for the ongoing Lok Sabha elections in Gujarat's Ahmedabad city and praised the Election Commission for conducting the polls "almost violence-free" and in a voter-friendly manner in the first two phases. Ahmedabad is part of the Gandhinagar Lok Sabha constituency, from where PM Modi's cabinet colleague and Union Home Minister Amit Shah is seeking his re-election. On the occasion, PM Modi said the conduct of elections in India and their management can be a learning process for other democracies, and added that leading universities in the world should carry out a case study on the country's polls. He also underlined the importance of voting as he called it a special gift. PM Modi, who arrived in Ahmedabad on Monday night, reached the polling booth at Nishan Public School in Ranip locality of Ahmedabad city soon after polling began at 7 am, and cast his vote. Shah accompanied the PM when he arrived there to cast his vote. Modi greeted people, gave autographs to them on his way to the polling booth. He shook hands with many



members of the public. He also lifted a baby girl who was being carried by her mother in the crowd and spent some light moments with the child. A woman from the crowd tied a 'rakhi' to him as a token of sisterly affection. Before entering the polling booth, the prime minister bowed down to his elder brother Somabhai Modi. He cast his vote after getting his finger inked. After coming out of the polling booth, Modi waved to the crowd and showed his inked finger. Modi is a registered voter from Ranip area. Somabhai Modi lives near Nishan School, which falls under Sabarmati assembly segment of Gandhinagar Lok Sabha constituency. Talking to reporters later, the PM appealed to people to come out in large numbers to vote. "Matdaan samanya daan nahi. Hamare desh main daan ka mahatva hai (Voting is not a common gift. In our country, a lot of importance is attached to giving donations). People of the country should vote in large numbers keeping this feeling in their hearts," Modi said. Today is the third phase of voting and campaigning will go on for almost three weeks and four more phases of voting will be held, he said. "As a voter from Gujarat, I have been voting from here (Nishan School) for the last many years, and our Amitabhai (Shah) is the candidate of BJP from here," Modi said. "Today is the day of celebrations of democracy. I will congratulate the Election Commission, security forces and officials involved in conducting the first two phases of polls almost violence-free. In the past, violence during elections was very common," he said. "I would also like to

congratulate the election commission for conducting the entire election in a voter-friendly manner. The conduct of our election, our election management is such that it can be a learning process for other democracies. Big universities of the world should carry out a case study on Indian elections," Modi said. "This year, almost 64 countries of the world are going to polls. There should be a comparison of elections between India and other countries. This year, the festival of democracy is not only in India but around the world," Modi said. He said he would congratulate the Election Commission for adopting good practices of the world in conducting elections in India. Modi also praised the Election Commission for adopting modern technology the poll management. Shah cast his vote at a polling station in Naranpura locality of Ahmedabad, and appealed to voters to participate enthusiastically to elect a stable government committed to make India prosperous. Shah greeted, interacted and even offered autographs to his supporters as he approached his polling booth at a sub-station in Ahmedabad. Shah accompanied his wife Sonal Shah, son Jay Shah and his wife to cast his vote.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

The die is cast

The pivotal third phase of the elections concluded with a low turnout, featuring prominent contenders

Yesterday, Prime Minister Modi exercised his voting right. He was vocal about India's exemplary democratic process on the global stage. Indeed, the complexity of Indian elections, given the vastness of the nation and its electorate, makes their execution a challenging feat. As the 2024 Lok Sabha election reaches midway, India's political arena brims with fervour, anticipation, and meticulous scrutiny. The third phase of voting holds particular significance, especially for the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), with voting taking place in Gujarat, the home turf of Prime Minister Modi, and Amit Shah, the Home Minister. The presence of both leaders casting their votes amplifies the importance of this phase, shaping the election's narrative thus far. The third phase encompassed 11 States and Union territories, witnessing 93 constituencies participating in the electoral process. Notably, the BJP secured victory in the Surat constituency in Gujarat uncontested. With voting in 283 Lok Sabha seats (52 per cent of total Lok Sabha seats) complete, the election is less than a month away from its logical conclusion. After four more phases, the results would be out on June 4. What set the third phase apart was the presence of several constituencies where notable figures were contesting. This phase hosted several prominent candidates, including Amit Shah (BJP) from Gandhinagar, Gujarat; Digvijaya Singh (Congress) from Rajgarh, Madhya Pradesh; Shivraj Singh Chouhan (BJP) from Vidisha, Madhya Pradesh; Dimple Yadav (Samajwadi Party) from Mainpuri, Uttar Pradesh; Supriya Sule (NCP - Sharad Pawar) from Baramati, Maharashtra; Jyotiraditya Scindia (BJP) from Guna, Madhya Pradesh; Pralhad Joshi (BJP) from Dharwad, Karnataka; and KS Eshwarappa (BJP) from Shimoga, Karnataka, among others.



The Election Commission reported a turnout of 66.14 per cent and 66.71 per cent for the first and second phases, respectively. The third phase was no different in terms of voter turnout. With the completion of the third phase, the fate of 283 Lok Sabha seats has been sealed, marking the election's midpoint with 52% of seats voted upon. The persistently low turnout across all phases raises concerns for both democracy and political parties, each grappling with the challenge of ensuring voter participation. For the BJP, the third phase holds immense significance. As a party entrenched in power since 2014, it faces the daunting task of not only maintaining its stronghold but also expanding its influence across diverse regions of the nation. As the Lok Sabha election unfolds, discernible trends and dynamics offer insights into the nation's pulse. Despite facing formidable challenges, the BJP leverages its organisational strength, robust campaign machinery, and Modi's charismatic leadership to maintain its competitive edge. However, navigating through economic concerns, social tensions, and regional disparities presents formidable obstacles. The outcome of this phase serves as a litmus test for the BJP's policies and leadership shaping the trajectory of Indian politics.

PICTALK



Women show their ink-marked finger after casting votes for the 3rd phase of Lok Sabha elections, in Bareilly

Evolution of monetary policymaking in India

With the changing nature of inflation and macroeconomic turbulence, remaining committed to inflation-targeting seems daunting

The history of monetary policymaking in India dates back to the pre-independence era, but it gained significant momentum and structure post-independence. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) was established in 1935, as a private shareholders' bank and was nationalized in 1949, giving the Government greater control over monetary policy and credit system. With the establishment of the Planning Commission in 1951, emphasis was laid on the direct and active role of Central banking. A breakthrough year was 1969 when 14 private sector banks were nationalized. It led to transforming monetary policy into 'credit planning' and taking up a 'command approach' (Khatkhate, 1990). Soon the economy suffered due to the two oil price shocks (1973-75 and 1979-81) leading to critical economic crises, which led to large-scale monetary expansion in the form of Government debt to support fiscal policy. It badly hit the inflation situation when it reached 23% in 1974-75. The condition worsened and



became dismal when India had to borrow largely from the IMF and also faced a critical BOP situation. Hence, the revision of the monetary policy framework was the way ahead. This was done by appointment of a committee (which came to be known as the Chakravarty Committee (1985) chaired by Sukhmoy Chakravarty) to review the functioning of the monetary system by the then Governor of RBI, Dr Manmohan Singh. The RBI Governor, C Rangarajan, introduced the Multiple Indicator Approach (MIA) in 1998, incorporating various macroeconomic factors like interest rates, inflation, exchange rates, output growth, employment, foreign trade, capital flows,

banking stability, among others, into the monetary policy framework, moving away from the unreliable M3 target due to economic liberalisation's unpredictability. This provided monetary authorities the flexibility to cater to a broad forum of economic disruptions. The economy was coordinating well with the MIA till the Global Financial Crisis of 2008 dawned, and a high-order expansionary fiscal and monetary policy was floated to capture the receding economic growth. This jeopardised inflation management by the RBI with the inflation gliding into double digits in 2009-10. The RBI became hawkish and between March 2010 and October 2011, the repo rate was increased by 325 basis points. It started preparing for inflation as the primary goal of monetary policy. Finally, in May 2016, the RBI formally adopted inflation-targeting (IT), the target being a 4 per cent inflation rate, with a relaxation of 2 per cent on both sides, to handle unforeseen macroeconomic disruptions. Taming inflation helps

counter investor uncertainty and business sentiments, anchors inflationary expectations, unfavourable exchange rates and balance of payments, besides supporting receding purchasing power. The IT did not get a fair chance to prove itself due to economic disturbances like Demonetisation and the Pandemic, and the current geo-political unrest has led to supply-side inflationary pressures that are difficult to control with IT, which is more efficient against demand-side inflation. With the changing nature of inflation from demand to the supply side, macroeconomic turbulence, and burgeoning uncertainties, remaining committed to IT seems daunting. The RBI needs to frame a comprehensive policy to make determined efforts to address and supplement IT with prudent actions to counter supply-side disruptions especially, affecting food prices.

(The author is assistant professor at Sri Guru Gobind Singh College of Commerce, University of Delhi; views are personal)



KAJLEEN KAUR

Global South's cultural diplomacy

Cannes transcends its role as a mere film festival; it serves as a beacon of cultural exchange, artistic exploration, and industry innovation



CHAITANYA K PRASAD

As we inch closer to the second week of May, excitement for the forthcoming 77th edition of the Cannes Film Festival is reaching a crescendo. The Cannes Film Festival, since its inception, has been hailed as the platform celebrating the joy and creativity of cinema, the high point of confluence of cultures, and talents, and an assembly of masters of storytelling. In recent years, its stage has increasingly spotlighted the cinematic voices of the Global South, a trend underscored by the burgeoning presence of films from Africa, South Asia and Southeast Asia. Building on last year's diverse selection from Japan, China, and South Korea, Cannes in its 77th edition, from 14th to 25th May 2024, reaffirms its commitment to amplifying varied narratives and perspectives. This year's edition promises to continue this trajectory, featuring standout entries like "All We Imagine As Light" by Indian filmmaker Payal Kapadia, "Boku No Ohisama (My Sunshine)" by the acclaimed Japanese filmmaker Hiroshi Okuyama, "Viet And Nam" by Vietnamese filmmaker Truong Minh Quy, and "The Village Next to Paradise" by Somalian filmmaker Mo Harawe. These selections highlight the new creative talent spots for cinema.

With the evolving world, there is a deeper significance highlighted by the recognition of cinema as a potent tool of soft power by countries in the Global South. Across the continents of Africa, Asia, and Latin America, nations have increasingly acknowledged the power of storytelling through cinema as a means to amplify their cultural influence and enhance their global standing. Over the past two years Cannes Film Festival has seen a dynamic shift in programming, from a European narrative to a more perceptive Southern inclusion and interconnection. In the borderless world that we live in today, the prominence of the Global South as a group has risen despite being dominated by multipolarity. Enhanced communication and the growing effects of globalisation have blurred geographical



boundaries, ushering in a new era where technology plays a pivotal role in shaping interactions. This transition has reverberated across various realms, including the cinematic sphere, where soft power finds expression on prestigious platforms. Cannes truly give the Global South a platform for creativity on the silver screen. Nomination and participation in prestigious festivals like Cannes are not merely accolades but recognition of the importance of soft power in the creative ecosystem. By showcasing their cinematic prowess and an amalgamation of their creative skills on a global stage, countries in the Global South seek to assert their cultural identity, foster cross-cultural dialogue, and bolster diplomatic ties. In an era where cultural diplomacy holds increasing sway, the Cannes Film Festival serves as a creative platform for nations to assert their soft power through the medium of cinema. Through their cinematic endeavours, these filmmakers become cultural ambassadors, bridging divides and fostering mutual understanding between nations. At the helm of the 77th Cannes Film Festival jury stands Greta Gerwig, both an accomplished actor and a filmmaker. Gerwig's appointment signals a broader effort towards gen-

BY SHOWCASING THEIR CINEMATIC PROWESS AND AN AMALGAMATION OF THEIR CREATIVE SKILLS ON A GLOBAL STAGE, COUNTRIES IN THE GLOBAL SOUTH SEEK TO ASSERT THEIR CULTURAL IDENTITY, FOSTER CROSS-CULTURAL DIALOGUE, AND BOLSTER DIPLOMATIC TIES

der representation at Cannes, a realm historically dominated by male voices. Symbolising a step towards inclusivity and recognition of the invaluable contributions of women in shaping cinematic discourse. As the jury list for this year awaits announcement, anticipation brews for a lineup that mirrors the festival's commitment to diversity, echoing last year's eclectic mix of talents from Argentina, Afghanistan, Morocco, Zambia, and beyond. Amidst the glitz and glamour, the Marché du Film emerges as a vital nexus for industry professionals, offering a platform for networking, deal-making, and creative exchange. With its finger firmly on the pulse of evolving industry dynamics, the Marché du Film embraces innovation and adaptation. Recognising the need to cater to the ever-changing landscape of filmmaking, it champions emerging trends, technologies, and voices, fostering a conducive environment for the flourishing growth of the global film industry. As over 14,000 industry professionals converge in Cannes annually to present and explore nearly 4,000 films and projects, the Marché du Film serves as a catalyst, urging professionals to elevate their business acumen and seize new opportunities.

Indeed, Cannes itself is a reflection of society's evolution, a microcosm of shifting cultural paradigms and technological advancements. Embracing the ethos of change, the Festival de Cannes introduces innovative elements to its programming, staying at the vanguard of storytelling in the digital age. One of the nominations for this year's Immersive Competition includes "Maya: The Birth of a Superhero", an XR experience created by Poulomi Basu, an Indian artist and CJ Clarke. The announcement of eight projects as part of the Immersive Competition heralds a bold foray into uncharted territory, encompassing location-based virtual reality, mixed reality experiences, projection mapping, and holographic works. Amid these shifts, India shines bright with the participation of Payal Kapadia, Sandhya Suri's "Santosh", FTII's "Sunflowers Were the First Ones to Know" and the screening of Shyam Benegal's "Manthan". As the global cinematic landscape continues to evolve, Cannes remains steadfast in its mission to celebrate the myriad voices that enrich the tapestry of world cinema. (The writer is former additional director general, DFF and Festival Director, IFFI; Views are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

JP AGGARWAL'S COMMITMENT

Madam — Apropos the news article, "I have not lost touch with Chandni Chowk people: Aggarwal," published on May 6, this is my response. In a political landscape rife with rhetoric and rivalry, Jai Prakash Aggarwal emerges as a steadfast figure, deeply rooted in Chandni Chowk's tapestry. Despite electoral setbacks, his commitment to constituents remains resolute. Aggarwal's recent critique of Prime Minister Modi's language underscores a concern for decorum in public discourse, a sentiment often lost in the cacophony of contemporary politics. His indictment of the BJP's alleged misuse of investigative agencies reflects a broader apprehension about democratic norms and the rule of law. Beyond partisan skirmishes, Aggarwal's focus on local issues—traders' welfare, infrastructure, and healthcare—reveals a genuine concern for Chandni Chowk's residents. His vision for the area, encompassing tourism, urban renewal, and social welfare, speaks to a holistic approach to governance. Amidst shifting political alliances, Aggarwal's unwavering commitment to his constituency stands out as a beacon of stability. As he embarks on his eighth electoral campaign, his pledge to serve remains unyielding, a testament to the enduring spirit of public service. Zoya Chatterjee | Chandigarh

VOTERS' DISILLUSIONMENT

Madam — Apropos the news article, "Narendra Modi introduces India to its Ashtalakshmis," published on May 4, this is my response. The narrative of electoral promises, unfulfilled commitments, and regional disparities echoes through the decades of Indian politics. From the inception of the democratic process to contemporary times, the saga persists. The cyclical pattern of pledges made during elections, often forgotten once power is secured, perpetuates a sense of disillusionment among the populace. Despite significant milestones like the Green

Make mistakes to learn something new



Apropos the news article, "Oops, I Dropped The Lemon Tart," published on April 28, this is my response. Gyaneshwar Dayal's piece in The Pioneer paints a vivid canvas of Chef Massimo Bottura's recent culinary odyssey in New Delhi. Bottura, not merely a chef but a maestro of gastronomy and a beacon of philanthropy, brought the essence of Osteria Francescana to India's capital once more. His partnership with The

Leela Palace New Delhi illuminated the culinary scene, offering an unforgettable experience steeped in innovation and sustainability. The narrative delves into Bottura's culinary philosophy, highlighting his penchant for turning mistakes into masterpieces, epitomised by the iconic "Oops! I Dropped the Lemon Tart." His interactive session at The Leela, where he shared the genesis of this dish, revealed profound insights into creativity and embracing imperfection. Through his culinary prowess and philanthropic endeavours, Bottura transcends the role of a chef, becoming a global inspiration. His anticipation for a simple breakfast with underprivileged children reflects his humility and dedication to making a difference beyond the kitchen. In essence, Bottura's visit not only tantalised taste buds but also stirred hearts, leaving an indelible mark on India's culinary landscape. Neha Gupta | Delhi

Revolution, persistent challenges like hunger and malnutrition endure, revealing systemic failures in addressing agricultural productivity. The poignant juxtaposition of floods ravaging the North while droughts parch the South underscores the urgent need for holistic solutions, like river interlinking. However, bureaucratic inertia and political apathy have impeded meaningful progress. Amidst this backdrop, the Northeast emerges as a beacon of transformation, propelled by visionary leadership and concerted efforts to integrate the region into the national fabric. The narrative of Modi's North East Story encapsulates this metamorphosis, beckoning readers to witness the evolution firsthand and embrace the region's vibrant culture and potential. Amaira Singhania | Bengaluru

WORK FROM HOME CHALLENGES

Madam — Apropos the news article, "Mastering self-leadership during work from home," published on May 6, this is my response. The transition to remote

work has been a mixed bag, with some relishing newfound flexibility while others struggle to delineate between work and home life. Blurred boundaries breed conflicts, taxing individuals' energy and focus. Boundary theory sheds light on these dynamics, emphasising the impact of role transitions on work-home conflicts. Employers must support employees, but self-leadership is equally vital. As remote work becomes ubiquitous, individuals must proactively manage their roles. Yet, challenges persist, from lacking managerial support to battling distractions. Self-leadership emerges as a beacon amid these complexities. Its principles empower individuals to adapt, innovate, and thrive in remote environments. As remote work becomes the norm, mastering self-leadership will be indispensable for professional success and personal well-being alike. Reyanish Joshi | Mumbai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com



FIRST COLUMN

OVERCOMING BONDAGE OF THINKING

God's grace frees us from anguish, guides us on the right path



AJIT KUMAR BISHNOI

This is a cruel fact. We are hopelessly tied down by our thinking, especially negative. What do you see on roads? Older folks are engrossed in thoughts. What happened? They realized that they were not so great after all. But the obstinate ego would not allow them to seek help where it is available. If a solution to a problem is to be found, it must be; this is their thinking. Sure, but how long would you meditate on it? There should be a time limit. No, that is why obsession is a very common problem.

Other ages are no better. The younger ones are guilty of lusty thoughts. With the advent of cell phones and the internet, age is no longer a bar. What a shame when one is supposed to be in the 'brahmacharya' (celibacy) stage. As one gets older, thoughts of earning the maximum amount of money capture the imagination. There is nothing wrong with it except our expectations should be based on reality. Otherwise, there will be a lot of pain. What is common to all ages is fear of different kinds. This is a real problem, which causes all kinds of mental diseases. This particular problem requires help at the highest level, that is from God, but will we turn to Him? Also common to all ages are hate, anger, enmity, etc. There is hardly any chance of relief when we think that we are the centre of the universe, even though there are eight billion of us. If that were true, there would be eight billion centres of the universe. See, how silly such thinking is. This is what is the basis of our thought process. The frog mentality of thinking one's limited knowledge is everything leads many to dismiss spiritual practices as simplistic, when in fact they are meant to be easily accessible to all.



Let us get to the bottom of this all-pervasive problem. What is this mind? It is a faculty given to us for thinking, willing and feeling. It is subtle, i.e. far more strong than the gross body. The mind affects the body, as we all have experienced. When we are disturbed, our bodies get affected; their working is disturbed. Why has God given us a faculty, which can hurt us so much? He had to do to give us free will, which can bring bliss, as indicated by Lord Krishna, 'A person, having consciousness, unattached to external sense objects, enjoys that happiness within, which is extraordinary. He who, with consciousness united to Brahman, finds eternal joy. God's kindness lies in our return to Him, part of the Cosmic Design, where independence is limited, and control rests with God. So we must turn to God to control our uncontrolled and negative thinking. Lord Krishna States, "Undoubtedly the mind is very difficult to control due to its fickle nature, but it can be brought under control by practice and by detachment from inappropriate sense objects." (6.35) This practice has to be with help from God. Otherwise, there will be partial success only. As we age, our focus shifts towards God, as our physical pleasures diminish, highlighting the purpose of the "Ashram" system for spiritual growth in later years. Therefore, God has made provisions for unlimited mental enjoyment. But we have to seek shelter from God for that. We should not be turning to drinks, etc. for compensation to get over our woes, because they send us deeper into more suffering. Fear is a defence mechanism but only in the limited sense. It should alert us to take curative action. But if it overtakes our thinking, fear becomes a serious problem, as all mental diseases point to.

The conclusion is: that we must turn to God with determination sooner than later. Then God will not only free us from the bondage of painful thinking but will also help us in all matters with His guidance and help. This is the way the System has been designed.

(The writer is a spiritual guide; views are personal)

Elected leaders need to rethink

It is time that elected representatives live up to the expectations of their electors as responsible, honest and devoted community leaders



JS RAJPUT



These are election times and each one of us is a part of the process. These are also times of model code of conduct in the shape of guidelines for political parties and candidates. There are restrictions imposed by the election commission on the maximum expenditure a candidate could incur. Everyone knows what happens to it! In general, people are no more worried about spiralling high expenses that the spread of elections imposes on the candidate and State exchequer.

The spread of elections leads to avoidable wastage of manpower and other resources required to conduct and complete the process. The worst sufferers are the schoolchildren, as teachers are the most easily available manpower for elections at every stage! Once elected, no one is willing to pave the way for the generation next! Election times also reveal the behavioural decline amongst those who had tasted the fruits of power earlier but were dethroned by the people. Their frustrations even bring forth utterances that may be blatantly unsocial, personal and not acceptable in a civil society. The elders have created conditions that demand innovative action by the young 'millennials' who must realize how their elders have decimated the basic principles of democracy by taking recourse to caste combinations, igniting regional and linguistic sentiments, and creating communal antagonism at the cost of deteriorating social cohesion! Independent India began its new journey at around 18% of literacy, today its boosts to nearly 80% of it despite the population increase of over 100 crores. We are a learning society. Our international standing is at its best after independence. One wonders why the language used by politicians against each other should become so coarse and uncivil. It could put to shame any decent educated person. Respect for the learned, committed and experienced is one of the most liked of the treasures of our heritage which unfortunately stands torn to tatters. India shall never be in a position to ignore the



ARTICULATING THE NORMAL EXPECTATIONS FROM THE ELECTED REPRESENTATIVE, APJ ABDUL KALAM WAS GIVING VOICE TO EVERY SANE INDIAN: "IT HAS BECOME CRUCIAL FOR US TO BE CLEAR ABOUT WHAT WE CAN RIGHTLY EXPECT FROM OUR LEADERS, FROM PANCHAYAT MEMBERS TO MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT"

presence of great luminaries of contemporary times like Gandhi, Patel, Subhash Bose, Nehru, Rajendra Prasad and others. How could anyone who wishes to understand India do so without getting familiar with Swami Vivekananda, Ramkrishna Paramhans, Tagore or Sri Aurobindo? Hope lies only in those who were in schools a couple of years ago, and were mesmerized by a saint-scientist; the indomitable APJ Abdul Kalam. I had personally witnessed on numerous occasions how children of India fell in love with him. It was not because of his position or the Pokhran II, it was because of the love his persona emanated for every child, every Indian! India stands blessed with numerous such luminaries who could make a change in the area around their place. One wishes political aspirants learn from APJ, and other luminaries how to deal with people! APJ Abdul Kalam was one of the most admired and loved celebrities during the millennial transition to the 21st century. He was a professional leader who led by example, through heart-to-heart connections with one and all. His dedication and devotion to the national cause were of the highest order. He inspired, he motivated and he achieved his target with gusto.

He could win over every Indian irrespective of their socio-economic station in life, his profession or his ideological leanings. APJ endeared himself particularly to the children of India in whom he could see the emerging India, the future India! He ignited the curiosity and creativity of millions of children. He gave them 'wings of fire'. He entered the Rashtarpati Bhavan with two bags and left with the same after five years. India needs people with such

personalities right from the panchayat level to the Parliament with whom every individual could feel connected, who may be acknowledged as 'approachable'. All this, and much more; reverberates in one's mind as various inputs concerning the general elections float before everyone. Each one of us who has voted over a dozen times in general elections would love to talk about the drastic change that has occurred in the quality of leadership on a larger scale, the deterioration in mutual respect and regard amongst those in public life, in power or opposition.

We are witness to the usage of a language for the opponents that would have shamed everyone some five decades ago. Today, no one seems to be worried about it. The only encouraging sign is that all this is being noted by the voters, and they are despising it. In the long run, one could say with confidence that it would not work in favour of the truants. Sadly enough, the defects of elections about whom Gandhi had written as early as 1922, have reached every stage of elections, including even those of panchayat Raj bodies.

One must not give up hope. And there is always hope for the better after having reached the bottom. Articulating the normal expectations from the elected representatives, APJ Abdul Kalam was giving voice to every sane Indian: "It has become crucial for us to be clear about what we can rightly expect from our leaders, from panchayat members to local councillors of a municipal corporation to members of parliament." In other words, there has to be ownership. Whether it is the panchayat member, development officer, councillor, MLA MP or minister, they have to at least try to be

the best of their ability to do what they are elected to do. We need a Parliament with a vision, one that has the larger picture in mind and can rise above petty party politics.

How would such a parliament perform? What are how it can play a far more constructive role than it has in the last Lok Sabha? I would also expect that the Hon'ble members of the next Lok Sabha shall firmly and sincerely resolve not to present before the nation any spectacles that disturb the functioning of the August House, and present a poor example before the young of India. What was happening till now, was a matter of serious concern for the last couple of decades. It was precisely articulated with great concern by the veteran politician C. Subramaniam: "The discipline that marks the proceedings of parliament and legislatures is a matter of great concern. Not only pandemonium is created obstructing the proceedings of the legislatures but also acts of violence among the members inside the legislatures are becoming common and an almost everyday occurrence. Nobody is prepared to observe the rules of the game. Then how can we expect the masses of the people to observe discipline and respect the laws and regulations?"

It is time that future MPs and other elected representatives live up to the expectations of their electors as responsible, honest and devoted community leaders. They have to be a source of inspiration to generations ahead. Let them resolve not to let even a minute of parliament's time be wasted! It would be a great gift to the nation!

(The author works in education, social cohesion and religious amity, views are personal)

Benevolent hearts: Dynamics of begging and household donations

Despite legal prohibitions in many States, begging persists with beggars being one of the highest recipients of household donations

Begging is a ubiquitous phenomenon in India and is hidden in plain sight. Perceptions of 'persons engaged in Beggary' may vary but it is also evident that many households donate to them. 'Persons engaged in Beggary' are largely missing from the discussions on public policy in the country. A recent study by the Centre of Social Impact and Philanthropy (CSIP) at Ashoka University showed that 'persons engaged in Beggary' are one of the highest recipients of household donations, ranking only after 'religious organisations'. This leads us to question, what are the motivations that lead households in such a large proportion to donate to 'persons engaged in Beggary'. Who are the biggest donation-makers to



SHAIVYA VERMA

'beggars' with respect to gender, geography and age? And in what 'form' donations are received by the 'persons engaged in Beggary'? Even though begging is not a crime it is legally prohibited in more than twenty States and Union Territories and can invite punishment for one year to 10 years and even beyond under special circumstances. The pros and cons of the existing laws are another

debate. The study by CSIP showed a 14% increase in total 'cash' donations by Indian households from INR 23.7 thousand crores in 2020-21 to INR 27 thousand crores in 2021-22 of which 'persons engaged in Beggary' are one of the preferred recipients of household giving among 'religious organisations', 'non-religious organisations', 'family and friends', 'household staff', and 'supporting a cause or signing a petition'. They are the second highest recipient of household donations both in terms of overall market size and the proportion of households who made donations to them among other recipient groups in the study. The report further notes that the market size and the average cash payments to

'persons engaged in Beggary' have increased from 2020-21 to 2021-22. While 'persons engaged in Beggary' are one of the preferred recipients, households do not trust them with their money but with materials. Despite a high proportion of households who donated to 'persons engaged in Beggary' they received the lowest value of 'cash' donations from households (under INR 100). While 'persons engaged in Beggary' were least preferred for 'cash' donations as compared to other recipient groups in the study, a clear preference to donate 'in-kind' was noted for this recipient group. More than half of those donating to 'persons engaged in Beggary' donated 'in-kind' which is starkly different from 'in-kind'

donations received by other recipient groups. Households are mostly driven by their intrinsic motivations when giving to the 'persons engaged in Beggary'. 'Religious beliefs' are one of the top motivators. It guided 55% of households that gave to the 'persons engaged in Beggary'. Religious beliefs can be understood as 'helping others is a way to serve God', and 'good karma/ Almighty rewards good deeds'. Furthermore, 'family traditions' play an important role in motivating households to give to the 'persons engaged in Beggary'. They are also affected by the visible hardship due to poverty and are driven to donate in order to support someone in financial distress. Rendering 'seva' or service

also emerged as a significant motivation for giving to 'persons engaged in Beggary'. Households also find it easier to give in smaller amounts in 'cash', which leads many households to offer some money to 'persons engaged in Beggary'. About 60% proportion of households responded to have donated to them. The study also found that donations made to 'persons engaged in Beggary' were in the range of smaller amounts 'under INR 100'. It was intriguing to find that the givers who are more empathetic to the 'persons engaged in Beggary' are the people who have a 'vulnerable' position in society and are mainly dependent on others for social and economic security. Older women and households from

rural areas and from lower socio-economic categories are primary givers to 'persons engaged in Beggary'. More households from rural India donate to 'persons engaged in Beggary' than households from large towns. In fact, the proportion of households making offerings to 'persons engaged in Beggary' in rural India was higher than the national average of the proportion of households who gave to 'persons engaged in Beggary'. Similarly, 'giving' by lower socio-economic category (SEC D/E) to 'persons engaged in Beggary' was higher than the national average. While about 53% of households from higher and middle socio-economic categories (SEC A, SEC B and SEC C) contributed, more

than 65% of households contributed towards 'persons engaged in Beggary' from the lower socio-economic groups (SEC D/E). In terms of gender and age, older women between the ages of 46 to 60 years are the biggest and primary donation-makers to the 'persons engaged in Beggary'. Beggary in many forms has been in existence for ages. Due to the hardships faced, persons engaged in Beggary usually suffer from negativity, hopelessness, low self-esteem and stigma. In India, 'people engaged in Beggary' are often seen outside religious places. The writer is Senior Research Manager at the Centre for Social Impact and Philanthropy (CSIP), Ashoka University. Views expressed are personal

Stimac announces second list of probables for World Cup qualifiers

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
Injured central defender Sandesh Jhingam missed out as Indian senior men's team head coach Igor Stimac on Tuesday announced his second list of 15 probables for the Bhubaneswar camp ahead of the FIFA World Cup 2026 preliminary joint qualification round 2 matches against Kuwait and Qatar. The first list of probables was announced on Saturday. Defender Jhingam, who sustained a right knee injury during India's Asian Cup group match against Syria in January, missed out of the list. The 26 players from the first list will begin training in the Odisha capital on May 10. The 15 players from the second list, comprising players from Mumbai City FC and Mohun Bagan SG, who contested the ISL Cup final, will join the camp on May 15. A total of 41 players will take part in the national camp. The Blue Tigers will face Kuwait in



Kolkata on June 6 before travelling away to take on Qatar on June 11 in their last two matches of Group A. India are currently placed second in the group, with four points from four matches. The top two teams in the

group will qualify for Round 3 of the FIFA World Cup Qualifiers and book their berth at the AFC Asian Cup Saudi Arabia 2027. **The second list of 15 probables for the Bhubaneswar**

(training from May 15): Goalkeepers: Phurba Tenga Lachenpa, Vishal Kaith **Defenders:** Akash Mishra Anwar Ali, Mehtab Singh, Rahul Bheke, Subhasish Bose **Midfielders:** Anirudh Thapa, Deepak Tangri, Lalengmawia

Ralte, Lallianzuala Chhangte, Liston Colaco, Sahal Abdul Samad **Forwards:** Manvir Singh, Vikram Partap Singh **The first list of 26 probables for the Bhubaneswar camp (training from May 10): Goalkeepers:** Amrinder Singh, Gurpreet Singh Sandhu. **Defenders:** Amey Ganesh Ranawade, Jay Gupta, Lalchungnunga, Muhammad Hammad, Narender, Nikhil Poojary, Roshan Singh Naorem. **Midfielders:** Brandon Fernandes, Edmund Lalrindika, Imran Khan, Isak Vanlalratfela, Jeakson Singh Thounaojam, Mahesh Singh Naorem, Mohammad Yasir, Nandhakumar Sekar, Rahul Kannoly Praveen, Suresh Singh Wangjam, Vibin Mohanan. **Forwards:** David Lalhansanga, Jithin Madathil Subran, Lalrinzuala, Parthib Sundar Gogoi, Rahim Ali, Sunil Chhetri.

What to know about journey of Olympic torch to Paris

AP ■ PARIS
The Olympic torch will finally enter France when it reaches the southern seaport of Marseille on Wednesday. And it's already been quite a journey. After being lit by the sun's rays on April 16 in Ancient Olympia, the torch was carried around Greece before leaving Athens aboard a three-mast ship named Belem, headed for Marseille. The Belem was first used in 1896, the same year the modern Olympics came back. It will be accompanied by more than 1,000 boats as it parades around the Bay of Marseille, before arriving at the Vieux-Port, or Old Port, and docking on a pontoon resembling an athletics track. Torch bearers will carry the flame across Marseille the next day, the last stretch running on the roof of the famed Stade Vélodrome, home to Marseille's passionate soccer fans. After leaving Marseille, a vast relay route will be undertaken before the torch odyssey ends on July 27 in Paris. Here's a look at where the torch goes before reaching Paris: **MONT-SAINT-MICHEL:** The torch is due to reach France on June 18 in the southern city of Nice. Located in an area of raised land surrounded by water, the island fortress looks like it was created for a Game of Thrones film set. But it's real, and very old. So old that it already existed during the Hundred Years' War between England and France, from 1337 to 1453. An English attack was even fended off. Later it became a prison, and in 1979 it was named a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Every year swarms of tourists are in awe of its raw and

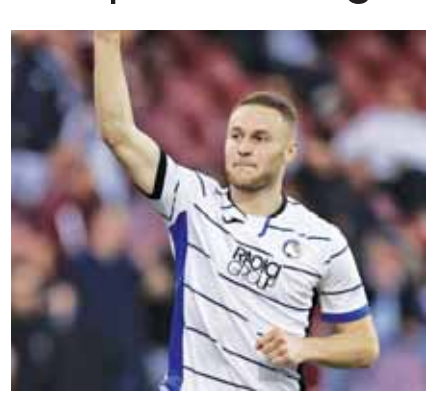


haunting beauty. **ACROSS THE OCEANS:** The torch travel route is even more unique considering it takes a detour through France's overseas territories called the Relais des Océans, or Ocean Relay. Riding the waves of the Atlantic, Pacific and Indian Ocean, it will be in French Guiana on June 9 before hitting New Caledonia on June 11. Next is the island of Réunion at Saint-Denis — coincidentally the same name as the Paris suburb with the Olympic village — before reaching Peapeete in the surfing realm of Tahiti, then Baie-Mahault in Gaudeloupe and finally Fort-de-France in Martinique. The torch comes back to France on June 18 in the southern city of Nice. **FROM SEA BREEZE TO HEAVY CHEESE:** Just five days after landing on French shores, the torch heads up the Alpine mountain pass of Chamonix-Mont-Blanc for Olympic Day on June 23. The Haute-Savoie region is known for its outstanding Chamonix ski resort, which hosts World Cup races, for sweeping views across glacier fields to nearby Italy, and — some would say more importantly — as a producer of fine cheese. A Cheese Olympics, should it be invented, would feature a

AP ■ ROME
Atalanta came from a goal down to beat Salernitana 2-1 in Serie A and improve its chances of a place in next season's Champions League. The Bergamo-based club rose above Roma and into fifth place. The top five qualify automatically for the Champions League. Atalanta rested some regular starters with one eye on Thursday's second leg of the Europe League semifinal against Marseille. It went behind after 18 minutes when Loum Tchaooua scored against the run of play. But Atalanta woke up in the second half. Gianluca Scamacca converted a nice headed assist by Mario Pasalic and six minutes later Teun Koopmeiners stroked home from outside the box.

Atalanta comes from behind to beat Salernitana and improve Champions League chances

Salernitana remained on the bottom of the table and will spend next season in Serie B. **UDINESE DRAWS WITH NAPOLI:** Udinese equalized deep in stoppage time to draw with Napoli 1-1 at home and earn a vital point in its fight against relegation. Substitute Isaac Success was surrounded by defenders but managed to squeeze a shot home in the second minute of stoppage time. Until then, it had looked like a certain defeat for the home side



after Victor Osimhen scored his 15th league goal five minutes into the second half. Osimhen rose to power home an inviting cross from Matteo Politano. The Nigeria international also had a goal chalked off 10 minutes from the end. Udinese remained third from the bottom and in the relegation zone but it was just two points behind Empoli and Frosinone. Three rounds remain and six teams are fighting to avoid joining Salernitana in the second division.



India's Kavin Quintal bags top 10 finish 2024 FIM Junior GP World Championship

PTI ■ CHENNAI
A young Indian rider Kavin Quintal made a stunning debut in the 2024 FIM Junior GP World Championship with a top-10 finish in the Stk European class in Round 2 at the Circuito do Estoril, outside Lisbon, Portugal. Fifty Motorsport team, Kavin clocked 23:19.001s for the 11 laps, just 34.866s adrift of the winner Adrian Rodriguez of Spain (SF Racing) and just 16.092s off fifth-placed Lorenzo Della Porta (Yamaha GV Racing) the current championship leader and 2019 Moto3 champion. The 18-year-old faced early setbacks as he crashed during out-lap in qualifying and had to start the race from the 30th position on the grid. The stock race was red flagged due to deteriorating track conditions in the rain in the second lap, but Kavin had

already moved up to 19th place by then. He navigated through the treacherous conditions overtaking his competition one-by-one and crossed the finish line in an impressive ninth position, for a top-10 finish among 36 riders. The stock race is a stepping stone for Moto2 and JuniorGP World Championship, a new FIM event for juniors on to the road for MotoGP. Having begun racing as a 13-year-old, Kavin became the youngest rider to bag points in the FMSCI Indian National Motorcycle Championship in 2018, switched to Honda Talent Cup in 2019. He made his international debut in the Asia Talent Cup in 2020 and represented India thrice in the Asian Road Racing Championships, with two top-10 finishes in 2023. Kavin's next race will be Round 3 of the JuniorGP Stk at Barcelona from May 16-19.

Gukesh, Arjun and Praggnanandhaa in Warsaw for Superbet Rapid and blitz

PTI ■ WARSAW
Fresh from his historic triumph at the Candidates' tournament, Indian Grandmaster D Gukesh will compete in the Superbet Rapid and Blitz chess tournament which begins here on Wednesday. A part of the Grand Chess tour, the event will also see GM R Praggnanandhaa in action for the first time since the Candidates while world number seven Erigaisie Arjun is the other Indian in the 10-player field for the tournament which will have nine rounds of rapid and 18 rounds of blitz to decide the winner. The tournament favourite is none other than world number one Magnus Carlsen



of Norway who starts as the top seed. The USD 175000 prize money event has as many as six wild cards in the first of the five events. The tour also has a bonus prize pool of USD 175000 for the top three finishers out of which a UDS 100000 is reserved for the winner. The four players who have signed up for the entire tour are Gukesh, Praggnanandhaa, Anish Giri of Holland and Nodirbek Abdusattarov of Uzbekistan. All of them will take part in four out of five events out of which two will be classical and remaining

three will be rapid and blitz. Besides Carlsen and Arjun, the other four wild cards have been given to Wei Yi of China, Duda Jan-Krzysztof of Poland, Vincent Keymer of Germany and Kirill Shevchenko of Romania. Set to play four out of five events in the tour, Gukesh looks like one of the tour favourites. The Chennai-based player also has a World Championship match to play later this year against Ding Liren of China and he surely has his hands full. Praggnanandhaa is a known expert in the faster version of the game and has beaten Carlsen a few times already. If there is one opponent that creates fear for the opposition — that's this 18-year-old Praggnanandhaa.

Arjun might have missed out on a Candidates berth very narrowly but has quickly put that setback aside. Banking on open events that elite players seldom play, Arjun struck back like a hurricane and briefly became top Indian rated player too till Gukesh surpassed him. Arjun is one uncompromising player in the world who fears none and wants to be his best, no matter who the opposition is. For Carlsen, the biggest opposition will come from the Indian trio only, both in Rapid and Blitz. Gukesh may not be the best when it comes to faster version of the game but the reason why he is playing is a clear signal that he wants to get better at it.

Thiago Silva to return to Brazilian club Fluminense after leaving Chelsea at the end of the season

AP ■ RIO DE JANEIRO
Veteran defender Thiago Silva will return to Brazilian club Fluminense after leaving Chelsea at the end of the season. The 39-year-old Silva said last week he was not extending his contract with Chelsea and Fluminense announced Tuesday that the center back is joining on a

free transfer. The defending Copa Libertadores champion posted a picture of Silva wearing a Fluminense shirt on social media with the text: "The monster is back." Silva played for Fluminense between 2006 and 2008. He left for AC Milan in 2009, and three years later joined Paris Saint-Germain. The Brazilian joined Chelsea in

2020 and won the Champions League the following year. The defender was in Brazil's squad for the last four World Cups. He also won the 2013 Confederations Cup and the 2019 Copa America with the national team. Silva is expected to join Fluminense once Brazil's transfer window reopens in July.



2020 and won the Champions League the following year. The defender was in Brazil's squad for the last four World Cups. He also won the 2013 Confederations Cup and the 2019 Copa America with the national team. Silva is expected to join Fluminense once Brazil's transfer window reopens in July.



Late Baldé header steals dramatic 4-3 win for Lyon at Lille

AP ■ LILLE
Lyon scored a dramatic last-minute winner to beat Lille 4-3 in a topsy-turvy French league thriller. Mama Baldé got the winner with a superb header in the second minute of stoppage time to shock a home side that led 1-0, 2-0, and 3-2. Lyon's fourth win in five league games ended Lille's run of three consecutive home victories. Bafodé Diakité put Lille ahead with a fine header after 20 minutes, and Edon Zhegrova added a second 16 minutes later when he fired a low shot home from outside the box. Goals from Said Benrahma in the 65th and substitute Malick Fofana eight minutes from time brought Lyon level. Bafodé Diakité gave Lille the lead again three minutes later with his second goal. Alexandre Lacazette made it 3-3 with two minutes remaining and Baldé grabbed the spotlight. Lyon moved into seventh place in Ligue 1, two points behind Lens.

Olympic bound Preeti among seven Indians to win gold at Asian U-22 & Youth Boxing Championships

PTI ■ ASTANA (KAZAKHSTAN)
Paris Olympics-bound Preeti was among seven Indian boxers to have clinched the gold medal as the country's medals tally hit a high of 43 at the conclusion of the Asian U-22 & Youth Boxing Championships here. Preeti (54kg) made a remarkable comeback after going down 0-5 in the first round to register a 3-0 win in the final against Kazakhstan's Bazarova Elna. The Indian boxers won 12 gold, 14 silver and 17 bronze medals to finish second behind hosts Kazakhstan who

bagged a total of 48 medals. The first gold medal on Tuesday went to Vishvanath Suresh in the 48kg category with the reigning defending Kazakhstan's Karap Yernar 5-0. Nikhil (57kg) defeated Sabyr Yerbolat of Kazakhstan with a referee stopped contest (RSC) win in the third round. Akash Gorkha (60kg) secured a 4-1 win over Kazakhstan's Ruslan Kuzeubayev to win India's third gold medal in the men's category. In the women's category, Poonam Poonia (57kg) and Prachi (63kg) defeated Kazakhstan's Sakysh Anel and

Anar Tursynbek respectively with an identical 4-1 scoreline. Later, Muskan (75kg) was made to work hard by Uzbekistan's Zokirova Aziza for a 3-2 split decision but one that gave India's its seventh gold medal. Preet Malik (67kg), Guddi (48kg), Tamanna (50kg), Saneh (70kg) and Alfiya Pathan (81kg) finished their campaigns with silver medals after going down in their respective finals. The Indian U-22 team grabbed a total of 21 medals including seven gold, five silver and nine bronze medals.



LIST OF MEDAL WINNERS:
Youth medallists: Gold - Men's: Brijesh Tamta (48kg), Aryan Hooda (51kg), Yashwardhan Singh (63.5kg); Women's: Laxmi (50kg), Nisha (52kg); Silver - Men's: Sagar Jakhar (60kg), Priyanshu (71kg), Rahul Kundu (75kg), Aryan (92kg); Women's: Tamanna (54kg), Nikita Chand (60kg), Shrushti Sathe (63kg), Rudrika (75kg), Khushi Poonia (81kg); Bronze - Men's: Sumit (67kg), Sahil (80kg), Lakshay Rathi (92+kg); Women's: Annu (48kg), Yatri Patel (57kg),

Parthavi Grewal (66kg), Akansha Phalasalwal (70kg), Nirjhara Bana (+81kg). **U-22 medallists:** Gold - Men's: Vishvanath Suresh (48kg), Nikhil (57kg), Akash Gorkha (60kg); Women's: Preeti (54kg), Poonam Poonia (57kg), Prachi (63kg), Muskan (75kg); Silver - Men's: Preet Malik (67kg); Women's - Guddi (48kg), Tamanna (50kg), Saneh (70kg), Alfiya Pathan (81kg); Bronze - Men's: M Jadumani (51kg), Ajay Kumar (63.5kg), Ankush (71kg), Dhruv Singh (80kg), Jugnoo (86kg), Yuvraj (92kg); Women's - Devika (52kg), Kajal (66kg), Ritika (+81kg).



INCONSISTENT SRH TAKE ON LSG IN PUSH FOR PLAYOFFS SPOT

PTI ■ HYDERABAD

Sunrisers Hyderabad will be eager to move on from their underwhelming batting display when they host Lucknow Super Giants in a crucial Indian Premier League match here on Wednesday. Both teams are locked in at 12 points from 11 games with SRH making the top four cut based on a slightly superior net run rate of -0.065 compared to LSG's -0.371. The Sunrisers find themselves in a fierce competition for the top four spot with Kolkata Knight Riders (16), Rajasthan Royals (16) and Chennai Super Kings (12) stationed above them on the points table. The winner of the duel will take a leap in the playoff race. The Pat Cummins-led side has ample talent but has been unable to hold on to a winning run recently. Sunrisers have lost three of their last four matches, mainly because their destructive batting line-up hasn't delivered. In their last match against Mumbai Indians, which they lost by seven wickets, they failed to put up a good target on the board, which has been



their strong suit this season. Barring Travis Head, who has been their stand out performer, the other batters in the side have faced a recent slump. After displaying his power-hitting ability, young opener Abhishek Sharma has

breached the 30-run mark just once in the last four games. And while SRH head coach Daniel Vettori has conceded that the openers are not expected to do the job all the time, the middle order needs to step up.

The flamboyant Heinrich Klaasen has also been unable to strike the ball consistently and Nitish Reddy too has been patchy. The bowlers have fared better compared to their batting counterparts. T Natarajan has been

consistent with the ball while seasoned seamer Bhuvneshwar Kumar also seems to have found his mojo after his incisive spell helped SRH eke out a one-run win against RR. LSG, on the other hand, have to get over their overall lacklustre display against Kolkata Knight Riders, when they not only conceded the first-ever 200 plus score at the Ekana Stadium but also folded their innings at 137. It was a day when skipper KL Rahul failed to anchor the innings while the likes of Marcus Stoinis and Nicholas Pooran were unable to get the big shots when needed. Ayush Badoni has had a subdued run in this IPL and the uncapped Indian player would be keen to shrug off the rustiness. LSG's struggles with the ball have been majorly due to the lack of firepower in their pace-bowling department. With tearaway pacer Mayank Yadav ruled out of the IPL and left-arm pacer Mohsin Khan also picking up an injury, the onus will be on Afghan quick Naveen-ul-Haq, young Yash Thakur, Stoinis and spinners Krunal Pandya and Ravi Bishnoi to deliver.



No plans to rest Bumrah yet: MI batting coach Pollard

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Mumbai Indians have no plans to rest ace India pacer Jasprit Bumrah ahead of the T20 World Cup even though they are out of contention for the IPL playoffs, said batting coach Kieron Pollard. MI defeated Sunrisers Hyderabad by seven wickets here on Monday after Suryakumar Yadav (102 not out) struck his second IPL century to help his team chase down a target of 174 with 16 balls to spare. The win helped MI end their four-match losing streak and record only their fourth win in 12 matches. "I certainly haven't had any discussions about that," Pollard told media after the game when asked if there are any plans to rest Bumrah from MI's remaining two matches keeping in mind the upcoming T20 World Cup. "I don't think that's my role and function at this point in time. But let's see what happens. We are all here to play an entire IPL. Sometimes when we think too far ahead of different things, thinking about World Cups, all these things could affect performances even from before the team was selected. "For us and in our camp, the most important thing is finishing off the IPL and let's see what happens after that. When he leaves the IPL and he goes into the Indian team, I think that's where that concession will take place."

MI's last IPL game is against Lucknow Super Giants at home on May 17. The T20 World Cup, to be co-hosted by USA and the West Indies, will begin on June 1. Pollard said as a batting coach the most difficult aspect of coaching an all-round batter like Suryakumar is to curb his attacking instinct. "He's one, who, by nature, instinctively, is very aggressive. He wants to take the bowler's on more often than not. At times it's just a matter of understanding the situation and respecting the new ball when it's moving around," Pollard said. "If the conditions are not suitable for a certain amount of shot making, having that discipline in order to be there for a period of time and they'll get into your work. "I think that would be the hardest thing - to try to curb the attacking instinct. But it's not something you want to curb too much and get them in a defensive frame of mind because of the direction the sport is heading now in terms of the amount of runs being scored."

take your hat off and say well played and well played to him. He's an exceptional cricketer and he's always going to demand a spot in the Indian team and I'm sure he'll have an influence in the World Cup," he said. "It's very difficult (to bowl at Suryakumar) and you guys have seen him close up for many years as I have. He's a very difficult batsman to match up with when he's in that sort of frame of mind, that sort of mood." Helmot said the conditions assisted swing bowling with the new ball in both the innings which forced the batters to adjust their game. "Travis (Head) has been one of our best players this season at the top of the order. But even he found it difficult at times to time the ball out in the middle on this particular track and that will happen at different times during the season," he said. Helmot said not losing their fourth spot in the IPL points table was the biggest positive for SRH in a resounding defeat. "The positives are that we're still fourth in the ladder. It's a really tight competition; one of the tightest competitions we've had in IPL for years that I can remember," he said. "For us, we've got our very first fly tomorrow (Tuesday) and then play the next day against Lucknow (on Wednesday). For us, it's (about) very quickly get through over this game," he added.

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Former Australia captain Michael Clarke does not read much into Rohit Sharma's string of poor scores, but suggests that the "fatigued" Indian skipper take a break to freshen up ahead of the T20 World Cup. Rohit, who will lead India in the next month's 20-team global showpiece, has four single-digit scores in his last five outings for his franchise Mumbai Indians in the ongoing IPL. The 37-year-old has had a busy season this year with an intense five-Test series preceding the IPL for Mumbai Indians, who are all but eliminated from the race to the playoffs this year. "Rohit, being the wise judge of his own performances, will

'Fatigued' Rohit Sharma needs break to freshen up ahead of T20I World Cup: Michael Clarke

undoubtedly be disappointed, especially considering his strong start. In my view, he might be feeling a bit fatigued as well," Clarke told Star Sports. "A break to freshen up could do wonders for him, but as the Indian captain and a key player for Mumbai Indians, you're not getting a break. He's going to have to find form," Clarke continued. Rohit played as an impact substitute in their match against Kolkata Knight Riders last week, raising some concerns for the Indian camp. However, he played a full game



against Sunrisers Hyderabad three days later. Clarke said it is only a matter of time before Rohit gets back to his usual elements as a batter.

"He was in a great mood. He's happy, which is a really good sign. He doesn't seem to be struggling with his timing; it's just a matter of getting out," he

said. "With someone like Rohit, it's only a matter of time before he finds his form again. Hopefully, he stresses less and focuses on his game because he's too talented to keep missing out. He's at his best when he's timing the ball, rather than trying to force it," he added. Clarke, meanwhile, also had praise in store for Rohit's deputy for the World Cup and MI skipper Hardik Pandya, who returned with 4-0-31-3 in their seven-wicket win over SRH on Monday.

OTHER SPORTS

Man United in crisis: Transfers, tactics and takeover helped lead up to 4-0 humiliation at Palace

AP ■ MANCHESTER (ENGLAND)

A bad season just keeps on getting worse for Manchester United. The 20-time English champion was routed 4-0 by Crystal Palace on Monday and faces the prospect of its lowest finish in the Premier League era, as well as a season without European soccer. League qualification was already beyond Erik ten Hag's troubled team before its latest defeat. Now, sitting eighth in the standings, even the third-tier Conference League could end up out of reach. On current form, United might need to beat Manchester City in this month's FA Cup final to secure a place in the Europa League. On current form, there is little chance of that happening. One of the world's most storied clubs is in a mess and the humiliation at the hands of

Palace was the latest evidence of that. A record of 13 league defeats is the most United has suffered in a Premier League campaign. In all competitions that number rises to 18, including four losses in six games as United crashed out of the Champions League at the group stage. Ten Hag's team has conceded 81 goals in all competitions, which is the most since 1976-77. According to stats company Opta, United has also spent more time in a losing position in league games this season than a winning one. Its only win in its last seven league games was against last-placed Sheffield United. United's lowest finish in the Premier League era - which it long dominated, winning 13 titles under former manager Alex Ferguson - was seventh under David Moyes in 2013-14. Here are some of the reasons



behind United's fall this season. **INJURIES:** United's substitutes' bench against Palace included six teenagers and two goalkeepers, such as the level of the injury crisis which has gripped Ten Hag's team. Jonny Evans, the veteran 36-year-old center back, was rushed back from injury to cover for the absent Harry Maguire and midfielder

by absences. Even Ten Hag accepted there was no excuse for Monday's performance. "The players who were available should do better. It's a deserved defeat," he said. **TACTICS:** Last season United had one of the meanest defenses in the Premier League, with only treble-winning City and Newcastle conceding fewer goals. It's been a very different story in Ten Hag's second season in charge, with the openness of his team a consistent problem. To compound the issue, United has found goals hard to come by at the other end of the field. A total of 52 scored is the joint lowest in the top half of the standings, level with 10th-place Bournemouth. Luton - which is in the relegation zone - has scored 49. United is too open in midfield, too fragile in defense and not potent enough in attack. And it falls on Ten Hag to come up with the solutions.



KKR players spend night in Varanasi after flight diverted multiple times due to bad weather

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Kolkata Knight Riders players had a harrowing experience as they were forced to spend a night at Varanasi after their flight from Lucknow to Kolkata was diverted multiple times due to bad weather. Following their massive 98-run win over Lucknow Super Giants on Sunday, the Shreyas Iyer-led side left on Monday evening for Kolkata at 5:45pm. The team was scheduled to arrive at 7:25pm. But the charter flight had to be diverted to Guwahati first and then to Varanasi after adverse weather conditions made it impossible to land the plane in Kolkata. The KKR media team provided an update at 8:46pm, saying, "Due to inclement weather over Kolkata, the KKR charter flight has been diverted to Guwahati. We've just landed here." Then another update at 9:43pm said, "We've got clearance to fly back to Kolkata now, from Guwahati. Estimated arrival: 11pm."

However, the ordeal was not over for the players and support staff as multiple attempts to land the flight failed, forcing the officials to divert the flight mid-air to Varanasi. "Flight took off from Guwahati to Kolkata, was scheduled to land at 11 PM. Couldn't land once again due to bad weather, despite several attempts. Diverted mid-air to Varanasi now. Just landed here," said an update at 1:15 am. The KKR team then spent the night at Varanasi and will be travelling to Kolkata this afternoon. "The team would be checking into Varanasi hotel for overnight stay. Return flight to Kolkata TBD on Tuesday (7 May) afternoon," the KKR media team said in the final update at 3:00 am. Fortunately, KKR's next game is against Mumbai Indians at Edens Garden on May 11. The two-time former champions will play Gujarat Titans in Ahmedabad on May 13 and Rajasthan Royals in Guwahati on May 19 for their final two league matches.



Badosa shows signs of her old form in a win over Andreieva at Italian Open

AP ■ ROME

Paula Badosa showed signs of her former top-five form during a 6-2, 6-3 victory over 17-year-old Mirra Andreieva in the first round of the Italian Open on Tuesday. Badosa was ranked as high as No. 2 before she missed the second half of last year due to a back injury that has also slowed her this season. She's now No. 126. Badosa jumped out to a 5-1 lead in the first set before a 45-minute rain delay and then picked up where she left off against the 40th-ranked Andreieva, who was the WTA tour's newcomer of the year in 2023. Badosa reached the quarterfinals in Rome last year but that turned out to be her penultimate tournament of the season. It was Badosa's first win since beating Simona Halep at the Miami Open last month in Halep's return from a doping ban. It also ended Badosa's six-match losing streak against players ranked in the top 40 that had stretched back to Rome last year. Also on the red clay at the Foro Italico, Shelby Rogers routed Italian wild-card entry Lisa Pigato 6-1, 6-0. The only other matches scheduled on the opening day featured 2021 U.S. Open runner-up Leylah Fernandez against Ana Bogdan and Yulia Putintseva against Martina Trevisan.

Bengal, Haryana win women hockey nationals ties

PTI ■ RANCHI

Bengal and Haryana registered identical victories by margins of 2-1 over Odisha and Maharashtra respectively in the National Women's Hockey League 2024 here on Tuesday. Bengal showed relentless attacking prowess and swift passing throughout the game. Their breakthrough came in the second quarter when Shanti Horo (23) manoeuvred past Odisha's defence before unleashing a thunderous shot into the net. The momentum swung further in Bengal's favour in the second half when Shanti Horo (39) capitalised on an unmarked opportunity



in the D area, slotting home her second goal with precision. Odisha managed to score a goal in the final quarter

through Dipi Monika Toppo (51), who converted a penalty corner. Nevertheless, Bengal held on to their lead to emerge

winners. Despite the loss Odisha, remained on top of the points table with 12 points from six matches.

In the day's other match, Haryana dominated possession from the start. The breakthrough came through Manju Chorsiya (12), who capitalised on an opportunity to score from open play, putting Haryana in the lead. In the second half, Haryana strengthened their position with Pooja (37) converting a penalty corner. Despite Maharashtra's efforts and multiple opportunities, including four penalty corners, they could only convert one, with Sukanya Dhaware (55) scoring a field goal in the dying minutes to narrow the deficit for her team.