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Published From
DELHI LUCKNOW BHOPAL BHUBANESWAR
RANCHI RAIPUR CHANDIGARH
DEHRADUN HYDERABAD VIJAYWADA

Late City Vol. 34 Issue 130
*Air Surcharge Extra if Applicable

NEW DELHI, SATURDAY MAY 11, 2024; PAGES 12 ₹3

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Delhi ready for Game of Throne

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal walked out of Tihar Jail on Friday evening, hours after the Supreme Court granted him interim bail until June 1 so that he can campaign for the Lok Sabha elections. As he exited through gate number 4, Kejriwal was welcomed by a sea of AAP workers, as well as senior leaders like Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann, Atishi, and Saurabh Bhardwaj. His wife Sunita Kejriwal, his daughter Harshita and AAP Rajya Sabha MP Sandeep Pathak turned up outside the jail to give him a rousing welcome with workers chanting slogans and Kejriwal waving to his supporters. As Kejriwal left from Tihar in his convoy clad in yellow T-shirts, AAP supporters danced to dhol beats and fed each other sweets at the party office here on Friday.

In a major relief to embattled Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) convenor and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, the SC on Friday granted him interim bail in a money laundering case at the peak of the election season but barred him from visiting his office or the Delhi Secretariat and signing official files unless absolutely necessary for obtaining the Lieutenant Governor's approval. He has been asked to surrender to the prison authorities by June 2. June 1 is the last day of the seven-phase elections. The votes will be counted on June 4.



Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal addresses supporters after coming out of Tihar Jail as the Supreme Court (SC) granted him interim bail in a money laundering case, amid the ongoing Lok Sabha elections, in New Delhi, on Friday

Kejriwal's release from jail, however transient, is expected to give a boost to the AAP's Lok Sabha campaign in Delhi where polling is scheduled for May 25, with its foremost leader hitting the hustings. Setting him free for 21 days after 50 days of custody in the money laundering case, a bench of Justices Sanjiv Khanna and Dipankar Datta in its eight pages order, said

will have to surrender and go back to jail on June 2. Kejriwal was arrested on March 21 by the Enforcement Directorate in connection with the excise policy case. In his first address, Delhi Chief Minister said, "Didn't I tell you I'd be back soon? I am back." He added, "I'm fighting against dictatorship with all I have, now 140 crore of us have to do that." He also thanked the Supreme Court judges who delivered the verdict.

"Tomorrow at 11 am, we will all go to the Hanuman Mandir in Connaught Place, then there will be a Press conference at the party office at 1 pm; I request all of you to come to the Hanuman Mandir," he said. Slogans like "Jail ke taale toot gaye, Kejriwal ji choot gaye," "Modi ji ja rahe hain, Kejriwal ji aa rahe hain," and "dekho dekho kon aaya, sher aaya sher aaya" rent the air at the AAP office on Friday. Many supporters carried posters with slogans against Prime Minister Narendra Modi

written on them. The bench also directed Kejriwal to furnish bail bonds in the sum of Rs 50,000 with one surety of the like amount to the satisfaction of the jail superintendent. A wave of jubilation swept across the INDIA Bloc parties as the news spread like wildfire, with his AAP terming it a "triumph of truth". "Hanuman ji ki jai. This is the victory of democracy. It is the result of the prayers and blessings of millions of people. Many thanks to everyone," Kejriwal's wife Sunita, who was filling in for her husband during his absence from the electoral battleground, said in a post on X in Hindi. Kejriwal is the first sitting Chief Minister in India to be put behind bars. Imposing bail conditions on the embattled AAP leader, a bench of Justices Sanjiv Khanna and Dipankar Datta said, "He shall not visit the Office of the Chief Minister and the Delhi Secretariat." It asked Kejriwal to not sign any official file unless absolutely necessary to obtain the Lieutenant Governor's sanction during the 21-day interim bail period. It asked Kejriwal to not sign any official file unless absolutely necessary to obtain the Lieutenant Governor's sanction during the 21-day interim bail period. "He shall be bound by the statement made on his behalf that he shall not sign official files unless it is required and necessary for obtaining clearance/ approval of the Lieutenant Governor of Delhi," the top court said.

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Storm lashes across Delhi

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

A strong, gutsy storm hit the national Capital and its adjoining areas late Friday evening, enveloping the skyline with dust. Incidents of trees uprooting were also reported. As a result of the dust storm, temperatures apparently decreased, as predicted earlier in the day by the India Meteorological Department, indicating that the heatwave would soon fade. "Duststorm/ thunderstorm with rain (followed by rain) and gusty winds with speed of 50-70 km/hour occurred over and adjoining areas of entire Delhi and NCR (Loni Dehat, Hindon AF Station, Ghaziabad, Indirapuram, Chhapraula, Noida, Dadri, Greater Noida, Gurugram, Faridabad," IMD said in a statement. India's unbearable heatwave saga appears to be reaching its conclusion as the Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) has forecast a wet spell accompanied by thunderstorms, lightning, and winds across several States, including the national Capital over the next three days. The change in weather comes just a month after April's blistering heat, which earlier prompted the authorities to issue a string of health advisories and school closures in heatwave-hit areas like Bhubaneswar in Odisha. "Heatwave is about to end from the entire country. Only in West Rajasthan and Kerala a heatwave alert has been issued. Tomorrow, the heatwave will only be present in West Rajasthan," said IMD scientist Soma Sen. She said though they have issued a yellow alert for west Rajasthan and



Kerala, impact is unlikely. "From tomorrow the heatwave will end in the country. The alert will remain only for west Rajasthan." "Strong moisture flow is coming to the country from the Bay of Bengal, due to which thunderstorm activity is increasing in the country...There will be a possibility of cloud-to-ground lightning in these thunderstorms," she said as quoted by a news agency here. Former Director General of Meteorology at IMD Dr KJ Ramesh said heatwaves have been abated and thunderstorms will develop from Southern India. Almost all the States will witness thunderstorms and natural lightning with high intensity. He explained that strong moisture flow from the Bay of Bengal is increasing thunderstorm activity in the country. Giving out thunderstorms and heavy rain warnings for some hilly States and the northeast, the weather department said strong lightning is possible.

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BJP leader on the mat in harassment case

SAUMYA SHUKLA ■ NEW DELHI

A city court on Friday ordered the framing of charges against the BJP MP and former Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) Chief Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh, in a sexual harassment case lodged by six female wrestlers. The court said there is sufficient evidence against him to frame charges while discharging him in a complaint filed by one of the six women wrestlers. Brij Bhushan was denied the BJP ticket to contest from his home seat Kaiserganj for this Lok Sabha polls, however, he got a ticket for his son Karan Bhushan Singh from the same seat. The Opposition parties had

been demanding swift action against the senior Bhushan for the alleged cases. Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate (ACMM) Priyanka Rajpoot ordered framing of charge for criminal intimidation against Brij Bhushan and will formally frame the charges on May 21. The court also ordered framing of charges against co-accused and former WFI assistant secretary Vinod Tomar in the case. The court said there is sufficient material to frame charges against Brij Bhushan in the offences of outraging the modesty of a woman and sexual harassment (sections 354 and 354A of the IPC) against five of the victims.



For accused number 2 Vinod Tomar, former WFI assistant secretary who is the second accused in the case, the court framed charges under Section 506 part 1 regarding victim number 1. For the remaining offences, the court said he

stands discharged. The lower court however discharged Brij Bhushan in the allegations levelled by victim number 6. The sixth victim's allegations dated back to 2012. The Delhi Police had filed a charge sheet in the case against Brij Bhushan, a six-time MP, on June 15 under sections 354 (assault or criminal force to woman with intent to outrage her modesty), 354A (sexual harassment), 354D (stalking) and 506 (criminal intimidation) of the Indian Penal Code. Brij Bhushan's plea seeking further investigation in the case was rejected last month. It had earlier deferred the framing of charges against

Brij Bhushan since his advocate Rajeev Mohan sought further investigation in the case. They alleged through an application that he was not in Delhi when one of the six wrestlers was allegedly molested. The police, in its 1,500-page chargesheet, had mentioned statements of at least 22 witnesses from across four States, including wrestlers, a referee, a coach and a physiotherapist, who have corroborated the allegations made by the six women wrestlers against Brij Bhushan. Another Delhi court is likely to pronounce its order on May 20 on whether to accept a police report seeking

cancellation of a sexual harassment complaint filed by a minor wrestler against Brij Bhushan. During the in-chamber proceedings held on August 1 last year, the minor wrestler had told the court that she was satisfied with the Delhi Police's investigation in the case and not opposed to the closure report it had submitted. On June 15 last year, the police filed a report before the court seeking cancellation of the case involving the girl after her father made a startling claim midway through the probe that he levelled false allegations of sexual harassment against Brij Bhushan to get back at him for perceived injustice to his daughter.

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Prime Minister Narendra Modi during a public meeting for Lok Sabha elections, in Hyderabad, on Friday

Cong plotting to kill Hindu faith: Modi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ HYDERABAD/NANDURBAR (MAHARASHTRA)

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who returned to campaigning on Friday after a day's break, hit out at the Congress while addressing a rally in Maharashtra, saying the party is "conspiring to eliminate the Hindu faith in India". Modi also accused the Congress of spreading lies regarding job reservations and the Constitution. "Alleging that the Congress 'hated' towards Hindus and their culture is being exposed daily, Modi said the leader who tutors 'shehzada' also said Ram temple should not have been built at Ayodhya. He has declared that construction of Ram temple at Ayodhya" and celebrating Ram Navami is against the idea of India, Modi claimed. "I go to the temple with great pride. He has given a certificate that even this is anti-national," he said. In another rally in Hyderabad, Modi said the national party is "anti-Hindu" and it knows religion-based reservations are unconstitutional. "The Congress wants to make Hindus second-class citizens in their own country. Are they talking about vote jihad because of this?" he questioned. Attacking the Congress Government in Telangana, Modi said he referred to

double (RR) tax in the State, without taking any names, but Chief Minister Revanth Reddy is giving explanations to the media indicating who is associated with it. Addressing an election rally in Mahabubnagar Lok Sabha constituency, Modi said the 'shehzade' of Congress (Rahul Gandhi) started off with 'mohabbat ki dukaan' before polls which lost steam as elections approached. "The 'shehzade' (prince) is now poisoning society by speaking of supporting 'tukde-tukde gang,'" he claimed. In a veiled reference to Congress leader Sam Pitroda's recent remarks, he said the 'shehzade's advisor' who lives in America described South Indian people as looking like Africans, which the PM claimed implied that Telangana people look like Africans. "You know why, because he doesn't like your skin colour. Now Congress will decide based on skin colour who is African and who is Indian," he said. "Do you perform puja on Ram Navami or not? Do you want to go to Ayodhya for darshan? Are you going to commit anti-national activity (with worship)?" he asked. He also said the Congress never bothered about welfare of Adivasis. Prime Minister Modi's ruling BJP has repeatedly accused the Congress of being "anti-Hindu" and "appeasing" Muslims.

Aiyar back to help BJP cause

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

An old video of another senior Congress leader, who has served in the Cabinet of several Prime Ministers, Mani Shankar Aiyar, has provided fresh ammunition to the BJP on Friday to attack the Congress, which, a few days ago, had worked hard to douse the flames ignited by its leader Sam Pitroda. In the midst of an aggressive Lok Sabha campaign, the BJP seized upon them, accusing the grand old party of being an apologist for Pakistan and the terrorism emanating from its soil. Meanwhile, the Congress again quickly distanced itself from Aiyar's comments. His remarks on Prime Minister Narendra Modi ahead of the 2014 general elections left a scar on the Congress till now. In the video, which has gone viral on social media, Aiyar is heard saying that India should respect Pakistan as it is a sovereign nation and engage with it since it also possesses an atom bomb. Aiyar said the video is old and being resurfaced now as the BJP's election campaign is faltering. He indicated in the video that if a "mad person" comes to power there and uses the atom bomb, it will not be



good and will have its effect here too. As the remarks triggered a row, the Congress said it totally disagrees with the remarks made by Aiyar some months ago. Aiyar does not speak for the party in any capacity whatsoever, Congress media department chairperson Pawan Khera said. Home Minister Amit Shah slammed the Congress for "raising question mark" on "Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) and asserted that every inch of it belonged to India and no force can snatch it. "Aiyar is telling us to respect Pakistan as it possesses an atomic bomb. A few days ago, INDIA Bloc leader Farooq Abdullah said do not talk about PoK as Pakistan has an atomic bomb. I want to tell the Congress and INDIA Bloc that PoK belongs to India and

no force can snatch it," Shah said at an election rally in Jharkhand's Khunti. Hitting back at BJP Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi said why is Pakistan being discussed when elections are taking place in India and the unemployment rate here is at a 45-year high. "I ask when was the statement made? ... If it is an old statement, then why are we discussing it today? Secondly, I want to ask, where are elections taking place, in India or in Pakistan? They are taking place in India. So why are we discussing Pakistan?" she said during her campaign trail in Amethi for the party's candidate Kishori Lal Sharma. BJP cited recent comments of more Congress leaders to make its point. The leader of Opposition in Maharashtra, Vijay Wadetiwar, had said IJS officer Hemant Karkare was killed by a cop affiliated to the RSS and not Pakistani terrorist Ajmal Kasab and former Punjab Chief Minister Charanjit Singh Channi had dismissed a recent terror incident in Poonch in which an Air Force official died as a poll stunt, noted Union Minister Rajeev Chandrashekar.

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EC lashes out at Kharge's 'biased' turnout narrative

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

Amid concerns expressed by various Opposition parties over the voter turnout data, leaders of the INDIA Bloc from Congress, TMC, DMK, Left, met the Election Commission at Nirvachan Sadan on Friday, submitting alleged violations of the model code of conduct by the BJP leaders during the ongoing Lok Sabha polls campaign. Though the EC is yet to respond on the meeting with Opposition members, it however in a strongly-worded letter replied to the Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge who a day earlier had written to the leaders of various Opposition parties on the issue of alleged "discrepancies" in the voting data released by the EC. The EC rejected Kharge's allegations that it had delayed the release of the final voter turnout numbers for the first two phases of the Lok Sabha elections and told him the utterances from president of a national political party is attacking the very credibility of the electoral steps and processes, and can have a negative impact on voter participation. Following which Congress



Photo: The Pioneer

chief spokesman Jairam Ramesh responded by defending the concerns raised by the Congress president. "The response of the EC to the issues raised by the Congress president in his letter to the INDIA parties is simply beyond description. The EC is a Constitutional body entrusted with the responsibility of being an impartial body that ensures, and is seen to ensure, a level-playing field to all political parties. "Both the content and intent of the letter will be a permanent blot on the reputation of an institution that can boast of luminaries like Sukumar Sen, TN Seshan, JM Lyngdoh and others," Ramesh said in a statement. EC dubbed as "aggression on

vitals of live election operations" through Kharge's recent statements concerning the ongoing Lok Sabha elections 2024. The poll body termed Kharge's letter as his attempt to push a "biased narrative". In a five-page response with annexures, the poll panel rejected charges of mismanagement and delay in the release of voter turnout data and termed Kharge's allegations "unwarranted", "without facts" and "reflective of a biased and deliberate attempt to spread confusion". The commission condemned Kharge's statement in which he wondered whether the delay in releasing voter turnout data was an attempt to doctor the final results".

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Sandeshkhali: NCW chief complains to EC against TMC

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Mud and muck continued to fly thick and fast from all sides over the Sandeshkhali incident that hit the national headlines a few months ago showing how henchmen of Trinamool Congress leaders grabbed lands of the poor and sexually exploited their women in these riverine islands of the Sunderbans.

This, even as a day after "fake FIR" reports emerged where some women of Sandeshkhali alleged that they were tricked by some BJP workers into signing blank papers which were later filled up with complaints of rape before being converted into FIRs. National Commission for Women (NCW) chief Rekha Sharma on Friday wrote to the Election

Commission of India (ECI), alleging how some women who were victims of sexual assault by men of arrested Trinamool Congress leader Sk Shahjahan were being forced to withdraw their complaints. Incidentally Sandeshkhali in Basirhat parliamentary constituency has a big electoral stake for both the BJP, Trinamool Congress.

Expressing concern at the new development Sharma wrote, "the party workers are instilling fear among the women of Sandeshkhali to suppress the victims from coming forward with their complaints, potentially impacting the fairness of election process in the area," requesting the ECI to "ensure that women are not compelled to withdraw their complaints due to the threat from TMC



workers." Sharma's letter is very much in line with a common refrain raised by the Bengal BJP leaders who suggested that the TMC's sting teams were out with money and muscle to generate a counter-narrative on Sandeshkhali so as to offset the appellation of BJP which was trying to deal an electoral body blow to Mamata Banerjee on the woman-sensitive issue. Women and minorities have been the electoral mainstay of the Chief Minister in the past a few years.

Sharma's letter to the ECI is seen as a preemptive measure to offset a possible Trinamool Congress' move via which the Bengal outfit is planning to lodge a formal complaint with the ECI against the NCW chairperson for "misusing her

position" and "being one of the main instigators of the Sandeshkhali issue." Sharma had in the earlier months written to President Droupadi Murmu requesting her to imposing President's Rule in Bengal on grounds of atrocities on women.

Before Sharma's letter Bengal Minister Shashi Panja had said that her party would move the ECI against the NCW chief for taking political stand on Sandeshkhali. She said how the NCW was politically biased and how some people "encouraged women of the area to make false allegations of sexual atrocities."

"TMC will go to the Election Commission against Rekha Sharma, who is the chairperson of National Commission for Women," Panja said.

Earlier on Thursday some women complained that the police complaint that they were made to sign on blank sheets were not on rape but on non-payment of hundred days' work schemes.

This, after purported videos emerged where some women alleged that local BJP leaders had tricked them into signing blank papers which were later with allegations of rape before being submitted to the police. "We were tricked into signing the blank papers ... we were told that the signed papers would be used to claim the 100-days' work dues ... we had no idea that rape stories would be written there. We discovered later that rape complaints had been lodged in our names. This is a blatant lie," they said.

Two get life imprisonment in activist Dabholkar murder case

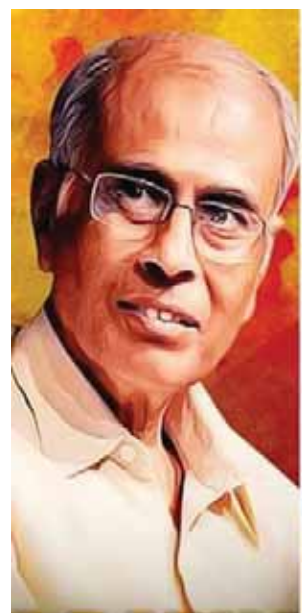
T N RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

A Pune-based Special UAPA Court on Friday handed out life imprisonment to two accused and acquitted three others in the sensational daylight murder of rationalist Narendra Dabholkar in August 2013.

Pronouncing verdict in the 11-year-old murder case which had created sensation across the country, Special UAPA Judge P. P. Jadhav convicted two accused sharpshooters --- Sharad B. Kalaskar and Sachin P. Andhure --- after holding them guilty of involvement in the crime, and awarded life imprisonment to them and imposed a fine of Rs 5 lakh each. The Judge noted that in the event of failure to pay the fine imposed on them, they would undergo an additional one year imprisonment.

The court acquitted three other accused in the case --- Sanjeev Punhalekar, Dr. Virendra Tawade and Vikram Bhawe --- for lack of evidence.

Welcoming the verdict in the case, children of Dr Dabholkar --- Hamid and Mukta --- said that they were relieved that the killers had finally been punished. "But, we will challenge the acquittal of the other three



accused in the Bombay High Court," they said.

Hamid and Mukta wondered why the investigators had still not arrested the masterminds behind the killings "There are other lapses in the investigations into the case," they said. It may be recalled that following the failure of the state police having failed to make any headway in the investigations into the Dabholkar murder case, the Bombay High

Court had transferred the case to the CBI on May 9, 2014, after overruling the objections raised by the Maharashtra government. The CBI had registered a case on June 2, 2014, on the high court's orders. On September 7 2016, the CBI filed a charge-sheet in the Dabholkar murder case before a First Class Judicial Magistrate in Pune.

The CBI officials arrested key accused Sachin Andhure from

Aurangabad on August 18, 2018 after the State ATS sleuths tipped them off to the CBI about the revelations made by one of the three right wing activists arrested in connection with a terror conspiracy. Following the raids at various places at Nalla Sopara in the neighbouring Thane district, the ATS had on August 9 2018 arrested three right wing activists ---Vaibhav Raut (40), Sharad Kalaskar (25) and

Sudhnava Ghondhalekar (39) --- and claimed to have foiled the attempts to engineer terror attacks in Mumbai, Pune, Satara, Solapur and Nala Sopara.

During the raids, the investigators had seized a huge chunk of arms and ammunition and also unearthed a mini pistol assembling unit in the Nala Sopara residence of key accused Vaibhav Raut. The interrogation of the accused in the terror conspiracy case by the ATS revealed that Andhure and the accused in the terror conspiracy case Sharad Kalaskar were friends. It was Kalaskar who allegedly spilled the beans of Andhure's role in the Narendra Dabholkar's murder. All the five accused --- linked to Sanatan Sanstha organisation--- were arrested by the CBI from 2016 to 2019.

The CBI, in close coordination with the Maharashtra ATS, had investigated the links among various right-wing organisations suspected to be involved in the killing of Dabholkar and others like Govindhakar and others like Govindhakar and others like Gauri Lankesh, unravel their contacts elsewhere in the country, their other targets and modus operandi.

Raj Bhavan staffer to knock President door against Governor indecency

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KOLKATA

The contractual woman employee of Kolkata Raj Bhavan who had earlier lodged a police complaint --- containing allegations of sexual misdemeanor --- against Bengal Governor CV Ananda Bose has raised objections to her CCTV footage being screened before the common public at the former's instance and said that she would take this up with President Droupadi Murmu. Saying that she could do nothing to the Governor who enjoyed constitutional immunity under Clause 2 of Article 361 the woman told media men that she could at least write to the President seeking her intervention into the matter. More so because the Police had no authority in the case.

"I know that because of Constitutional immunity, nothing will happen to a sitting Governor. But what about the offence he committed? I have decided to write to the President seeking her intervention in the matter. I am



writing to her to get justice and nothing else," she said. She was likely to make a formal complaint to the police against the Governor for revealing her identity to the public against a standing order of the Apex Court.

Earlier the Governor had invited 100 "common men" except Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee and the members of police force to show the CCTV footage in an apparent bid to make his position clear on the allegations of sexual misdemeanor leveled against him. The woman had earlier alleged in a television channel that she was asked for certain favours in lieu of good and permanent posting either as a University professor or some similar post.

BJP leader on the mat in...

From Page 1
Police had recommended dropping the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act case against Brij Bhushan, but charged him with sexual harassment and stalking in a separate case lodged on the basis of a complaint by six women wrestlers. Police had recommended cancellation of the complaint involving the minor wrestler, saying "no corroborative evidence" was found.

The POCSO Act provides for a minimum imprisonment of three years, depending on the sections under which a crime has been registered. The closure report notwithstanding, the court has to take a call on whether to accept it or order further investigation.

Fresh ED chargesheet against Kavitha

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Friday filed a fresh charge sheet in the Delhi excise policy-linked money laundering case naming BRS leader K Kavitha as an accused. The ED had arrested 46-year-old Kavitha, the daughter of former Telangana chief minister K Chandrababhu Naidu, from her Banjara hills residence in Hyderabad on March 15.

According to sources, the prosecution complaint was filed under the provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA). Kaveri Bajwa, the special judge for CBI, ED cases, is likely to take up the charge sheet for cognisance on May 13.

A similar complaint against Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal is expected to be filed next week.

This is the seventh charge sheet by the ED in this case in which it has arrested 18 people so far including Kejriwal, who was given interim bail by the Supreme Court on Friday. The ED has alleged that Kavitha was a key member of the 'South Group' that has been accused of paying the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) alleged kickbacks of Rs 100



crore in return for a big share of liquor licences in the national capital, as part of the excise policy for 2021-22 which has been scrapped following allegations of corruption and cartelisation of liquor traders.

The agency earlier said Kavitha was "one of the kingpins, a key conspirator and beneficiary of the Delhi excise policy scam."

"K Kavitha orchestrated a deal with Arvind Kejriwal, then deputy chief minister and minister of excise Manish Sisodia, wherein she along with other members of the South Group paid them kickbacks through a string of intermediaries and middlemen.

"In exchange of the kickbacks paid to the leaders of AAP she had access to the policy formulation and was offered pro-

visions to ensure favourable position to her," the ED had claimed.

It further alleged Kavitha was "involved" in various activities relating to proceeds of crime to the tune of at least Rs 292.8 crore.

In a linked development, the Delhi High Court on Friday sought the stand of the ED on a bail plea moved by Kavitha in this case.

She was also arrested by the CBI when she was under judicial custody in the ED case.

While refusing to grant her relief, the trial court had said Kavitha's role "prima facie appears as that of key conspirator of the criminal conspiracy hatched for the purpose of collection and payment of upfront money to AAP through co-accused for getting favourable provisions in the Delhi Excise Policy 2021-22".

"Her role in demanding the upfront money and the alleged payment thereof for favourable provisions in the Excise Policy have also been highlighted in the course of arguments and as discussed in the preceding paragraphs," the trial court had noted.

In her bail plea filed in the high court, the BRS leader said she has "nothing to do" with the excise policy and there is

a criminal conspiracy against her, "orchestrated by the ruling party at the Centre with the active connivance of the Enforcement Directorate". She submitted there is no case against her and she is being implicated on the basis of witness statements whose credibility is under serious doubt.

The ED had alleged that Rs 45 crore "kickbacks", out of the Rs 100 crore "bribe" provided by the 'South Group', were used by the AAP for the Goa assembly election campaign in 2022. The 'South Group' liquor lobby allegedly includes Kavitha, TDP Ongole seat Lok Sabha candidate Magunta Sreenivasulu Reddy, his son Raghav Reddy and others.

The excise case pertains to alleged corruption and money laundering in the formulation and execution of the Delhi government's excise policy for 2021-22, which was later scrapped.

Delhi Lieutenant Governor V K Saxena recommended a Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) probe into the alleged irregularities. Subsequently, the ED registered a case under the PMLA. The ED filed its money laundering case on August 22, 2022, taking cognisance of the CBI FIR that was lodged on August 17, 2022.



Rajya Sabha Deputy Chairperson Harivansh with his spouse performed evening Arti at the Saryu Ghat in Ayodhya on Friday. They also worshipped at the Ram Lalla Temple. Photo: The Pioneer

EC lashes out at Kharge's 'biased'...

From Page 1
"Utterances from president of national political party attacking the very credibility of the electoral steps and processes can have a negative impact on voter participation and can be seen as a means to deter an elector from exercising their franchise and/or demoralising the huge number of election staff and machinery which is mainly drawn from the respective State Governments... Commission wishes you to appreciate that your comments/observations/allegations given in the aforesaid post borders on vitiating the constitutionally mandated work of ECI," Senior Principal Secretary Sumit Mukherjee in the EC wrote to Kharge in its response.

Highlighting the factual timeline of voter turnout data release from the 2019 general elections onwards, the EC dismissed any suggestion of delay or mismanagement.

Aiyar back to help BJP...

From Page 1
"Indian National Congress dissociates itself completely from and disagrees totally with some remarks made by Aiyar a few months back which have been revived today by the BJP in its attempt to deflect attention from Prime Minister Modi's daily goof ups. Aiyar does not speak for the party in any capacity whatsoever," said Khera. Uploading a video of External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, Khera said, "If old videos are to be used, here is a not so old video where the External Affairs Minister is publicly advising India to be afraid of China."

Storm lashes across...

From Page 1
As per the IMD, a region undergoes a heatwave if the maximum temperature reaches at least 40 degrees Celsius or more for plains and at least 30 degrees Celsius or more for hilly regions. Qualitatively speaking, heatwave is a condition of air temperature which becomes fatal to the human body when exposed.

Earlier, the IMD had predicted that heatwave to severe heatwave conditions have taken its grip in various parts of India in recent months. Some parts of Gangetic West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Odisha and Telangana saw maximum temperatures settling 3-5 degrees Celsius above normal. The mercury settled above 44 degrees Celsius in at least 10 places in these States last week.

Prior to that, the Met Department had said above-normal maximum temperatures were likely over most parts of the country in May and a significantly high number of heatwave days expected over the northern plains, central region and adjoining areas of peninsular India. April witnessed record-smashing maximum temperatures in east, northeast and south peninsular India, prompting health warnings from government agencies and some states to suspend in-person classes in schools.

The IMD data shows that heatwaves this April were far worse than in 2023, the warmest year on record so far. In Delhi, the weather department predicted rain for this week, even as the maximum temperature in the national Capital touched 42 degrees Celsius on Tuesday.

Delhi ready for Game of...

From Page 1
"He will not make any comment with regard to his role in the present case; and will not interact with any of the witnesses and/or have access to any official files connected with the case," the top court said.

"Given the importance, we reject the argument raised on behalf of the prosecution that grant of interim bail/release on this account would be giving a premium of placing the politicians in a beneficial position compared to ordinary citizens of this country. While examining

the question of grant of interim bail/release, the courts always take into consideration the peculiarities associated with the person in question and the surrounding circumstances. In fact, to ignore the same would be iniquitous and wrong," the bench said in its order.

The apex court, while granting Kejriwal the relief said there is no doubt about the fact that serious accusations have been made against him but he has not been convicted yet." He does not have any criminal antecedents. He is not a threat to society,"

the bench said. "It is no gain saying that the general elections to the Lok Sabha are the most significant and important event this year, as they should be in a national election year. Between 650-700 million voters out of an electorate of about 970 million will cast their votes to elect the Government of this country for the next five years," the bench said.

"The prosecution has rightly pointed out that the appellant -Kejriwal had failed to appear in spite of nine (9) notices/summons, first of

which was issued in October 2023. This is a negative factor, but there are several other facets which we are required to take into consideration. The appellant -Kejriwal is the Chief Minister of Delhi and a leader of one of the national parties. No doubt, serious accusations have been made, but he has not been convicted. He does not have any criminal antecedents. He is not a threat to society," it said.

"The investigation in the present case has remained pending since August 2022.

Kejriwal was arrested, as noted above, on 21.03.2024. More importantly, legality and validity of the arrest itself is under challenge before this court and we are yet to finally pronounce on the same.

The situation cannot be compared with harvesting crops or pleading to look after business affairs. In this background, once the matter is subjudice and the questions relating to legality of arrest are under consideration, a more holistic and libertarian view is justified, in the background that the

18th Lok Sabha General Elections are being held," it said.

"Twenty-one days... should not make any difference," Justice Khanna noted, saying the ED case was registered in August 2022 while the Chief Minister was arrested on March 21 this year." He (Kejriwal) was out there for one-and-a-half-years. He could have been arrested earlier or after but nothing such thing happened," the bench told the ED.

"The grant of interim bail will not be treated as an expression of opinion on the

merits of the case or the criminal appeal which is pending consideration before us," the bench said.

"As the appeal is pending before us, we do not think it would be proper for us to direct the appellant -Kejriwal to approach the trial court for interim bail/release.

This may not be apt in view of the legal issues and contentions that are under examination and consideration before us," it said.

As soon as the bench assembled for pronouncing the

order, Solicitor General Tushar Mehta pointed out that radical preacher Amritpal Singh, who is currently lodged in Assam's Dibrugarh jail under the National Security Act, has approached the Government for contesting the elections. "Now we have been approached by Amritpal Singh. That's our concern. I could not find any precedent to assist the court on this (interim bail for poll campaigning). A person is being released for election campaigning," he told the bench.

I want to bow down to Lord Hanuman: Kejriwal after release

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Turning up the heat in the national capital's atmosphere ahead of Lok Sabha 2024 elections, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal walked out of Tihar Jail on Friday following the Supreme Court granting him interim bail till June 1 for election campaigning, while stating that he is fighting with all his might to defeat dictatorship.

As the jailed AAP supremo marched out of Asia's biggest prison, scores of party workers and supporters broke into celebration to welcome their leader by gathering outside the Tihar jail. Kejriwal left from Tihar in his convoy. He was accompanied by his wife Sunita Kejriwal, his daughter Harshita and AAP Rajya Sabha MP Sandeep Pathak.

Workers and leaders of his Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) had gathered outside the prison complex to welcome him. Kejriwal left from Tihar in his convoy. Clad in yellow T-shirts, AAP supporters danced to dhol beats and fed each other sweets at the party office here on Friday as they celebrated the



Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal comes out of Tihar jail on Friday

Supreme Court's decision to grant Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal interim bail in a money laundering case. Slogans like "Jail ke taale toot gaye, Kejriwal ji choot gaye", "Modi ji ja rahe hain, Kejriwal ji aa rahe hain," and "Dekho

dekho kon aaya, sher aaya sher aaya" rent the air at the AAP office. Many supporters carried posters with slogans against Prime Minister Narendra Modi written on them. AAP chief expressed his hap-

piness with the apex court's decision and said, "I feel really happy today being between all of you. I said I would come early, and I have kept my words. First and foremost, I want to bow down to the feet of Lord Hanuman since I am



Ranjan Dimri

amongst you all because of the blessings of Him," he said. He further thanked all the people and citizens for sending him blessings and seeking his well being in their prayers. "I want to thank the Supreme Court and the judges because

of whom I am among you all. My only request to you all is that we all have to come together to save the country from dictatorship. I am fighting with my body, mind and money against the dictatorship . But 140 crore people will also

have to fight against dictatorship," Kejriwal said, while his supporters fluttered AAP flags and burst crackers to rejoice in this relief by the apex court. There was visible enthusiasm in the air with drums beating and public wearing AAP hats

and t-shirts.

The Chief Minister looked in an election mood as soon as he stepped out and also shared his plans for election campaigning starting Saturday. He said that he will visit Hanuman temple in the morning followed by a press conference in the party office. "Tomorrow morning we will meet in Hanuman temple in Connaught Place at 11 pm and seek His blessings. And then we will have a press conference in the party office at 1 pm. Please come in big numbers to the temple and also come to the party office," he said, while ending his address to the public with the slogan 'Bharat Mata ki Jai'.

In a major relief to the AAP national convener, the Supreme Court on Friday granted him interim bail till June 1 to campaign for the ongoing Lok Sabha election. Arrested in a money laundering case linked to the alleged Delhi excise policy scam, Kejriwal will have to surrender and go back to prison on June 2. June 1 is the last day of the seven-phase Lok Sabha election. Votes will be counted on June 4.

AAP celebrates Kejriwal's freedom

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The AAP and INDIA bloc leaders rejoiced in celebrations in the national capital on Friday after the Supreme Court granted interim bail to Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal till June 1, saying his release from judicial custody will pave the way for "big changes" in the country. Jubilant workers danced and raised slogans such as "Jail ke taale toot gaye, Kejriwal ji choot gaye" (Locks of jail broken, Kejriwal is freed) outside the AAP's office in Delhi. The party thanked the Supreme Court for granting interim bail to the AAP chief. The former IRS officer and Kejriwal's wife Sunita, who has stepped into the limelight since her husband's arrest on March 21, said Kejriwal's release on interim bail is 'victory of democracy' and attributed the relief as the result of prayers and blessings of millions of people. "Hanuman ji ki jai. This is the victory of democracy. It is the result of the prayers and blessings of millions of people. Many thanks to everyone," Sunita said in a post on X (formerly Twitter).

At a joint press conference, senior AAP leader and Delhi Minister Saurabh Bharadwaj



described the interim bail as a blessing of Lord Hanuman to his devotee Kejriwal. He said, "Kejriwal's interim bail after 40 days is no less than a miracle. There is also a divine hint that prevailing conditions are going to change in the country. His release will pave the way for big changes in the country." Following the apex court's decision, AAP cancelled all its meetings and programmes in the city ahead of the Lok Sabha 2024 elections, which is slated to be held in Delhi on May 25. MLA Dilip Pandey and AAP candidate for East Delhi Kuldeep Kumar's interaction with a group of doctors in Patparganj, MLA Ritiraj Jha's Sankalp sabha in Sangam Vihar, AAP Delhi Convener and Delhi Minister Gopal Rai's Sankalp Sabha in Matiala

and Vikaspuri and Senior AAP leader and MCD Mayor Shelly Oberoi, MLA Rakhir Birla and Women wing President Sarika Chaudhary's event of forming a human chain were in the list of programmes that were called off following the relief by Supreme Court. Party's Delhi unit convener Gopal Rai said all people in the country who love democracy are overjoyed with the top court's verdict and it is a ray of hope for them. "The SC verdict has not only provided interim bail to Kejriwal, it has also ensured victory of democracy and the constitution," he said. Senior AAP leader and Delhi Minister Atishi described the top court's decision as a victory for truth and democracy

in the country and said, "I want to appeal to people that this is the last chance to save democracy through the power of vote and replace dictatorship in the country." Claiming that dictatorship will end, Rajya Sabha MP Sanjay Singh said, "Truth can be troubled but not defeated ('Satya pareshan ho saktai hai, parajiti nahin'). The decision of the Hon'ble Supreme Court is welcome. Dictatorship will end. Satyamev Jayate." Talking to the media, AAP MLA Durgesh Pathak said, "We welcome the Supreme Court order. Satyamev Jayate! The dictatorship will end." Congress, AAP's alliance partner in Delhi, also welcomed the decision of the apex court stating this will boost the faith of the people in democracy. Delhi Congress Chief Devender Yadav said, "We have been saying that the BJP and its leaders have caged the establishments of democracy. Because of this, the sitting CMs were sent to jail. I appreciate the Supreme Court's order of granting (interim) bail to Arvind Kejriwal. This will boost the faith of people in democracy." The decision of the Supreme Court, for letting Kejriwal campaign for the upcoming Lok Sabha 2024 elections, will strengthen the alliance, he

said. "We are into an alliance and in an alliance, wherever someone is needed, we have to stand with them. All the seven (Lok Sabha seats) are our responsibility. We will try that the joint campaign, which has got strength now, will get stronger by this decision," Yadav claimed. Congress candidate Kanhaiya Kumar from Northeast Delhi constituency welcomed the SC decision and said that the INDIA bloc's war for justice continues. On X (formerly Twitter), he said, "I welcome the decision of the Hon'ble Supreme Court to grant interim bail to Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal. This is a big decision to protect the constitutional rights of citizens. INDIA alliance's war for justice continues, the real victory will be achieved on June 4 by uprooting this anti-constitutional government." A bench of justices Sanjiv Khanna and Dipankar Datta said Kejriwal, arrested in a money laundering case linked to the alleged excise policy scam, will have to surrender and go back to jail on June 2. The matter relates to the alleged corruption and money laundering in the formulation and execution of the Delhi government's now scrapped excise policy for 2021-22.

Bail does not amount to acquittal: BJP on SC order

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

In an apparent reaction to the Supreme Court's decision to grant interim bail to Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, senior BJP leader Vinay Sahasrabudhe on Friday said "the lordships" have made themselves a part of the campaign by picking a side right in the middle of the elections. "By picking a side right in the middle of elections, the lordships that have made themselves a part of the campaign. When the billion ballots speak, they may not like it," he wrote on X. This comes after the Supreme Court granted interim bail to Kejriwal till June 1 to campaign in the ongoing Lok Sabha elections. Reacting to the decision, BJP spokesperson Shahnawaz Hussain said bail does not amount to acquittal and asserted that Kejriwal's release will have no impact on the elections. The BJP will win all seven seats in Delhi, he told reporters in Patna. Meanwhile, Delhi BJP said the bail is not proof of being innocent and sometimes even criminals are released on parole. BJP candidate from South Delhi Parliamentary seat and Leader of Opposition in Delhi Assembly, Ramvir

Singh Bidhuri said the Supreme Court has only granted Arvind Kejriwal interim bail for 20 days. "Such bail is also granted to dangerous criminals for specific purposes. In the eyes of the Supreme Court, Kejriwal is an accused, hence several conditions have been imposed on him," he said. Bidhuri stated that the Aam Aadmi Party is celebrating Kejriwal's bail as though the court has exonerated him. Today, they are shouting the slogan "Satyamev Jayate" (truth alone triumphs), and from June 2, they will start claiming that the constitution is in danger because Kejriwal has to return to jail. Delhi BJP President Virendra Sachdeva said that while the BJP respects the Supreme Court's decision, getting interim bail does not mean that Delhi's Chief Minister is free of guilt. "Sometimes even criminals are released on parole, and this is a legal process, so it does not prove that Arvind Kejriwal, who was the main culprit in the multi-million rupee liquor scam, is innocent today," Sachdeva said. Further, Sachdeva asserted that truth can't be defeated. He said, "The truth may have been delayed but it's not

defeated because the truth is that only Arvind Kejriwal is responsible for the liquor scam in Delhi, pushing youth into addiction, and bringing in a new liquor policy to fill his pockets." Attacking the AAP for "portraying that the AAP chief has been acquitted of his charges in the alleged excise policy linked money laundering scam", Sachdeva said, "The way Aam Aadmi Party leaders are trying to portray that Arvind Kejriwal has been acquitted, they are once again misleading the people of Delhi and betraying them," adding that the people of Delhi understand that whether it is a liquor scam or other scandals in Delhi, Kejriwal is the mastermind behind all of them. Taking a jibe at AAP for creating a stir for jailed Chief Minister, he said, "AAP has no local issues for the elections because as a state government, they have done nothing in the last 10 years. So they created a stir in the name of Arvind Kejriwal being jailed and are now trying to create a deceptive atmosphere of coming out of jail, which the people of Delhi will not buy. BJP candidates will win all seven seats in the upcoming elections."

Chronology of Delhi Excise Policy scam linked to money laundering case

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Following is the chronology of events in the Delhi excise policy-linked money-laundering case in which the Supreme Court on Friday granted interim bail to Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal till June 1 to campaign in the Lok Sabha elections:

- * November 2021: Delhi government introduces new excise policy.
- * July 2022: Lt Governor VK Saxena recommends Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) probe into alleged irregularities in formulation and implementation of policy.
- * August 2022: CBI and Enforcement Directorate (ED) register cases in connection with alleged irregularities.
- * September 2022: Delhi government scraps excise policy.
- * October 30, 2023: ED sends first summons to Kejriwal in money-laundering case for appearance on November 2.
- * December 2023: ED issues two more summonses to Kejriwal for questioning on December 21 and January 3.

- * January 2024: Two more summonses sent to Kejriwal by ED for January 18 and February 2.
- * February 3: ED files complaint against Kejriwal before magisterial court for skipping summonses.
- * February 7: Magisterial court summons Kejriwal on ED complaint.
- * February: ED issues summonses for appearance of Kejriwal on February 19, February 26 and March 4.
- * March 7: Magisterial court issues summonses to Kejriwal on



ED's fresh complaint against him for evading summonses.

- * March 15: Sessions court refuses to stay proceedings against Kejriwal for skipping

summons.

- * March 16: Magisterial court grants bail to Kejriwal in ED's complaints against him for skipping summonses after he

appears before it.

- * March 21: Delhi HC refuses to grant protection from arrest to Kejriwal on his petition challenging summonses issued to him. ED arrests Kejriwal shortly after.
- * March 23: Kejriwal moves Delhi HC challenging his arrest by ED and trial court order remanding him in agency's custody.
- * April 9: HC dismisses Kejriwal's petition against arrest by ED.
- * April 10: Kejriwal moves SC challenging HC order uphold-

- * April 15: SC seeks response from ED by April 24 on Kejriwal's plea challenging his arrest.
- * April 24: ED tells SC that Kejriwal led investigating officer through his conduct "to form the satisfaction" that he is guilty of money laundering.
- * April 27: Kejriwal tells SC that his "illegal arrest" in case constitutes an unprecedented assault on tenets of democracy based on "free and fair elections" and "federalism".
- * April 29: SC questions non-

appearance of Kejriwal before ED despite repeated summonses for recording of statements, and asks if he can challenge arrest on grounds of non-recording of his version.

- * May 3: SC says it may consider granting interim bail to Kejriwal in view of ongoing Lok Sabha elections.
- * May 8: SC says it will pronounce order on interim bail to Kejriwal on May 10.
- * May 10: SC grants interim bail to Kejriwal till June 1, says he will have to surrender and go back to jail on June 2.

Shut down coaching centres violating fire safety norms: HC to MCD, DDA

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Friday directed the MCD and the DDA to shut down forthwith the coaching centres operating in violation of the fire safety norms. A bench headed by Justice Yashwant Varma, which had earlier ordered inspection of coaching centres in Mukherjee Nagar by a team of lawyers, also asked the authorities to relocate electrical equipment installed outside their premises which may be potentially dangerous to the public. The order came on a batch of petitions on the operation of coaching centres in the area, including a case the high court had registered on its own after taking cognisance of an incident of fire that broke out at one of them in June 2023. Amicus curiae Gautam Narayan told the court that the inspection, which was carried



out on two occasions in April, revealed that a few coaching centres that the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) claimed had shut down were still functioning under a new management or name. Narayan said these premises were in non-compliance with the fire safety requirements, and in one instance, an electrical board was found installed at the very entrance,

blocking the way in case of a fire. The court pulled up the MCD for failing to take note of such coaching centres in spite of its earlier direction to close down institutes which are in violation of fire safety norms, and directed it to immediately take action against them. "Someone is wanting to play games? You are trying to nit-pick. The direction was to

shut it down. Don't say anything now. You shut it down. The amicus is doing the job which the MCD should be doing. You created this mess. You will shut down all four properties which have been identified," the bench, also comprising Justice Ravinder Duda, said. "In light of apparent violation of sealing directions issued by us, we direct the MCD/DDA (Delhi Development Authority) to take action forthwith and premises are sealed," the bench ordered. The high court had earlier said "fire safety is a must" and all coaching centres must either comply with their statutory requirements under the Delhi Master Plan, 2021 and other applicable regulations or face closure. On Friday, the court also clarified that the "character" of a building for the purposes of its identification as an educational building and the applic-

ability of the fire safety norms has to be determined by its "use", and asked the MCD, DDA and The Delhi Fire Service (DFS) to undertake a fresh survey to identify non-compliant coaching centres within four weeks. On a prima facie evaluation, the court finds that it is the expression "used for" in Unified Building Bye Laws which would be determinative of character as an educational building and therefore in case of buildings which may be falling in other general category but are used for school, coaching etc with over 20 students, it is the norms of educational buildings that will get attracted, it said. Last year, the high court had registered a case on its own after taking suo motu cognisance of a fire incident at a coaching centre in Mukherjee Nagar in June during which students were seen climbing down the building using ropes.

Mystery surrounding actor Gurucharan disappearance deepens

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

TV serial 'Tarak Mehta Ka Ooltah Chashmah' fame actor Gurucharan Singh, who played Roshan Singh Sodhi's character, was using 27 separate email accounts in the fear of being "surveilled" by someone. Investigation by the Delhi Police on Friday revealed that the mystery surrounding his disappearance has become deeper with new information being found. According to a police officer, who is privy to the investigation, the actor was having a suspicion of being "surveilled" for which he would often change his email accounts. The 51-year-old actor was supposed to board a flight from Delhi to Mumbai on April 22 evening but never reached his destination. His father, who lives in Palam,



informed the local police after his phone was found to be unreachable. A case under section 365 (kidnapping or abduction with intent to convey out of India or secretly confine person) of the IPC was registered at Palam police station on April 26. A police team has been tasked to trace his location from the mobile phone which he was carrying, a police officer said. The officer said Singh's mobile phone has been

switched off since 9:22 pm on April 22. On the basis of CCTV footage, his last location was tracked to Dabri in southwest Delhi where he reached in an e-rickshaw, hired from near IGI airport. The actor used to carry two mobile phones. But he left one of them at his home in Delhi. He made the last call to his friend, who was supposed to pick him at the Mumbai airport, another officer said. Scanning his financial transactions from his bank accounts and credit cards, the police found that the last transaction was of Rs 14,000, which he withdrew from one of his bank accounts on the day he went missing. The police officer said Singh's financial condition was not sound, as he had several loans and dues on him.

Opposition welcomes SC order granting interim bail to Kejriwal

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Opposition leaders on Friday welcomed the interim bail given to Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal by the Supreme Court, saying the "fight to save democracy" will now be with more intensity. Congress leader Pawan Khera hoped former Jharkhand chief minister Hemant Soren also gets due justice. "We welcome the intervention by the Supreme Court in granting bail to Arvind Kejriwal... We also hope that the prime minister gets enough time after June 4, when he becomes the former prime minister of India, to introspect sitting in Sabarmati Ashram the kind of politics he has indulged in," he said.

West Bengal Chief Minister and Trinamool Congress chief Mamata Banerjee also welcomed the Supreme Court order, saying "I am very happy to see that Shri Arvind Kejriwal has got interim bail. It will be very helpful in the context of the current elections." Sharad Pawar, who heads the NCP (SP), said the country remains steadfast in the pursuit of democracy. "I welcome the interim bail order granted to the chief minister of Delhi, Arvind Kejriwal by the SC. India remains steadfast in the pursuit of democracy," Pawar wrote on X. Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Priyanka Chaturvedi called it a "big win" for Kejriwal. "And big win for Arvind Kejriwal ji as SC steps in to grant him interim bail. The bid to silence the



opposition by BJP is backfiring on them. We Won't be silenced, won't bend, won't give in come what may. Bharat is watching, India is winning! Jai Hind!" she wrote on X. Another Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Aaditya Thackeray said justice and relief to Kejriwal against the "dictatorial regime" in the country was a huge sign of winds of change. Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann said they will now fight the battle to save democracy with more intensity. In a post on X, he said, "Thanks to the Supreme Court... Now we will fight the battle to save democracy with more intensity... Arvind Kejriwal is not a person but a thought... And now will take this thought forward with greater momentum."

The AAP leaders in Punjab also hailed the Supreme Court decision to grant interim bail to Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, saying truth always triumphs. Punjab Cabinet Minister Chetan Singh Jauramajra thanked the apex court for granting interim bail to the AAP supremo. "Truth always triumphs," said Jauramajra. Punjab Finance Minister Harpal Singh Cheema said he was grateful to the top court for upholding justice. "Today's interim bail order for Arvind Kejriwal by Hon'ble Supreme Court reaffirms the honesty and integrity of the AAP. Grateful to the judiciary for upholding justice. Arvind Ji's presence among us will give all of us energy and vigour to fight

and win," said Cheema in a post on X. Another minister Balbir Singh said with Kejriwal getting interim bail, a wave of happiness has spread among party workers. "Millions of prayers have been answered. I thank the Supreme Court," said Singh as he accused the BJP of trying to suppress the truth. "But the truth has won," the health minister said. Earlier in the day, the Supreme Court granted interim bail to Kejriwal till June 1 to campaign in the ongoing Lok Sabha elections. The Delhi chief minister was arrested in a case relating to alleged corruption and money laundering in the formulation and execution of the Delhi government's now-scrapped excise policy for 2021-22.

Jaishankar slams Canada for backing Khalistanis

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

By allowing political space to Khalistani separatist elements, the Canadian government is sending a message that its vote bank is "more powerful" than its rule of law, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar said. In an exclusive interview to PTI late Thursday, Jaishankar said India respects and practices freedom of speech, but that does not equate with freedom to threaten foreign diplomats, extend support to separatism or allow political space to elements advocating violence. The external affairs minister also wondered how people with dubious backgrounds are being allowed to enter and live in Canada, referring to Khalistani supporters among the Sikh migrants from Punjab. "In any rules-based society, you would imagine that you would check people's background, how they came, what passport they carried etc," he said. "If you have people whose presence there is itself on very dubi-



ous documents, what does it say about you? It actually says that your vote bank is more powerful than your rule of law," the minister said. The Indian diaspora in Canada is about 1.8 million strong and there are another one million Non Resident Indians residing in the country. The Indian diaspora, mostly of Sikh ethnicity, is considered an influential bloc in Canada's politics. Ties between India and Canada came under severe strain following Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's allegations in September last year of

the "potential" involvement of Indian agents in the killing of Nijjar. New Delhi rejected Trudeau's charges as "absurd". India has been maintaining that the main issue has been that of Canada giving space to pro-Khalistani elements operating from Canadian soil with impunity. "It is not so much a question of running out of options. What we have seen to our regret has been the direction of Canadian politics where separatists and extremist forces, many of whom openly advocate violence, have been given political space in that

country," Jaishankar said. "And there are people in positions of prominence today in Canadian politics who actually espouse that kind of separatism and extremism," he said. His remarks came in response to a question on how India plans to deal with challenges emanating from Canada and whether the options for New Delhi are running out. "We cannot for the good relations overlook that," he said during the freewheeling interview at PTT's headquarters. Jaishankar said Canada's response to India's concerns has been that it has freedom of speech. "Whenever we have taken this up with the Canadians..It is not a new issue... It has been going on almost for 10 years and they keep saying, oh 'we have freedom of speech'" "We also have freedom of speech in our country. But freedom of speech does not mean freedom to threaten foreign diplomats, freedom of speech does not mean the kind of positions and the kind of activities which people in Canada are doing

which does harm to our country because of its support for separatism," Jaishankar said. "And freedom of speech does not mean this kind of space which is also given to people of various dubious backgrounds - people associated with organised crime and so on," the external affairs minister added. In the last few months, India has been expressing concerns over the security of its diplomats in Canada and calling on Ottawa to ensure that they are able to carry out their responsibilities without fear. There have been instances of pro-Khalistani elements threatening to harm Indian diplomats. Days after Trudeau's allegations in September last, India asked Ottawa to downsize its diplomatic presence in the country to ensure parity. Canada subsequently withdrew 41 diplomats and their family members from India. India has been asserting that its "core issue" with Canada remains that of the space given to separatists, terrorists and anti-India elements in that country.

Sanjay Bhalla assumes charge as CoP of Indian Navy

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Vice Admiral Sanjay Bhalla on Friday here assumed charge as Chief of Personnel (CoP) of Indian Navy. He was commissioned in the Indian Navy in 1989. In a career spanning 35 years, he has held a number of specialist, staff and operational appointments, both afloat and ashore, navy said. After completing his Specialisation Course in Communication and Electronic Warfare, Bhalla served as a specialist onboard several frontline warships. He subsequently had the privilege of holding challenging, fulfilling and eventful Commands at sea, which include, INS Nishank, INS Taragiri, INS Beas and the coveted appointment of Flag Officer Commanding Eastern Fleet (FOCEF). During his tenure as FOCEF, he was the Officer in Tactical Command for the prestigious



President's Fleet Review (PFR - 22) and the Sea Phase of Indian Navy's flagship multinational exercise MILAN - 22, that witnessed an unprecedented participation from friendly foreign countries. Ashore, he has held important staff appointments at the Naval Headquarters including Assistant Chief of Personnel (Human Resource Development); headed Officers training at Naval Academy, and has held a diplomatic assignment overseas. Prior to assuming charge as the COP, he was

the Chief of Staff of the Western Naval Command. An alumnus of Royal College of Defence Studies, London, Naval War College and Defence Services Staff College, Wellington, his educational accomplishments include M Phil (Defence & Strategic Studies), Masters in International Security and Strategic Studies from the Kings College, London, M.Sc (Defence & Strategic Studies), Madras University and M.Sc (Telecom) from CUSAT.

FORMAT C-7 (FOR POLITICAL PARTIES TO PUBLISH IN NEWS PAPERS, SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS & WEBSITE OF THE PARTY)	
(As per the Commission's directions issued in pursuance of the order dated 13.02.2020 of the Hon'ble Supreme Court in contempt petition(C) no. 2192 OF 2018 WP (C) no. 536 of 2011)	
Name of the Political Party	: Indian National Congress
Name of the Election	: General Election Lok Sabha 2024
Name of State/UT	: Delhi
(1) Name of the Constituency	: North - West Delhi
Name of the Candidate	: Dr. Udit Raj
s.no.	
1 Criminal antecedents	
a Nature of Offences	1. Criminal U/S 188/269/283 IPC R/W SEC 3 Epidemic Diseases Act R/W 51(b) Disaster Management Act. 2. Criminal U/S 188 IPC 3. Criminal U/S 153 IPC R/W61(D) IT ACT
b Case no.	1. FIR NO. 150/21 Dated 12/08/2021 PS-Parliament Street 2. FIR NO. 12/24 Dated 22/02/2024 PS-Parliament Street 3. FIR NO.158/2021 PS- Kotwali Sadar, Unnau
c Name of the Court	1. Case FIR No 150/2021 was pending in the Court of Ms. Anamika, MM, PHC but vide order dated 28/02/2024 the case was transferred for the MP/MLA Court Rouse Avenue and Vide order dated 05/03/2024 Ld. Principal District Judge sent the same to Delhi High Court for the assignment in MP/MLA Court but till date no court has been assigned for the adjudication of the case. 2. Charge-sheet has not been filed in Case FIR No.12/2024 PS-Parliament Street and matter is pending investigation at PS - Parliament-street. 3. Charge has not been framed in case FIR no. 158/2021 PS - Kotwali Sadar.
d Whether Charges have been Framed or not (Yes/No)	NO
e Detail of punishment undergone, if any	N/A
f Any other information required to be given	The above-stated cases are false, fabricated and politically motivated.
2 The reasons for the selection of the candidate. Selection shall be with reference to the qualifications, achievements and merit of the qualifications, achievements and merit of the candidate, and not mere "winnability" at the polls (not more than 100 words)	Dr. Udit Raj is former IRS and his vast Knowledge and experience in Public service and impeccable character were inter-alia , reasons for his selection as Candidate for North-West Constituency.
3 Reasons as to why other individuals without criminal antecedents could not be selected as candidates (not more than 100 words)	Dr. Udit Raj is former member of Parliament and Common People of North-West Delhi Constituency loved his works for the welfare of the Common people and hence on the demand of the people of North-West Delhi, he was preferred over other candidates.
(2) Name of the constituency : North - West Delhi	
Name of the Candidate : Dr. Udit Raj	
• In the case of election to council of states of states or election to Legislative Council by MLAs, mention the election concerned in place of name of constituency.	
Signature of Office bearer of the political Party Name and designation Davinder Yadav President	

ICMAI seeks inclusion of Cost Accountants as auditors within Cooperative Societies Act

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Institute of Cost Accountants of India (ICMAI) has sought inclusion of Cost Accountants as auditors within specific sections of the Multi-State Cooperative Societies Act, 2002. The proposal aims at enhancing the effectiveness of cooperative societies in India. In response to this proposal, Dr Ashish Kumar Bhutani, Secretary Cooperation, assured the ICMAI delegation of giving thorough consideration to their proposal. Additionally, he also expressed his willingness to explore collaborative initiatives between the Ministry and the Institute, indicating openness to cooperation and partnership in this endeavor. This assurance from Dr Bhutani came during an event where he unveiled the inaugural edition of the Quarterly Journal



of the Cooperative Development Board (CDB) of the ICMAI. The event, organized by ICMAI in collaboration with the National Council for Cooperative Training (NCCT), also saw the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the two entities. Dr Bhutani commended the collaborative efforts of ICMAI and NCCT, recognizing them as proactive think tanks and valuable knowledge repositories. He, along with Mohan Kumar Mishra, Secretary of NCCT, signed the first copy of the journal, highlighting the commitment of both

organizations to the growth and development of the cooperative sector in India. During the event, ICMAI and NCCT officials briefed Dr. Bhutani on their strategic roadmap, which encompassed four key pillars aimed at supporting the government's efforts in advancing the cooperative sector. According to the ICMAI officials, it is advocating for Cost Accountants to be recognized as auditors under two specific sections of the Multi-State Cooperative Societies Act, 2002. These are Section 72(1) under which Cost Accountants could potentially be appointed as auditors for such societies, allowing them to conduct audits and assess the financial performance and compliance of these organizations while Section 77(1) may relate to the appointment of special auditors for specific purposes or circumstances, such as investigations or special reports.

NGO moves SC asking EC to upload LS voter turnout data on website

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

An NGO has moved the Supreme Court seeking a direction to the Election Commission (ECI) to upload polling station-wise voter turnout data in "absolute figures" on its website within 48 hours of conclusion of polling for each phase of the ongoing Lok Sabha elections. The Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) has filed an interim application in its 2019 PIL seeking directions to the poll panel that "scanned legible copies of Form 17C Part-I (Account of Votes Recorded)" of all polling stations be uploaded immediately after the polls. "Direct the Election Commission to provide tabulated polling station-wise data in absolute figures of the number of votes polled as recorded in Form 17C Part-I after each phase of polling in the ongoing 2024 Lok Sabha elections and also a tabulation of constituency-wise figures of voter turnout in absolute numbers in the on-going 2024 Lok Sabha elections," the NGO said. It said the plea was filed to ensure that the democratic process is not subverted by electoral irregu-



larities. "The voter turn-out data for the first two phases of the ongoing 2024 Lok Sabha elections published by ECI on April 30 has been published after 11 days of the first phase of polling held on April 19 and 4 days after second phase of polling held on April 26. "The data as published by the ECI in its press release dated April 30, 2024 shows a sharp increase (by about 5-6%) as compared to the initial percentages announced by ECI as of 7 pm on the day of polling," the plea said. The petition said the "inordinate" delay in the release of final voter turnout data, coupled with the unusually high revision of over 5 per cent in the poll panel's press note of April 30, 2024 has raised con-

cerns and public suspicion regarding the correctness of the said data. The non-release of absolute number of votes polled, coupled with the "unreasonable delay" in release of votes polled data, has led to apprehensions in the mind of the electorate about the sharp increase between initial data and data released on April 30, it said. "These apprehensions must be addressed and put to rest. That in order to uphold the voter's confidence it is necessary that the ECI be directed to disclose on its website scanned legible copies of Form 17C Part-I (Account of Votes Recorded) of all polling stations which contains the authenticated figures for votes polled, within 48 hours of the close of polling," it said.

Coast Guard inks MoU with Hindalco

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Indian Coast Guard (ICG) and Hindalco Industries has inked a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) here for the manufacturing and supply of indigenous marine-grade aluminium to Indian public and private shipyards for the construction of ships. Giving details here on Friday, defence ministry officials said the MOU inked on Thursday will also provide benefits such as quarterly pricing, priority in supplies and turnover discount. The ICG fleet is presently operating 67 ships with aluminium hull with capability of operating in shallow waters. To further boost coastal security, it has planned to induct more such vessels where the indigenously manufactured marine-grade aluminium will be utilised. The MoU was signed by Deputy Director General (Material & Maintenance), ICG IG HK Sharma and CEO, Downstream Aluminium Business, Hindalco Nitesh Koul in the presence of senior officials of the ICG.



Opposition wants to bury me alive, but people are my security shield: Modi

PIT ■ WANDURBAR (MAHARASHTRA)

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday said some in the opposition want to bury him alive, but people of the country are his security shield and they won't let any harm come to him. Lashing out at the opposition Shiv Sena (UBT) headed by former Maharashtra CM Uddhav Thackeray, the BJP stalwart addressed the "nakli (fake) Shiv Sena" abuses him in such a way that it pleases its "favourite vote-bank". "The nakli Shiv Sena wants to bury me alive. They abuse me in such a way that it is liked by their favourite vote-bank. They also take a bomb blast accused for election campaigning," Modi said



while addressing a campaign rally in north Maharashtra's Wandurbar in support of BJP candidate Hina Gavit. The BJP on Thursday claimed 1993 serial bomb blasts accused Iqbal Musa alias Baba Chauhan was seen in a Lok Sabha campaign rally of Shiv Sena (UBT) Mumbai North

West candidate Amol Kirtikar. The allegations were denied by Musa as well as Kirtikar, both of whom claimed they did not know each other. He maintained the opposition has lost people's support and trust, and that is why their political space is shrinking.

"People of India are my security cover. They can't bury me alive or dead," the PM told the crowd. He was apparently referring to Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Sanjay Raut's alleged comments about "burying him (Modi) in Maharashtra just like Mughal emperor Aurangzeb". "The Congress says 'Modi teri kabur khudegi' (Modi, your grave will be dug). While abusing me they keep in mind voter appeasement. (Shiv Sena founder) Balasaheb Thackeray must be very sad," averred the BJP's star campaigner. The Congress is an ally of the Shiv Sena (UBT) in Maharashtra. Wandurbar is among 11 Lok Sabha seats in Maharashtra that will go to polls in the fourth phase on May 13.

INDIA Bloc seeped in corruption: Nadda

PTI ■ CHANDIGARH

BJP chief J P Nadda on Friday lashed out at the opposition INDIA alliance, dubbing it an "assembly of corrupt" and asking the people to vote for the saffron outfit so that the country's march on the path of progress continues. At a roadshow in Haryana's Panchkula, Nadda also accused the opposition parties of promoting dynastic politics. "Modi says remove corruption, they (opposition) say save the corrupt and make them flourish," he said at the roadshow in favour of BJP's Ambala candidate Banto Kataria. "Is the Congress a party of scams or not. Is Lalu's (Yadav's) party a party which indulged in scam. Did Mamata (Banerjee) indulge in scams or not? Did DMK Stalin's family indulge in



scams or not? Did K Kavitha indulge in scam or not? Toh 'sare bhrashtachariyon ka jamavda hai' (assembly of the corrupt)," Nadda said. He also noted that many opposition leaders are either in jail or on bail. "Where is Arvind Kejriwal today. Where is Manish Sisodia. Where is (AAP's) Satyendra Jain. Where is (SP leader) Azam Khan...Rahul is

on bail, Sonia is on bail. (B S) Hooda is on bail. Lalu is on bail. So, either these leaders are on jail or out on bail," the BJP leader said. Accusing the opposition parties of promoting dynastic politics, he claimed they have no concern for the people. "Farooq Abdullah wants his son Omar to become chief minister. When (former Punjab Chief Minister

Parkash Singh) Badal sahab was there (alive) he was busy making efforts for his son Sukhbir (Badal). Chautala family also tried the same. "Everywhere you see the same thing. After Mulayam (Singh Yadav), Akhilesh has come... (in Bihar) it is Tejashwi now, Mamata (Banerjee) sees (her nephew) Abhishek, KCR sees Kavitha, Sharad Pawar sees Supriya Sule, Uddhav sees Aaditya Thackeray... They are all dynastic parties," he said. He said India has to be made a developed nation and for this we have to strengthen the hands of the prime minister. Nadda also spoke at length about the various development programmes and schemes of the BJP-led NDA government at the Centre. Polling for all the 10 seats in Haryana will be held in the sixth phase of elections on May 25.

Paras blames nephew Chirag for his non participation in poll campaign in Hajipur

PTI ■ PATNA

Former Union Minister Prashupati Kumar Paras on Friday squarely blamed nephew Chirag Paswan for his non-participation in the poll campaign in Hajipur, the seat he currently represents but is now being contested by the latter. Paras also said Chirag, the son of late Ram Vilas Paswan, has "never bothered to come and seek blessings" from his uncle. "I have never been invited," was the curt reply of Paras, when he was asked about his absence in Hajipur from where Chirag has filed his nomination. The seat had earlier been represented by late Paswan nine times. Chirag's Lok Janshakti Party (Ram Vilas) has got five seats in Bihar as per the seat-sharing formula decided by the BJP-led coalition.

The formula has left Paras high and dry and he has reacted by resigning from the Union cabinet but chosen to remain with the BJP-led NDA. "I stay just a few hundred metres away from the Patna airport where Chirag goes almost every day to catch his helicopter. He has never bothered to come and seek

my blessings even though I am older than him. My party leaders have been campaigning for NDA candidates in Bihar," said Paras who leads the Rashtriya Lok Janshakti Party (RLJP).

Public Notice: Notice is hereby given to the public at large, on behalf of our client, Mr. Jai Kishan Saini S/o. Mr. Ranjeet Singh R/o House No. 695 A, Saini Mahalla, Village Nangli, West Delhi, Delhi-110041 (Mortgagor), that Mr. Jai Kishan Saini was the owner of the Scheduled Property, and Mr. Jai Kishan Saini as attorney of Mr. Bai Kishan Saini the Scheduled Property to Mr. Jai Kishan Saini, vide Sale Deed dated 01.04.2024 Doc. No. 2024/61/2277, Book No. 1, Vol. No. 5452, Page No. 135-154, SRO-IIA Panjabji Bagh, New Delhi.

Public Notice: Notice is hereby given to the public at large, on behalf of our client, Mr. Jai Kishan Saini S/o. Mr. Ranjeet Singh R/o House No. 695 A, Saini Mahalla, Village Nangli, West Delhi, Delhi-110041 (Mortgagor), that Mr. Jai Kishan Saini was the owner of the Scheduled Property, and Mr. Jai Kishan Saini as attorney of Mr. Bai Kishan Saini the Scheduled Property to Mr. Jai Kishan Saini, vide Sale Deed dated 01.04.2024 Doc. No. 2024/61/2277, Book No. 1, Vol. No. 5452, Page No. 135-154, SRO-IIA Panjabji Bagh, New Delhi.

Public Notice: To be known to all that, M. Mohd Saleem S/o. Mohammad Naim R/o Flat No. 510, Friends Circle, CGHS Ltd., Plot No. 7, Sector-12, Dwarka, Delhi-110078, allottee/owner of Flat No. B-510, Friends Circle, CGHS Ltd., Plot No. 7, Sector-12, Dwarka, Delhi-110078, vide FIR No. LR No. 1722302/2021 dated 10-05-2024.

Proposal Invited From: Chartered Accountants/CA firm for conducting Statutory Audit of Books of Shri Sri Sri Apartment Owners Association, 15, Ahinsa Khand, Indraprastha, Ghaziabad, U.P-201014 for the Financial Year 2023-24. Interested Chartered Accountants or CA firms may submit their proposals with quotations on or before 18-05-24 at the email aca.ashish@gmail.com Phone: + 9132356688. CA firms must have post qualification experience of more than 5 years. Audit experience of Apartment Association under UP Apartment Act will be preferred. Individual CA's or any CA of firm should not have any association/ relation with the society's Accountant, Internal auditor, AOA board members or any of the Apartment Owners of Shri Sri Sri Apartment. The Apartment Association is managing the affairs of the common area & facilities of the multi-story Apartment having 74 flats and the primary source of revenue is the collection of Common Area monthly maintenance charges from the Apartment Owners. Auditor shall be required to undertake the Statutory tax audit of the books of accounts maintained by the board of association. The Audit fee will be minimum Rs. 50,000/- excluding Government taxes. Signed by Secretary, SSOA.

Public Notice: General public is hereby informed that Shri Rajesh Dhawan S/o Late Sh. Krishan Gopal Dhawan is filling application in L&DO for substitution of the property No. 30, first floor, Double Storey "A" type Tenement, Hakikat Nagar, Delhi-110009, in the name of Shri Rajesh Dhawan S/o Late Sh. Krishan Gopal Dhawan on the ground of Relinquishment Deed, Death certificate, Affidavits, Indemnity Bond & Surviving member certificate. If there are any objections/claims from the general public on this application, the same shall be communicated to L&DO with supporting documents through registered post or by visiting L&DO at Nirman Bhawan, New Delhi or through an email at id@nic.in, within 30 days of the publication of this notice.

Public Notice: Be it known to all concerned that my client Sh. Khushi Ram S/o. Late Sh. Vijay Singh R/o. G-126, Ground Floor, Gazipur Village, Delhi-110096, has debarred and disowned his son Nitin Yadav, R/o. G-126, First Floor, Gazipur Village, Delhi-110096, from his all movable and immovable properties and severed all kind of relations with him due to his complete (disobedience, disrespect, mal-treatment, humiliation and cruel behaviour and undesirable activities and even out of control of my client he resides separately, at first floor, he used to subjecting mentally and physically torturing and falsely accusing to my client. Hence my client has duly disowned him through this public notice and my client will not be responsible and liable for any acts, deeds on his part as above said person in any manner, if anybody deals with him shall be his own cost, risk and consequences.

NORTHERN RAILWAY				
INVITATION OF TENDERS THROUGH E-PROCUREMENT SYSTEM				
Tender Notice No. 12/2024-2025 Date: 10.05.2024				
Principal Chief Materials Manager, Northern Railway, New Delhi-110001, for and on behalf of the President of India, invites e-tenders through e-procurement system for supply of the following items:-				
S. No.	Tender No.	Brief Description	Qty.	Closing Date
01	08243068	ANTI TRACKING FINISHING VARNISH	4811 KGS	31.05.24
02	07230459	SUPPORTING DEVICE COMPLETE FOR CBC OF LHB COACHES	292 NOS	03.06.24
03	19240810	SET OF LABYRINTH RING, BEARING CAP AND CLAMP PLATE	818 SET	04.06.24
04	19240706	BULL GEAR (72 TEETH) FOR WAP-7 LOCO	34 NOS	05.06.24
05	09243043	HIGH PERFORMANCE ANTI CORROSION EPOXY COATING	18692 KGS	07.06.24
06	12241701	ALUMINIUM CONDUCTOR WELDING CABLE	34749 MTR	10.06.24
07	09243010	ENAMEL SYNTHETIC EXTERIOR, FINISHING OXFORD BLUE	25315 LTR	11.06.24
08	12240029	EARTHING CABLE COMPLETE 70 SQ MM	11006 NOS	11.06.24
09	19240563	Oil COOLING RADIATOR FOR CONVERTER/TRANSFORMER OF 3-PHASE LOCOMOTIVES	42 NOS	12.06.24
10	07240118	FOOT REST MULTISTAGE ARRANGEMENT FOR LHB TYPE AC CHAIR CAR	29267 NOS	28.06.24
11	07230086	TWO PIECE GLASS SHUTTER	4696 NOS	15.07.24
12	19243517	ROLLER BEARING RB5020	724 NOS	22.07.24
13	07240059	LADDER	6379 NOS	23.07.24
14	19242711	AXLE BOX COMPLETE ASSEMBLY FOR CENTRE AXLE	61 NOS	05.08.24

SYMBOLIC POSSESSION NOTICE

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

Whereas The undersigned being the Authorized Officer of ICICI Bank Limited under the Securitisation, Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of the powers conferred under section 13 (12) read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) rules 2002, issued demand notices upon the borrowers mentioned below, to repay the amount mentioned in the notice within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice.

As the borrower failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the borrower and the public in general that the undersigned has taken Symbolic possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him/her under Section 13(4) of the said Act read with Rule 8 of the said rules on the below-mentioned dates. The borrower in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of ICICI Bank Limited.

Sr. No.	Name of the Borrower/ Loan Account Number	Description of Property/ Date of Symbolic Possession	Date of Demand Notice/ Amount Due	Name of Branch
1.	Satpal Singh/ Balbir Singh/ LBPNO0006573840/ TBPNO0006549883	House Measuring 3 Maria 3 Sarsal Being 1/48 Share of Property Measuring 8 Kanal Comprised in Khewat No. 150, Khata No. 197, Mustil and Killa No. 16/4-8-0 Waka, Mozta Jamalpur Nagar, Abadi Dev Nagar, Inside Hadud Nagar Nigam, Tehsil and District Sonapat, Haryana- 131001/ May 08, 2024	January 08, 2024 Rs. 15,48,361/-	Sonepat/ Delhi

The above-mentioned borrowers/s guarantors/s are hereby given a 30 day notice to repay the amount, else the borrowed properties will be sold on the expiry of 30 days from the date of publication of this notice, as per the provisions under the Rules 8 and 9 of Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002.

Date: May 10, 2024
Place: Delhi
Authorized Officer
ICICI Bank Limited

Lost and Found: This is to inform public at large that Original Apartment Buyer's Agreement Dated 13-06-2012 was executed between Mrs. Dimple Jain and M/s Jasmine Buildmart Pvt. Ltd. for apartment no 2301, Tower B, Krish Provence Estate, Sector-2, Gwal Pahari, Gurugram, Haryana. The aforesaid Apartment Buyer's Agreement got lost in transit and to ensure no misuse can be done of the aforesaid agreement, the undersigned has lodged F.I.R. vide Application No 132270852400665, Dated-06-05-2024, Time 10:00 am at Police Station Sector-10, Gurugram, Haryana. Stating that the aforesaid agreement has been lost. The public at large is advised that if they found they should return or have any interest, they may lodge their claim within 15 days from date given in this publication to Mr. Balbir Jain, 544 G, Sector-37, Phase City-2, Gurugram Haryana-122001.

Balbir Jain
On behalf of Mrs. Dimple Jain

HDB Financial Services Limited Ground Floor, Zenith House, Keshavrao Khadye Marg, Mahalaxmi, Mumbai - 400034 Tel No.: +91 22 49113600

FINAL AUCTION CUM SALE NOTICE FOR GOLD ORNAMENTS

The borrower(s) (whose details are provided in the table herein below), in particular, and the public, in general are hereby informed that the below mentioned accounts are overdue, and the borrowers/account holders have not responded/complied with the communication, and notice issued by HDB Financial Services Limited (the "Company") requesting the borrower to clear his/hers/their dues as per the documents in relation to the above mentioned loan signed/ accepted by the borrower(s) (such documents, collectively "loan agreement") and therefore defaulted in terms thereof. The Company has in exercise of its rights as a pledgee, decided to enforce the pledge and therefore hold a public auction of the gold ornaments pledged to the company as security for the loan for the purpose of selling the same and realizing/recovering the dues owed by the borrower(s) to the company. The auction will be conducted on/after 16-05-2024 at the below mentioned local branch of HDB Financial Services Limited from 11:00 am onwards on the date and branches mentioned in the below table:-

Loan No	Customer Name	Date of Loan	Overdue Amount ₹	Branch Name
18446230	Rinku Chauhan	13-10-2021	6337	Delhi Ncr-Burari
25818167	Seema Jagbir Singh	15-07-2022	11179	Delhi Ncr-Burari
33848265	Manish Kumar	27-04-2023	38723	Delhi Ncr-Burari
29214514	Anju Devi	15-11-2022	8652	Delhi-Bhajanpura
27474753	Mamta Wo Mahender	17-09-2022	21859	Delhi-Dilshad Garden
28715627	Ranjay So Kishan	29-10-2022	11746	Delhi-Dilshad Garden
34949479	Sanjay Singh	30-05-2023	7713	Delhi-Dilshad Garden
38261939	Govar So Naresh	24-08-2023	8230	Delhi-Dilshad Garden
35784160	Shivam Shukla	24-06-2023	10134	Delhi-Gandhi Nagar
15990832	Laxman Pal	07-07-2021	8989	Delhi-Hari Nagar
36105006	Nisha Jain	06-07-2023	44139	Delhi-Kalshah Nagar
30571539	Rakesh Kumar Tripathi	09-01-2023	154825	Delhi-Kashmiri Gate
36760959	Rohit Malhotra	11-07-2023	20736	Delhi-Kashmiri Gate
26047450	Rajshahjan Ali	25-07-2022	12133	Delhi-Lajpat Nagar
40076576	Mufeez Khan	13-10-2023	8093	Delhi-Lajpat Nagar
41156964	Mufeez Khan	09-11-2023	15583	Delhi-Lajpat Nagar
31832959	Tanveer Alam	22-02-2023	12123	Delhi-Malviya Nagar
35911748	Vinay Kumar	28-06-2023	36589	Delhi-Patel Nagar
37209732	Sandya Wo Hareram	28-07-2023	10736	Delhi-Ramesh Nagar
36760959	Rohit Malhotra	11-07-2023	20736	Delhi-Uttam Nagar

The auction shall be conducted on an "AS IS WHERE" and "AS IS WHAT IT" basis and the Company is not making and shall not make any representation or warranties as regards the quality, purity, caratage, weight or valuation of the said gold ornaments. It shall be the sole and absolute responsibility of the potential purchaser to verify, examine and satisfy themselves about the quality, purity, caratage, weight or valuation of the said gold ornaments prior to placing their bid and for such purpose it shall be open to potential purchasers to examine, at their sole cost and expense, and at the address set out herein above, the gold ornaments whether with or without expert advice 45 minutes prior to the time stipulated for the conduct of the auction. All the bids shall be subjected to such minimum reserve price as the company may deem fit to fix in this regard. The auction process and sale (if any) pursuant to such auction shall be subjected to such further terms and condition as the company may at sole discretion deem fit to impose.

If the borrower(s) mentioned above pays the amount due to the Company in terms of the loan agreement in his individual loan account in full before the auction as mentioned above, the pledged ornaments securing the said loan may be withdrawn from the said auction without further notice. Please note that it is the absolute discretionary power of the undersigned authorized officer of the company, either to postpone or to cancel the auction proceeding without prior notice and without assigning any reason thereof and to reject any or all the bids or offer without assigning any reason for the same.

Date: DELHI
Date: 11-05-2024
Authorized Officer
HDB Financial Services Ltd

INDIAN OVERSEAS BANK

Rohini Branch (1506), 101-110, 1st floor RG complex, Sector 08, New Delhi 110085

ANNEXURE - I Demand notice to Borrowers / Mortgagors/Guarantors Under Sub-section (2) of section 13 of the SARFAESI Act, 2002

Date: 22.02.2024

To: SI/ Borrower (Name & full address) No (Indicate in bracket if borrower is also mortgagor)

1 VIRENDER PRASAD (Borrower) S/o- Jagdish Prasad, R/o- D-605/1, Sukhdev Nagar, Wazirpur Industrial Area, Ashok Vihar, Delhi - 110052

2 SANGITA DEVI (Borrower) W/o- Virender Prasad, R/o- D-605/1, Sukhdev Nagar, Wazirpur Industrial Area, Ashok Vihar, Delhi - 110052

Dear Sir/s
Re: Your Credit facilities with Indian Overseas Bank, Rohini Branch

1. You, the above named borrowers of our bank have availed the following credit facilities from our Rohini Branch:

The details of credit facilities with outstanding dues are as under:

SI/ Nature of facility	Limit	Rates of interest (including overdue interest) & rests	Total dues* as on 31.01.2024 (in Rs.)
1 RSUBH	Rs. 500000/-	10.90	Rs. 609791.68/-

2. The details of securities in favour of the Bank for the aforesaid credit facilities are:

Nature of security (Hypothecation / Mortgage etc.)	Particulars of securities [Full description with location, four boundaries, measurement on four sides total extent and name of owner to be given]
1. Mortgage	EM of the property entire 2nd floor without roof right, part of free hold built-up property no. 157, in block UO, area measuring 70 sqmtr. Situated in the layout plan of Pitampura residential scheme, Delhi - 110034.

** The Bank reserves its right to proceed under SARFAESI Act against the eligible securities and as regards the agricultural land security Nos. 6 above through other available legal course of action.

3. Consequent upon defaults committed by the above named borrowers in payment of the principal debt / interest as per agreed terms, your loan account has been classified as Non-Performing Asset on 31.12.2022 as per Reserve Bank of India guidelines and directives. Despite our reminders for regularization of your account, you have not repaid the overdue loans including interest thereon.

4. Since you the above named borrowers referred under SI Nos 1 & 2 have failed to meet the liabilities in respect of the credit facilities duly secured by various securities mentioned above and upon classification of your account as a Non-Performing Asset, we hereby recall our advances to SI Nos 1, 2 & 3 of you and give you notice under sub-section (2) of section 13 of the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002, and call upon you to pay in full and discharge your liabilities to the bank aggregating to Rs. 609791.68/- as detailed in para 1 above, with further interest @9.65 % compounded with monthly rests as agreed, from the date mentioned above, within 60 days from the date of receipt of this notice.

5. The above named mortgagor / guarantor Nos 1 & 2 have given undertaking for repayment/ guarantee for the credit facilities taken by the borrowers and have also given the properties herein mentioned to secure the above said credit facilities. Since the borrowers have committed defaults in repayment, the mortgagors/guarantors have become liable to pay to us in terms of the guarantee, the amounts due to the Bank as per the loan / credit facilities aggregating to Rs. 609791.68/- together with further interest @10.90% compounded with monthly rests as agreed and we hereby invoke the guarantee against the mortgagors/guarantors who have given non-agri securities enforceable under the SARFAESI Act namely Virender Prasad and Sangita Devi of you and call upon you to pay the said amount within sixty days from the date of receipt of this notice. Please be advised that the guarantors liability is co-extensive with the liability of borrowers.

We further give notice to the borrowers namely Virender Prasad and Sangita Devi and mortgagors/guarantors who have given non-agri securities enforceable under the SARFAESI Act namely Virender Prasad and Sangita Devi that failing payment of the above amount in full with interest and charges etc till the date of payment, we shall be exercising all or any of the rights vested on us, under sub-section (4) of section 13 of the said Act.

6. Please note that in law the borrowers and guarantors are jointly and severally liable to repay the dues with further interest and charges etc.

7. Please note that interest will continue to accrue at the rates and rests as agreed for each credit facility until full repayment.

8. Your attention is also invited to sub-section (13) of section 13 of the said Act in terms of which you are restrained from transferring/ alienating/ shifting any of the secured assets referred to above by way of sale, lease or otherwise, without obtaining our prior written consent. Please also note that non-compliance / contravention of the provisions contained in the said Act or Rules made thereunder, is an offence which is punishable with imprisonment and/or fine as provided under section 29 of the Act.

9. The guarantors referred under SI Nos and have given personal guarantee to secure the loans of the said borrowers and as such we advise you to prevail upon the borrowers to repay the dues as per our demand since we have the right to separately recall the advance from you, initiate action against you simultaneously in accordance with law, for recovery of our dues based on your personal guarantee.

10. We also put all of you on notice that if the account is not regularized/ repaid within the stipulated time and in case of the Bank classifying you as a willful defaulter as per RBI Guidelines, the Bank reserves its rights to publish your photograph in newspaper(s) with your name, address, details of default, dues etc., in accordance with RBI Guidelines besides initiating all recourses available to the Bank for recovery.

11. We also advise you that this demand notice is without prejudice to and shall not be construed as waiver of any other rights or remedies which we have for recovery of the above said dues as well as our right to make further demands in respect of sums due and payable by you.

12. Further, attention is invited to provisions of Sub-section (8) of the Section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available, to redeem the secured assets.

Yours faithfully,
Authorized Officer

INDIAN OVERSEAS BANK

Rohini Branch (1506), 101-110, 1st floor RG complex, Sector 08, New Delhi 110085

ANNEXURE - I Demand notice to Borrowers / Mortgagors/Guarantors Under Sub-section (2) of section 13 of the SARFAESI Act, 2002

Date: 22.02.2024

To: SI/ Borrower (Name & full address) No (Indicate in bracket if borrower is also mortgagor)

1 VIRENDER PRASAD (Borrower) S/o- Jagdish Prasad, R/o- D-605/1, Sukhdev Nagar, Wazirpur Industrial Area, Ashok Vihar, Delhi - 110052

2 SANGITA DEVI (Borrower) W/o- Virender Prasad, R/o- D-605/1, Sukhdev Nagar, Wazirpur Industrial Area, Ashok Vihar, Delhi - 110052

Dear Sir/s
Re: Your Credit facilities with Indian Overseas Bank, Rohini Branch

1. You, the above named borrowers of our bank have availed the following credit facilities from our Rohini Branch:

The details of credit facilities with outstanding dues are as under:

SI/ Nature of facility	Limit	Rates of interest (including overdue interest) & rests	Total dues* as on 31.01.2024 (in Rs.)
1 RSUBH	Rs. 3200000/-	9.65	Rs. 3789078.36/-

2. The details of securities in favour of the Bank for the aforesaid credit facilities are:

Nature of security (Hypothecation / Mortgage etc.)	Particulars of securities [Full description with location, four boundaries, measurement on four sides total extent and name of owner to be given]
1. Mortgage	EM of the property entire 2nd floor without roof right, part of free hold built-up property no. 157, in block UO, area measuring 70 sqmtr. Situated in the layout plan of Pitampura residential scheme, Delhi - 110034.

** The Bank reserves its right to proceed under SARFAESI Act against the eligible securities and as regards the agricultural land security Nos. 6 above through other available legal course of action.

3. Consequent upon defaults committed by the above named borrowers in payment of the principal debt / interest as per agreed terms, your loan account has been classified as Non-Performing Asset on 31.12.2022 as per Reserve Bank of India guidelines and directives. Despite our reminders for regularization of your account, you have not repaid the overdue loans including interest thereon.

4. Since you the above named borrowers referred under SI Nos 1 & 2 have failed to meet the liabilities in respect of the credit facilities duly secured by various securities mentioned above and upon classification of your account as a Non-Performing Asset, we hereby recall our advances to SI Nos 1, 2 & 3 of you and give you notice under sub-section (2) of section 13 of the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002, and call upon you to pay in full and discharge your liabilities to the bank aggregating to Rs. 3789078.36/- as detailed in para 1 above, with further interest @9.65 % compounded with monthly rests as agreed, from the date mentioned above, within 60 days from the date of receipt of this notice.

5. The above named mortgagor / guarantor Nos 1 & 2 have given undertaking for repayment/ guarantee for the credit facilities taken by the borrowers and have also given the properties herein mentioned to secure the above said credit facilities. Since the borrowers have committed defaults in repayment, the mortgagors/guarantors have become liable to pay to us in terms of the guarantee, the amounts due to the Bank as per the loan / credit facilities aggregating to Rs. 3789078.36/- together with further interest @ 9.65 % compounded with monthly rests as agreed and we hereby invoke the guarantee against the mortgagors/guarantors who have given non-agri securities enforceable under the SARFAESI Act namely Virender Prasad and Sangita Devi of you and call upon you to pay the said amount within sixty days from the date of receipt of this notice. Please be advised that the guarantors liability is co-extensive with the liability of borrowers.

We further give notice to the borrowers namely Virender Prasad and Sangita Devi and mortgagors/guarantors who have given non-agri securities enforceable under the SARFAESI Act namely Virender Prasad and Sangita Devi that failing payment of the above amount in full with interest and charges etc till the date of payment, we shall be exercising all or any of the rights vested on us, under sub-section (4) of section 13 of the said Act.

6. Please note that in law the borrowers and guarantors are jointly and severally liable to repay the dues with further interest and charges etc.

7. Please note that interest will continue to accrue at the rates and rests as agreed for each credit facility until full repayment.

8. Your attention is also invited to sub-section (13) of section 13 of the said Act in terms of which you are restrained from transferring/ alienating/ shifting any of the secured assets referred to above by way of sale, lease or otherwise, without obtaining our prior written consent. Please also note that non-compliance / contravention of the provisions contained in the said Act or Rules made thereunder, is an offence which is punishable with imprisonment and/or fine as provided under section 29 of the Act.

9. The guarantors referred under SI Nos and have given personal guarantee to secure the loans of the said borrowers and as such we advise you to prevail upon the borrowers to repay the dues as per our demand since we have the right to separately recall the advance from you, initiate action against you simultaneously in accordance with law, for recovery of our dues based on your personal guarantee.

10. We also put all of you on notice that if the account is not regularized/ repaid within the stipulated time and in case of the Bank classifying you as a willful defaulter as per RBI Guidelines, the Bank reserves its rights to publish your photograph in newspaper(s) with your name, address, details of default, dues etc., in accordance with RBI Guidelines besides initiating all recourses available to the Bank for recovery.

11. We also advise you that this demand notice is without prejudice to and shall not be construed as waiver of any other rights or remedies which we have for recovery of the above said dues as well as our right to make further demands in respect of sums due and payable by you.

12. Further, attention is invited to provisions of Sub-section (8) of the Section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available, to redeem the secured assets.

Yours faithfully,
Authorized Officer

APPENDIX IV-A Sale Notice for sale of Immovable Property E-Auction Sale Notice for sale of Immovable Assets under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with proviso to Rule 8(6) and Rule 9(1) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002.

Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower(s) and Guarantor(s) that the below described Immovable Property mortgaged to Indiabulls Housing Finance Ltd. [CIN : L65922DL2005PLC136029] ("Secured Creditor"), the physical possession of which has been taken by the Authorized Officer of the Secured Creditor, will be sold on "as is where is", "as is what is" and "whatever there is" basis on 29.05.2024 from 04.00 P.M. to 05.00 P.M., for recovery of Rs. 25,14,304/- (Rupees Twenty Five Lakh Fourteen Thousand Three Hundred Four only) pending towards Loan Account No. HHLNO00235708, by way of outstanding principal, arrears (including accrued late charges) and interest till 06.05.2024 with applicable future interest in terms of the Loan Agreement and other related loan document(s) w.e.f. 07.05.2024 along with legal expenses and other charges due to the Secured Creditor from SUDHESH K and VRINDA SUDHEESH. The Reserve Price of the Immovable Property will be 12,00,000/- (



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Testing times

Stakes could not be higher in Haryana's political chess, with the outcome remaining anybody's guess

The recent developments in Haryana's political circles have again brought to the fore the intricacies of coalition dynamics. The Jannayak Janta Party (JJP), a key player in the State's politics, has decided to align with the Congress in demanding a floor test for the BJP-led Government in the Haryana Assembly. This comes on the heels of the withdrawal of support by three Independent MLAs to the ruling coalition, turning it into minority with 44 legislators in the House of 90. The Congress, buoyed by the latest developments and perhaps sensing an opportunity to tip the scales in its favour, has seized upon this moment to mount pressure on the BJP Government. However, in the backdrop of this high-stakes political manoeuvring, the JJP finds itself grappling with internal discord. Reports have emerged suggesting that three of its MLAs held clandestine meetings with former Chief Minister ML Khattar, raising eyebrows and fuelling speculation about potential defections. The apparent



dissonance within the JJP underscores the complex interplay of interests and ambitions that often characterises coalition politics. For a party like the JJP, which emerged as a key player following the fractured mandate in the last State elections, maintaining cohesion within its ranks while balancing competing demands from its coalition partners is no easy feat. To jog the memory, it was in Haryana that 'Aaya Ram Gaya Ram' culture started, which continues unabated. The outcome of this internal tug-of-war will not only shape the immediate political landscape in Haryana but also have far-reaching implications for the State's future.

As alliances shift and allegiances waver, the only constant is the relentless pursuit of power and the drive to stay one step ahead of the competition. With the House strength being 90 members, a political party needs the support of 46 MLAs to cross the halfway mark and form a Government. After the withdrawal of support by three Independents, the BJP is short of two MLAs to continue in the Government. The BJP now has 40 MLAs, besides the support of a lone Haryana Lokhit Party legislator and at least three Independents (earlier, it had six Independents in support), which brings to a total of 44 in the House. For the BJP, it is a double whammy, all this is happening days ahead of the Lok Sabha polls to the 10 Haryana seats on May 25. In the 2014 Lok Sabha elections, the BJP won seven of these seats in Haryana with a 35 per cent vote share. In 2019, the BJP won all 10 seats with a 58 per cent vote share. In the current situation, however, it might be a Herculean task. JJP's Dushyant Chautala has mounted pressure on the Nayab Singh Saini Government for a floor test, which he is likely to get the Chair's nod for. If the JJP breaks, it would give the BJP the much-needed elbow room but what is certain for now is that it is time for horse trading in Haryana.

PICTALK



A herd of elephants grazes near a village at Boko, in Kamrup district of Assam

Battle to save India's biodiversity



KAVIN KUMAR KANDASAMY

India's rich biodiversity is under severe threat due to climate change, as recent studies warn of potential economic losses and irreversible ecological damage

India, a land of diverse climates and rich ecosystems, is a global treasure trove of biodiversity. From the majestic Himalayan ranges to the vibrant coastal reefs, our country's biodiversity sustains countless life forms and plays a crucial role in regulating ecosystems. It's not just a vital resource for human sustenance, providing food, water, shelter and medicine, but also a critical indicator of our planet's health, a testament to our rich heritage and a responsibility we all share.

However, the delicate balance of India's biodiversity is now facing unprecedented threats from climate change. Recent studies warn that India may lose a staggering 35 per cent of its GDP by the year 2100 due to climate change, highlighting the deep interconnection between the nation's prosperity and its natural heritage. Rampant deforestation and habitat degradation, particularly in regions like the Western Ghats, are pushing carbon sinks towards becoming sources, exacerbating the climate crisis. The time for action is now.

Impact of Climate Change: A Looming Crisis

The repercussions of climate change are becoming quite evident in altering ecological balance, extreme weather events and increasing health risks. In an era marked by escalating environmental challenges, the climate crisis demands urgent and concerted action. According to a [i]United Nations' InterGovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report, climate change is imperilling human well-being and planetary health, focusing strongly on interactions between climate, biodiversity and human society. The report suggests that the rise in extreme weather conditions has led to some irreversible impacts as natural and human systems are pushed beyond their ability to adapt.

Not only this, a report by the Reserve Bank of India highlights how climate change poses challenges for monetary policy, with frequent weather shocks threatening economic growth and stability. Moreover, a recent



study predicts that climate change could cut global income by up to 19 per cent in the next 25 years, with the most vulnerable countries suffering the most severe impacts.

To overcome these challenges, India has embarked on a journey to mitigate climate change and safeguard its biodiversity. With the G20 presidency last year, India has positioned itself as the voice of the Global South to lead the way in climate action and leveraged this positioning to drive impactful outcomes in various realms related to climate action. Tackling deforestation, reducing emissions and restoring ecosystems are key strategies. With over 26 per cent of the country grappling with expanding drought conditions, urgent measures are being taken to build resilience against environmental degradation.

Pioneering Climate Action Tamil Nadu, a coastal State in the heart of southern India, is emerging as a beacon of hope and leading the charge in climate change efforts. The State has become a forerunner in climate action by announcing three major missions, name-



INDIA'S BIODIVERSITY, A VITAL RESOURCE AND INDICATOR OF PLANETARY HEALTH, FACES UNPRECEDENTED THREATS FROM CLIMATE CHANGE, NECESSITATING URGENT ACTION TO MITIGATE IMPACTS AND SAFEGUARD ITS RICH NATURAL HERITAGE

ly Climate Change; Biodiversity Conservation and Greening; and Wetlands. Through initiatives like the Tamil Nadu Biodiversity and Greening Project (TBGP), the State aims to achieve a 33 per cent forest and tree cover by 2031. With approximately \$90 million in investments, Tamil Nadu's Climate Change Mission, Green Tamil Nadu Mission and Tamil Nadu Wetlands Mission demonstrate a commitment to sustainable development and ecosystem restoration. **Driving Solutions:** Addressing the climate crisis necessitates collaborative efforts from all stakeholders. Supported by startups and Government interventions, public-private partnerships are essential to drive innovation and scale climate solutions. Startups are pivotal in developing innovative technologies that reduce carbon footprints while contributing to economic growth. International collaboration, exemplified by agreements like the Paris Agreement, provides a framework for collective action on a global scale. India's leadership in renewable energy, particularly through

initiatives like the International Solar Alliance (ISA), underscores its commitment to driving sustainable development and fostering a harmonious coexistence between humanity and nature. As India addresses the intertwined challenges of climate change and biodiversity loss, the steps taken today will shape the legacy for future generations. This demands reflection, unity and action to come up with sustainable solutions. In this crucial sustainability battle, India's role extends beyond its borders, contributing significantly to global biodiversity conservation and climate change mitigation efforts. The recent Supreme Court ruling recognising the right against climate change as a fundamental right under Article 14 and Article 21 underscores India's steadfast commitment to climate action and environmental protection. This offers prospects for the Government, corporations and climate action companies to come together and work towards a sustainable future. (The writer is the CEO of ProClima; their views are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

EVOLUTION OF MONETARY POLICY

Madam — This refers to the article, 'Evolution of monetary policy,' which was published on 8 May 2024. Even before India got freedom the Congress formed a committee to suggest the type of economic policy free India should adopt. The committee analysed and said the key infrastructure sector should be under the Public sector to help the investors with raw materials, power, transport and communication at a very economical cost. This helps domestic ventures to produce more. None of the rich in India had so much reserve to invest in big projects and returns from such projects take some years. When Rajiv came to power he availed a small loan from the World Bank to develop mainly the telecom sector accepting the condition to open our door slightly for foreign goods to be marketed here. Though the country went bankrupt between 1980-1990, it is to be noted that the assets of the top richest families swelled from Rs 8000 CR to Rs 40,000 Cr during the same period. So irrespective of parties the interests of the rich are well cared for and produced more than 200 billionaires in a short span under the present regime. This course continues and will go on to enrich the rich, the cost of the due share of the unprivileged section.

A G Rajmohan | Anantapur

MISLEADING ADVERTISEMENTS

Madam — Apropos the editorial "The Name Game" published on 9th May, this is my response. There are guidelines issued by the Department of Consumer Affairs called "Endorsements know-hows" for celebrities, influencers and virtual influencers on social media platforms. The guidelines specify that celebrities must not endorse any product or service they have not personally used or experienced. Further, they are advised to be 'diligent' before endorsing any product or service i.e. extremely careful by analysing the pros and cons of it to save the health and money of lakhs of their followers. Some of them blindly accept and adopt what they say. An

War of words over industrialists



Apropos, "Modi questions Rahul's silence on Ambani, Adani," The Pioneer, May 9, this is my response. The phenomenal industrialists Ambani and Adani have become fodder for the political parties in our country. They have been pilloried by Rahul Gandhi, alleging Modi helped them grow. In contrast, this time Modi turned the tables

against Rahul, alleging a deal between the business tycoons and Congress has silenced Rahul. It's a sad commentary in a country that aspires to emerge as a developed nation and laying the red carpet for the industrialists seeking investments to facilitate employment generation and, thus, economic growth - has engaged in attacking entrepreneurs. India needs to encourage more and more entrepreneurship and innovation bringing more firms into the sphere as a country where millions of people join the labour force every month which can't be absorbed by a few conglomerates. However, the Congress party was exposed with its hand in glove with businesses in the allocation of 2G spectrum and coal. At the same time, the Modi Government brought in reforms to enhance transparency in the allocation of natural resources and the overhauling of the country's bankruptcy laws.

N Sadhasiva Reddy | Bengaluru

example of carelessly endorsing a harmful product is 'pan masala' that too on a sports channel during the live telecast of a cricket match watched by millions of youngsters, highly prone to its habit-forming usage. The Hon'ble Supreme Court has reiterated the above guidelines. The Government needs to punish the celebrities indulging in misleading promotions under the Consumer Protection Act by a jail term, not mere fines to instil responsibility in them as advocated by the Court.

O Prasada Rao | Hyderabad

FOOTBALL IS NUMBER ONE

Madam — Though top football-playing nations are restricted to Europe, Latin America and African countries, the beautiful game's popularity is unmatched in non-football-playing nations as well. The game is a universal language, to say so and has nicely flowered over the decades through champion players of diverse socio-economic milieus gathering together for a common cause: regale the fans with skill and perseverance. No surprise, the lovely game is viewed as a promoter of uni-

versal peace despite the onfield acrimony. The exhilaration of great players will captivate fans forever. No game evokes such intense emotions that emanate after every goal is scored. Parallely, administrators and countries worldwide have displayed mostly unambiguous references towards the game. Now, in a huge honour to football, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) has adopted a resolution proclaiming May 25 as "World Football Day". May 25 marks the 100th anniversary of the first ever Football tournament. As aptly described by a diplomat at the UNGA, football is the "number one game played and followed across the globe". Additionally, as the resolution stated, football creates a space for international cooperation. World Football Day is intended to encourage global peace, overall development and women and empowerment of women and girls.

Ganapathi Bhat | Akola

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

Use of lighting in Indian architecture

Lighting greatly enhances India's architectural heritage, turning historic landmarks into captivating spectacles



ABHIJIT VAISH

India's architectural heritage reflects a blend of history, culture and tradition. In bustling urban environments, our heritage monuments stand as timeless witnesses to our rich past. However, these architectural marvels often fade into the background amidst the vibrant city scenes. Yet, through the strategic application of lighting, these structures are brought to life, captivating the imagination and enhancing their charm after dusk.

Enhancing Historical Significance Through Lighting

Carefully designed external lighting has the power to breathe new life into heritage landmarks, illuminating their intricate details and historical significance. technology, renowned for its energy efficiency and controllability, offers a unique opportunity to showcase these monuments in a manner that respects their heritage while captivating modern audiences. By leveraging lighting solutions, cities across India are revitalizing their architectural treasures, ensuring they remain bea-



Roomi Gate, Lucknow: As a symbol of Lucknow's rich Mughal heritage, Roomi Gate exudes grandeur and historical significance.

Transforming Indian Architectural Landscape with Lighting

From the majestic Sun Temple in Konark to the iconic Roomi Gate in Lucknow, lighting has transformed India's architectural scene, infusing these structures with renewed splendour and magnificence.

Sun Temple, Modhera:

Nestled in the heart of Gujarat, the Sun Temple stands as a testament to ancient craftsmanship and architectural ingenuity. Through the application of dynamic lighting, the temple's intricate carvings and majestic outlines are brought to life after sunset. Visitors are mesmerized as the tem-

ple emerges as a radiant spectacle, inviting them to embark on a journey through time and history.

Roomi Gate, Lucknow: As a symbol of Lucknow's rich Mughal heritage, Roomi Gate exudes grandeur and historical significance. Dynamic lighting accentuates the gate's intricate motifs and architectural features, casting a mesmerizing glow that captivates spectators. Illuminated against the night sky, Roomi Gate symbolizes the city's cultural legacy, inviting locals and tourists alike to marvel at its beauty.

Gujarat Bhawan:

Nestled in the heart of New Delhi, Gujarat Bhawan serves as a cultural hub representing the vibrant heritage of Gujarat. Through the integration of dynamic lighting, the Bhawan transforms, becoming a luminous tribute that honours the State's rich traditions. The interplay of light accentuates its distinctive features, creating a captivating visual narrative for visitors and passersby.

Signature Bridge:

The Delhi Government's decision to illuminate the entire structure of the Signature Bridge

underscores the city's commitment to enhancing its architectural landmarks. Towering above the city's skyline, the bridge now glows at night, offering a spectacular view to visitors and residents alike.

Maryada Purushottam Shri Ram International Airport, Ayodhya:

This architectural marvel, features dynamic lighting that complements its unique design inspired by the Nagara style of temple architecture. Blending modern facilities with rich cultural heritage, the airport offers a captivating experience for travellers and visitors. Lighting greatly enhances India's architectural heritage, turning historic landmarks into captivating spectacles. Embracing this technology allows cities to showcase their cultural legacy and create vibrant public spaces, enriching the lives of residents and visitors. As India progresses, lighting signifies innovation, guiding towards a brighter future for its architectural landscape.

(The author is the executive director at Instapower Ltd, views are personal)



FIRST COLUMN

TRAITS OF A SUCCESSFUL PERSON

He dares to defy convention and breathe life into audacious ideas



RAVI VALLURI

There is a part of us that will not let us be content until we become all that we are capable of being. Life is not about resting on our past achievements and laurels and residing in our comfort zone. It is an adventure from being ordinary to extraordinary. One's current situation may be good, but if a greater opportunity presents itself, one must be open to expanding. This does not mean you are to run away or violate your integrity.

Muscles stay strong and flexible only by use and stretching and so does our mind. The challenge is the way of the universe and showing us the path that the bigger we assume that form and shape. We should bless our dreams and our desires to identify the opportunity that is lurking as there would be several chances arising around the corner. We need the courage and humility to ask the Universe to provide such opportunities, leave behind all our limitations and step forward to live life as magnificent and gigantic as ordained by the Universe. Successful people stretch their hands and take up responsibility which empowers them to enter uncharted territories. This increases the level of their prana/chi, attention span and nature of work, adding a new dimension to the personality. Successful people are never straight-jacketed in their approach and revel in taking risks. Only risk-takers become game-changers.

Rahul Bajaj's sons Rajiv and Sanjiv embarked upon a fascinating idea to salvage the scrap of the decommissioned INS Vikrant to manufacture scooters. It was an innovative idea, utilizing scrap in a novel manner. While the bottom line of the exercise may be to generate profit, the unattainable thought is audacious. Therefore, successful entrepreneurs never kill an idea. An ingenious idea can be a platform for a radical discovery.



An awesome idea is breathtaking and amazing, stunning and awe-inspiring. When the idea germinates, something stupendous takes place. Think big and do not listen to people who tell you it can't be done. "Life is too short to think small", writes Tim Ferriss. The Universe listens to our deepest thoughts. If the thought is positive, we are blessed with positive results.

The cardinal principle in life is to ensure that we receive and circulate only positive thoughts. We should ensure that we are surrounded by efficacious people. Keep shouldering responsibility and ensure that we possess a YES MIND. Successful enterprises ensure that their workforce performs in harmony and synergy while working in teams. The Universe believes in the Laws of Attraction, the Laws of Abundance, the Laws of Gratefulness and the Laws of Spiralling Effect. All this gets transformed into what Darren Hardy calls the Compound Effect. Next, we ought to always feel blessed and have faith that a superior power is guiding us in our endeavours. There is a superior intelligence that is always creating wonderful opportunities for us and these should be grabbed and seized with humility.

A triumphant individual hinges his belief on the thought that the Divine will take care of everything and by simply reposing faith in that Superior Power. Successful People work on these principles where the football swerves like a parabola and enters the net and we are numbed, giving a standing ovation. That is the miracle performed. Choose to call it the power of the Almighty or the architecture of the Universe. But this works on the premise of the power of positive thinking and becoming successful.

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

Precision agriculture: Key to food security



PARAG ACHARYA

The future of Indian agriculture hinges on a blend of tradition and innovation. Precision agriculture offers a crucial pathway to sustainably feed 1.7 billion people

India's population is projected to reach approximately 1.7 billion by 2050. It would be a significant challenge for Indian agriculture to meet the food demands of such a vast population amidst the emerging challenges of climate change. Additionally, the sector faces issues such as an ageing farmer population. Younger generations are increasingly veering away from taking over the family agricultural farm, choosing other, more lucrative and less labour-intensive career paths over agriculture. To address these challenges, the adoption of modern farming techniques like precision farming and digital smart agriculture becomes imperative to ensure sustainable food production and the future prosperity of Indian agriculture.

A recent parliamentary panel has emphasized the importance of promoting agricultural mechanization, particularly for small and marginal farmers and has advocated for the integration of tiny robots and Artificial Intelligence (AI) into Indian farm operations to address the challenges posed by fragmented land holdings. Furthermore, the panel recommended the establishment of a 'National Institute of Agricultural Robotics and Artificial Intelligence' to ensure that India remains at the forefront of agricultural development both domestically and internationally. On August 23, 2022, regarding Farm Mechanization, the Secretary of the Department of Agricultural Research and Education revealed that India's mechanisation level stands at 47 per cent, trailing China (59.5 per cent), Brazil (75 per cent) and the US (95 per cent). The level of mechanisation varies greatly by region inside India too. Northern States boast higher rates (70-80 per cent), driven by fertile land, labour decline and State backing. Southern and eastern States lag (35-45 per cent) due to fragmented land holdings. North-eastern States struggle due to terrain, equipment costs and socio-economic factors.

Certainly, agriculture has evolved steadily from a traditional, labour-intensive model to a sophisticated, technology-driven system. Key milestones include the establishment of the Department of Agricultural Research and Education (DARE), the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) and Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK). The development of high-yielding, cost-effective, disease/pest-resistant and climate-resilient varieties and technologies across crops, horticulture, animal husbandry and fisheries sciences by ICAR has significantly bolstered production and productivity. However, while acknowledging these strides, it's imperative to recognize that the pace of progress must match the urgency of our times.

Throughout history, people have always sought easier, faster and more efficient ways to get things done. This pursuit has sparked a technological revolution that merges age-old farming practices with cutting-edge innovations like the Internet of Things (IoT) known as Ag-IoT. It is a huge change in farming that could shake up how we grow, manage and protect our food. Its solutions are not merely about efficiency; they are about empowering farmers to achieve greater time efficiency, productivity and precision in their daily tasks. It's like having a super smart assistant that can take care of land, animals, crops and farms without needing humans to do everything. People also call it precision agriculture, smart agriculture, or digital agriculture.



THE INTERNET OF THINGS IS A HUGE CHANGE IN FARMING THAT COULD SHAKE UP HOW WE GROW, MANAGE AND PROTECT OUR FOOD. ITS SOLUTIONS ARE NOT MERELY ABOUT EFFICIENCY; THEY ARE ABOUT EMPOWERING FARMERS TO ACHIEVE GREATER TIME EFFICIENCY, PRODUCTIVITY AND PRECISION IN THEIR DAILY TASKS

It is like a big step forward in farming because it uses data to make decisions, making everything more efficient and productive. Through Ag-IoT, the very pulse of plant and animal needs can be sensed. The farmers can keep an eye on the soil all the time, control watering systems from afar and even check on the health of their animals without being right there. It's super handy because it can predict how much crops will grow accurately. In every aspect, Ag-IoT stands poised to revolutionize the landscape of crop management, insect and pest surveillance, food warehousing, livestock care, disease monitoring, dairy operations, supply chain logistics and beyond.

The evolution of drone technology has opened up boundless possibilities in the realm of crop assessment and monitoring. One such pioneering initiative, the NaMo Drone Didi Initiative, stands as a beacon of empowerment for rural women. In a momentous gesture, Prime Minister Narendra Modi personally handed over 1000 drones to 1000 Nammo Drone Didis across 10 locations nationwide at the Indian Agricultural Research Institute in Pusa, New Delhi. These drones will help them do things like check on crops, spray fertilizers and plant seeds. Prime Minister Modi's announcement of the 'Drone Didi' yojana 2023-24 further underscores the Government's dedication to leveraging technology for the betterment of society. Significant financial allocations during 2020-21 and 2021-22, by the Indian Government including INR 1756.3 crores and INR 2422.7 crores respectively to States for the integration of cutting-edge technologies

like drones, artificial intelligence, blockchain, remote sensing and GIS into agriculture and INR 7302.50 crores and INR 7908.18 crores were made in the same periods to ICAR for R&D, further demonstrate the Government's dedication to modernizing agriculture.

Technological strides like RFID tags (radio frequency identification) and systems like NLIS (National Livestock Identification Scheme) and INAPH (Information Network for Animal Productivity & Health) have propelled Precision Dairy Farming.

With swift electronic scanning and data integration, farmers can efficiently manage cow health, productivity and records, marking a significant shift in the dairy industry towards precision and efficiency. Meanwhile, in the aquaculture industry, companies like Aquaconnect and Shrimpbbox are leveraging technology to revolutionise shrimp farming. Aquaconnect employs artificial intelligence and satellite sensing technologies to monitor farm performance and provide advice to shrimp and fish farmers, predominantly small to medium-scale operations. Shrimpbbox, on the other hand, specializes in shrimp farming in colder climates and landlocked areas, boasting impressive productivity with minimal water usage and without antibiotics. Cropin Technology, based in Bengaluru, has developed Aksara, an open-source microlanguage model tailored for climate-smart farming.

In India, the World Economic Forum's AI for Agriculture Innovation (AI4AI) initiative, led by C4IR India, is revolutionizing farm-

ing through AI. The 'Saagu Baagu' pilot in Telangana's Khammam district, supported by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and Digital Green, exemplifies this success. With over 7,000 farmers benefiting, chilli yields surged by 21 per cent, pesticide use decreased by 9 per cent, fertilizer usage dropped by 5 per cent and unit prices improved by 8 per cent. Consequently, farmers doubled their earnings, with incomes rising by over INR 66,000 per acre per crop cycle. Overall, AI interventions at 175 farms in India have boosted crop yields by 30 per cent, as per the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR).

In conclusion, the future of Indian agriculture hinges on a blend of tradition and innovation. With a burgeoning population and dwindling resources, precision agriculture offers a crucial pathway to sustainably feed 1.7 billion people. If established, the 'National Institute of Agricultural Robotics and Artificial Intelligence' would catapult Indian agriculture into unprecedented realms of excellence. The benefits of farm mechanization must permeate every corner of our nation, bridging divides and fostering inclusivity. We cannot afford to overlook those who are marginalized by the digital divide, particularly our small-scale farmers. As we look towards the future, let us remain committed to nurturing a vibrant, tech-enabled agrarian ecosystem that empowers farmers, preserves natural resources and ensures food security for generations to come.

(The writer is a scientist, at Odisha University of Agriculture and Technology, Bhubaneswar; their views are personal)

Revisiting Rohith Vemula's death after eight years

As the dust settles, revelations by the Telangana Police shed new light on Vemula's untimely death

Rohith Vemula (26), a PhD scholar at the University of Hyderabad was found dead in his hostel room on 17 January 2016. Had he lived for another fortnight, he would have celebrated his 27th birthday on January 30. But he was called back by the Maker as it is said that He prefers the favourite ones to join Him ahead of others.

The untimely demise of Vemula opened a Pandora's Box all over India. Opposition parties led by the Congress staged a nationwide protest and agitation blaming the Narendra Modi Government at the Centre for the death of this young man. The CPI(M)'s frontal organization SFI called for education bundh the next day and



KUMAR CHELLAPPAN

demanding the resignation of Smriti Irani, the then union minister for human resources development and Bandaru Dattatreya, a minister of State from the council of ministers blaming the duo for the death of Rohith Vemula. Poets affiliated with the CPI(M) and other Left organizations wrote poems and short stories based on the life and times of Vemula. The fact that Vemula belonged to the Harijan com-

munity added to their ire and this was discernible from the power of the words with which they blamed the "communal and fascist" Government at the Centre. Many articles and features that appeared in regional newspapers and satellite TV channels blamed the doorstep of Smriti Irani for Rohith Vemula's suicide. A major political outfit promoted by the all-powerful minority community had declared a solatium of Rs 25 lakh to the family of Vemula within days of his unfortunate death. Though it is more than eight years since he bade farewell to this world, his mother or brother has not been given the promised amount. When Radhika, the mother of Rohith

Vemula contacted the leadership of the said party, they feigned ignorance about the amount and the matter was given a silent burial. More than eight years after the suicide of Vemula, the Telangana Police which was entrusted with the probe of finding out matters that led Vemula to resort to the extreme measure concluded that Rohith Vemula was neither a member of the Harijan community nor any Other Backward Community (OBC) student as he had claimed. The fear that the university was likely to detect the truth behind his caste status which would put an end to his political aspirations had made him take the drastic step, said the police report. The unanswered question in



the whole episode is why the investigating officers failed to track the phone calls made by Vemula during the last few days of his life. This would have thrown more light on the reasons behind the suicide of the research scholar. Many of his colleagues attribute a failed love affair as the cause behind his suicide.

Months before he committed suicide, Vemula had led a demonstration under the auspices of the Ambedkar Students Association on the University Campus to protest the death penalty awarded to Yakub Memon, one of the prime accused in the Mumbai serial blasts of 1993 which claimed 260 lives. There were reports that the soft-spoken Vemula and his friends had bashed up a member of the rival union and the victim needed hospitalisation. Moreover, there were charges against the University of Hyderabad for non-payment of a monthly scholarship of Rs 25,000 to Vemula though the university authorities denied the allegation. Rohith Vemula was neither the first Harijan student in the

University of Hyderabad or any other universities in India who have committed suicide. Rajini Anand, an engineering college student in Kerala had jumped to death in 2004 following the callous approach of the ruling Congress-led Government in the State towards her plea for financial assistance to pay college fees. Sometime last year, a CPI(M) member of Rajya Sabha asked the Government of India to furnish the number of Harijan students who had committed suicide in the country since 2014. The MP's innuendo was that no Harijan students had committed suicide in the country before the swearing-in of Modi as Prime Minister. The kind of fire from the

opposition faced by Smriti Irani was unprecedented and strange. The Rohith Vemula affair cost her the office of the HRD ministry and she was relegated to minister of textiles Opposition party leaders have all the right to criticize the Government and ministers for errors and omissions. But it should be restricted to the carelessness and irresponsibility of the concerned minister. For eight years, this young lady was crucified by her political rivals. Had they taken a little bit of time and gone through the releases issued by the Government of India, they would not have dared to throw mud at Smriti. (The writer is special correspondent with The Pioneer; views are personal)

Heavy fighting in Rafah keeps aid crossings closed

Over one lakh civilians flee

AP ■ RAFAH

Heavy fighting between Israeli troops and Palestinian militants on the outskirts of the southern Gaza city of Rafah has left crucial nearby aid crossings inaccessible and caused over 100,000 people to flee north, a United Nations official said Friday. Israel's plans for a full-scale invasion of Rafah appear to be on hold for now, with the United States deeply opposed and stepping up pressure by threatening to withhold arms. But even the more limited incursion launched earlier this week threatens to worsen Gaza's humanitarian catastrophe. Heavy fighting was also underway in northern Gaza, where Hamas appeared to have once again regrouped in an area where Israel has already

launched punishing assaults. Over a million Palestinians have fled to Rafah to escape fighting elsewhere, with many packed into UN-run shelters or squalid tent camps. The city on the border with Egypt is also a crucial hub for bringing in food, medicine, fuel and other goods. The UN's Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, known as OCHA, says about 110,000 people have fled Rafah and that food and fuel supplies in the city are critically low. Georgios Petropoulos, an OCHA official working in Rafah, said the two main crossings near the city remain closed, cutting off supplies and preventing medical evacuations and the movement of humanitarian staff. "Even if there were assurances to us being able to pass through a corridor, the proximity so close to a military involved in fighting is just not acceptable for something that has to be a humanitarian zone," he said. The UN's World Food



University students supporting Palestinian people stage a rally to demand a stop to the crackdown on demonstrators at rallies for Palestinians on the campus of U.S. universities, near the U.S. Embassy in Seoul, South Korea, Friday. AP/PTI

Programme will run out of food for distribution in southern Gaza by Saturday unless more aid arrives, Petropoulos said. He said about 30,000 people were leaving Rafah daily in search of safety, but that humanitarian workers had no supplies to help them set up camp in a new location. "We simply have no tents, we have no blankets, no bedding, none of the items that you would expect a population on the move to be able to get from the humanitarian system," he said. Israeli troops captured the Gaza side of the Rafah crossing with Egypt on Tuesday, forcing it to shut down. Rafah was the

main point of entry for fuel needed to power vehicles, as well as the generators on which hospitals and water treatment plants rely. Israel says the nearby Kerem Shalom crossing — Gaza's main cargo terminal — is open on its side, but the UN says it remains inaccessible on the Gaza side because of ongoing fighting. Israeli troops are battling Palestinian militants in eastern Rafah, not far from the crossings. An Associated Press reporter in the city heard heavy artillery and gunfire throughout the night into Friday. The military said in a statement that it had located several tunnels and eliminated militants "during close-quarters combat and with an aerial strike." Hamas' military wing said it carried out a complex attack in which it struck a house where Israeli troops had taken up position, an armored personnel carrier and soldiers operating on foot. There was no comment from the Israeli military. It is not possible to indepen-

dently confirm battlefield accounts from either side. Hamas also said it launched a number of mortar rounds at the Kerem Shalom crossing, close to where Israeli troops are operating. The military said it intercepted two launches. The crossing was initially closed after a Hamas rocket attack last weekend that killed four Israeli soldiers. Israel says Rafah is the last Hamas stronghold in Gaza and key to its goal of dismantling the group's military and governing capabilities and returning scores of hostages captured in Hamas' October 7 attack that triggered the war. But Hamas has repeatedly regrouped, even in the hardest-hit parts of Gaza. Heavy battles erupted this week in the Zeitoun area on the outskirts of Gaza City in the northern part of the territory. Northern Gaza was the first target of the ground offensive, and Israel said late last year that it had mostly dismantled Hamas there. The north remains largely isolated by Israeli troops, and

the UN says the estimated 300,000 people there are experiencing "full-blown famine." Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has vowed to proceed with the offensive with or without US arms, saying "we will fight with our fingernails" if needed in a defiant statement late Thursday. The Israeli military says it has what it needs for the missions it has planned, including in Rafah. The war began with Hamas' surprise attack into southern Israel last year, in which it killed some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and took another 250 hostage. The militants are still holding some 100 captives and the remains of more than 30 after most of the rest were released during a cease-fire last year. The war has killed over 34,800 Palestinians, mostly women and children, according to the Gaza Health Ministry, which does not distinguish between civilians and combatants in its figures.

Police dismantle pro-Palestinian camp at MIT

Boston (AP): Police dismantled a pro-Palestinian tent encampment at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology early Friday and moved to clear protesters from University of Pennsylvania's campus in Philadelphia, hours after police tear-gassed protesters and took down an encampment at the University of Arizona. In Cambridge, Massachusetts, video showed police roaming through the MIT encampment. Police in riot gear arrived around 4 a.m., encircled the camp and gave protesters about 15 minutes to leave. Ten students who remained were arrested, the university's president said. A crowd outside the camp began gathering and chanting pro-Palestinian slogans but were dispersed by 6 a.m. At the University of Arizona in Tucson, campus police in riot gear fired tear gas late Thursday at protesters before tearing down an encampment that included wood and plastic barriers on campus. In a statement, the University of Arizona said it made the decision because the encampment violated school policy. "A structure made from wooden pallets and other debris was erected on campus property after 5 pm in violation of the policy," the school said in a statement. "University officials issued warnings to remove the encampment and disperse. The warnings were ignored." The school also said that police vehicles were spiked, and rocks and water bottles thrown at officers and university staff. In Philadelphia early Friday, police detained people who were at an encampment that has been in place at the University of Pennsylvania for more than two weeks. Officers moved in after giving protesters a warning to leave campus or face possible arrest. Tensions have ratcheted up in standoffs with protesters on campuses across the United States and in Europe. Some colleges cracked down immediately, while others have tolerated the demonstrations. Some have begun to lose patience and call in the police over concerns about disruptions to campus life and safety.

Suspected pirate attack in Gulf of Aden raises concerns

Jerusalem (AP):

A European naval force detained six suspected pirates on Friday after they opened fire on an oil tanker travelling through the Gulf of Aden, officials said, likely part of a growing number of piracy attacks emanating from Somalia. The attack on the Marshall Islands-flagged Chrystal Arctic comes as Yemen's Houthi rebels have also been attacking ships travelling through the crucial waterway, the Red Sea and the Bab el-Mandeb Strait connecting the Red Sea and the Mediterranean Sea. The pirates shot at the tanker from a small ship "carrying weapons and ladders," according to the British military's United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations centre, which oversees Mideast shipping routes. The pirates opened fire first at the Chrystal Arctic, whose armed, onboard security team returned fire at them, the UKMTO said. The pirates then abandoned their attempt to take the tanker, which continued on its way with all its crew safe, the UKMTO said. Hours later, the European Union naval force in the region known as Operation Atalanta said a frigate operating in the region detained six suspected pirates. The frigate seized the pirates given "the unsafe condition of their skiff" and said that some had "injuries of varied severity." It wasn't immediately clear if those injured suffered gunshot wounds from the exchange of fire with the Chrystal Arctic. The EU force declined to elaborate "due to the security of the operations." Once-rampant piracy off the Somali coast diminished after a peak in 2011. That year, there were 237 reported attacks in waters off Somalia.

UN to vote on resolution for Palestine rights

AP ■ UNITED NATIONS

The UN General Assembly is expected to vote Friday on a resolution that would grant new "rights and privileges" to Palestine and call on the Security Council to favourably reconsider its request to become the 194th member of the United Nations. The United States vetoed a widely backed council resolution on April 18 that would have paved the way for full United Nations membership for Palestine, a goal the Palestinians have long sought and Israel has worked to prevent, and US deputy ambassador Robert Wood made clear Thursday the Biden administration is opposed to the assembly resolution. Under the UN Charter, prospective members of the United Nations must be "peace-loving," and the Security Council must recommend their admission to the General Assembly for final approval. Palestine became a UN non-member observer state in 2012.

"We've been very clear from the beginning there is a process for obtaining full membership in the United Nations, and this effort by some of the Arab countries and the Palestinians is to try to go around that," Wood said Thursday. "We have said from the beginning the best way to ensure Palestinian full membership in the UN is to do that through negotiations with Israel. That remains our position." But unlike the Security Council, there are no vetoes in the 193-member General Assembly and the resolution is expected to be approved by a large majority, according to three Western diplomats, speaking on condition of anonymity because negotiations were private. The draft resolution "determines" that a state of Palestine is qualified for membership — dropping the original language that in the General Assembly's judgment it is "a peace-loving state." It therefore recommends that the Security Council reconsider its request "favourably." The renewed

push for full Palestinian membership in the UN comes as the war in Gaza has put the more than 75-year-old Israeli-Palestinian conflict at center stage. At numerous council and assembly meetings, the humanitarian crisis facing the Palestinians in Gaza and the killing of more than 34,000 people in the territory, according to Gaza health officials, have generated outrage from many countries. The original draft of the assembly resolution was changed significantly to address concerns not only by the US but also by Russia and China, the diplomats said. The first draft would have conferred on Palestine "the rights and privileges necessary to ensure its full and effective participation" in the assembly's sessions and UN conferences "on equal footing with member states." It also made no reference to whether Palestine could vote in the General Assembly. According to the diplomats, Russia and China which are strong supporters of Palestine's

UN membership were concerned that granting the list of rights and privileges detailed in an annex to the resolution could set a precedent for other would-be UN members — with Russia concerned about Kosovo and China about Taiwan. Under longstanding legislation by the US Congress, the United States is required to cut off funding to UN agencies that give full membership to a Palestinian state — which could mean a cutoff in dues and voluntary contributions to the UN from its largest contributor. The final draft drops the language that would put Palestine "on equal footing with member states." And to address Chinese and Russian concerns, it would decide "on an exceptional basis and without setting a precedent" to adopt the rights and privileges in the annex. The draft also adds a provision in the annex on the issue of voting, stating categorically: "The state of Palestine, in its capacity as an observer state, does not have the right to vote in the General Assembly or to

put forward its candidature to United Nations organs." The final list of rights and privileges in the draft annex includes giving Palestine the right to speak on all issues not just those related to the Palestinians and Middle East, the right to propose agenda items and reply in debates, and the right to be elected as officers in the assembly's main committees. It would give the Palestinians the right to participate in UN and international conferences convened by the United Nations — but it drops their "right to vote" which was in the original draft. Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas first delivered the Palestinian Authority's application for UN membership in 2011. It failed because the Palestinians didn't get the required minimum support of nine of the Security Council's 15 members. They went to the General Assembly and succeeded by more than a two-thirds majority in having their status raised from a UN observer to a non-member observer state.

'Muslims in Singapore distressed by Gaza conflict'

Singapore (PTI): Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong has said that he understands that Muslims in the multi-national-multi-racial country are distressed by the "unconscionable and inhuman" conflict in Gaza but underlined that Singaporeans have to work together to acknowledge these feelings and provide help to the Palestinians in a practical manner. The conflict in Gaza was triggered by the unprecedented attacks against Israel by Hamas militants on October 7 that killed around 1,200 people. Israel has launched a massive counter-offensive against the Islamic militant group that has ruled Gaza since 2007. More than 34,900 people have been killed in Gaza in Israeli action, according to the territory's Hamas-run health ministry.

Trump Hush Money trial enters 3rd week, awaits Michael Cohen testimony

AP ■ NEW YORK

The third week of testimony in Donald Trump's hush money trial draws to a close Friday after jurors heard the dramatic, if not downright seamy, account of porn actor Stormy Daniels, while prosecutors gear up for their most crucial witness: Michael Cohen, Trump's former attorney. Daniels' story of an alleged sexual encounter with Trump was a crucial building block for prosecutors, who are seeking to show that the Republican and his allies buried unflattering stories in the waning weeks of the 2016 presidential election in an effort to illegally influence the race. Trump, who denies the sexual encounter ever happened, walked out of the court in a rage Thursday, angrily telling reporters, "I'm innocent." His attorneys pushed for



a mistrial over the level of tawdry details Daniels went into on the witness stand, but Judge Juan M. Merchan denied the request. Over more than 7½ hours of testimony, Daniels relayed in graphic detail what she says happened after the two met at a celebrity golf outing at Lake Tahoe where sponsors included the adult film studio where she worked. Daniels explained how she felt surprise, fear and discomfort, even as she consented to sex with Trump. During combative cross-examination, Trump's lawyers sought to paint Daniels as a liar and extortionist who's trying to take down the former president after drawing money and fame from her claims. Trump attorney Susan Necheles pressed Daniels on

why she accepted the payout to keep quiet instead of going public, and the two women traded barbs over what Necheles said were inconsistencies in Daniels' story over the years. "You made all this up, right?" Necheles asked Daniels. "No," Daniels shot back. The defence has sought to show that the hush money payments made on his behalf were an effort to protect his reputation and family — not his campaign — by shielding them from embarrassing stories about his personal life. After Daniels stepped down from the stand Thursday, Trump's attorneys pressed the judge to amend the gag order that prevents him from talking about witnesses in the case so he could publicly respond to what she told jurors. The judge denied that request too.

Australian judge extends ban on X sharing video of bishop's stabbing

AP ■ MELBOURNE

An Australian judge on Friday extended a ban on X allowing videos of the stabbing of a Sydney bishop in his church last month after government lawyers condemned the social media company's free speech argument for keeping the graphic images circulating. Australian Federal Court Justice Geoffrey Kennett extended his order that X Corp., the company rebranded by billionaire Elon Musk when he bought Twitter last year, block users from sharing videos of the April 15 attack. The attack led to terrorism-related charges for the alleged attacker, a teenager, and triggered a riot outside the church. The order has existed since April 22 and Kennett will

decide on Monday whether it will continue in its current form. X is alone among social media platforms in fighting a notice from Australia's eSafety Commission, which describes itself as the world's first government agency dedicated to keeping people safer online, to take down the video of the attack during an Assyrian Orthodox service streamed online. A bishop and priest were injured but both survived. Musk has accused Australia of censorship and has applied to the Federal Court to overturn the eSafety notice. The court will sit on Wednesday to consider setting a hearing date for X's application. X has geoblocked Australian users from the content, but eSafety argues the video can be still accessed from Australia through Virtual

Private Networks. VPNs are services that allow users to access sites in other countries that are blocked in their own nation. The regulator wants a worldwide ban on the video. An eSafety lawyer, Tim Begbie, described X in court on Friday as a "market leader in proliferating and distributing violent content and violent and extremist material." Begbie said Australia could not be expected to conform to X's "pro-free speech stance." "The fact is that that stance is in large measure illusory. Because X doesn't stand for global removal is bad" in some pure sense," Begbie said. X's own policies repeatedly refer to circumstances in which the platform will elect to remove content globally, Begbie said.

Prince Harry and Meghan in Nigeria

AP ■ ABUJA

Prince Harry and his wife, Meghan, arrived in Nigeria on Friday to champion mental health for young people affected by conflicts and to promote the Invictus Games, which the prince founded to aid the rehabilitation of wounded and sick servicemembers and veterans. The couple, in the West African nation for the first time on the invitation of its military, visited the Lightway Academy college which receives support from their Archewell foundation to educate and train young girls affected by conflicts in Nigeria. Harry and Meghan will also be meeting with wounded soldiers and their families in what Nigerian officials have said is a show of support to improve the morale of the soldiers, including those fighting a 14-year war against Islamic extremists in the country's northeast. "This engagement with Invictus is giving us the opportunity for the recovery of our



soldiers," Abidemi Marquis, the director of sports at Nigeria's Defence Headquarters, told reporters on Thursday. Harry served in Afghanistan as an Apache helicopter copilot gunner, after which he founded the Invictus Games in 2014 to offer wounded veterans and servicemembers the challenge of competing in sports events similar to the Paralympics. Nigeria was among the nations

that participated in last year's edition of the games. The couple were received at the Abuja school by a dancing troupe and a crowd of excited students and teachers. Student Nnenna Okorie couldn't hide her excitement at meeting the couple. "She is the prettiest human being ever," said Okorie, a senior student at the school. "I admire her so much and then Harry, I love how he is so supportive," she said. During their stay, Harry and Meghan will attend basketball and volleyball matches and will meet with local non-governmental organisations in Abuja and Lagos that are receiving support from them. Meghan will also co-host an event on women in leadership with Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, Director General of the World Trade Organisation, according to their spokesman Charlie Gipson. The news of Meghan's visit excited some in Nigeria where her life — and association with the British royal family — is closely followed. Meghan has also said in the past that she found out through a genealogy test that she was 43 per cent Nigerian. The Nigerian military has touted the Invictus Games as one which could help the recovery of thousands of its personnel who have been fighting the homegrown Boko Haram Islamic extremists and their factions since 2009 when they launched an insurgency.

Polish farmers march against EU policies

AP ■ WARSAW

Tens of thousands of disgruntled Polish farmers marched through downtown Warsaw on Friday to protest the European Union's climate policies and oppose the pro-EU government of Prime Minister Donald Tusk. The march under the slogan "Down with the Green Deal" was organised by Solidarity, a farmers' trade union that is strongly opposed to the EU's farming policies, in particular a policy known as the Green Deal which aims to make agriculture more climate friendly. The farmers say it interferes with their work and imposes high costs on them. "We are protesting because we don't want to become slaves on our own land," said dairy farmer Grazyna Gasowska from eastern Poland. "According to the Green Deal we are supposed to grow what they tell us to, when they tell us to," Gasowska said as she held a national white-and-red flag.



"All those diversification requirements are very difficult for the farmers." The noisy march stopped at the EU Warsaw office and then at parliament. "Let Brussels eat worms, we prefer pork chops and potatoes," said one banner, referring to a general belief that the EU will advise eating insects and worms rather than cattle meat. The demonstration came as Poland's political parties campaign ahead of elec-

tions next month for the European Parliament. The protest was supported by Polish right-wing opposition party Law and Justice, which held power from 2015 until late last year and is looking to regain political momentum. With an eye to the election, Tusk on Friday announced a reshuffle of his Cabinet to replace four ministers running for the European Parliament next month. The changes are also seen as a chance to bring new energy into Tusk's government, which took office in December and embarked on deep reforms in many areas, including justice, foreign policy and the media. "Today comes the time of bringing order and this is one of the reasons for which we jointly decided to have these changes," Tusk said. He said there will be more changes in the future that would be dictated by the "interest of the state." Tusk's pro-European Union government has embarked on a wide reversal of the policies of the Law and Justice party, which put Poland on a collision course with the 27-member EU during its administration. Tusk's team is taking steps to free the judiciary and the state media from the political control that Law and Justice tried to impose, and bring to account those responsible for mismanagement and loss of funds by state-owned companies.

Sensex, Nifty rebound as ITC, Reliance gain



PTI ■ MUMBAI

Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty found firmer ground on Friday, propelled by a rally in market heavyweights Reliance Industries, ITC and Bharti Airtel amid a supportive trend overseas. Recovering from the sharp decline in the previous trade, the 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 260.30 points or 0.36 per cent to settle at 72,664.47. During the day, it rallied 542.37 points or 0.74 per cent to 72,946.54. The NSE Nifty climbed 97.70 points or 0.44 per cent to 22,055.20. From the Sensex basket, Power Grid, NTPC, JSW Steel, Asian Paints, ITC, Bharti Airtel, Hindustan Unilever and Tata Motors were the biggest gainers. On the other hand, Tata

Consultancy Services, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Infosys, Wipro, Mahindra & Mahindra and HDFC Bank were among the laggards. In Asian markets, Seoul, Tokyo, Shanghai and Hong Kong settled with gains. European markets were trading in the green. Wall Street ended in positive territory on Thursday. Global oil benchmark Brent crude climbed 0.41 per cent to USD 84.22 a barrel. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 6,994.86 crore on Thursday, according to exchange data. In the previous session, the BSE benchmark dropped 1,062.22 points or 1.45 per cent to settle at 72,404.17 on Thursday. The NSE Nifty dived 345 points or 1.55 per cent to 21,957.50.

SGGSCC celebrates 40th Annual Day



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Sri Guru Gobind Singh College of Commerce, University of Delhi, organized its 40th Annual Day on Tuesday, 7th May 2024. The Principal of the college, Prof. Jatinder Bir Singh, in his address, congratulated the students for their achievements in academics and co-curricular events. He recounted how in its brief

history of forty years, the college has made a significant mark in the educational landscape of India. SGGSCC has been awarded A++ by NAAC and has been ranked among top 50 colleges of the country by NIRF. The Chief Guest of the event, Justice Jagdish Singh Khehar, former Chief Justice of India urged the students to be creative and thoughtful in order to enjoy life and work.

BPCL to invest ₹1.7 lakh crore in core, new energy business

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd (BPCL) plans to invest Rs 1.7 lakh crore over the next five years in its core oil refining, fuel marketing and petrochemical business as well as in clean energy such as hydrogen, its chairman G Krishnakumar said on Friday. As part of 'Project Aspire', a five-year strategic framework, BPCL plans to raise its oil refining capacity, augment petrochemical business and expand its presence in cleaner fuel space with an eye on energy transition and meeting country's fuel demand, he said at a post earnings investor call. "Our strategy is based on two fundamental pillars - 'Nurturing the Core'; and 'Investing in Future Big Bets'. We remain committed to our core businesses, which include the refining, marketing of petroleum products and upstream. In addition, we are focusing on our big bets, which comprise petrochemicals, gas, green energy, non-fuel retail, and digital," Krishnakumar said.

This will not just help meet the rising fuel demand of the world's fastest growing economy but also help the firm meet its target of achieving net zero carbon emissions by 2040. "Overall, we plan to invest Rs 1.7 Lakh crores over a period of 5 years. Of this, Rs 75,000 crores is earmarked for refineries and petrochemicals. We plan to undertake strategic pipeline projects with an investment of Rs 8,000 crores, of which projects worth Rs 5,000 crores have already been identified. "We will invest more than Rs 20,000 crore in our marketing business. We have also earmarked investments of Rs 32,000 crores in upstream production, mainly in Mozambique and Brazil, depending on positive developments on ground. We will invest Rs 25,000 crores on gas business, (and) Rs 10,000 crores on green energy business," he said. BPCL, which owns three refineries that convert crude oil extracted from below earth's surface into fuels like petrol and diesel, plans to expand refining capacity to 45



million tonnes per annum by March 2029 from current 35.3 million tonnes, he said. The capacity addition would majorly be at Bina refinery in Madhya Pradesh, which is being expanded to 11 million tonnes from current 7.8 million tonnes. Smaller capacity additions through debottlenecking are planned at Mumbai and Kochi refineries as well. On fuel retailing infrastructure, BPCL is looking to add about 4,000 petrol pumps to its 22,000-odd retail stations. Also, the company is undertaking two petrochemical projects at

Bina and Kochi, he said. "In line with the government's focus to increase gas share in the Indian energy portfolio from 6 per cent to 15 per cent, we intend to increase our gas footprint by building optimal city gas infrastructure and acquiring high opportunity geographic areas. We are also exploring enablers like diversification of sourcing, trading capabilities, storage facilities and LNG regasification infrastructure etc. To support our aspirations," he said. Alongside, it will pursue green ambitions. "We aim to build 10 GW of renewable energy portfolio

through organic and inorganic acquisition of operating assets, by 2040," he said. The clean energy business will include producing green hydrogen, which emits only water when burnt. "We will produce 30,000 tonnes per annum of green hydrogen in our refineries by 2030, to meet 10 per cent of our hydrogen demand. We will also engage in pilots for green hydrogen fuelled mobility and other applications," he said. The firm is also aggressively pushing for biofuels and plans to set up 26 compressed biogas plants in the near term. "In the EV charging business, we plan to reach a total of 7,000 EV charging stations by FY25. As of March 2024, we added 2,443 new EV charging and battery swapping stations, taking our total to 3,135 EV charging and battery swapping stations," he said. The EV charging stations will complement its fuel retailing network which also includes 2,034 CNG stations. Expecting petrol and diesel demand to grow in the near

term, he said the growth in demand of petrol is expected to be around 5 per cent whereas in diesel about 1.5-2 per cent. "India has struck the right balance between its energy security and climate goals. Our rapidly expanding economy will inevitably lead to a surge in energy demand, prompting a continued demand and growth in BPCL's core and new businesses," he said. India has set a goal of attaining net-zero emissions by 2070. "This will accelerate the adoption of green and low carbon energy solutions, opening significant economic opportunities for companies operating in the broader energy sector, including BPCL." On price outlook, he said the expectation is that global supply and demand will be relatively balanced and the prices would be in the range of USD 83-87 per barrel. "The factors that could impact prices are largely related to unplanned production disruptions, a risk highlighted by the recently escalating tensions in the Middle East."

Rupee settles 1 paisa lower at 83.49 against US dollar

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The rupee stayed range-bound and settled 1 paisa lower at 83.49 (provisional) against the US dollar on Friday, as the support from positive domestic equities was negated by elevated crude oil prices. Forex traders said significant foreign fund outflows dented investors' sentiments. At the interbank foreign exchange market, the local unit traded in a narrow range. It opened at 83.48, and touched an intraday high of 83.46 and a low of 83.51 during the day. The domestic unit finally settled for the day at 83.49 (provisional), down 1 paisa from its previous close. On Thursday, the rupee closed at 83.48 against the American currency. The Indian rupee traded on a flat note. Positive domestic markets and a weak US dollar supported the rupee, however, a rise in crude oil prices and sustained foreign fund outflows capped sharp gains, said Anuj Choudhary Research Analyst, Sharekhan by BNP Paribas. Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was at 105.23, higher by 0.01 per cent as the US dollar declined on rising



weekly unemployment claims from the US. Weekly unemployment claims rose to 231,000 vs 209,000 in the prior week and the forecast of 212,000. "We expect the rupee to trade with a slight negative bias and the US dollar may rise again amid hawkish Fed speak and safe-haven demand amid geopolitical tensions in the Middle East," Choudhary said. Selling pressure by foreign investors and rising global crude oil prices may also pressurise the rupee. However, a rise in risk appetite in global markets may support the rupee at lower levels. "Traders may take cues from India's IIP data and Michigan consumer

sentiment data from the US. USD-INR spot price is expected to trade in a range of Rs 83.30 to Rs 83.75," Choudhary added. Brent crude futures, the global oil benchmark, rose 0.62 per cent to USD 84.40 per barrel. On the domestic equity market, the 30-share BSE Sensex advanced 260.30 points, or 0.36 per cent to close at 72,664.47 points. The broader NSE Nifty settled 97.70 points or 0.44 per cent higher at 22,055.20. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) were net sellers in the capital markets on Thursday as they offloaded shares worth Rs 6,994.86 crore, according to exchange data.

China willing to help Indian firms to cater to its market demand: Envoy

PTI ■ BEIJING

The Chinese market is open to all countries, including India, China's new envoy to India, Xu Feihong, has said, maintaining that Beijing understands New Delhi's concerns over its burgeoning trade deficit and is willing to address this issue by facilitating more Indian companies to tap the Chinese market. The trade deficit, a major concern of India for years, stood at USD 99.2 billion in 2023 in the overall bilateral trade of USD 136.2 billion. In 2022, the trade deficit crossed the USD 100 billion mark by touching USD 101 billion for the first time. India has been periodically flagging concerns and pressing China to open its IT and pharma sectors besides grains, its major export potential sectors. In an interaction with the PTI and China's CGTN-TV here before he headed to New Delhi to take up his posting, Xu reiterated Beijing's often repeated assertions that it is not China's intention to seek a trade surplus. "There are multiple factors behind India's trade deficit. China understands India's concern. It is never our

intention to seek a trade surplus." "The Chinese market is open to all countries, including India. We have sent many trade promotion delegations to India to buy Indian products, and we would like to see more marketable Indian products enter the Chinese market. We are ready to provide greater facilitation for India's participation at the China International Import Expo, the China-South Asia Expo, the Canton Fair and other platforms," he said. "China is also willing to help Indian companies cater to China's market demands and tap into the potential for commercial and trade cooperation." "Last year, the Chinese diplomatic missions in India issued nearly 190,000 visas; over 80 per cent were business visas. Business travels in both ways is good for bilateral trade. We hope that India can also provide more convenience to Chinese businesspeople travelling to India for business opportunities," Xu said. India-China trade continues to remain high despite bilateral tensions over the eastern Ladakh military standoff as the total trade last year climbed to a record USD 136.2 billion.

As many as 17 firms under IT hardware PLI to start production this year, says IT Secretary

PTI ■ FARIDABAD

Majority of personal computer and server makers selected under the IT hardware production-linked incentive scheme are expected to start production this year, a senior government official said on Friday. "... About 17 out of 27 PLI companies will start production this year. Around 6-7 of them started production last year and two have plans to start production next year," Ministry of Electronics and IT (MeitY) Secretary S Krishnan said on the sidelines of the inauguration of a new high-end computing server manufacturing unit of Netweb Technologies here. The government in November, 2023 approved the application of 27 companies, including Dell, HP, Foxconn, Lenovo, Netweb Technologies, under new production-linked incentive (PLI) scheme for IT hardware. Among the big names that have been granted approval under the IT hardware scheme are Flextronics, VVDN, and Optiemus. Other applicants that have received the green signal include Padget Electronics, SOJO Manufacturing Services,

ITA seeks financial help from Centre to support struggling Darjeeling tea industry

PTI ■ KOLKATA

The Indian Tea Association (ITA) on Friday reiterated its plea for financial assistance from the Centre to support the struggling Darjeeling tea industry. According to the ITA, the situation in Darjeeling is critical due to decreasing yields and plummeting prices. Without a financial relief package, the survival of the Darjeeling tea industry is in jeopardy, the association said, adding that it has urged the



government to consider and act upon a financial revival package endorsed by the Parliamentary Standing

Committee on Commerce in March 2022. "The association has urged the government to extend a

financial revival package to the Darjeeling tea sector which has been already endorsed by the Parliamentary Standing Committee on commerce in March 2022. This awaits consideration and action", the ITA said. The ITA, quoting Tea Board data, highlighted that adverse weather conditions have affected tea production in Assam and West Bengal, leading to a significant decrease in production. From January to March 2024, production was down by 13.69

million kg at 96.10 million kg across the country, according to Tea Board data. Prices at the auctions have also taken a beating during the same period, the ITA said, adding that at an all-India level, auction prices were down by Rs 16.08 per kg at Rs 128.12. Meanwhile, tea exports from India during January to December 2023 fell to 227.91 million kg as compared to 231.08 million kg in the same period of 2022, adding to the industry's challenges, the ITA said.

Gold, silver prices rebound on bullish global trend, strong domestic demand

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Gold and silver prices rebounded sharply on Friday after falling for two straight sessions, with the yellow metal jumping Rs 950 to cross the Rs 73,000-mark in the national capital amid a bullish global trend and strong domestic demand on the Akshaya Tritiya festival. According to HDFC Securities, the precious metal climbed by Rs 950 to Rs 73,200 per 10 grams. It had closed at Rs 72,250 per 10 grams in the previous trade. Silver prices also surged by Rs 2,300 to Rs 85,500 per kg. In the previous close, it had ended at Rs 83,200 per kg. "Spot gold prices (24 carats) in the Delhi markets are trading at Rs 73,200 per 10 grams, up by Rs 950, amid a bullish trend in the overseas markets. "During the auspicious occasion of Akshaya Tritiya, retail demand is going to rise as people will buy gold coins, bars, and jewellery," Saumil Gandhi, Senior Analyst of Commodities at HDFC Securities, said. In the global markets, spot gold at Comex was trading at USD 2,360 per ounce, up by USD 52 from the previous close. Gold rose after the latest unemployment claims data revealed more indications of a slowing labour market.

Bank of Baroda Q4 profit rises marginally to ₹4,886 crore



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

State-owned Bank of Baroda (BoB) on Friday posted a marginal 2.3 per cent rise in net profit at Rs 4,886 crore for the fourth quarter ended March 2024. The bank had earned a net profit of Rs 4,775 crore in the January-March quarter a year ago. The total income increased to Rs 33,775 crore during the quarter under review, as against Rs 29,323 crore in the same period last year, BoB said in a regulatory filing. Interest income grew to Rs 29,583 crore during the latest three-month period from Rs 25,857 crore in the corresponding quarter a year ago. On the asset quality side, the bank's gross Non-Performing Assets (NPAs) moderated to 2.92 per cent of gross advances as of March 31, 2024, from 3.79 per cent at the end of March 2023. Net NPAs also declined to 0.68 per cent of the advances, from 0.89 per cent at the end

of 2023. As a result, provisions for bad loans and contingencies eased to Rs 1,302 crore, as against Rs 1,421 crore earmarked during the same quarter a year ago. The Provision Coverage Ratio of the bank stood at 93.30 per cent at the end of March 2024. For the financial year ended March 2024, the bank's net profit increased by a 26 per cent to Rs 17,789 crore, as compared to Rs 14,110 crore in the preceding fiscal. Total income of the bank increased to Rs 1,27,101 crore in FY24 as against Rs 99,614 crore in the preceding fiscal. The board has recommended a dividend at Rs 7.60 per equity share of face value of Rs 2 each fully paid up for the ensuing 28th Annual General Meeting. Capital Adequacy Ratio (CRAR) improved to 16.31 per cent, from 16.24 per cent as on March 31, 2023. Net Interest Margin (NIM) of the bank stood at 3.18 per cent at the end of March 2024.

India forex reserves jump by USD 3.66 billion to USD 641.59 billion: RBI

Mumbai: After three consecutive weeks of drop, India's forex reserves increased by USD 3.66 billion to USD 641.59 billion for the week ended May 3, the RBI said on Friday. The overall kitty dropped USD 2.412 billion to USD 637.922 billion for the previous week ended April 26. For the week ended April 5, the reserves had hit an all-time high of USD 648.562 billion, following multiple weeks of increases after breaching the previous high of September 2021 in March this year. For the week ended May 3, the foreign currency assets, a major component of the reserves, increased by USD 4.459 billion to USD 564.161 billion, the data released on Friday showed. PTI

Cipla net profit jumps 78.7 per cent to ₹931.87 crore in Q4

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Pharma major Cipla Ltd on Friday reported a 78.7 per cent jump in consolidated net profit to Rs 931.87 crore in the March quarter on the back of higher sales. The company had posted a consolidated net profit of Rs 521.51 crore in the year-ago period, Cipla Ltd said in a regulatory filing. Consolidated total revenue from operations during the quarter under review stood at Rs 6,163.24 crore as against Rs 5,739.3 crore in the corresponding period a year ago, it added. Total expenses in the fourth quarter were higher at Rs 5,153.31 crore as compared to Rs 4,946.14 crore in the same period previous fiscal, it



added. In the fourth quarter, Cipla said its "One-India market saw a growth of 7 per cent year-on-year (YoY) backed by branded prescription and trade generics, while North America revenue was at USD 226 million, up 11 per cent YoY supported by continued growth in key differentiated assets as well as base portfolio." The board of directors of the

company in its meeting on Friday recommended a final dividend of Rs 13 per equity share of face value of Rs 2 each for FY24, subject to approval of shareholders at the ensuing annual general meeting, it said. For the fiscal year ended March 31, 2024, the consolidated net profit was at Rs 4,153.72 crore as compared to Rs 2,832.89 crore in the previous fiscal, Cipla said. For FY24, consolidated total revenue from operations was at Rs 25,774.09 crore as compared to Rs 22,753.12 crore in FY23. Commenting on the performance, Cipla Ltd MD and Global CEO Umang Vohra said in FY24, the company's revenues crossed

the threshold of Rs 25,000 crore, whereas operating margins significantly improved to cross Rs 6,000 crore for the first time. "This was backed by One-India revenue breaching Rs 10,000 crore, North America revenue surpassing USD 900 million and South Africa reaching top spot in prescription market, with all three businesses growing in double digits over last year with improved profitability," he added. On the road ahead, he said, "As we enter into FY25, our focus will be on our priorities of market leading growth in our key markets, growing big brands bigger, investing in future pipeline as well as focusing on resolutions on regulatory front."



ON BOARD THE DILLI-AWADH EXPRESS

There is little to complain if the ancient gastronomic delights from the bustling streets of Dilli 6 intersect with the regal fare of Lucknow's Awadhi Chowk, right in the heart of modern Delhi. It is a rare symphony, says **SHOBORI GANGULI**

For ages, food critics and connoisseurs have engaged in passionate discourses on how the royal Mughlai cuisine of Dilli stands out in sharp contrast to its regal Awadhi counterpart in Lucknow, a debate that rages on. While both define North India's rich culinary heritage and both spill out of the ancient quarters of royal kitchens to occupy modern-day street food outlets of these two historic cities, it takes a magician to synchronise the two.

With Chapter 4 of Farage: Northern Meanders, Chef Anuj Kapoor, Director of Culinary at Radisson Blu Hotel in Greater Noida, delivers this impossible magic of harmony with precision. From the bustling chaos of Old Delhi's streets to the serene ambience of Awadh's royal courts, Chef Kapoor employs his nostalgia of childhood and college years spent in Lucknow and his enviable professional experience in Old Delhi's Mughlai lanes and bylanes to curate an innovative six-course meal, meticulous attention paid to each spice and ingredient.

The meal started off with a fiery welcome shot of *Tikha Mango*, the salt and chili rimmed glass of *aam panna* a welcome relief in Delhi's sizzling May heat. The *Amuse Bouche* gently opened the gates to *Dilli 6 ki Nagori, Methde Aloo, Kachalu*, a delectable offering of a *golgappa* sized *puri* with filling. A real taste of Delhi is incomplete without some wholesome *Chaat*. So Chef Kapoor had a platter ready with *Kulle ki Chaat* served with a not-too-sour *Kanji* with a jalapeno and *Ram Laddoo* skewer.

The *Nakkhas Masala Panko Soft Shell Crab Aragula* and *Orange* was a



CHEF ANUJ KAPOOR

tantalising appetizer on offer. Unfortunately, for Delhi, seafood meanders its way into kitchens through freezers, compromising its freshness. While the taste of the crab and the crispiness of the batter worked well on the palate, it is my personal observation that deep fried Indian food, North to South, East to West, is difficult to master in large kitchens. They tend to get fried and re-fried, leaving that slight hint of used oil. These are best left to home kitchens or road side eateries. The vegetarian option of *Ambi, Hari Mirch Ganderi Paneer Tinka* may perhaps have been a better choice. That said, the Entrée opened the floodgates of gastronomic indulgence. The *Gosh ki Galawat* served atop a *Biscooti Roti* that Chef Kapoor had quite obviously paid personal attention to, was an amazingly innovative combination. The taste lingered on long after the meal was over. For the vegetarians there was, of

course, the *Chakundar ki Galawat*.

This was followed by the main course in which Chef Kapoor refined and redefined the decadent *Nalli Nihari* to a level of sophistication difficult to match. The *Chowk ka Nalli Nihari Wellington* indeed transported one to an epicurean heaven. A clear winner, this masterpiece blended the iconic Wellington-style pastry with the refined flavours of pulled *Nalli Nihari* mutton. This innovative dish symbolised Chef Kapoor's unique gift of framing culinary history in a contemporary context. There was *Jumbo Prawn Khorma* on offer alongside the vegetarian *Aminabad Masala Portobello, Gucchi, Qar-e-Pukhtan*.



Chef Kapoor has a signature inaugural, informal talk before laying out the table for his patrons.

At the beginning of each Farage, he talks about the inspiration informing the menu, of how Dilli 6 is better known for its vegetarian fare considering the Old City has a fair share of vegetarian traders and merchants, and similar such priceless nuggets of culinary history. I left the venue with the taste of an extremely flavourful and aromatic *Chowk ki Gilouri*, transporting me to the bylanes of Lucknow that I remember only too well.

FACTSHEET

Farage Chapter 4: Northern Meanders
Venue: *Satin, Radisson Blu, Greater Noida*
Date: *May 10th & May 11th, 2024*

Padharo Mhare Desh



The ongoing Rangeelo Rajasthan food festival at the Crowne Plaza in Delhi takes its guests on an exotic culinary odyssey, writes **SHOBORI GANGULI**

Rajasthan never ceases to inspire. Be it the food, the clothes, the colours, the mesmerizing deserts, the people, its music, this region's appeal is immortal and forever irresistible. Little wonder then that the majestic Rangeelo Rajasthan food festival at Crowne Plaza's Infinity in the heart of Delhi has drawn well-deserved attention.

Showcasing Rajasthan's regal culinary heritage, *Panch Rang Panch Nagar* is the leitmotif of the festival that draws inspiration from the diverse palates and cuisines of the five towns of Jaipur, Jodhpur, Jaisalmer, Udaipur, and Bikaner. We are told that the chefs engaged in this epic effort have journeyed to the royal kitchens spread across Rajasthan to collate secret recipes and traditions while bringing in local cooks to ensure the authenticity of regional flavours.

In order to remain faithful to the festival's thematic emphasis, the venue has been draped in the architectural hues of the five chosen cities, where guests can effortlessly surrender to the rustic charm and authenticity of village-style piping hot *Jowar, Bajra* and *Bejar rotis* prepared by local women, travelling straight out of their earthen *chulhas* to the plate.

Playing the perfect host, Executive Chef Roushan Sharma is quick to bring in some local starters like the *kachodi kadhi* and *samosa kadhi*, the crispy fried goodies gently crushed into a warm bowl of silk smooth gravy. This came with a sharp and tangy garlic and *kutty mirch* chutney and fiery *Mirchi ke Tapore*. Clearly, Ghee is the real star of a traditional Rajasthani food

spread so there was no dearth of this cooking medium in the dishes that arrived at the table.

Sharing his experience of travelling to Rajasthan for the curation of the festival's menu, Chef Sharma says, "Our culinary expedition to Rajasthan was a blend of royalty and authenticity. Spending a day with Thakur Kunal Singh Sa graciously unravelled the secrets of royal recipes, while our interactions with local villagers added depth to our



culinary pool that has its origins in the arid and resource-starved agrarian ecosystem of the region for centuries. Indeed, each element of the menu was an eye-opening vehicle of transport to Rajasthan's culinary heartland.

Now, a bit about the décor. Painstakingly set up to recreate the rustic charm and village-style dining experience of *Padharo Mhare Desh* one could opt to dine under the stars (not recommended in this May heat) or enjoy the interiors with live folk performances, including vibrant *Kathputli* puppetry and a spirited *Ghoda Gadi*. The venue has even recreated the vibrant energy of a traditional *Rangrez Bazaar*, complete with stalls offering local handicrafts and entertainment.

Pankaj Gupta, the Area General Manager, underscored the significance of such an experience amid the dynamic culinary landscape today: "In a world where dining options abound, we believe in offering our guests more than just a meal. The Rangeelo Rajasthan Food Extravaganza is not merely a culinary event; it's a journey of discovery and delight, where every dish and every performance tell a story of Rajasthan's rich heritage and culture." And indeed, it does.

FACT SHEET

Venue: *Infinity, Crowne Plaza Delhi*
Date: *May 3rd to May 12th, 2024*
Time: *7:00 PM to 11:00 PM*
Price: *Rs 2599 plus taxes per person*
Contact: *8860605588, 8860634435*

What's cooking this weekend!

Lucknow meets Hyderabad at Westin



Chef Mohammad Shaheed Qureshi



The Westin Gurgaon is hosting a 10-day culinary pop up, with Kangan from The Westin Mumbai Garden City from May 17th till May 26th, 2024. Showcasing Kangan's convergence of the regal flavours of Lucknow and the fiery essence of Hyderabad, Guest Chef Mohammad Shaheed Qureshi from Kangan and Multi Property Executive Chef Amit Dash would be at the helm of this pop-up. The pop-up promises a gastronomic journey celebrating Lucknowi and Hyderabadi flavours. Kangan is a contemporary interpretation of rustic Indian flavours mainly from the North-West Frontier region of Peshawar. Being showcased at The Westin's all-day dining restaurant, Seasonal Tastes, the pop-up menu at Kangan explores progressive ideas in Indian cuisine while maintaining the traditional culinary integrity of signature dishes.

From traditional kebabs to rich *biryanis*, the spread brings out many undiscovered facets with its unique use of time tested ingredients transformed by eclectic combinations and modern presentations. For instance, the *Sikanderi Raan, Banno kebabs, Khaliyas, Kormas, Niharis*, and *Gacche Gosht ki Biryani*. Chef Dash says, "Hosting pop-up events has transformed our business, boosting revenue and enhancing guest experiences. Diversifying our offerings and



collaborating with renowned restaurants have attracted new audiences, bolstering our position in the hospitality industry," adding that "Experimentation with cuisines, chefs, and concepts has showcased our adaptability and innovation, keeping us ahead of trends and reinforcing our reputation. From a business perspective, these pop-ups have allowed us to expand our offerings which aligns with the exploratory culinary demands of our patrons. This strategic approach has led to increased profitability and recognition, highlighting the importance of collaboration and innovation in hospitality."

Venue: *Seasonal Tastes, The Westin Gurgaon, New Delhi*
Date: *May 17th - May, 2024, for dinner buffet everyday; Sunday brunches on 18th and 25th May 25th respectively.*

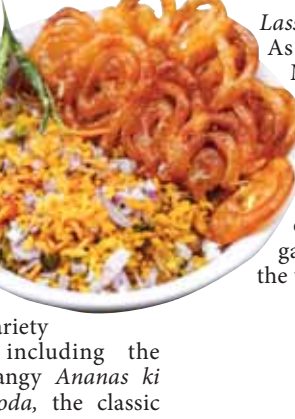


Indori Zyaka at Crowne Plaza, New Delhi

Edesia, the renowned global cuisine restaurant at Crowne Plaza New Delhi will showcase an unprecedented culinary extravaganza through the exquisite flavours of Malwa Cuisine from Indore. This unprecedented food festival promises to unravel the hidden treasures of Indore's culinary heritage, offering a delectable array of dishes. From May 10th to May 19th, 2024, guests are invited to indulge in an unparalleled dining experience as Edesia unveils a plethora of culinary delights, carefully curated to exemplify the essence of Indore's gastronomy. On offer will be an assortment of mouthwatering delicacies, including the iconic *Poha Jalebi*, irresistible *Indori Shikanji, flavourful Bhutte ki Kees*, comforting *Sabudana Khichdi*, crispy Baked *Samosa*, savoury *Moong Dal Bhajiyas*, and the quintessential *Pani Puri* served with six unique types of water. Other highlights include *Chole Tikki*, succulent *Kadak Nath*, aromatic *Khassi ka Meat*, fragrant *Subz Methi Pulao*, hearty *Sev Tamatar ki Subji*, decadent *Mawa Bati*, traditional *Lancha*, and baked *Kalakand*. The culinary journey will conclude on a sweet note,



with the divine flavours of *Aam Ras*, creamy *Shrikhand*, and wholesome *Dal Bafra*. To complement this gastronomic odyssey, beverages have been meticulously crafted to elevate the buffet experience. Guests can quench their thirst with a variety of invigorating drinks, including the revitalizing *Shikanji*, the tangy *Ananas ki Panna*, the unique *Anti Soda*, the classic



Lassi, and the refreshing *Kairi Pana*. As Shuvendu Banerjee, General Manager of Crowne Plaza puts it, "This festival is a celebration of culinary diversity and a testament to our commitment to offering unparalleled dining experiences. We invite food enthusiasts to join us on this gastronomic journey as we explore the vibrant flavours of Indore."
Venue: *Edesia at Crowne Plaza, New Delhi Okhla.*
Date: *May 10th - 19th, 2024*
Time: *7:00 PM - 11:00 PM*
Price: *Rs 2,799 plus taxes*



KKR TARGET PLAYOFF BERTH AT HOME

PTI ■ KOLKATA

In red-hot form, two-time former champions Kolkata Knight Riders will look to seal an IPL playoff berth for the first time in three years when they take on the struggling Mumbai Indians in their final home match of the season, here on Saturday.

The return of their two-time title-winning skipper Gautam Gambhir as team mentor has done wonders for the side which has found ways to win games from difficult situations this season.

Sitting at the top of the 10-team standings with eight wins from 11 matches, another win will guarantee them the playoff berth as the Shah Rukh Khan-owned franchise will look to end on a high, its campaign at the home venue of Eden Gardens.

Gambhir's ploy to back Sunil Narine as an opener along with World No.2 T20i batter Phil Salt has been a masterstroke. The duo have scored bulk of the team's runs, giving it the perfect platform in powerplays to post six 200-plus totals from eight matches batting first.

With 32 sixes to his name, Narine is also the second in the list behind Abhishek Sharma (35).

The consistency with which

MI SEEK TO SALVAGE PRIDE



Narine keeps churning out high scores match after match with been phenomenal. With one century and three fifties, the Trinidadian has also been their leading run-getter, amassing 461 runs at a strike-rate of 183.66. Englishman Salt has scored 429 runs at a strike-rate of 183.33.

The duo's explosive form has also meant that the likes of Andre Russell and Rinku

Singh, who have been their designated finishers, have not got enough opportunities. Their performance has also covered up the team's bowling profligacy, particularly that of Mitchell Starc.

The young Angkrish Raghuvanshi at No.3 has also proved his worth, while Ramandeep Singh has been spectacular at the death.

In contrast, five-time

champions Mumbai Indians, under Hardik Pandya, became the first team to be knocked out after Sunrisers Hyderabad demolished Lucknow Super Giants the other day.

Coming on the back of a morale-boosting win over SRH, MI will look to salvage some pride.

Fresh from his knocks of 56 and 102 not out, Suryakumar Yadav has been in scintillating

form which augurs well for Team India ahead of the T20 World cup in less than a month.

At the same time, Team India fans will hope that Rohit Sharma and Hardik Pandya also return among runs.

The India captain has four single-digit scores and one 11 in last five games, while Pandya's best this season has been 46. The struggling all-

rounder has failed to cross 10 in his last six innings. Pandya would be desperate to strike form given that it would be crucial to India's chances in the T20 World Cup next month

TEAMS (FROM):

Kolkata Knight Riders: Shreyas Iyer (c), KS Bharat (wk), Rahmanullah Gurbaz (wk), Rinku Singh, Angkrish Raghuvanshi, Sherfane Rutherford, Manish Pandey, Andre Russell, Nitish Rana, Venkatesh Iyer, Anukul Roy, Ramandeep Singh, Varun Chakravarthy, Sunil Narine, Vaibhav Arora, Chetan Sakariya, Harshit Rana, Suyash Sharma, Mitchell Starc, Dushmantha Chameera, Sakib Hussain, Mujeeb Ur Rahman, Gus Atkinson, Allah Ghazanfar and Phil Salt.

Mumbai Indians: Hardik Pandya (c), Rohit Sharma, Suryakumar Yadav, Dewald Brevis, Jasprit Bumrah, Piyush Chawla, Gerald Coetzee, Tim David, Shreyas Gopal, Ishan Kishan (wk), Anshul Kamboj, Kumar Kartikeya, Akash Madhwal, Kwena Maphaka, Mohammad Nabi, Shams Mulani, Naman Dhir, Shivalik Sharma, Romario Shepherd, Arjun Tendulkar, Nuwan Thushara, Tilak Varma, Harvik Desai (wk), Nehal Wadhwa and Luke Wood.



The Big Cricket League to promote local talent

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Promising to transform the landscape of Indian cricket, the Big Cricket League (BCL) was officially launched here recently at an event with an aim to bridge the gap between established cricketers and aspiring local talents.

Led by former India international cricketer Rudra Pratap Singh, the BCL revolves around providing a platform for showcasing raw talent and offering a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to play alongside cricketers icons.

The launch event was attended by legendary cricket figures including former India Captain Dilip Vengsarkar, League Commissioner, and former West Indies Captain Courtney Walsh, Vice President. Both Vengsarkar and Walsh echoed Singh's enthusiasm, emphasizing the

significance of the BCL in providing opportunities for those who have missed out on traditional pathways to cricketers success.

In the inaugural season, it was announced that six franchises were set to compete in 18 live T20 matches. These matches will feature a blend of former international icons, first-class cricketers, and aspiring local talents, ensuring a captivating spectacle for cricket enthusiasts worldwide.

With matches set to be broadcasted on both television and OTT platforms across India and in over 30 countries, the BCL aims to make its presence felt amid a global audience. Furthermore, opportunities for team ownership and sponsorship are available, signaling the league's commitment to fostering collaboration and support within the cricketing community, said a statement from the BCL.

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Former Indian captain Sourav Ganguly on Friday said the Indian team management should make Virat Kohli open in next month's T20 World Cup to exploit the star batter's rich vein of form in the ongoing Indian Premier League.

Kohli is the current Orange Cap holder in this IPL with 634 runs from 12 matches, averaging 70.44 and at an impressive strike-rate of 153.51, which is significantly higher than his career rate of 134.31.

"Virat is playing exceptionally well. The way Kohli batted last night — 90 in quick time, you need to use him as opener in T20 World Cup. He should open, evidenced by his last few IPL innings which have been outstanding," Ganguly told PTI here on the sidelines of a promotional event.

Ganguly said India have picked a balanced squad for the T20 World Cup which has the wherewithal to land the trophy after a gap of 17

Virat Kohli should open in T20 WC: Ganguly

years. India's lone triumph in the T20 World Cup came in 2007, the inaugural edition held in South Africa.

"This is an excellent squad. I think they have picked the best possible squad. Apart from batting depth, bowling looks excellent.

"Bumrah is the best fast bowler in the world at the moment. We have experience in Kuldeep, Axar, Siraj. It's an ideal combination we have this time," said Ganguly.

This edition of the IPL has seen teams breaching the 250-run mark quite effortlessly, and the 51-year-old said the trend would continue in the future as well.

"This is going to be the trend in the years to come. T20 cricket has become a power-oriented game and that's what it is going to be.

"I was reading Sanju Samson's comments the other day, where he

said there's no time to settle down in modern T20s. You just have to hit, and that's the way it is going to be," said Ganguly.

The Kolkatan, himself no stranger to hitting some monster sixes during his playing days, identified the evolved mindset of batters and Impact Player rule as the main reasons behind such mammoth totals in the IPL.

"Now, in IPL we are seeing scores like 240, 250 regularly. The main reasons are good batting wickets and the grounds are also not big in India. In the last game between Delhi Capitals and Rajasthan (Royals), 26 sixes were hit in a 40-over game, which is almost one six every over.

"That's how this game has gone and that's how the players have started approaching the game. The Impact Player rule, where every team has the possibility of adding another

batsman, has also added another dimension to it," he detailed.

Ganguly said the bowlers need to

upskill themselves to counter the ruthless march of batters in T20s, and cited the example of pacer



Jasprit Bumrah. Amidst the general ruins of bowlers, Bumrah stood tall, grabbing 18 wickets from 12 matches and his economy rate of 6.20 is the best among regular bowlers.

"The bowlers need to be really more skillful, we have some skillful bowlers around, to be more successful. Look at Bumrah, Axar Patel, Kuldeep Yadav, all of them bowl superbly in all formats of the game and in the IPL.

"I don't believe in formats. I believe in skills. These are exemplary players who will thrive in all formats," he noted.

Does he think the power-hitting will take the elegance and artistry away, making cricket robotic?

"Not at all. Demands of different formats are different. Everything evolves, sports is not an exception. You will still see elegance and artistry in Test cricket. Test matches

will always be Test matches.

"Look, quality players will be successful in all formats of the game. Look at Virat Kohli...the best players will adjust to all formats," he added.

Recently, Dinesh Karthik had expressed his desire to return to the Indian side in the context of the T20 World Cup, but Ganguly said the selectors made the right choice by selecting Rishabh Pant and Sanju Samson as wicketkeeper batters.

"Dinesh played well but there are better players than Dinesh. I don't think you can leave Sanju or Rishabh out. There are better players than Dinesh Karthik at the moment," said Ganguly. Ganguly also refrained from commenting on the "public reprimand" given to Lucknow Super Giants skipper KL Rahul by the team owner Sanjeev Goenka.

"It is not fair for me to make a comment based on a TV grab. I don't know what Sanjeev had spoken to Rahul. So, I leave it at that," he said.

OTHER SPORTS

Rafael Nadal shows he is not quite ready for retirement in a comeback win at Italian Open

AP ■ ROME

For a brief stretch on Thursday, Rafael Nadal looked every bit of a weary 37-year-old player nearing retirement.

Struggling to produce pace off both sides with his groundstrokes, committing an uncharacteristically high number of unforced errors and unable to stay in rallies, Nadal dropped the first set of his first-round match at the Italian Open against Belgian qualifier Zizou Bergs.

Then the fist-pumping, virtually-unbeatable-on-clay, 22-time Grand Slam champion version of Nadal emerged and the Spaniard rallied for a 4-6, 6-3, 6-4 victory before an adoring crowd in what will likely be his final tournament at the Foro Italico.

Nadal was playing only his 10th match this year after missing nearly all of 2023 with a hip injury that required surgery. He's hoping to be competitive one last time at the French Open, where he is the record 14-time champion.

"That was not my best match. I was practicing better than how I played today, without a doubt. But I found a way to win," Nadal said. "My game is more unpredictable than before. I didn't play much tennis for the last two years. So I'm up and down, on and off, but I think I can do it much better than what I did today."

Rome, where he is a record 10-



time champion, is Nadal's last big warmup tournament before Roland Garros starts on May 26.

Nadal noted that after overcoming his hip and abdominal issues, the time has come "to prove myself if I am able to push my body to the limit that I need to push to feel myself ready for what's coming."

"I am not talking only about Roland Garros. I am talking about the next match. I need to lose this fear," Nadal said. "Matches like today help. Some moments I was moving faster. Some moments not. I need to get used to that, to take that risk. ... I feel more ready to try it than before."

During his 70th win in the Italian capital, the Campo Centrale crowd serenaded Nadal with chants of: "Ole, Ole,

Ole, Na-dal, Na-dal."

"I've always been emotional to play here, these kind of events are the most important events in my tennis career," Nadal said. "The crowd has been always amazing with me, supporting me since the beginning of my tennis career. So I'm super excited to be able to play one more time here."

Nadal was coming off a straight-set loss to 31st-ranked Jiri Lehecka in the fourth round of the Madrid Open. But he has never lost consecutive matches on clay in his entire career and now that impressive statistic remains intact during what he has indicated is his final season on tour.

Nadal got out to a strong start, unleashing a 95 mph (153 kph) forehand winner en route to an early break and a 3-1 lead in

the first set. But he gave the break right back in the next game when he missed three weak groundstrokes into the net.

Then at 4-4, Nadal double-faulted twice and was broken again to give the 108th-ranked Bergs a 5-4 lead and a chance to serve out the set.

In the first set, Nadal committed 16 unforced errors to Bergs' 10.

During the first game of the second set, the match was briefly suspended when a spectator in the stands required medical treatment.

That allowed Nadal to chat with Carlos Moya, his coach.

After the 10-minute suspension of play, Nadal raced out to a 3-0 lead in the second set as he upped the power on his shots and became more aggressive.

During the third set, Nadal managed to win a point after he fell to the red clay, quickly getting up to resume the rally and then producing a delicate drop-shot winner. Then he blasted a forehand cross-court winner to break for a 3-1 lead and unleashed a double-clay fist pump.

There were more fist pumps when Nadal rallied from 0-40 on his serve to hold for a 4-2 lead in the third.

Nadal's mother and sister sitting behind the court shouted encouragement and his 1-year-old son was also court-side - sitting on the lap of Nadal's father.

Gukesh storms back, Pragg moves to joint third; Carlsen takes lead

PTI ■ WARSAW

World Championship challenger D Gukesh bounced back from a sedate start to defeat compatriot R Pragganandhaa and Germany's Vincent Keymer before holding world No. 1 Magnus Carlsen after round six of the Superbet rapid and blitz tournament here on Friday.

However, Pragganandhaa produced a strong fifth round, defeating Holland's Anish Giri and he followed it with a win over Keymer in the sixth round.

Norway's Carlsen shares the lead with Wei Yi of China with eight points apiece while Pragganandhaa and Shevchenko share the third spot on seven points each.

Nodirbek Abdusattorov of Uzbekistan, Gukesh and Arjun Erigaisi are joint fifth on 6 points, a full point ahead of local star Duda Jan-Kryzstof.

Bayer Leverkusen had a double reason to celebrate in stoppage time on Thursday. Not only did it reach the Europa League final and keep its treble bid on course but substitute Josip Stanišić's late goal preserved its remarkable unbeaten record as Leverkusen rescued a 2-2 draw against Roma.

Both had seemed at risk during the semifinal second leg after two Leandro Paredes penalties had made it 2-0 on



the night and 2-2 on aggregate. But an own goal by Roma defender Gianluca Mancini eight minutes from time and Stanišić's equalizer saw Leverkusen stretch its unbeaten streak to 49 matches.

Leverkusen advanced 4-2 on aggregate and will face another Italian team on May 22 in Dublin after Atalanta beat Marseille 3-0 to advance 4-1 on aggregate.

"It's pure goosebumps!" Granit Xhaka told German television RTL. "You dream of

fianchetto by white did not offer much scope for Gukesh and his position worsened as Pragganandhaa launched a King side attack by advancing his pawns. The pressure was immense on both and despite getting close to a winning position Pragganandhaa could not keep his nerves and let Gukesh come back strongly.

In the next round, Pragganandhaa was on target with some difficult moves to grind down Giri in just 21 moves out of an irregular Queen pawn game.

Giri fell prey to a brilliant rook manoeuvre and blundered early.

Gukesh made most of the chances to crush Keymer who played white. The tactical complications led to a wild position in the middle game wherein Keymer found his king going for a long walk.

It was hard to recover for him from there and Gukesh finished the game with a queen sacrifice.

The fact that its unbeaten record was preserved about 30 seconds away from coming to an end was another improbable finale in an impressive season for Xabi Alonso's team, which has already won the Bundesliga title and also reached the German Cup final.

Leverkusen rallies late in draw with Roma to preserve unbeaten record and reach Europa League final

AP ■ LEVERKUSEN (GERMANY)

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