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Voter fatigue deepens in Phase IV

VOTER TURNOUT OVER 63 PER CENT IN PHASE IV POLLS
SRINAGAR IMPROVES THREE DECADES VOTERS SCORE

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

The intense voters' awareness programmes for increasing the turnout remained futile as the phase four general elections on Monday saw the average plummeting to over 63 per cent till 8.30 pm on Monday. The voter turnout in the first three phases was 66.14 per cent, 66.71 per cent and 65.68 per cent, respectively. Interestingly the good news came in from Jammu and Kashmir which saw voting after abrogation of Article 370. Srinagar recorded 36.88 per cent voter average. This figure is higher than Srinagar's turnout in 2019 when it saw a turnout of 14.43 per cent. The figures for 2014, 2009, 2004 and 1999 are 25.86 per cent, 25.55 per cent, 18.57 per cent and 11.93 per cent respectively.



Voters display identity cards while standing in queue to cast their votes during the phase IV of general elections, in Berhampur, Odisha, on Monday

reports of EVMs malfunctioning at some booths in West Bengal and Odisha. This schedule was a critical round for the Congress and not much for the BJP. According to the Election Commission, polling was held smoothly and peacefully. With the fourth phase, the polling for the 379 out of 543 parliamentary constituencies has been completed. Interestingly, amid the Congress demand to vote for NOTA, voter turnout in Indore was recorded 56.53 per cent, lowest in Madhya Pradesh where the Congress nominated candidate withdrew from the polls. West Bengal witnessed over 63.85 per cent, Odisha 76.02 per cent turnout, the highest among all States polling. Among other States, Andhra Pradesh recorded 68.16 per cent, Bihar 55.92 per cent, Jharkhand 63.50 per cent, Madhya Pradesh 68.90 per cent, Maharashtra 52.93 per cent, Odisha 61.54 per cent and Uttar Pradesh 58 per cent. In Telangana, Hyderabad which is considered a stronghold of Asaduddin Owaisi, witnessed 39.17 per cent polling which is lowest in the State. In Bengal, where violence marred previous rounds of voting, a Trinamool Congress worker was killed in a crude bomb attack. The incident took place in the Bolpur Lok Sabha constituency, mere hours before polling was scheduled to begin. Amid claims of West Bengal Chief Electoral Officer that voting has been peaceful so far, clashes broke out between supporters of TMC and BJP in Monteswar's Susunia area of Bardhaman-Durgapur Lok Sabha seat around noon, as BJP candidate Dilip Ghosh was on his way to a polling booth following complaints of booth jamming. Ghosh was allegedly heckled by the TMC activists, sources claimed. BJP candidate in Telangana's Hyderabad Lok Sabha seat K Madhavi Latha was booked by election authorities after a video clip surfaced online in which she was purportedly seen asking burqa-clad women voters to show their faces to compare with the photo identity cards.

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THE PIONEER REPORTS FROM GROUND ZERO

WEST BENGAL

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Stray incidents of violence marked the fourth-phase polling in West Bengal's eight constituencies that went to the polls on Monday, with a little more than 75 per cent voter turnout reported by the Election Commission of India. The EC said the polling percentage could increase by a few percentage points in the final count. While Behrampur — from where Pradesh Congress president Adhir Chowdhury is contesting against TMC's Yusuf Pathan — Krishnagar, Ranaghat and Burdwan East was comparatively peaceful with a couple of incidents of "stick-fighting" being recorded from Krishnagar. Some areas of Burdwan-Durgapur seat from where former BJP State president Dilip Ghosh is contesting against TMC's Kirti Azad witnessed sporadic violence, sources said. A Trinamool Congress supporter at Monteswar in Burdwan-Durgapur seat was hurt after he was allegedly beaten up by the Central forces guarding the booth. A similar incident took place at Burdwan city when Ghosh rushed to a polling booth hearing that the booth had been blocked by the TMC men. After he was returning from the area, local TMC workers resorted to brick-battling. In the melee the back windshield of one of the vehicles in his convoy got smashed and a CAPF jawan sustained injuries, sources said. He was rushed to the hospital. "The TMC goes on to it every year ... they capture booths and chase away voters ... they do not allow people to



vote year after year ... as they are being stopped from doing so this year they are getting hostile," Ghosh said. At Tehatta in Krishnagar, the BJP men fought with their TMC counterparts with bamboos, in which several saffron workers were injured. Elsewhere a CPI(M) worker got a fractured forehead in a clash with TMC men, sources said. Reports from Palashi Para surfaced of defective EVMs where every vote pressed for the TMC was reportedly going to the BJP, sources said. Subsequently the machine was changed but 255 votes that had already been polled would be counted, ECI sources said. A total of 1,45,30,017 voters were eligible to exercise their franchise in 15,507 polling stations. A total of 75.66 per cent voters exercised their franchise till 5 pm. According to latest reports while Bolpur Lok Sabha constituency registered 77.77 per cent, neighbouring Birbhum saw 75.45 per cent voter turnout.

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MAHARASHTRA

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Amid a complaint by the Opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) about the alleged use of money to "purchase" votes in three constituencies, an average 52.75 per cent of 2.28 crore voters exercised their franchise till 5 pm in eleven Lok Sabha constituencies in the fourth phase of polls held on Monday. Except that the tribal-dominated constituency of Nandurbar witnessed 60.60 per cent voting till 5 pm, the polling in other ten constituencies ranged from 43.80 per cent to 58.65 per cent, a percentage that was in line with similar pattern of voting witnessed in the first three phases of Lok Sabha polls in the State. Apart from Nandurbar where high polling percentage was expected considering that the constituency had witnessed 66.77 per cent 68.65 per cent polling respectively in 2014 and 2019 polls, the other ten constituencies recorded the following polling percentages till 5 pm: Ahmednagar (52.27), Aurangabad (55.38), Beed (58.37), Jalgaon (51.98), Jalna (59.44), Maval (46.03), Pune (44.90), Raver (56.16), Shirdi (55.27) and Shirur (43.89). The low polling percentages in constituencies like Pune, Shirur and Maval were a cause for worry for all the political parties. In a related development, the Opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi leaders made a sensational allegation that large amount of cash were



reportedly being transferred to and fro, ostensibly to buy votes in the Lok Sabha elections. Shiv Sena (UBT) spokesperson Sanjay Raut, NCP (Sharad Pawar) MLA Rohit R Pawar and Congress MLA Ravindra Dhangekar who is contesting from Pune, targeted the ruling BJP-led MahaYuti and alleged that the money might be used to "purchase" votes in Pune, Ahmednagar and Nashik LS constituencies. Putting out a purported video of Chief Minister Eknath Shinde alighting from a helicopter in Nashik with two security personnel lugging at least two heavy bags, Raut demanded to know why the CM travelled with such bulky luggage for just a two-hour long poll campaign trip. Rohit Pawar posted another video showing bundles of cash lying on a road in the Ahmednagar LS constituency and claimed that it contained 'prasad' for disbursing among the voters.

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UTTAR PRADESH

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A voter turnout of 58.9 per cent was recorded till 6 pm in the 13 Lok Sabha constituencies of Uttar Pradesh where polling was held in the fourth phase of the parliamentary elections on Monday. The polling commenced at 7 am and concluded at 6 pm. Uttar Pradesh's Chief Electoral Officer Navdeep Rinwa said here on Monday that 58.9 per cent turnout of voters was recorded by 6 pm. He said the voter turnout would marginally increase after final tabulation of the data which would be available by Tuesday morning. Polling for the by-election to Dadraul Assembly constituency in Shahjahanpur was also held on Monday. The constituencies where polling was held on Monday included Shahjahanpur, Kheri, Dhaurahra, Sitapur, Hardoi, Misrikh, Unnao, Farrukhabad, Etawah, Kannauj, Kanpur, Akbarpur and Bahraich. With the conclusion of the fourth phase of polling, 39 of the State's 80 Lok Sabha constituencies have voted, while polling for the remaining 41 seats will be held in fifth, sixth and seventh phases.



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BIHAR

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PATNA

Over 54 per cent of around 95 lakh voters in five Lok Sabha constituencies in Bihar exercised their franchise till 5 pm on Monday, the officials said. Voting was held in Begusarai, Ujiarpur, Samastipur, Munger and Darbhanga constituencies in the fourth phase of the Lok Sabha elections. Union Minister Giriraj Singh is seeking re-election from Begusarai where his primary opponent is CPI's Awadhesh Rai. Singh had defeated former JNU Students' Union president Kanhaiya Kumar in the 2019 Lok Sabha polls in the same seat. In Ujiarpur, which has the lowest number of voters at 17.48 lakh but hosts the maximum of 13 candidates, Union Minister of State for Home Nityanand Rai aims for a third consecutive term. His principal rival is Alok Mehta, a senior RJD leader and a former State Minister. Samastipur, formerly known as Rosera, presents a battleground for two debutants — Congress' Sunny Hazari and Shambhavi Choudhary of LJP (Ram Vilas) — both offspring of senior JD(U) leaders and Ministers in the Nitish Kumar Cabinet.

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Modi shows the road to 2024 conquest



Prime Minister Narendra Modi with Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath during a road show for Lok Sabha elections, in Varanasi, on Monday

Kissa Kursi Ka: Why Maliwal was thrashed

SAUMYA SHUKLA ■ NEW DELHI

Days after he stepped out of Tihar jail on interim bail, more trouble mounts for AAP and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal as the party's Rajya Sabha MP Swati Maliwal went to the Civil Lines police station on Monday and alleged that Kejriwal's 'controversial' personal assistant, Bibhav Kumar, 'assaulted' her at the Chief Minister's official residence. Though an official complaint is yet to be made in this regard, sources said AAP leaders, including Kejriwal, have been annoyed with Maliwal due to her prolonged absence and not making at least a courtesy visit when Kejriwal was in jail facing a probe on the multi-crore liquor case. Senior AAP leaders Manish

Sisodia, Satyender Jain are still in jail in the same case being probed by Enforcement Directorate while party's Rajya Sabha member Sanjay Singh is on bail. Sources also said due to widening rift between Maliwal and the AAP, she is being forced by the party to resign from the Rajya Sabha as the top leadership of AAP are in a mood to give the RS berth to a top lawyer helping Kejriwal and others in the case. Earlier in the day as per DCP of North M K Meena, she received a PCR call at 9.34 am from a woman who said she had been assaulted at the Delhi Chief Minister's residence. "I am a lady calling from the Chief Minister's official residence. His PA has beaten me up badly on his saying," the PCR call report received by the



Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal with Rajya Sabha MP Swati Maliwal

MP read. However, she has not filed any official complaint as of yet. "After some time, MP madam came to the police station. However, she left stating she will file a complaint later," the DCP told reporters. According to sources, she said she is not

in good condition as of now and hence, will file the complaint later. The call was from Maliwal's mobile number, said another officer, stating that she was the one on the other side of the line. A team from the Civil Lines police station reached the Chief Minister's residence soon after the call. The SHO met Maliwal there and she told him she would soon be going to the police station, the officer said. Maliwal went to the police station at 10 am. "In the police station, she was informed that a medical examination is necessary to file an assault FIR. She was at the police station for five minutes and left without filing any formal complaint. She said she would be back later," he said. According to an official, she also cried at the police station. The Rajya Sabha MP and former chairperson of the Delhi Commission for Women (DCW) for nine years has not yet said anything officially and gave no response to messages and calls made to her for her comment.

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LS election: Srinagar sees highest voter turnout since 1996

MOHIT KANDHARI ■
SRINAGAR

Over 36 per cent voter turnout was recorded in the Srinagar Lok Sabha seat where enthusiastic voters participated peacefully in the 'festival of democracy' to elect their public representative amid tight security arrangements on Monday. Chief Electoral Officer, Jammu and Kashmir PK Pole addressing media in Srinagar said, "Over 36.1 per cent voter turnout was recorded till 5.00 pm and the final tally of votes is most likely to touch 40 per cent, the highest ever voter turnout in the Srinagar

Parliamentary constituency since 1989". He said there was no poll boycott call, and no other untoward incident of stone pelting was reported from anywhere across 18 Assembly segments falling under the Srinagar Lok Sabha seat.

So far the highest ever figure of 40.94 per cent voter turnout was recorded in the 1996 Lok Sabha polls.

In 2019, 14.43 per cent voter turnout was recorded, 25.86 per cent in 2014, 25.55 per cent in 2009, 18.57 per cent turnout was recorded in 2004, 11.93 per cent in 1999, and 30.06 in 1998 Lok Sabha polls.

Referring to the participation



of Kashmiri migrant voters in the poll process, CEO PK Pole said a little over 11 percent of Kashmir migrant voters



(approximately 6000 out of 52100) exercised their right to franchise across 26 special polling booths set up in

Jammu, Udhampur and New Delhi.

Of 18 Assembly constituencies falling in the Srinagar Lok Sabha seat, only two Char-e-Shareef and Kangan assembly segments recorded over 50 per cent voter turnout till 5.00 p.m.

On the other hand, the Habba Kadal Assembly segment in the heart of Srinagar recorded the lowest voter turnout of 13.25 per cent till 5.00 p.m.

Lal Chowk and Hazrat Bal Assembly segments recorded a little over 26 per cent polling while Khanyar recorded 23 per cent polling. The South Kashmir districts of Shopian and Pulwama recorded over

40 per cent polling till 5.00 p.m. while the central Kashmir district of Ganderbal recorded around 45 per cent polling.

This is the first major poll in Kashmir since J&K special status was abrogated by the BJP government on August 5, 2019 and the erstwhile state was also downgraded into two union territories of Ladakh and Jammu and Kashmir.

The main contest here is between the National Conference's influential Shia leader Ruhullah Mehdi, Peoples Democratic Party's youth leader Waheed Para, who is out on bail in a terror-related case and Apni Party's Mohammad Ashraf Mir.

CBSE Board results: Over 93 per cent pass in Class X, 87.98 per cent in Class XII

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
New Delhi

Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) on Monday declared the results for Classes 10 and 12 on Monday. The pass percentage in Class 10 was 93.60 and the pass percentage in the Class 12 exams increased marginally and stood at 87.98 per cent. The percentage of passing for both classes has increased marginally from last year. The top-scored subject was Mathematics in Class 10 and Painting in Class 12. The results of both the classes were declared on the official website of CBSE.

In the declared results for Classes 10 and 12, the girls have outshone the boys, as 94.75 per cent girls have cleared the 10th exams and more than 91 per cent girls pass exams in the 12th class. The CBSE announced that there would be no merit list to "avoid unhealthy competition" and the rise in pass percentage is due to an increase in the number of competency-based questions in the exams this year.

For Class 12, more than 16.21 lakh students appeared in the



examination, 1.16 lakh students scored above 90 per cent and 24,068 students scored above 95 per cent. The Government-aided and government schools have achieved a pass percentage of 91.42 and 88.23 respectively, leaving behind the Private schools with a pass percentage of 87.70.

The passing percentage for Class 10 has been 93.60 which was a rise of 0.48 percentage points from last year. More than 2.12 lakh students in Class 10, passed with above 90 per cent, and 47,000 students have scored above 95 per cent marks. Although more than 1.32 lakh students have been placed in 'compartment', but

the number has decreased from last year.

Class 10 saw the highest number of full marks scorers in the subject of Mathematics, with 11,253 students followed by subjects of Sanskrit with 6,700 and Artificial Intelligence with 6,269 top scorers. While the maximum number of full marks scorers in Class 12 were in the subject of Painting with 10,402 followed by Chemistry at 2,152 and Psychology at 2,134 students.

To praise and increase the confidence of the students, Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, congratulated them by referring to them as "exam warriors". He tweeted on 'X'

saying, "Dear #ExamWarriors, Congratulations to all of you who have successfully passed the CBSE Class XII exams! I am immensely proud of your accomplishment and your relentless dedication. I also acknowledge the efforts of your supportive families and dedicated educators, whose unwavering support has been crucial to this success."

The Prime Minister further tweeted for the students who were not able to score as much marks as they wanted, by saying "this is just one milestone in your journey." Heartily congratulate my young friends who have successfully cleared the #CBSE Class X and Class XII examinations. While you cherish the success and enjoy the fruits of your labour, do also utilise this time to make an effective plan for higher studies," said Dharmendra Pradhan, Minister of Education, Government of India.

Many other leaders like Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, and Union Minister Prakash Javadekar also congratulated the students for passing with flying colors.

Admission starts in apparel, textile technology courses

PNS ■ AMRITSAR

Department of Apparel and Textile technology of Guru Nanak Dev University has started admissions to undergraduate as well as post graduate programmes like B.Tech (Textile Processing Technology), M.Sc Fashion Designing (2 years) and M.Sc. Fashion Designing (FYIP). The programmes are blend of theory, practical, industrial training and research in various aspects of dye chemistry, dyeing/printing/finishing technology, textile testing, garment manufacturing, colour measurements and analysis and waste management.

Dr Varinder Kaur, Head and Associate Professor, Department of Apparel and Textile Technology, said that in the current session, two students of B. Tech (Textile Processing Technology) semester IV got selected as interns under National Technical Textile Mission, Ministry of Textiles, Govt. of India and are offered Rs. 40,000 Internship for two months under GIST 2.0 Scheme. Seven students of B.

Tech (Textile Processing Technology) VIIIth Semester are undertaking 6 months industrial training (as part of their curriculum) with internship of Rs. 25000/ month in one of the leading textile industry of India, Trident Group. Other students are also undertaking training at other renowned textile industries of India with handsome stipend. He said the prominent recruiters are Abhishek Group of Industries Ltd (Trident), Vardhman Groups of Companies, Arvind Mills, Alok Industries Ltd., Dystar India Ltd., JCT Ltd., NaharGroups of Inds. Ltd., Welspun Ltd., Atul Ltd, Jayshree textiles, Orient Craft Ltd, Raymonds Ltd., Malwa Industries Ltd., Reliance Industries Ltd., Sarla Textiles, OCM Textiles Ltd., Saluja group of Industries, Donear etc. The institute ensures 100 per cent placements and exhaustive industrial training of the students, the course of B Tech in textile Processing Technology is in high demand. The admission process for all the programmes has started. Details are available on website.

Tata Power DDL organises networking meet

STAFF REPORTER ■
NEW DELHI

In line with its commitment for social inclusion and support for Affirmative Action (AA) communities including promoting women entrepreneurs, Tata Power Delhi Distribution Limited (Tata Power-DDL), recently organized a networking meet in collaboration with the Dalit Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (DICCI) recently.

The networking session with the Dalit Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry was orchestrated to showcase the leadership's commitment towards the development and upliftment of the Business Associates. The meet served as a platform to highlight Tata Group's legacy of fostering social inclusion and supporting Business Associates (BAs) within the AA community.

With the progressive philosophy of 'Be Job Givers, Not Job Takers', the Dalit Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry is an organization representing Dalit entrepreneurs belonging to the Affirmative Action community.

Commercial land revoked in Noida

STAFF REPORTER ■
NEW DELHI

In what could be perceived as a jolt to investment and employment prospects in the State, the Uttar Pradesh government has cancelled the allocation of land parcels to two subsidiary companies of the M3M Group- Lavish Buildmart and Skyline Propcon - in sector 94 and 72 of Noida. The group had announced an investment of about Rs 7500 crore in the presence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath during investors summit in February 2023.

After obtaining all legal approvals and making initial investments, the investors were taken by surprise which occurred 18 months after the issuance of allocation letters. Sources said an initial investment totaling approximately Rs 4000 crore and the potential loss of over 10,000 jobs looms large as consequences of this decision. As per available information, Lavish secured a plot in scheme September 2022 while Skyline acquired in December 2022.

Manav Sthali school achieves 100 per cent results in Class X and XII CBSE Board exams



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Manav Sthali School Students came out with flying colours with 100 per cent result in Class X and XII CBSE Result 2023-24. In Class XII, 308 students took the exams, out of which Aryan Ghai topped the school with 97 per cent marks in non-medical followed by Saarthak Garg (commerce with Maths) securing 96.60 per cent and Sarah Dhingra (Commerce with Maths) getting 96.4 per

cent. One student secured 100 out of 100 marks in painting and 15 students secured 99 out of 100 marks subject wise.

In class X, 370 students took the exams and Shyama Batra topped the school in Class X with 96.20 per cent marks followed by Ishaan Goel securing 95 percent, Vinita Dolai 95 per cent, and Siya Arora 94.60 per cent. Eight students secured 100 marks subject wise and 20 students secured 99 out of 100 marks subject wise.

Voter fatigue...

From Page 1 Latha and Owaisi are facing off in Hyderabad, which the latter won by a sizeable margin in the last Lok Sabha elections. The YSRCP alleged that party agent Suresh Reddy was stabbed at Mandi Krishnapuram village in Chittoor's Gudipala mandal. It also alleged that TDP supporters attacked party member B Anji Reddy at Aravallipadu in the Darsi constituency. Polling for 175 Assembly seats and 25 Lok Sabha constituencies in the coastal state is taking place simultaneously.

TDP MLC Mohammed Ahmed Sharif wrote a letter to Chief Electoral Officer Mukesh Kumar Meena, complaining about alleged attacks by YSRCP cadres on TDP supporters at Rentala village in Rentichintala mandal of Palnadu district. In Jharkhand, security forces thwarted an attempt by

Maoists to obstruct voter access to polling booths by felling a tree and blocking a road leading to remote Sonapi and Morangponga areas of West Singhbhum district. Khunti in Jharkhand recorded highest voter turnout of 68.40 per cent followed by Singhbhum at 68.00 per cent while Palamau recorded lowest at 60.59 per cent Samastipur seat in Bihar recorded highest voter turnout of 58.32 per cent followed by Ujaipur at 57.50 per cent while Munger recorded lowest at 53.41 per cent. Voting was progressing peacefully in Jammu and Kashmir where three generations of the Abdullah family cast their vote in the Srinagar Lok Sabha constituency. However, a number of displaced Kashmiri Pandits in Jammu were unable to cast their vote as their names were missing from the electoral rolls.

BIHAR

From Page 1

Sunny is the son of Maheshwar Hazari who had won the seat on a JD(U) ticket in 2009, while Shambhavi is the daughter of Ashok Choudhary, a Minister in the Nitish Kumar Cabinet in Bihar. According to the Election Commission data, 56.36 per cent of voters exercised their franchise in Samastipur, 54.93 per cent in Ujaipur, 54.28 per cent in Darbhanga, 54.08 per cent in Begusarai and 51.44 per cent in Munger till 5 pm. The voter turnout in the five Lok Sabha seats was recorded at 54.14 per cent till 5 pm, the officials said. Polling for the five Lok Sabha seats in the State will decide the fate of 55 candidates, they said. A voter in Bihar's Munger claimed she was not allowed to cast her vote after authorities asserted that her name was not registered in the voter list. However, elders in her family, who passed away several years ago, still had their names on the list.

WEST BENGAL

From Page 1

This was followed by Ranaghat with 77.46 per cent and neighbouring Krishnagar 77.29 per cent voters casting their votes.

While 77.36 per cent voters exercised their franchise at Bardhaman-East, Baharampur from where Chowdhury is contesting witnessed 75.36 per cent polling. Asansol from where Shatrughan Sinha is contesting against SS Ahluwalia witnessed a surprisingly low 69.43 per cent polling. Even as a comparatively low turnout of voters tended to

keep all sides guessing experts said things could hurt the Trinamool Congress the most. "While in 2019 and 2021 elections the polling was around 82 per cent in panchayat elections, Bengal saw 85 per cent polling of which at least 8-10 per cent was bogus ... now this is the real percentage and the TMC will have to face it," said PCC leader Ashutosh adding, "TMC knows what they will face now." Meanwhile, in a related development Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Monday attacked Prime

Minister Narendra Modi saying his guarantees were all "acts of 420" (cheating) and asked him first to fulfill his earlier promises.

"Modi is giving guarantees after guarantees, but the question is what about the promises that he made in the past 10 years... Did anyone of you get Rs 15 lakh in your accounts that he promised ... did he provide yearly 2 crore and in total 20 crore jobs ... Is he giving free gas, free ration and free water which he claims ... we are giving free ration and he is taking the credit ... he

promised free gas but has increased its price ... so all his guarantees are acts of 420," said Mamata, adding "the BJP is going out of power this time round ... the people have understood this and are voting without fear." She, however, raised the EVM issue once again saying how some machines had been tampered with. "Today also I got a report that people are pressing TMC's symbol and the vote is going to the BJP ... this is the BJP is planning to win the elections," she said adding they will be defeated in any case.

MAHARASHTRA

From Page 1

"Today, a packet arrived here in the name of everyone called 'Raja' with the 'prasad' and a plea by the guardian minister to vote for his party. The irony is that in many villages, the local refused to accept the 'prasad' and in others, the village elders siphoned off half the 'prasad,'" Rohit Pawar said, while taking a dig at the BJP's LS candidate from Ahmednagar Dr. Sujay R. Vikhe-Patil Dr Sujay is taking on Nilesh D. Lanke of the NCP (Sharad Pawar) Dhangekar alleged that last night in Pune, a large amount of cash was distributed during the weekend to lure the voters in the Sahakar Nagar slums in his constituency reportedly supporters of the ruling MahaYuti.

The ruling BJP is battling hard to retain seven seats that it had won in the 2019 polls, while the feuding factions of the Shiv Sena are slugging it out in three constituencies - Aurangabad, Maval and

Shirdi (SC).

The two factions of the NCP - led by Sharad Pawar and Ajit Pawar - are locked in a keen contest at Shirur, where sitting NCP (SP) Dr Amol Kolhe is taking Shivajirao Adalrao Patil. Shivajirao Patil -- who was earlier with Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena - switched over to the Ajit Pawar-led NCP a few weeks ago, just to contest the polls on NCP (Ajit Pawar) ticket. Unlike in the earlier three phases, there are not many known faces. The only relatively familiar face is Pankaja Munde, who is the eldest daughter of late BJP leader Gopinath Munde and niece of BJP national leader Pramod Mahajan. Pankaja is locked in a direct contest against Bhajrang Sonawane of the NCP (Sharad Pawar). Mundes hail from the Vanjari community and has an excellent following among the OBC community members, while Sonawane is a Maratha. The contest in the neighbouring Aurangabad

seat which is currently held by Imtiyaz Jaleel of the Asaduddin Owaisi-led All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM) has evoked considerable interest. Jaleel had surprised many in the State political circles by winning the Aurangabad seat for the first time. He had earlier in 2014 been elected to the Maharashtra Legislative Assembly from Aurangabad Central constituency.

This time around, Jaleel is involved in a three-cornered contest against Sandeeprao Bhumare of the Shiv Sena (Eknath Shinde) and former MP Chandrakant Khaire of Shiv Sena (UBT). It remains to be seen if the AIMIM candidate will be able to retain Aurangabad seat in this election. In Nandurbar where both Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi addressed election rallies, the BJP sitting MP Dr Haseena Haseena Gavit is taking on Gopal Padvi of the Congress.

UTTAR PRADESH

From Page 1

The last phase of polling will be held on June 1. The voters turnout in 13 Lok Sabha constituencies by 6 pm was 53.24 per cent in Shahjahanpur, 64.73 per cent in Kheri, 64.45 per cent in Dhaurahra, 61.91 per cent in Sitapur, 57.57 per cent in Hardoi, 55.79 per cent in Mirrikkh, 55.79 per cent in Unnao, 55.40 per cent in Farrukhabad, 56.38 per cent in Etawah, 61 per cent in Kannauj, 53.06 per cent in Kanpur, 57.66 per cent in Akbarpur and 57.45 per cent in Bahraich. The voter turnout in Dadraul Assembly bypoll was 53.31 per cent. The CEO said polling in all 13 Lok Sabha constituencies was peaceful and no untoward incident was reported from any place. He said close to 150 complaints were received from 13 constituencies, the maximum 70 complaints from Kannauj, by his office in Lucknow. He said all the complaints were immediately addressed

and resolved. He said the complaints related to electronic voting machine (EVM) malfunction, slow polling process, attempts of fake voting using fake identity. He said till 6 pm 53 ballot units, 53 control units and 201 Voter verifiable paper audit trail (VVPAT) units were replaced. The CEO said for the free fair and transparent polling the Election Commission of India had made arrangements for webcasting at 14,126 polling booths and it was monitored by the district election officers, chief electoral officer at Lucknow and Election Commission of India at New Delhi. He said arrangements for videography were also made in 5,420 polling booths. For keeping close watch on the election process, the poll panel had deployed 13 general observers, nine police observers and 17 expenditure observers. Besides these 2,250 sector magistrates 287 zonal magistrates 111 static

magistrates and 2,920 micro observers were also deployed. Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav is the most high-profile candidate in the fourth phase election in UP. Pitted against Yadav in Kannauj is the Bharatiya Janata Party's incumbent Member of Parliament from Kannauj, Subrat Pathak. In 2019, Pathak had defeated Akhilesh Yadav's wife Dimple in Kannauj in a close contest. In Kannauj, Akhilesh is contesting to reclaim his family legacy as BJP's Subrat Pathak tries to repeat his 2019 win. The Kannauj constituency has been considered a stronghold of the SP since 1998, but it witnessed a significant shift in the 2019 election when BJP's Subrat Pathak wrested this Lok Sabha seat from the SP. The Bahujan Samaj Party has fielded Imran Bin Zafar. Subrat Pathak has been a consistent contender for the BJP, having contested the Lok Sabha elections from Kannauj since 2009.

Kissa Kursi Ka: Why Maliwal was thrashed

From Page 1

There is also no reaction from either the Chief Minister's residence or from Delhi's ruling Aam Aadmi Party. Leader of Opposition in Delhi Assembly and BJP South Delhi candidate Ramvir Singh Bidhuri has condemned the assault on Maliwal and said the accusation is indeed alarming. Earlier, the Chief Secretary had been beaten in a similar manner, and several incidents of scuffles have occurred with many senior leaders of the Aam Aadmi Party, Bidhuri said. In-charge of BJP's National Information & Technology Department Amit Malviya said, "AAP RS MP and former DCW chief Swati Maliwal alleges that Delhi CM's PA assaulted her. Call made from Delhi CM's House. Remember, Swati had maintained silence

on Kejriwal's arrest. She was in fact not even in India at that time and didn't return for a long time." Further, the National Commission of Women (NCW) has issued a statement in this regard on its official X (formerly Twitter) and said it will be sending an enquiry team to look into the alleged assault of Maliwal. It will also send a formal letter to the Delhi Police to send an action taken report (ATR) in the matter. "Maliwal reportedly assaulted the Delhi CM's residence. The NCW vows action, demanding justice from the Delhi Police and sending an enquiry team. Perpetrators must be held accountable. The NCW will be sending a formal letter to Delhi Police to send an ATR in this matter in 3 days," the commission said.

CBSE Class X, XII results: Delhi Government school students shine

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

About 97 per cent of class 12 students and 94 per cent of class 10 students in Delhi Government schools passed the exams surpassing its own previous records and above the national average. The CBSE results of both the classes were announced on Monday. The result of government schools of Delhi has been 96.99 per cent, whereas the result of CBSE 12th in the entire country has been 87.98%. The performance of Delhi government schools in CBSE 10th board has been 94.2%, which is 8.36% more than last year.

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Monday lauded the state government-run schools for outshining their previous year CBSE class 12th results and securing a pass percentage of 96.99 per cent this year as compared to 91.59 per cent recorded last year. Taking to X, the chief minister, who is out on an interim bail till June 1 to campaign for the Lok Sabha elections, congratulated the students, teachers and their parents for the "spectacular" performance.



Ranjan Dimri

He added that the performance of the Delhi government schools in the CBSE class 12 results for 2023-24 surpasses the national average of 87.98 per cent. Delhi Education Minister Atishi also congratulated all the students, teachers and parents

and said, "Once again Delhi government schools have proved that they are top in the country. It is the result of Delhi's education revolution and the hard work of our teachers and students that the results of the Kejriwal government schools are higher than

government schools across the country." She said that due to the wonderful changes that have taken place in Delhi Government schools in the past, the trust of parents towards Delhi Government schools is increasing year by year. "The Kejriwal

government is continuously making efforts to maintain this trust of the parents and under the leadership of Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, we are providing quality education to every child studying in our schools," Atishi said. Giving a message to the children who have not been able to pass the examination, the Delhi Minister said that those children who for some reason could not pass the main examination should not be disappointed but should work hard and try to improve their results. A total of 1,51,429 children of government schools appeared in the 12th board examination out of which 1,46,885 children passed the examination. The result of class 12th has been 96.99 per cent, which is 5.4 per cent higher than last year's 91.59 per cent and more than 9 per cent higher than the

CBSE national average. The result of 307 schools of Delhi Government has been 100 per cent, which has increased by two and a half times compared to 118 last year. The result of 863 schools was more than 90 per cent in 2024 while last year, the results of 647 schools of the Kejriwal government were more than 90%. In the 10th board results, the result of the Kejriwal government schools has been 94.2 per cent, 8.36 per cent more than last year's 85.84% and 7.48 per cent more than the average 86.72 per cent scored by government schools across the country. A total of 1,64,996 students appeared in the CBSE 10th board examination out of which 1,55,442 children passed, 9,449 children got compartment and 105 students failed.

The results will further improve after the compartment exam. The 10th board result in 2024 has been 100 per cent in 327 schools of the Kejriwal government while last year this number stood at 124. Also, there are 843 schools where the result of children is more than 90 per cent which is up from 528 schools in 2023. RD Public school in Krishan Vihar and RDIS school in Sector 21 Rohini achieved 100 per cent results this year in the class 12th as well as in class 10th. In class 12th, Zainab, Dhriti, Arpit, and Tiya created history by securing full marks and performing brilliantly. In class 10th, Hanshika, Aarav, Rakhi, Shivansh and Jiya created history. In RDIS school, Manish and Srishti of class 12 and Harshita and Jaivik of class 10 created history by their academic performance.

Will be back from Tihar on June 5 if INDIA Bloc wins: Kejriwal

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Monday said he will be back from Tihar jail on June 5 if the INDIA Bloc comes to power after the election results are announced. Arrested in a money laundering case linked to the alleged Delhi excise policy scam, Kejriwal has been granted interim bail by the Supreme Court till June 1 to campaign in the Lok Sabha elections. He will have to surrender and go back to jail on June 2. June 1 is the last day of the seven-phase elections and the votes will be counted on June 4. Addressing his Aam Aadmi Party councillors, Kejriwal alleged that efforts were made to break and humiliate him during judicial custody in Tihar. This was his first meeting with the councillors after his release from jail. He called upon the councillors to engage in the cleanliness work of Delhi with more hard work and dedication. "There were two CCTV cam-



eras inside my cell in Tihar and the feed was monitored by 13 officers. It was said that the CCTV feed was also provided to PMO. Modi ji was monitoring me... I do not know what grudge Modi has against me," he claimed. Kejriwal said the AAP leaders are respected and loved by people and "feared by the BJP because of our work". "I have to go back to jail on June 2. I will be watching the election results inside jail on June 4. If the INDIA bloc comes to power, I will be back on June 5," he told party councillors. The AAP National Convenor

said they (BJP-led Central government) tried their best to harass him (Kejriwal) in various ways inside the jail, sometimes used to insult him. "They did not give me insulin for 15 days. I have been suffering from diabetes for 20 years and have been on insulin for 10 years. I have very high sugar levels, and I take 52 units of insulin daily, which is a lot. "When I went to jail, my sugar level was increasing daily, sometimes it was 300, sometimes 325. It was then that I started getting worried because if the sugar level remains this high for a long time, then it gradually starts affecting your organs like kidney and liver, and it can lead to permanent damage. I used to keep requesting the doctors to give me insulin, but they kept delaying," he said. "Today, people in the country are not betting whether they (BJP) will get over 400 seats, the bet is that whether they will get 250 seats or not. What is this? This is a miracle; this is God's grace."

BJP expresses shock over Maliwal incident

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

In a scathing attack on AAP convener and Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal over assault on the Rajya Sabha MP Swati Maliwal, Delhi BJP on Monday claimed that the former Delhi Commission of Women (DCW) has been under pressure and has gone missing. Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva claimed that the residence of the Chief Minister has always been a subject of controversy and said, "It is regrettable that within Delhi, there is a Chief Minister who first got his Chief Secretary beaten up at his residence and now his female associate has been assaulted." Stating that misbehavior towards Swati Maliwal by Arvind Kejriwal's colleague is not the first incident of his kind, he said, "Many prominent women like his former NGO Companion Kiran Bedi, Shazia IImi, and Richa Pandey have left him due to his anti-women politics. Providing protection to MLAs like Somnath Bharti, Amanatullah Khan, Sharad

Chauhan, Prakash Jarwal, who have misbehaved with numerous women, is evidence of Arvind Kejriwal's anti-women mentality." BJP candidate Bansuri Swaraj for New Delhi expressed her shock over the fiasco and said, "This incident shocks the conscience of every Delhiite, and the BJP, above dehors political differences and ideology, stands with every woman who becomes a victim of any kind of violence. It is shocking. The allegations are extremely serious, which are that in the presence of CM Arvind Kejriwal, in fact at his behest, his OSD physically assaulted Swati Maliwal who is a woman worker of AAP. If the AAP cannot protect its own MP, if party convener Arvind Kejriwal cannot ensure the safety of his own party workers, then how can he actually speak about women safety in Delhi?" BJP candidate Kamaljeet Sahrawat for West Delhi said that when Maliwal, worked as the Chairperson of the Delhi Women Commission, kept claiming that she was continuously working to keep women safe in Delhi.

Not new to controversy, Kejriwal's aide Bibhav behind exit of many former AAP leaders

SAUMYA SHUKLA ■ NEW DELHI

This is not the first time Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's close aide Bibhav Kumar has been embroiled in controversy. Kumar, who has been referred to as "Kejriwal's Man Friday", is also responsible for the exit of prominent faces like poet Kumar Vishwas, journalists Shazia IImi and Ashutosh, psephologist Yogendra Yadav, JNU Professor Anand Kumar and Captain GR Gopinath amongst others. Bibhav is facing ED's scrutiny in the alleged excise policy linked money laundering scam. ED, in February, conducted raids at locations connected to Bibhav Kumar. He was also questioned reportedly to seek some clarifications regarding some documents in the excise probe by ED last month. Thereafter, the Directorate of Vigilance terminated the services of Bibhav Kumar as personal secretary to the Chief Minister of Delhi. Special Secretary Vigilance YVVJ Rajshankar, who issued the



termination order, cited a 2007 case pending against Bibhav Kumar, wherein he was accused of obstructing government work. "It is observed that charges against Bibhav Kumar are grave in nature, including charge of assault or criminal force to deter public servant from discharge of his duty" (section 353 IPC), of which the trial against Bibhav Kumar is at the stage of evidence, and therefore Bibhav Kumar is not clear from vigilance angle," it said. Challenging the order, Kumar filed a petition before the Central Administrative Tribunal (CAT), which refused

to stay the termination, stating that granting such relief would be premature. Kejriwal's close aide was also asked to vacate his government quarter in Civil Lines area till May 10 following the order of Kumar's termination of service. He is also engulfed in alleged irregularities in the Delhi Jal Board. Kumar has been associated with Kejriwal in the early 2000s, when he worked as a video editor for a magazine launched by India Against Corruption's members who subsequently formed the AAP. He is one of the most reliable people in the Delhi CM's circle.

Shah to campaign for BJP candidate in Gurugram

STAFF REPORTER ■ GURUGRAM

With only 12 days left for the Lok Sabha general elections, senior leaders of the BJP, Union Home Minister Amit Shah, is going to address a public meeting in Gurugram on Thursday evening in support of party candidate and incumbent MP Rao Inderjit Singh. Senior party functionaries said on Monday, that thousands of people are expected to attend the rally that will be held at Huda Ground in Sector-5 in Gurugram. "The party is embarking towards a historic win and to top that Amit Shah ji is coming to the city to shower us with his guidance. Security and management is in place for this huge rally," BJP district president Kamal Yadav



said, after addressing a meeting with the party's factionary at the party office Gurukulam on Monday. Haryana will go to polls on May 25 and incumbent MP Rao Inderjit Singh is eyeing a third win from the Gurugram seat, after having won from there in the 2014 and 2019 Lok Sabha elections.

Yadav also asked all the officials to bring as many people as possible to the rally. He asked the workers to go door-to-door and invite people to the rally. "The workers would go door to door and tell people about the achievements of the Modi government and also urge them to come to Shah's rally," on May 16.

SC rejects plea seeking Kejriwal ouster post his arrest

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday dismissed a plea seeking removal of Arvind Kejriwal as the Delhi Chief Minister after his arrest in a money laundering case, holding that the petitioner had no legal right to seek his ouster. A bench of Justices Sanjiv Khanna and Dipankar Datta said resignation in such circumstances is a matter of propriety but there is no legal right to seek removal of Kejriwal as the chief minister following his arrest. "What is the legal right? On propriety you may certainly have something to say, but there is no legal right. It's up to the LG (Lieutenant Governor) to take action if he wants to. We are not inclined



to entertain this (petition)," the bench told petitioner Kant Bhatti's counsel. The bench, while dismissing the appeal challenging the April 10 order of the Delhi High Court said, "When the matter (Kejriwal's petition against arrest) was being heard, we had posed the same question to

them. Ultimately, it is a matter of propriety and there is no legal right." It pointed out that several petitions on the issue have been dismissed by the high court. On April 10, the high court had expressed its displeasure over repeated filing of petitions seeking Kejriwal's removal. The court said once it had dealt with the issue and opined that it fell within the executive domain, there should not be any "repeat litigation" as it was not a "James Bond movie that will have sequels". It had pulled up petitioner Sandeep Kumar, a former AAP MLA, who sought Kejriwal's ouster from the office, for trying to involve the court in a "political thicket" and said it will impose costs of Rs 50,000 on him.

Congress to hold town halls ahead of LS polls

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Congress interim chief Devender Yadav said on Monday the party will hold around five to seven town halls in the national capital ahead of the Lok Sabha elections. He also claimed that the party and the INDIA alliance will sweep all seven seats in Delhi. "Congress leader Rahul Gandhi will take part in one of the town halls, he said. Yadav also said the party has hired two call centres with around 140 employees to look after several functions, including checking the effect of the Congress' campaigns. Yadav had said on Sunday that workers were identified, shortlisted and screened before being picked for BLA-2 training at the polling booth



level for the elections. "The Delhi Congress will organize "Town Hall" in the coming days to discuss the issues faced by the people like price rise, unemployment, GST, rehri-patri vendors, pollution, women's safety and security, law and order, JJ clusters, resettlement and unauthorized colonies, ownership rights to the poor in every Lok Sabha constituency and to find solutions," he said.

Eye checkup camp held for widowed mothers

STAFF REPORTER ■ VRINDAVAN

Sulabh Hope Foundation on Sunday organised an eye check-up and bhajan programme on the occasion of International Mother's Day at the Pagal Baba Ashram. This camp was organized for the widowed mothers living in the ashrams of Vrindavan. The widowed mothers were successfully examined by a team of eye doctors from Delhi and were provided with proper consultation as well as spectacles. The programme started with a tribute to Dr. Bindeshwar Pathak, the founder of Sulabh International who started many welfare schemes for the widows living in Vrindavan. Bhajans were also played and sung by the mothers during the programme. Vineeta Verma, Vice President



of Sulabh Hope Foundation, said "the eye testing was done for more than 150 mothers." She further added that in future, medical camps will be organised for mothers from time to time. The tradition of celebrating Holi and Diwali was started by Sulabh Foundation about 10 years ago and is still continuing. Sulabh also provides these mothers with vocational training and primary education to help them have a dignified life.

SC terms solid waste pile up in Capital horrible

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday termed as "horrible" the situation where 3,800 tonnes of solid waste in Delhi go untreated every day, while the surrounding areas in the national capital region have inadequate facilities for treating them, and observed it violated the fundamental right of citizens to live in a pollution-free environment. Referring to data on generation of solid waste per day and the capacity to treat them in areas like Gurugram, Faridabad and Greater Noida, the top court observed that considering the development work which was taking place in Delhi and the surrounding areas, it was obvious that it would increase. A bench of Justices A S Oka and Ujjal Bhuyan said immediate measures should be undertaken to ensure that the quantity of untreated solid waste does not increase till proper facilities are put in place to treat them. The authorities will have to consider various methods to do that,



including putting restraints on construction activity in these areas, it said. It directed the secretary of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs of the Government of India to convene a meeting of all authorities concerned to find a solution and place it before the court. "In the event the authorities fail

to come out with any concrete proposals, we will have to consider passing drastic order with a view to take care of the environment in the capital city of Delhi and surrounding areas," the bench said. "We hope and trust that all the authorities will take the issue with great seriousness as prima facie impression which we

gather is that none of the authorities have bothered to consider the drastic consequences of not having adequate capacity to deal with solid waste generated every day," it said. The bench said a report shall be prepared by the secretary of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs and placed before the court by July 19. The apex court noted it was an admitted position by all concerned that within the limits of the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD), every day 3,800 tonnes of solid waste was generated which cannot be treated as the existing plants do not have the capacity to treat them. "This is a sorry state of affairs in the capital city of Delhi," it said. Calling it a "very vital issue" for Delhi, the bench observed there should be no politics over it. It noted that the MCD's counsel has apprised the court that it will be possible to treat such excess waste only by June 2027 when an additional facility will come into existence. It said this means that for a

period of more than three years from now, Delhi will have 3,800 tonnes of untreated solid waste accumulating in some place every day. "As noted in the earlier order, this poses a great danger to the environment of the capital city," it said. Referring to an affidavit filed by the Union Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, the bench said "something more shocking" has been brought on record. It noted that as per the affidavit, 1,200 tonnes of solid waste was generated in Faridabad but the capacity of processing was only 240 tonnes per day. The bench said as per data, 1,000 tonnes of solid waste was generated daily in Faridabad but the capacity of processing was only 240 tonnes per day. During the hearing, the court said a permanent solution has to be found by the authorities "otherwise tell us which category of constructions should we stop in Delhi. We will pass that drastic order". "Around 3,800 tonnes per day is untreated solid waste in the

city of Delhi. Have you taken estimate how far will it increase?" it asked the counsel representing various authorities. "We are worried about this. What the whole world will say. In the capital city of India, 3,800 tonnes of solid waste being untreated every day as of 2024. What will happen in 2025, what will happen in 2026?" it said. "Everywhere the situation is horrible," the court said. Towards the fag end of the hearing, the bench told Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, who was appearing before it in some other matter, that the Centre should also look into this issue. "What kind of scenario is this and what signal are we giving to the entire world? We talk about development, we talk about environment, what signal we are giving," the bench said. While hearing the matter on April 22, the apex court had termed as "shocking" that 3,000 tonnes of the 11,000 tonnes of municipal solid waste generated in Delhi every day was not processed.

Plea in SC seeks review of EVM VVPAT verdict

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

A plea has been filed in the Supreme Court seeking review of its April 26 judgement by which it had rejected the demand for reverting to the old paper ballot system and the complete cross-verification of votes cast using EVMs with a Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT). The review petition was filed by Arun Kumar Agrawal, who had filed the PIL on the issue earlier, through lawyer Neha Rathi.

The review plea filed on May 10 said, "There are mistakes and errors apparent on the face of the impugned order... and as such there are sufficient reasons which require review of the impugned order/judgment... The petitioner respectfully seeks review on the following issues as have been dealt with in judgment dated April 26, 2024: i) Feasibility of count-

ing of all VVPAT paper slips in terms of time to be taken and additional manpower, ii) Vulnerability of SLU (symbol loading units) and iii) Percentage of VVPAT slips counted for tallying with EVM votes after Chandrababu Naidu... Judgment."

The plea dealt with the feasibility of counting of all VVPAT paper slips in terms of time to be taken and additional manpower and referred to the relevant portion of the judgement.

"During the course of hearing, it was suggested that instead of physically counting the VVPAT slips, they can be counted by a counting machine. This suggestion, including the suggestion that bar-coding of the symbols loaded in the VVPATs may be helpful in machine counting, may be examined by the ECI," the top court had said in the judgement.

Seeking physical counting, the plea said the counting of all VVPAT slips can be done "accurately with a fraction of the employees and at a fraction of cost and within five to eight hours".

It said the VVPAT paper is of the same size as the thermal print out received when a credit or debit card is swiped on making a payment.

"The counting of the slips after they have been sorted candidate-wise, is in fact easier than counting normal paper because the VVPAT paper slip is slightly curled on account of being thermally printed from a roll. The curling makes the picking up of the paper slip from the surface of a table easy.

"Each slip can be counted while being picked to make bundles of 25 slips as mandated under instructions given in the ECI's Manual on EVM and VVPAT, 2023," the plea said.



It said EVMs do not allow voters to verify that their votes have been accurately recorded. "Furthermore, given their

very nature, EVMs are especially vulnerable to malicious changes by insiders such as designers, programmers, manufacturers, maintenance technicians, etc. Therefore, in light of the above there are apparent errors on the face of the impugned order dated April 26, 2024 and the impugned judgment, is liable to be reviewed," it said.

On April 26, a bench of Justices Sanjiv Khanna and Dipankar Datta had termed the suspicion of manipulation of the EVMs "unfounded" and trashed the demand for reverting to the old paper ballot system.

The bench had said that the polling devices were "secure" and eliminated booth capturing and bogus voting.

However, the judgement had opened a window for aggrieved unsuccessful candidates securing second and third places in poll results and allowed them to seek verification of micro-controller chips embedded in five per cent EVMs per assembly constituency on a written request upon payment of a fee to the

poll panel.

It had directed that from May 1, the symbol loading units should be sealed and secured in a container and stored in a strongroom along with the EVMs for a minimum period of 45 days post-declaration of results.

By the judgement, the top court had dismissed the PILs which had also sought a direction to return to the ballot paper system.

"A voting mechanism must uphold and adhere to the principles of security, accountability, and accuracy. An over complex voting system may engender doubt and uncertainty, thereby easing the chances of manipulation. In our considered opinion, the EVMs are simple, secure and user-friendly. The voters, candidates and their representatives, and the officials of the ECI are aware of the nitty-gritty of the EVM system. They also check and

ensure righteousness and integrity," the bench had said. It had said the possibility of hacking or tampering with the agnostic firmware in the burnt memory of EVMs to tutor or favour results is "unfounded".

"Accordingly, the suspicion that the EVMs can be configured or manipulated for repeated or wrong recording of vote(s) to favour a particular candidate should be rejected," the bench had said. It had said the incorporation of the VVPAT, an independent vote verification system which enables electors to see whether their votes have been recorded correctly, fortifies the principle of vote verifiability, thereby enhancing the overall accountability of the electoral process.

The seven-phase Lok Sabha polls began on April 19 and will conclude with the announcement of results on June 4.

Measles jab single dose 2.6 times more likely to be ineffective in kids born via C section: Study

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

A single dose of the measles vaccine is up to 2.6 times more likely to be completely ineffective in children born by C-section, compared to those born naturally, a study has said, emphasising the importance of tailoring vaccination strategies to address the differences in vaccine effectiveness based on birth



method.

Measles is a highly infectious disease preventable by vaccines. However, failure of the jab can significantly increase the risk of an outbreak. The study led by a team of researchers from the universities of Cambridge, UK, and Fudan in China, showed that a second measles jab is vital and induces a robust immunity against measles in children born via C-section.

The study, published in the journal Nature Microbiology, found that the vaccine's effect is linked to the development of the child's gut microbiome — the vast collection of microbes that naturally live inside the gut. Vaginal birth is known to transfer a greater variety of microbes from mother to baby, which can boost

the immune system." We've discovered that the way we're born — either by C-section or natural birth — has long-term consequences on our immunity to diseases as we grow up," said Professor Henrik Salje in the University of Cambridge's Department of Genetics.

"Infants born by C-section are the ones we really want to be following up to make sure they get their second measles jab because their first jab is much more likely to fail," he added.

At least 95 per cent of the population needs to be fully vaccinated to keep measles under control. For the study, the team used data from previous studies of over 1,500 children in Hunan, China, which included blood samples taken every few weeks from birth to the age of 12.

Seventh edition of exercise Shakti between India, France begins in Meghalaya

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The seventh edition of the "Exercise Shakti" between India and France began in Meghalaya on Monday with an aim to enhance joint military capability of both sides to undertake multi-domain operations in a sub-conventional scenario, the defence ministry said.

The joint military exercise also seeks to enhance the level of defence cooperation between the two friendly nations and boost their bilateral ties. Exercise Shakti, being held from May 13-26, will enable the two sides to share their best practices in tactics, techniques and procedures of conducting joint operations, the Ministry of Defence said in a statement.

Tactical drills to be practiced during the exercise will include response to a terrorist action of capturing a defined territory, setting up of a joint command post, establishment of an intelligence and surveillance centre, securing a helipad or landing



site, small team insertion and extraction, special heliborne operations, cordon and search operations besides employment of drones and counter-drone systems among others, it said.

Exercise Shakti is a biennial training event conducted alternatively in India and France. The last edition was conducted in France in November 2021.

The seventh edition of the exercise commenced on Monday at Umroi, in a fully developed and modern foreign training node in Meghalaya.

"The joint exercise will facilitate developing inter-operability, bonhomie and camaraderie between armed forces personnel of the two countries. This will also enhance the level of defence cooperation, further fostering bilateral relations between the two friendly nations," the statement said.

The opening ceremony of the joint exercise was attended by Thierry Mathou, Ambassador of France to India and Major General Prasanna Sudhakar Joshi, General Officer Commanding 51 Sub Area, the ministry said.

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Possession Notice
 Notice under Section 13 (4) of the SARFAESI ACT, 2002 read with Rule 8 (1) of the Security (Enforcement) Interest Rules, 2002

Whereas, Mr. Rajneesh Mahajan, as the Authorized Officer of the Jammu & Kashmir Bank Limited under the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest (SARFAESI) Act, 2002 and in exercise of powers under section 13(2) of the said Act read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002, issued Demand Notice dated 30.06.2022 thereby calling upon the Borrower(s) Cum Mortgagor(s) and guarantor(s) viz.

- M/s Kiran Udyog Private Limited-Address: 27b/7, New Rohtak Road New Delhi through its directors
- Mr Arvind Kumar Jain, R/o 27b/7, New Rohtak Road New Delhi-110005 (Director cum Personal Guarantor)
- Mr Rajeev Kumar Jain, R/o 27b/7, New Rohtak Road New Delhi-110005 (Director cum Personal Guarantor)
- Mr. Vivek Jain, R/o 27b/7, New Rohtak Road New Delhi-110005 (Director cum Personal Guarantor)
- Mrs. Sunita Jain W/o Sh Arvind Jain, R/o 27b/7, New Rohtak Road New Delhi-110005 (Mortgagor cum Personal Guarantor)
- Mrs Monika Jain W/o Sh Vivek Jain, R/o 27b/7, New Rohtak Road New Delhi-110005 (Mortgagor cum Personal Guarantor)
- Mrs Lata Jain W/o Sh Rajeev Jain R/o 27b/7, New Rohtak Road New Delhi-110005 (Mortgagor cum Personal Guarantor)

to repay an amount of Rs.11,61,76,852.97 (Rupees Eleven Crores Sixty One Lacs Seventy Six Thousand Eight Hundred Fifty Two & Paise Ninety Seven Only) being the balance outstanding as on 31.05.2022 in the accounts of the Borrower, within 60 days from the date of the said notice together with the future interest and other charges thereon. The said borrower having failed to repay the said amount, notice is hereby given to the said borrower in particular and the public in general that the undersigned being authorized officer of the J & K Bank Ltd. has taken possession of the mortgage property described herein below, in exercise of the powers conferred on me under section 13 (4) of the said Act read with Rule 8 of the said Rules, on this 10th day of May 2024.

The said borrower in particular and the public in general are hereby cautioned against dealing with the said property in any manner whatsoever and any dealings with the said property will be subject to the charge of the J&K Bank Limited for the amount in aggregating to Rs 14,25,07,441.20 (Rupees Fourteen Crores Twenty Five Lakh Seven Thousand Four Hundred Forty one & Paise Twenty Only) together with unapplied and future interest thereon from 01-05-2024 and other charges incurred or to be incurred. The borrowers attention is invited to the provisions of Sub-section (8) of Section 13 of the Act, in respect of the time available, to redeem the secured assets.

DESCRIPTION OF THE IMMOVABLE PROPERTY

Immovable Property Bearing No. 1586 and 590-92, ward No XVI, Khasra No.920, Situated at Block E, Gali No.31, Naiwala Karol Bagh New Delhi Owned By Mrs. Sunita Jain, Mrs Monika Jain, Mrs. Lata Jain and Mrs Rama Jain.

Sd/-
 (Mr. Khuram Jah Rasool)
 Authorized Officer, The J&K Bank Ltd

Date: 10-05-2024
 Place: New Delhi

Indian masterpieces find place in UNESCO register

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

India's literary masterpieces 'Ramcharitmanas', 'Panchatantra', and 'Sahdayaloka-Locana' have earned a prestigious place in UNESCO's Memory of the World Asia-Pacific Regional Register, a significant acknowledgment of their

cultural and historical importance. Authored by Kashmiri poet Acharya Anandvardhan, Pandit Vishnu Sharma, and Hindu saint and poet Goswami Tulsidas respectively, these trio iconic Indian literary works have left an enduring impact on readers and artists in India as well as worldwide.

In what is a proud moment for India, their inclusion in prestigious UNESCO register also adds a feather in the cap of the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA) which had played a crucial role in securing their inclusion at the 10th meeting of the Memory of the World



Committee for Asia and the Pacific (MOWCAP) in Ulaanbaatar. Significantly, this is the IGNCAs first achievement at the Regional Register since its inception in 2008.

"Their inclusion in the register highlights their transcendent influence, which extends beyond

borders and generations, shaping the moral fabric and artistic expressions of diverse cultures.

"This achievement highlights the timeless value and influence of these literary works, which have deeply impacted Indian literature and culture," Professor Ramesh Chandra Gaur, Dean (Administration) and Head of the Department, Kala Nidhi Division at IGNCAs told The Pioneer. He had presented these three entries from India, effectively defending the nominations at the UlaanBatar convention.

At the gathering in Ulaanbaatar, 38 representatives from member states convened alongside 40 observers and nominees, said an official from the IGNCAs.

After undergoing rigorous deliberations and receiving recommendations from the Register Subcommittee, all three nominations secured inclusion, highlighting their significance in India's literary legacy.

Gaur added that their inclusion in UNESCO's register reaffirms India's rich literary heritage and underscores the importance of preserving and promoting such cultural treasures for future generations.

Authored by Goswami Tulsidas, 'Ramcharitmanas' is an epic poem that narrates the life of Lord Rama, a revered figure in Hindu mythology. It is written in the Awadhi dialect of Hindi, and is one of the most renowned works of devotional literature in India. 'Ramcharitmanas' is not only a religious text but also a cultural symbol, influencing art, music, and literature across India.

These we never had... this is for the first time that Likewise, 'Panchatantra' which is traditionally attributed to writer Vishnu Sharma is a collection of ancient Indian fables and moral stories.

पंजाब नैशनल बैंक ...the name you can BANK upon!
 CIRCLE SASTRA CENTRE SOUTH DELHI, UPPER GROUND FLOOR, 7, BHIKAJI CAMA PLACE NEW DELHI-110066
 PHONE : 8800417770, EMAIL: cs4168@pnb.co.in

SALE NOTICE FOR SALE OF IMMOVABLE PROPERTIES

E-Auction Sale Notice for Sale of Immovable Assets under the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with proviso to Rule 8 (6) 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 properties mortgaged/charged to the Secured Creditor, the constructive/physical/symbolic possession of which has been taken by Authorized Officer of the Bank/Secured Creditor, will be sold on "As is where is", "As is what is", and "Whatever there is" on the date as mentioned in the table herein below, for recovery of its dues due to the Bank/Secured Creditor from the respective Borrower(s) and Guarantor(s). The reserve price and the earnest money deposit will be as mentioned in the table below against the respective properties

Sr. No.	Name of the Branch Name of the Account Name and Addresses of the Borrower/Guarantors Account	Description of Immovable Properties	E) Dt. Of Demand Notice u/s 13(2) of SARFAESI ACT 2002			A) Reserve Price (Rs. in Lacs)	DATE/ TIME OF E-AUCTION	Details of the encumbrances known to the secured creditors	Name & Contact No. of Authorized Officer/nodal Officer
			F) Balance outstanding as on date of NPA	G Possession Date u/s 13(4) of SARFAESI ACT 2002	H) Nature of Possession Symbolic/Physical/Constructive				
1	B/O Alta Trust New Delhi (521810) M/S Vivek Trading Co., F-28 Prashant Vihar New Delhi-110085 Also at M/S Vivek Trading Co., G-23, Vardhman AC Market Vigyan Vihar New Delhi-110092 Also at: Smt Ritu Aggarwal (Borrower) W/O Sh. Shivansh Agarwal Proprietor of M/S Vivek Trading Co. R/O -7/34 Sector-5 Rajinder Nagar Sahibabad Ghaziabad UP-201005 Also at: Sh Sharad Gupta (Guarantor) S/O Bangali Babu Gupta, R/O-5/119, Sector-11, Rajender Nagar Sahibabad Ghaziabad-201005, Also at: Sh Sharad Gupta (Guarantor) S/O Bangali Babu Gupta, 28, G-2 Vaishali Sector-2 Block-A Ghaziabad-201010 UP Also at M/S Mudit Buildtech Pvt. Ltd. (Corporate Guarantor & Mortgagor), Registered Office: D-347, Tagore Garden Extension Near Holy Child School New Delhi-110027 Also at Sh Sharad Gupta (Guarantor) S/O Bangali Babu Gupta, J-1/72 Khirki Extension Malviya Nagar, New Delhi-110017 Also at: M/S Mudit Buildtech Pvt. Ltd., 192 G T Road Prakash Industrial Estate Sahibabad Ghaziabad, UP-201005	All part and parcel of Industrial Property Municipal No-90-B(New No-90-B/5) Land Area 170.93 SQM, Situated at Prakash Industrial Estate Sahibabad Ghaziabad Owned by Sh. Sharad Gupta	E) 07.02.2018 F) 737.41 LAKHS Plus further interest & other charges G) 01.11.2018 H) Physical	A) ₹ 202.00 lakhs B) ₹ 20.20 lakhs C) ₹ 1.00 Lakhs	05.06.2024 11.00 am to 04.00 pm	There is no SA filed/stay on sale of property	Mr. Harish Kumar 8800417770		
2	Branch : Basant Lok, New Delhi M/S Shivashish Polytubes Pvt Ltd., D-144 , Jhilimil Colony Delhi-110095 Shri Shivansh Agarwal (Director/guarantor), 7/34, Sector-5 , Rajinder Nagar, Sahibabad , Ghaziabad - 201005 Smt Geeta Agarwal (Director/guarantor), 7/34, Sector-5, Rajinder Nagar, Sahibabad , Ghaziabad - 201005	1) Plot Part of Khasara No 1776-A, 1776-B (Area 35.77 Sq Yds) Village -pasona, pargana Loni Tehsil & District Ghaziabad UP 2) Plot At Prakash Industrial Estate (Area 79.83 Sq Yds) Village KARKAR moden & pasona , pargana,Loni, Tehsil & District-Ghaziabad-UP 3) Plot No 90-B, New no 90-B/4 Ground Floor, (With out roof right) Prakash Industrial Estate (Area 51.11 Sq yds) G T Road Sahibabad Ghaziabad UP 4) Plot No 90-B/3 Ground Floor(Without roof right) Prakash Industrial Estate (Area 64.10 Sq Mtrs), Village Karkar Moden & Pasona, Pargana Loni Tehsil & District-Ghaziabad UP	E) 01.11.2017 F) Rs.632.44 lakhs plus further interest & Other charges G) 05.10.2018 H) Physical	A) ₹ 219.00 lakhs B) ₹ 21.90 lakhs C) ₹ 1.00 Lakhs	05.06.2024 11.00 am to 04.00 pm	There is no SA filed/stay on sale of property	Smt. Twinkle Nain 9802927574		
3	B/O Vasant Kunj New Delhi (411400) M/S T.S CHADHA & CO., Prop-Vikramjeet Singh Chadha, H NO-148-A Lower Ground Floor Arjun Nagar, Safdarjung Enclave New Delhi-110029 Also at : Smt. Gurmeet Kaur W/O Sh. Tara Chand Chadha, H. NO-148-A Upper Ground Floor Arjun Nagar, Safdarjung Enclave New Delhi-110029 Also at Sh.Vikramjeet Singh Chadha, H NO-148-A Upper Ground Floor Arjun Nagar, Safdarjung Enclave New Delhi-110029	Entire Lower Ground Floor & Third Floor at the built up property at 148/A Street No-29 Arjun Nagar New Delhi-110029 Measuring 82 Sq Yards in the name of Smt. Gurmeet Kaur.	E) 22.10.2018 F) 30.72 LAKHS Plus further interest & other charges G) 12.02.2019 H) Physical	A) ₹ 107.00 lakhs B) ₹ 10.70 lakhs C) ₹ 1.00 Lakhs	05.06.2024 11.00 am to 04.00 pm	There is SA filed but no stay on sale of property	Mr. Harish Kumar 8800417770		

BRIEF TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF E-AUCTION SALE: The sale shall be subject to the Terms & Conditions prescribed in the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002 and to the following further conditions: 1. The properties are being sold on "AS IS WHERE IS BASIS" and "AS IS WHAT IS BASIS" and "WHATEVER THERE IS BASIS". 2. The particulars of Secured Assets specified in the Schedule herein above stated to the best of the information of the Authorized Officer, but the Authorized Officer shall not be answerable for any error, misstatement or omission in this proclamation. 3. The sale will be done through e-auction platform provided at the Website <https://www.mstcecommerce.com> on date and time of auction specified above. 4. For further details and complete Terms & Conditions of the sale, please refer to: www.ibapi.in, www.tenders.gov.in, www.mstcecommerce.com, <https://eprocure.gov.in/epublish/app>.

Date: 13-05-2024, Place: New Delhi
 AUTHORIZED OFFICER, PUNJAB NATIONAL BANK

INDIA Bloc leaders scared of Pakistan's nuclear power: Modi

PTI ■ MUZAFFARPUR/HAJIPUR/SARAN (BIHAR)

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday lashed out at the opposition INDIA bloc, calling its leaders "cowards" who were "scared of Pakistan's nuclear power". Addressing three back-to-back rallies in Bihar's Hajipur, Muzaffarpur and Saran Lok Sabha constituencies, Modi made an apparent reference to a recent statement of National Conference leader Farooq Abdullah, without mentioning him by name. "The INDIA bloc seems to have leaders who are scared of Pakistan and have nightmares of its nuclear power," he said. The remarks come in the backdrop of comments by Abdullah about Pakistan having atom bombs and not



wearing bangles. "If Pakistan does not wear bangles, we will make the country wear these. I knew they did not have foodgrains. Now, I come to know they do not even have adequate supply of bangles," the PM said. "But, we must look carefully at the opposition which seems to be full of cowards and timid people, who give a clean chit to Pakistan on terrorism, raise doubts on surgical strikes... their Left allies even want our nuclear arsenal to be dismantled," he said. Modi maintained that the INDIA bloc had worked out a formula, which would allow five of its leaders, if the coalition came to power, to enjoy a year of premiership each. "Just imagine what type of a mess we would get to see if

the bloc's plan to have a different PM, every year, for five years, succeeds. However, they are a motley group that is bound to fail," he said.

"The current elections are for having a government that will give a further boost to the standing and clout enjoyed by the country," the PM said.

Modi also said the money recovered in raids against politicians "belonged to the country's poor". "I will tell you why they are

creying hoarse against the action of agencies like the ED. During the previous Congress regime, the ED seized only Rs 35 lakh, which could be contained in a school bag. Ever since we took over, the agency has recovered Rs 2,200 crore, which would require 70 small trucks to be carried," said Modi. The prime minister said unlike his opponents, who were concerned about promoting their offspring, "I have no 'warris' (successor). The common people are my warris". He reiterated the charge that parties like the Congress and RJD will "give away reservations" to Muslims "to pursue their vote bank politics", but added that "as long as I am alive, I will not let this happen". "Kidnapping and extortion flourished during the RJD

rule in Bihar... NDA fights for social justice, 60 per cent Union ministers from OBC/SC/ST categories," he asserted. "It has been several days since I challenged the Congress-led opposition to give it in writing that it will not give reservations on religious lines. They are yet to respond," Modi said. The PM also alleged that the opposition had plans to impose "inheritance tax" but "Modi would stand like a wall in their way, thwarting attempts to rob people of their wealth". He accused the opposition parties of "deliberately hurting people's sentiments by making obnoxious statements about the Ram temple in Ayodhya". Targeting RJD leaders Lalu Prasad and his son and heir

Rahul did not visit Ram temple for fear of losing vote bank, says Shah

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Monday said Congress leader Rahul Gandhi did not visit the Ram temple in Ayodhya as he feared losing his vote bank. Addressing a rally in Maharashtra's Dhule district, Shah also said Gandhi opposed the abrogation of Article 370, which provided special status to Jammu and Kashmir, and sought to know the views of Shiv Sena (UBT) head Uddhav Thackeray on the Congress leader's stand. The Congress, Shiv Sena (UBT) and the Sharad Pawar-led NCP (SP) are constituents of the opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) in the state and the INDIA alliance at the national level. The consecration of Lord Ram's idol was held at the Ayodhya temple in January this year. Shah said Prime Minister Narendra Modi not only helped in the resolution of the Ram temple issue but also facilitated its construction. "Rahul Gandhi was invited for the Ram temple inauguration), but he did not



visit because he feared losing his vote bank. The BJP does not have any such fear," he said. The Congress did not remove Article 370 from Jammu and Kashmir because of the same appeasement politics, the senior BJP leader said. "Gandhi opposed the

from Uddhav Thackeray. One of the constituents of the opposition INDIA bloc is DMK led by M K Stalin, and his son Udhayanidhi Stalin has insulted Sanatan Dharma. Does Uddhav agree with them?" Shah sought to know. Further targeting the Congress and the Wayanad MP, the Union minister said 20 attempts were made to "launch and relaunch" Rahul Gandhi as a leader. "How can he (Gandhi) even launch Chandrayaan to the moon? Can he or his government ever give a befitting response to Pakistan? Can they end Naxalism or terrorism in the country? Can they make India prosperous?" he asked. Shah was campaigning for BJP's Dhule Lok Sabha seat candidate Subhash Bhamre, the former Union Minister of State for Defence.

Congress holding PM responsible for Nehru's mistakes: Jaishankar on China issue

PTI ■ MUMBAI

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Monday said the Congress holds Prime Minister Narendra Modi accountable for the mistakes made by first prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru when making comments on China while believing the party has no culpability for the past acts. On Chinese belligerence in Ladakh and Arunachal Pradesh, Jaishankar said Indian land was taken by China between 1958 and 1962, and some of it before 1958 as well. Attacking Rahul Gandhi, Jaishankar said it is "very very sad" to "gun down your own forces". "When you keep saying land taken by China, it was lost in 1962. I see efforts made to mislead the country," he said in response to a question at a news conference here. China



and India have been witnessing an unease in ties, especially after the Galwan Valley incident of June 2020 when Chinese and Indian soldiers clashed, resulting in casualties on both sides. Since then India-China relations have been in an "abnormal state", with both sides amassing its troops along the LAC. The External Affairs Minister

said people are saying Chinese are building villages on the border, but it is in a place called Longju (along Line of Actual Control in Arunachal Pradesh), which the Chinese attacked and occupied in 1959. "If you look at the Google map, please look at that village and triangulate it with what Nehru said to the Parliament in 1959," Jaishankar said. Congress leader Rahul Gandhi and his party talk about a bridge being built by China in Pangong Tso in Ladakh but the bridge is being built at a place where the Chinese came in 1958 and then retook in 1962, Jaishankar asserted. A Congress spokesperson recently said the Chinese have built a road in Shaksgam Valley and claimed this has created concerns for Siachen, the EAM said. "Possibly it has concerns for Siachen. Shaksgam Valley was allowed by Nehru to be part of POK and the Pakistanis handed it over to China in 1963. The Congress party is holding Modi responsible for Nehru's actions in 1949 and for (Pakistani premier Zulfikar Ali) Bhutto's actions in 1963 but apparently they (Congress) have no culpability," Jaishankar said.

Only Ramdrohis opposing Modi, claims Yogi

PTI ■ RAE BARELI/BARABANKI (UP)

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said Monday that Prime Minister Narendra Modi will again form the government, asserting that even Lord Ram wants his "ardent devotee" to win. He was addressing rallies in Barabanki and Rae Bareilly, from where Congress leader Rahul Gandhi is contesting the Lok Sabha elections. "Only 'Ramdrohis' or Pakistanis are opposing Modi ji," Adityanath said at a public meeting in Rae Bareilly constituency. "I cannot understand what is Rahul Gandhi's relationship with Pakistan. He lives in India, seeks votes in Rae Bareilly and gets support from Pakistan." He alleged that the voices from Pakistan and that of Ramdrohis have become similar. "A Pakistani minister was supporting the incident in which soldiers were martyred in Pulwama... Now he has made a statement in support of the Congress candidate from Rae Bareilly, Adityanath said. Taking a dig at Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi who has sought to know from PM Modi what he has done for Raebareilly in the past 10 years, the Uttar



Pradesh chief minister asked, "What has the Congress done in 65 years (of rule)?" In Barabanki, Adityanath said under the leadership of Prime Minister Modi, everyone, irrespective of their caste and community, benefitted from the development schemes. "Our beloved Lord Ram also wants his ardent devotee to take over the reins of the country once again," the Uttar Pradesh chief minister said. With the fourth phase of voting underway, the "Modi wave has now turned into a tsunami," he said. Hitting out the Congress and Samajwadi Party, he said, "They have a history of scams. These people are making big claims, but the truth is that during their time people used to die of hunger, farmers used to commit suicide and youth used to migrate." "But we are all witnesses to the change that took place in the last 10 years under the leadership of Prime Minister Modi. For the last four years, 80 crore people have been getting free rations, 12 crore farmers have got the benefit of Kisan Samman Nidhi," Adityanath said. Voting in Barabanki and Rae Bareilly Lok Sabha seats will be held in the fifth phase on May 20.

Union Minister Anurag Thakur, Congress candidate file nomination papers in HP

PTI ■ HAMIRPUR/SHIMLA (HP)

Union Minister Anurag Thakur and Congress candidate Vinod Sultanpuri filed their nominations for Hamirpur and Shimla (SC) Lok Sabha seat, respectively on Monday. Thakur was accompanied by senior BJP leaders and his brother Arun Dhumal, the chairman of the Indian Premier League as he submitted nomination papers. The senior BJP leader is seeking a fifth term in the Lok Sabha from the Hamirpur seat in Himachal Pradesh. Before filing his nomination, Thakur paid obeisance at the temple of Maa Awahdevi and addressed people at several places. Hundreds of party functionaries and locals greeted him with garlands and wished him luck. The Congress has fielded Satpal Raizada, a former MLA of Una, as its candidate against Anurag Thakur. In Shimla, sitting MLA from Kasauli Vinod Sultanpuri filed his nomination from Shimla (SC) Lok Sabha seat. The Congress candidate was accompanied by Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu, party's state unit chief Pratibha Singh and Cabinet Minister Harshwardhan Chauhan, among others. Talking to media person after Sultanpuri submitted his papers, Sukhu said all four Congress candidates contesting Lok Sabha polls in the state have filed their nominations.

PD(442)C
I, Manjit Singh S/o Avtar Singh R/o B-1 Gujranwala Town Adarsh Nagar North West Delhi-110009 have changed my name to Manjeet Singh Anand.
PD(441)A

PUBLIC NOTICE
Mr. Sanjay Kumar and Mrs. Monika Swami are the owners of the property bearing Plot No. 1963, Ground Floor, Sector-28, Faridabad, Haryana-121008. Any person who has any objection regarding the Mortgage of the aforesaid property in favour of Mr. Sanjay Kumar and Mrs. Monika Swami, may submit his/her objection within 7 days from the date of the Notice in writing. The said objection may be kindly sent to the undersigned by way of the Registered Post on the address given below and by E-mail.
Lavanya Sharma (Advocate)
Trinity Legal Partners
C-401, Fourth Floor, Nirvana Courtyard, Nirvana Country, Sector-50, Gurugram-122018
E: lavanya@trinitylegalpartners.com

THE PIONEER CLASSIFIEDS
CHANGE OF NAME

I, hitherto known as Rajni alisa Inder Kaur D/o Des Raj W/o Sinder Pal residing at H.No.-15/3, East Guru, Angad Nagar, Laxmi Nagar, Delhi-110092 have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as Inder Kaur.
PD(442)C
I, Manjit Singh S/o Avtar Singh R/o B-1 Gujranwala Town Adarsh Nagar North West Delhi-110009 have changed my name to Manjeet Singh Anand.
PD(441)A

This may be published in Newspaper and TV from the day following the last date for withdrawal of candidature and two days before the date of poll.
Format C-1
Declaration about criminal cases
(As per the judgement dated 25th September, 2018, of Hon'ble Supreme Court in WP (Civil) No 536 of 2011 (Public Interest Foundation & Ors. Vs Union of India & Anr.) Name and address of candidate: Singh Ram S/o Mam Chand, Vill- Bhamrapur, Bharangji, Tehsil- Bawal, Distt. Rewari Name of Political Party: Independent Name of Election: House of The People Name of Constituency: Gurgaon-09 I Singhram (name of candidate), a candidate for the above mentioned election, declare for public information the following details about my criminal antecedents: (A) Pending criminal cases: Sl. No.-1 Name of Court: SDJM Case No. and Dated: CH/923/19 Status of Case(s): Evidence Section(s) of Acts concerned and brief description of offence(s): 323, 294, 506, IPC (B) Details about cases of conviction for criminal offences: NA *In the case of election to Council of States or election to Legislative Council by MLAs, mention the election concerned in place of name of constituency.

PUBLIC NOTICE
Notice is hereby given to the General Public on behalf of our client that Mr. Sunder Lal is the owner of House No. 26, area admeasuring 65 sq. yds., Nehru Kulia, Malka Gari, Delhi, vide GPA, ATS & Will dated 28.10.1994 executed by Mrs. Taj Devi. All persons are hereby informed that above mentioned owner wants to sell the said property to a person who intends to obtain loan on our client against the said property, if anybody has any objection regarding the said property, kindly inform the undersigned in writing on the below mentioned address within 07 days of the present.
Kumar & Associates (Advocates & Consultants)
200, Ind Floor, 23, Shivaji Marg, Mori Nagar, N. Delhi-15 Ph: 011-41112527-28, legal@kralgal.com

PUBLIC NOTICE
Notice is hereby given to the General Public that Mrs. Hem Lata W/o Mr. Arvind Kumar is the owners BUILT-UP PROPERTY BEARING NO. A-28, SECOND FLOOR (WITH ROOF RIGHTS) AREA MEASURING 75 SQ. YDS I.E. 62.70 SQ. METRS. OUT OF KHASRA NO. 121 AND 122, SITUATED IN THE AREA OF VILLAGE BABAR PUR IN THE ABAD OF NEAR CHANDMASJID, ILLAKH SHAHADIA, DELHI, vide Sale Deed dated 31.07.2017 executed by Mr. Arvind Kumar S/o Mr. Budh Prakash and Mr. Arvind Kumar owner of vide Reg. GPA dated 27.11.2015 and same to be sold to intending Borrower i.e. Mr. Jay Sharma & Mr. Sonu Sharma and same mortgaging the said property with SMFG India Home Finance Co. Ltd. if anybody has any charge/interest in the said property or any kind of dispute kindly inform the undersigned in writing on the below mentioned address within 07 days of the present.
Mrs. Praseen Lata, Advocate
SG Associates (Law Firm)
F7-18, Lotus Road Plaza, Vahav, Khandupuram, Shabhadra (P) Distt. Srisailem (Tamil Nadu), Ph: 9111127264, 913095831

PUBLIC NOTICE
"It is to inform to the public at large that Mr Ram Singh Yadav has acquired Plot No.C-78, area measuring 300 sq. yds., out of Kharsa No.271 Village Rostian Pura Prem Nagar C-Block Najalgarh New Delhi -110043 vide Sale Deed dated 22.07.2003 executed by Mr. Satish Yadav, Now Mr. Ram Singh Yadav is the undisputed owner of above said property.
OR
Any person / firm / institution / company having any claim or right in respect of the said Property by way of inheritance, share, sale, agreement, lease, license, gift, possession, legal heirs, partners or encumbrance whatsoever or otherwise is hereby required to intimate in writing to the undersigned within 07 days from the date of publication of this notice of his/her/their share or claim, if any, with all supporting documents at below mentioned address. After expiration of notice period, the claims, if any, of such person shall be treated null and void and also treated as waived and not binding on our client.
Ajay Kumar Giri (Advocate) OFFICE: 26/161, LGF, Vikram Vihar Lajpat Nagar 4, New Delhi, 110024.

कार्यालय सहायक आयुक्त, राज्य कर सचलदल इकाई, आशारीडी, देहरादून।
पत्रांक : 45 / सहायकायुक्त/राज्यकर/आशारी/देहरादून/2024-25 दिनांक : 11.05.2024
नीलामी सूचना
सर्वसाधारण को सूचित किया जाता है कि इस कार्यालय द्वारा दिनांक 09.05.2024 को पत्रांक 38 / दिनांक 06.05.2024 द्वारा प्रकाशित नीलामी सूचना में आंशिक संशोधन किया गया है, जिसमें उल्लेखित पूर्व बोली निक्षेप (Pre bid deposit) की रकम ₹ 7080.00 के स्थान पर ₹ 4433.00 पदा जाये, तथा जिस माल की नीलामी प्रस्तावित है, माल के विवरण के स्थान पर माल का विवरण निम्न प्रकार पदा जाये—
क्र.सं० सामग्री का विवरण निर्धारित न्यूनतम बोली मूल्य (कर रहित)
01 पेन्ट- 10 नग ₹ 88,660.00
उपरोक्त के अतिरिक्त शेष नीलामी सूचना एवं नीलामी की शर्तें पूर्ववत् रहेगी।
(अवनीश कुमार पाण्डेय)
सहायक आयुक्त राज्य कर (प्रमारी)
सचल दल इकाई आशारीडी देहरादून।

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) 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 : L6522DL2005PLC136028) ("Secured Creditor"), the constructive 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 18.06.2024 from 04.00 P.M. to 05.00 P.M., for recovery of Rs. 23,19,597/- (Rupees Twenty Three Lakh Nineteen Thousand Five Hundred Ninety Seven only) pending towards Loan Account No. HHLNOD00221563, 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 PUSHPENDRA SHARMA, BALKISHAN SHARMA and REKHA SHARMA.
The Reserve Price of the Immovable Property will be Rs. 21,50,000/- (Rupees Twenty One Lakh Fifty Thousand only) and the Earnest Money Deposit ("EMD") will be Rs. 2,15,000/- (Rupees Two Lakh Fifteen Thousand only) i.e. equivalent to 10% of the Reserve Price.

DESCRIPTION OF THE IMMOVABLE PROPERTY
UNIT NO. 1509, 15TH FLOOR, TOWER - 3 IN DREAM HOMES, SECTOR - 5, WAVE CITY, NH - 24, GHAZIABAD, UTTAR PRADESH - 201001.
For detailed terms and conditions of sale, please refer to the link provided on the website of the Secured Creditor i.e. www.indiabullshomeloans.com; Contact No: 0124-6910910, +91 7065451024; E-mail id: auctionhelpline@indiabulls.com. For bidding, log on to www.auctionfocus.in
Date : 09.05.2024
Place : GHAZIABAD
Sd/-
Authorized officer
Indiabulls Housing Finance Limited

SYMBOLIC POSSESSION NOTICE
Branch Office: ICICI Bank Ltd, Landmark Building, 4th Floor, 228A, AJC Bose Road, Kolkata-700020 CIN No: L65190GJ1994PLC021012, www.icicibank.com
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.
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 in Demand Notice (Rs.) Name of Branch
1. Borrower 2 Plus & (Guarantors) Kunj Bihari Goyal, Jyoti Goel, Karishma Goyal And Savitri Remedies Pvt Ltd (Represented By Directors Jyoti Goel & Kunj Bihari Goyal) & (Mortgagor) Savitri Remedies Pvt Ltd (Represented By Directors Jyoti Goel & Kunj Bihari Goyal) / Represented By Proprietor Karishma Goyal Near Hebe Ispat Compound Agamkuan Choti Pahari Road, Agankuan Rasida Chak Patna- 800007/ 057905501520 & 057955000013 Property on Land Being Part of Municipal Survey Plot No 284, Sheet No 68 Under Patna City Municipal Survey of 1932-33, Municipal Holding No 131/157 (Old) and 213/157 (New), Circle No 24, Old Ward No. 9, New Ward No. 41/30 and Zone No. 4, Mohalla Gobind Mitra Road, Revenue Mauza Moharrampur, P.S. No. 137, Taunsi No. 263, P.S. Pirbahore, District Patna, Sub Registration Office Patna Within The Limits of Patna Municipal Corporation, Patna (Admeasuring An Area of 1509.5 Sq Ft) Date of Symbolic : 08/05/2024
The above-mentioned borrowers(s)/ guarantors(s) are hereby given a 30 day notice to repay the amount, else the mortgaged 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 14, 2024
Place: Delhi
Authorized Officer
ICICI Bank Limited

PUBLICATION FORM NO. 1
DEBTS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL
(Area of Jurisdiction-Part of Uttar Pradesh)
600/1, University Road, Near Hanuman Setu Mandir, Lucknow- 226 007
DRC NO. 389/2023
Notice Under Rule 2 of Second Schedule to the Income Tax Act, 1961 Read with Section 29 of The Recovery of Debt Due to Banks and Financial Institutions Act, 1993.
ICICI Bank Ltd.
Vs.
Mrs. Sangeeta De & Others
To,
1. Mrs. Sangeeta De
Flat No. A-1601, 16th Floor, Sunworld Arista GH 01/C, Tower C, Sector 168, Gautam Budha Nagar- 201 301
Also:- Flat No. 1101, Tower No. D 5, Puri Pranayam, Sector No. 82/85, Fridabadi- 121 004
2. Mr. Suranjana De
Flat No. A-1601, 16th Floor, Sunworld Arista GH 01/C, Tower C, Sector 168, Gautam Budha Nagar- 201 301
Also:- Flat No. 1101, Tower No. D 5, Puri Pranayam, Sector No. 82/85, Fridabadi- 121 004
3. Ms. Sagorika De
Flat No. A-1601, 16th Floor, Sunworld Arista GH 01/C, Tower C, Sector 168, Gautam Budha Nagar- 201 301
Also:- Flat No. 1101, Tower No. D 5, Puri Pranayam, Sector No. 82/85, Fridabadi- 121 004
4. Mrs. Sunworld Residency Private Limited
Corporate Office :- A-4, Sector-4, Noida- 201 301 ...Defendants
This is to notify that a sum of Rs. 1,62,62,698/- (Rs. One Crore, Sixty Two Lac, Sixty Two Thousand, Six Hundred and Ninety Eight only) together with pendente lite and future interest @8% per annum with monthly rest from the date of filing 04.02.2019 Original Application till is fully liquidated and costs succeeds and with cost jointly severally till its realization is made has become due from you as per the Certificate bearing No. 389/2023 dated 18.07.2022 in Original Application No. 201/2019 passed against you by the D.R.T. Lucknow.
2. You are hereby directed to pay the sum within 15 days of the receipt of this Notice, failing which the recovery shall be made in accordance with the Recovery of Debts Due to Bank and Financial Institution Act, 1993.
3. You are hereby ordered to declare on Affidavit the particulars of asset on or Before 25/07/2024
4. You are hereby ordered to appear before the undersigned on 25/7/2024 at 10:30 A.M.
5. In addition to the sum aforesaid you will also be liable to pay the following Costs.
Details of costs:-
Application fees Rs. 1,50,000/-
Counsel fees & Clerkage Rs. NA
Publication charges Rs. NA
Miscellaneous Expenses Rs. NA
Clerical Charges
Given under my hand and seal at Lucknow this 16th day of April, 2024.
Recovery Officer-I
Debts Recovery Tribunal
Lucknow



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Frenemies

India seeks to neutralise China's economic hold but it beats US to become India's biggest trading partner

In the realm of global economics, the dynamics of trade relationships often override geopolitics. India's growing trade affinity with China is a living example of that: China has become India's largest trading partner in 2023-24. This development brings little joy to the nation aspiring to become an alternative to China and striving to bolster its manufacturing sector, with the Prime Minister's 'Make in India' call. Despite the Indian Government's rhetoric urging caution in dealings with China, economic imperatives seem to be reshaping the contours of bilateral trade. Their trade relationship has long been characterised by a mix of competition and cooperation. Both nations are regional powerhouses with vast consumer markets and burgeoning manufacturing sectors, though China is much ahead of India in terms of economy and infrastructure size. Over the years, China has emerged as a crucial supplier of goods to the world, including India, ranging from electronics and machinery to pharmaceuticals and textiles. Concurrently, India has also found a receptive market for its exports in China, particularly in sectors like raw materials, agricultural products and IT services. But the real problem is the lopsidedness of the trade. We are a net importer of Chinese goods, that too at the cost of our local industry.



Most traders take the easy import route, often sub-standard but cheap, and make decent profits. This leads to job losses and closure of several MSME manufacturing units. Besides, the nations are not the best of neighbours; relying on China in this scenario is indeed fraught with danger. But where wealth flows, interests follow and that explains India's rising trade ties with China. The trajectory of bilateral trade has been influenced by several factors. One, the sheer size and harmony of their economies create natural synergies to drive trade volumes. Despite occasional border disputes and geopolitical issues, economic pragmatism often prevails, fostering trade ties. Two, China's manufacturing prowess and cost competitiveness have made it an attractive destination for Indian importers, especially in sectors where domestic production struggles to meet demand. Moreover, the persistent trade deficit with China underscores India's reliance on their goods and highlights the challenges in achieving more equitable trade ties. The geopolitical dimension of India-China trade cannot be overlooked either. The Indian Government must emphasise the need for strategic autonomy and self-reliance in key sectors. Initiatives such as 'Make in India' and Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) must be given further fillip. Additionally, efforts to diversify trade partnerships by nurturing ties with countries like the US, Japan and Australia must be accorded priority and a diversified trade portfolio maintained. Achieving a fundamental rebalancing of India-China trade dynamics is a multifaceted challenge that requires nuanced handling and necessitates a calibrated and pragmatic policy approach.

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PICTALK



Flamingoes at the Thol Bird Sanctuary in Mehsana district

Regime change on cards in Nepal?



ASHOK K MEHTA

Amid strained India-Nepal relations, speculation swirls around a potential regime change in Nepal

Nepal's late Foreign Minister Rishikesh Shah would say that Kathmandu is the rumour capital of the world and also the fount of speculation. Our own Madhuri Dikshit once hailed Nepal as a beautiful country adding: "We're lucky it is part of India". This created a furor but the story appeared with tasteful embellishments in Nepal. Delhi's Chief Minister Madan Lal Khurana waxed eloquent about the sterling qualities of Nepalis working in India and what great servants they made. This led to fireworks in Nepal and bush telegraphy produced several ugly distortions. Hrithik Roshan never said he did not like Nepalese but Indian films were banned and other collateral damage followed. India is usually at the receiving end of Nepal's woes and wrath. China has begun to feature negatively only recently. India-bashing was at its peak following the economic blockade in 2015 and the rekindling of border dispute when Kalapani, Lipulekh and Limpiyadhura were incorporated into Nepal's map after India included Kalapani in a new map. Chinese Ambassador Hou Yanxi who made her mark rough-shodding Nepalese politicians was targeted by the Indian media. Yanxi became central to a duel between Indian and Nepalese media. How poorly informed political class, celebrities and even the media about Nepal were apparent. This longish backgrounder is a necessary prelude to describe last week's rumour and speculation about another attempt at regime change in Nepal. The report about the split in JSP (N) took place when its supremo, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Health and Population Upendra Yadav was visiting the US. The story goes that NC leader Sher Bahadur Deuba attempted to topple the Left coalition led by Prachanda by drawing out Yadav (12 lawmakers) and Madhav Nepal of Unified Socialists (10 lawmakers). 20 plus lawmakers are necessary for the NC-led Democratic Alliance to make a comeback. The attempt failed as UML's KP Oli preempted the plan by splitting JSP(N) by



getting former colleague and lawmaker Ashok Rai to walk away from Yadav with seven of 12 lawmakers. The inside story is different: Yadav had plans to overwhelm numerically the Hill Nepalese with Madhesis in the approaching party national convention. This upset the Hill and Madhesis members unhappy with Yadav. Rai approached the Election Commission and registered a new party JSP sans N for Nepal. Yadav has decided to fight the Rai faction in court. Rai has pledged support for Prachanda. Reports about Deuba's deal vary: offering Yadav Premiership and/or a shared term with Madhav Nepal. This deal too fizzled out as Unified Socialists were already divided between two former PMs, Nepal and Jhalanath Khanal. India figured in the regime change as having backed Deuba. Operation Topple requires either RSP (21 lawmakers) or JSP(N) and Unified Socialists together to desert the ruling dispensation. The king-maker for this great game is the CPN Maoists with 31 lawmakers that both NC and UML would need to stay in power. The threat to the Prachanda-led coalition will lurk in the nooks and corners of Parliament posed by parties with double-digit strength. NC, the single-largest party is

MIND GAMES ARE REGULARLY PLAYED IN BOTH COUNTRIES AS UNILATERALISM HAS CREPT INTO NEIGHBOURHOOD DIPLOMACY. WHILE NEPAL HAS DONE A TIT-FOR-TAT OVER THE MAP, CHINA HAS UNILATERALLY CHANGED THE LAC

licking its wounds but will not declare a truce to infuse a modicum of political stability. It has been blocking parliamentary proceedings for more than a month over the cooperative fund fraud in which Home Minister Rabi Lamichhane, RSP is involved. It has demanded a parliamentary probe into the alleged wrongdoings of Lamichhane. Prachanda has agreed to an enquiry in which others involved in the scam are also investigated. Parliament resumed after a short recess but NC is not allowing it to function. The budget has to be passed shortly and maybe the government will be forced to take the ordinance route. In India too it is time for regime change but through the world's longest election process. The BJP excels in toppling opposition governments with Operation Lotus. India has played a pivotal role in introducing democracy and its restoration in Nepal. Foreign Minister Jaishankar who has become a rock star in the election campaign is sharing pearls of wisdom on every conceivable subject, especially India's Neighbourhood First Policy. He said that politics may go up or down in the neighbourhood but India is regarded as a friend by the people. Later, he admitted that in diplomacy as in business there are setbacks - it's part of the game. The latest setback in India-Nepal relations is the resurfacing of the festering border dispute. Having incorporated it in its state emblem the government has ordered the new map to be printed on Rs 100 bank notes about which Jaishankar observed that Nepal unilaterally took some measures but they can't change reality on the ground, adding 'discussions are ongoing through an established platform'. As far as is known, no discussion has taken place. For Prachanda and Oli, nationalism is the magic mantra. When Prachanda came to India on an official visit last June during the joint press statement, PM Modi said that the border dispute would be resolved through a joint mechanism. Strangely this fact was not mentioned in the press release of the joint statement. Mind games are regularly played in both countries as unilateralism has crept into neighbourhood diplomacy. While Nepal has done a tit-for-tat over the map, China has unilaterally changed the LAC with India (The writer, a retired Major General, was Commander, IPKF South, Sri Lanka, and founder member of the Defence Planning Staff, currently the Integrated Defence Staff. The views expressed are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Every vote counts



Amidst the dynamic political landscape, where elections have been completed in some places and others are still pending, it's crucial to acknowledge that not all leaders hoist the banner of public welfare. Merely casting a ballot doesn't guarantee the orchestration of effective governance. Instead of succumbing to the illusion that voting alone resolves everything, let's dispel such notions. The real-

ity often reveals a different narrative, where power dynamics favour those with deep pockets and questionable tactics, leaving trust and resources in disarray. If you're still clinging to the belief that all politicians are solely motivated by altruism, it's a precarious innocence to maintain. However, rather than consigning voting to oblivion, let's approach it with discernment. Let's seek out candidates who sway to the tune of integrity and genuinely prioritize the welfare of the people. And let's not overlook the importance of advocating for electoral reforms, weaving a fabric of transparency, accountability, and fairness in the political sphere. Your vote, fellow citizens, carries weight, especially when interwoven with others who aspire to a more just and equitable society. Remember, in the intricate tapestry of democracy, every thread contributes to a brighter future for us all
Imdadullah | Hyderabad

KEJRIWAL'S ELECTIONEERING

Madam — This is with reference to your Editorial "Wild card" (May 13). The national convener of the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) Arvind Kejriwal will campaign in favour of the Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance (INDIA) candidates across the country, Sandeep Pathak, the party's national general secretary said in a statement on Sunday, 12 May. Kejriwal will campaign in Lucknow on May 15, in Jamshedpur on May 16 and in Mumbai on May 17, he added. Kejriwal, who came out of Tihar Jail earlier this week, said he will work tirelessly and campaign across the country to end the "dictatorship" of the Modi government at the Centre. All the INDIA bloc constituents want Kejriwal to visit their states and campaign for them. The Supreme Court has granted interim bail to the AAP leader to participate in the Lok Sabha poll campaigning.
Bhagwan Thadani | Mumbai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

SC judgments have strengthened democracy

Democratic spectacle owes its strength and boldness to a series of landmark legal judgments that have fortified its foundations



AKSHAT KHETAN

Elections, serving as the cornerstone of democracy, offer a platform for citizens to voice their opinions, hold leaders accountable, and actively engage in shaping the future of their nation. In India, elections transcend mere political proceedings; they evolve into grand festivals, embodying the collective will and aspirations of over a billion people. India's electoral odyssey, marked by its vast scale, diversity, and intricacy, has been fortified by a series of seminal legal rulings. These decisions have been instrumental in shaping and reinforcing the democratic framework of India, ensuring fairness, transparency, and inclusivity in the electoral process. Among the plethora of cases that demonstrate the resilience of the legal system, five stand out as pillars that have fortified India's electoral journey.



Fundamental Right to Vote: At the core of India's electoral democracy lies the fundamental right to vote, enshrined in the Constitution. Over time, the judiciary has steadfastly upheld and safeguarded this right through various legal pronouncements. In the landmark 1977 case of Mohinder Singh Gill v. The Chief Election Commissioner, the Supreme Court of India unequivocally affirmed that the right to vote is sacrosanct and any arbitrary deprivation of this right is unconstitutional. The crux of this case revolved around assessing the constitutional validity of electoral laws that might encroach upon the fundamental right to vote. **Electoral Reforms and Transparency:** Ensuring transparency and accountability in the electoral process has been an ongoing endeavour, guided by judicial interventions aimed at curbing malpractices and fostering electoral integrity. The 2002 case of Association for Democratic Reforms v. Union of India marked a significant milestone in this journey. This case presented the chal-

lenge of reconciling the right to privacy of political candidates with the public's right to information, necessitating a delicate balance between transparency in electoral processes and individual privacy rights. **Inclusive Representation and Minority Rights:** The diverse social fabric of India underscores the necessity for inclusive representation and safeguarding minority rights in the electoral arena. Legal judgments have played a pivotal role in upholding these principles and ensuring equitable participation for all segments of society. The 1991 case of Indra Sawhney v. Union of India, commonly known as the Mandal Commission case, stands as a testament to this commitment. This case grappled with the challenge of affirmative action and reservation policies, striking a balance between equitable representation of marginalised communities and the principles of meritocracy enshrined in the Indian Constitution. The landmark judgment underscored the commitment to inclusive representation, empowering

marginalised communities and fostering social justice in the electoral process. **Effective Electoral Disputes Resolution:** Efficient resolution of electoral disputes is indispensable for upholding the sanctity of elections and fostering public trust in the democratic process. This judgment bolstered the credibility of the electoral process, ensuring expeditious and impartial resolution of disputes. **Safeguarding Electoral Rights and Freedoms:** Preserving electoral rights and freedoms is paramount for the integrity of the electoral process. Legal judgments have been instrumental in protecting these rights and holding authorities accountable for any infringements. The 2015 case of Mohd. Sattar v. State of Rajasthan serves as a poignant example. The judgment reaffirmed the principle of universal suffrage, ensuring that every citizen's voice is heard. (The writer is corporate and legal advisor and founder of AU Corporate Advisory and Legal Services; views are personal)

ELECTION GUARANTEES

Madam — This election season in India is filled with a plethora of extended guarantees from different political parties and their renowned leaders. Initially, it was only PM Narendra Modi who extended oral guarantees termed as 'Modi ki Guarantee'. Now, to compete with him, recently released Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal has also presented his list of 10 guarantees to script a 'new India'. However, Mr. Arvind made it clear that he didn't want to be the Prime Minister of India. Nevertheless, his support for the INDIA bloc has grown stronger, especially after he was sentenced to Tihar Jail by the apex court. Elections have a historic relationship with political guarantees and promises. But we all already know how many of these guarantees are actually fulfilled. The irony is that people don't need guarantees to survive and ensure their well-being; instead, we need commitment and actions for the actual general welfare of every section of our society. Since Mr. Kejriwal is on interim bail until June 1st, considering the short duration of time he is outside the jail, he is trying his best to reach out to the maximum public with his statements, social media posts, press conference conversations, and other personal interactions with the countrymen to challenge the BJP in general and PM Modi in particular for his arrest during this peculiar time of elections. Now that it is a fight between the guarantees of the two biggest political parties, it is up to the people to decide whom they will choose in the tough fight of the Lok Sabha elections.

Kirti Wadhawan | Kanpur

CONTROVERSIAL CONTEST

Madam — The Eurovision Western Music Contest has been held in various countries across Europe for the last 68 years. The youth there enjoy this competition, and spectators and music lovers are often seen in a dancing mood throughout the event. However, this year's event, which concluded late on Saturday night, can be termed as the most political, controversial, chaotic-

ic, discriminatory, and tense event in its history. For this, we have to thank the security personnel of Sweden and the officials of Malmö city, who were ultimately successful in bringing this event to its destination. As a result, Swiss singer Nemo was declared the winner for his song 'The Code'. Otherwise, as soon as people came to know that Israeli singer Eden Golan had also been included in this competition, a round of protests started in the venue. It seemed as if Malmö, Sweden's third-largest city, had been divided into two parts, with 70 percent of people against Israel and 30 percent in favor of the Israeli singer. In the context of the ongoing war in Gaza, Dutch singer and contender Joost Klein was expelled from the competition due to a backstage dispute. The world seems to be deeply divided due to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and the Russian attack on Ukraine. England's daily 'The Telegraph' rightly ran the headline 'This is the most poisonous Eurovision in history'.
Jang Bahadur Singh | Jamshedpur



FIRST COLUMN

THE RISE OF ROBOTS

Robots are emerging as the next frontier, but can they replace humans?



SHAINY SHARMA

Various research and studies have shown that the next frontier in Artificial Intelligence is the Robots. Much more added to it are the big names- Jeff Bezos, Microsoft and many others who are investing in human robots according to people with knowledge of the situation, as part of a scramble to find new applications for the so-called AI Technology. Undoubtedly, robots have increasingly become an integral part of our lives in this century, impacting various aspects of society, industry and everyday activities. The robots have revolutionized in many key sectors be it industrial, healthcare, agricultural, transportation or any other. The science of robots is revolutionizing day by day and scientists are making innovations in robots. Research studies show that by 2050, robots will overcome human beings as they will develop strong intellects.

Many developing nations are involving the use of robots. In the industrial sector robots are performing the tasks such as assembling, welding, painting and packaging in factories thereby increasing efficiency, precision and productivity. In the healthcare sector, robots can perform tasks such as surgery, patient care, rehabilitation and medication dispensing with great precision and even provide support and assistance to elderly or disabled individuals. Talking about the automobile industry, autonomous vehicles- including cars, drones and delivery robots, are transforming transportation and logistics while self-driven car makers are promising to make transportation safer, more efficient and accessible to people who are unable to drive. In the agricultural sector, agricultural robots such as drones



and automated harvesters can help optimise farming practices by monitoring crops, applying fertilizers and pesticides precisely and thereby harvesting crops efficiently which ultimately improves yields, reduces labour costs and minimizes environmental impact. Not only these but the robots are doing jobs and servings in restaurants too. The robots have taken down the responsibility of the pizza boy in pizza shops and even are performing tasks such as customer service, cleaning, and inventory management. They enhance operational efficiency and provide novel experiences for customers.

Robots are indeed reshaping various aspects of everyone's lives, from how individuals work to how they interact with technology and each other. Today, educational robots are gaining an advantage in classrooms over teachers, engineering, and other STEM concepts in a hands-on manner.

Overall, robots are transforming the way we live, work and interact with the world around us. With advancements in robotics technology continuing to expand their capabilities and applications, the question of whether robots will replace humans in various tasks and roles is a complex one. While robots and automation have the potential to replace humans in some repetitive and routine tasks, they also create new opportunities and roles for humans in other areas. However, many tasks and roles require human creativity, empathy, and problem-solving skills, which are difficult for robots to replicate.

There is no denying the fact that the evolution of robots will profoundly impact society, offering new opportunities for innovation, collaboration, and improving quality of life. However, it will also raise the important ethical, social and economic considerations that must be carefully addressed with time. As robotics technology continues to advance, it will further transform society and open new possibilities for innovation and human-machine collaboration.

(The writer is an educator, views are personal)

The plight of unwed mothers of Kolam tribe

The stigmatisation of 'Kumari Matas' in the Kolam tribe highlights their struggle for social acceptance and economic empowerment



TV KATTIMANI



Kolam, a Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTG) of the Dravidian race is known for its unique culture, language, indigenous knowledge and matrilineal society. They reside predominantly in the Yavatmal, Chandrapur, some parts of Amravati, Wardha and Nanded districts of Maharashtra and in some parts of Adilabad of Telangana. They have historical roots in Andhra Pradesh and later migrated to the regions of Vidarbha and Marathwada. This Proto-Australoid tribe is often highlighted for its unwed mothers. As per the reports of The Indian Express, there are at least 45 registered unwed mothers and over 450 unregistered unwed mothers only in the three blocks named Maregaon, Pandarkawada and JhariJamini of Yavatmal. Being a matriarchal society, the Kolams of Yavatmal have always celebrated womanhood. They celebrate the first mensuration of girls; they worship 'Gabhuri', the mother Goddess as their main deity to uphold their matriarchal societal roots.

However, the situation is changing. Though the unwed mothers have been renamed as the 'KumariMaata' due to their assimilation with mainstream society yet due to their rising inclination towards the male-dominated society, patriarchal tenets are growing in these traditions. Therefore, the position of women is also declining consequently and those unwed mothers who used to live a normal life previously are now considered 'Bad character women'. There are various case studies and stories of women of the Kolam tribe where the elite in the society or financially stronger like contractors, outsiders visit the areas for work purposes, establish physical interactions with the women in their communities and refuse to marry them when they are expecting a child. Women are frequently conned by marriage promises because they are socially, emotionally and economically vulnerable. The woman is held liable for the premarital pregnancy, whereas the responsible males are excluded



THE KOLAM TRIBE, CLASSIFIED AS A PARTICULARLY VULNERABLE TRIBAL GROUP (PVTG), IS GRAPPLING WITH A SIGNIFICANT ISSUE OF UNWED MOTHERS, EMPHASISING THE URGENCY FOR INTERVENTIONS TO TACKLE THEIR COMPLEX SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL STRUGGLES

from this process.

Most of these Kolam women work as agricultural labourers, construction labourers and other low-wage activities due to which it becomes very easy for the traders and other outsiders to abuse them physically. For example, according to Deshpande (2016) "border districts of Maharashtra, such as Chandrapur, Gadchiroli, Bhandara, Buldhana, Amravati, Nagpur and Gondia too have unwed mothers, the numbers in Yavatmal are higher because of its proximity to the chilli fields of Telangana, where work (for the poor) is available throughout the year. A number of unwed mothers say they were lured by neighbouring state's men who promise marriage but left when they became pregnant."

Some of them get pregnant while being a minor whereas others are due to their backwardness. Though in most tribal societies, giving birth to a child is a biological phenomenon and hence considered pious but yet due to the assimilation with the conventional societies they are also recognizing childbirth as a structural process where the consent of society, kin and kith is necessary. These structural changes are pushing unwed mothers toward various other socio-cultural and economic problems.

The most important among these is that unwed mothers are not accepted within the community nor do they find any other groom, as they are considered obscene. As a result, for the entire period of life, they serve as a single mother due to which the pressure of childbearing increases among them. The problems are more serious as being unwed mothers they often face disgrace in the newly constructed norms of patriarchal society. Sometimes they need to

leave the village and stay in the outskirts whereas in many cases the other women are not allowed to talk to them or join them for any occasion, as they are believed to be malignant due to their premarital physical relations. The consequences are economic and occupational also. As a daily wage labourer, their leisure time is very little but being single mothers they need breaks for breastfeeding and childcare due to which they face pay cuts. Sometimes they need to pay a fine to the panchayats also for their "misconduct".

These unknown pregnancies among the women of Kolam are a crucial issue. These indicate the lack of awareness about contraceptive measures, education, economic weakness and social vulnerability that often attract these women to fake marriage conversations and other luring proposals. As per the report of Sant Gadge Baba Amravati University (2018-2019) in Yavatmal, "28.84 per cent Kumari Matas are in the age range of 26 to 30 years, 36 per cent Kumari Matas having education up to Fourth standard, 67.30 per cent Kumari Matas are belonging to 'Kolam' caste, 82.69 per cent are homeless. 51.09 per cent are pregnant due to outsiders, 82.07 per cent children of Kumari Matas are admitted in the school by furnishing the name of mother only, 92.30 per cent had delivery at home, 61.63 per cent getting help from Government schemes".

The subject is more critical as many of them are uncounseled because most of them do not come forward to speak due to socio-cultural stigma and thus their stories remain untold. This has again a negative impact on them as their complete family details are not mentioned in the Government records like ration cards, Aadhar

cards, etc. which deprives them of getting the benefits of many Government schemes that can make their life easier.

As per the report of Pune Times Mirror, "a survey of such victims is conducted every year by a woman and child development (WCD) officer with the help of Anganwadi workers and a junior protection officer at the taluka level." Further, the Anganwadi workers help these unwed mothers by teaching them the methods of nutrition and hygiene. The Bombay High Court has already directed the state to the need for the rehabilitation of young unwed mothers among the Kolam tribe. The Government of Kerala is also running a similar kind of scheme called "Snehasparsham" which offers unwed mothers ₹1000/- per month to lessen the financial burden of these economically vulnerable unwed mothers. The need of the hour is to initiate some projects and schemes for them so the Kumari Matas of Yavatmal can be included in the parameters of Government benefits at a large scale.

The infrastructural facilities like schools and primary health care centres, are the basic needs of these regions. Endeavours should also be taken to open basic schools and training centres for vocational courses like sewing, beautician, etc. The awareness about Self-Help groups can make them financially independent through various micro-level businesses like horticulture, bee-keeping, jelly-making etc. Further, documentation of unwed mothers can give them a social identity and make them live a life of dignity and self-respect.

(The writer is Vice Chancellor, Central Tribal University of Andhra Pradesh; views are personal)

Kejriwal's bail: Unveiling political prophecies post-release

The Delhi CM's release sparks controversy with ominous predictions and bold political statements, fuelling nationwide debate on democracy's future

Persons accused of criminal cases getting arrested and the courts granting them bail is nothing new. Even if the person happens to be the reigning chief minister of a State or a former union minister of finance, the bail does not absolve the accused of the charges. The Supreme Court order that released the Delhi Chief Minister on bail from the custody of the Enforcement Directorate says it is a provisional arrangement so that he could participate in the election campaign as the Lok Sabha poll comes once in five years.

So far, so good. But what came after the Delhi Chief Minister was released on bail needs to be analyzed threadbare. On Saturday, he worshipped at Lord Anjaneya



KUMAR CHELLAPPAN

Temple and addressed a press meeting. What he said during the press meeting is shocking and capable of causing fear in the minds of the people. He said if the BJP wins the 2024 Lok Sabha election and comes back to power, Prime Minister Narendra Modi will send all Opposition leaders to jail. Kejriwal also claimed that Amit Shah is being groomed as the next Prime Minister as Modi is likely to retire in 2025

when he turns 75. Yet another disclosure made by the Delhi Chief Minister was that Yogi Adityanath would be removed as chief minister of Uttar Pradesh within two months of the BJP coming back to power.

The national and international media are celebrating Kejriwal's bail and his prophecies. A major section of the media forgot the fact that they were the ones to give running commentaries of Live events without joining the game as players. The media in Kerala and Tamil Nadu are on Cloud Nine reporting that there is going to be a change of Government at the Centre after 4 June 2024. Well, let's leave it to the voters who are in the process of electing their representatives. It is good to see

that doubts about tampering the electronic voting machines have taken a stage and the Opposition leaders have started working on the modalities of Government formation. Saturday's press meeting by the Delhi Chief Minister took one to 2019 when the same had claimed that if the BJP wins the General Election and returns to power, there would not be any more elections in India. "The 2019 General Election would be the last poll the country will see if Narendra Modi returns to power," these were the words of Kejriwal in 2019.

After the 2019 general election, Narendra Modi returned to power with a larger majority and the country saw regular elections to all the State assemblies that completed their

mandatory five-year tenure. Though the claim fell flat on all fours, neither the media that flashed Kejriwal's warning about the "last" general elections nor our political pundits remembered the same.

Once the results were announced and the BJP was returned to power, that became the news, and everything else was forgotten (at least till 2024). Yet another battlefield has been opened by the Opposition and that is the One Nation, One Leader concept, the brand new slogan coined by Kejriwal. Wasn't it George Santayana, the Spanish-American philosopher who said in 1863 that "those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it"? Narendra Modi, I am sure

does know this adage quite well and hence there is no possibility of following the slogan coined by Kejriwal. The entire media in the country is unanimous in their opinion that elections are the festivals of democracy. But the festivals will certainly lose their charm if they are fueled by half-lies and full lies. One is at a loss to understand the logic behind the claim by certain leaders that the BJP government would subvert the Constitution!

Who derailed the Constitution much against the order of the Supreme Court that the basic structure of the Constitution should never be tampered with. It was in 1976 that then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi altered the preamble of the Constitution by incorporating

the words secularism, socialism etc. India survived as a nation from 1947 to 1976 without the terms secularism and socialism in its Constitution. B R Ambedkar, the architect of the Constitution, was totally against the inclusion of these terms when it was drafted for the first time. It was after the introduction of these terms that communal riots and terrorism peaked in India. Accusations and allegations are fine because they add to the intensity of the campaigning. But baseless allegations rob the beauty of the election process. Interestingly, the leaders named by the Delhi chief minister as potential victims of the Modi regime are not saints or beatified ones. Reports from Delhi say that Kejriwal

was summoned eight or nine times by the ED for questioning in connection with money laundering. The Chief Minister chose to ignore the same with contempt. He might not know the truth that the reigning Prime Minister cooperated with the Supreme Court-appointed Special Investigation Team under the chairmanship of R K Raghavan, a former CBI director to grill him about the Gujarat riots. For 19 hours, the then Gujarat Chief Minister sat through the grilling and answered all the queries they asked. That is what we call honesty and integrity. People still hope that Kejriwal too is honest.

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

Pro-Palestinian protests dwindle on campuses

Some US college graduations marked by defiant acts

AP ■ CHICAGO

A tiny contingent of Duke University graduates opposed pro-Israel comedian Jerry Seinfeld speaking at their commencement in North Carolina Sunday, with about 30 of the 7,000 students leaving their seats and chanting “free Palestine” amid a mix of boos and cheers. Some waved the red, green, black and white Palestinian flag. Seinfeld, whose namesake sitcom was one of the most popular in US television history, was there to receive an honorary doctorate from the university. The stand-up comic turned actor, who stars in the new Netflix movie “Unfrosted,” has publicly supported Israel since it invaded Gaza to dismantle Hamas after the organization attacked the country and killed some 1,200 people in southern Israel on October 7. The ensuing war has killed more than

35,000 people in Gaza, mostly women and children, according to Gaza’s Health Ministry, which doesn’t distinguish between civilians and combatants. The small student protest Sunday at Duke’s graduation in Durham, North Carolina, was emblematic of campus events across the US Sunday after weeks of student protests resulted in nearly 2,900 arrests at 57 colleges and universities. Students at campuses across the US responded this spring by setting up encampments and calling for their schools to cut ties with Israel and businesses that support it. Students and others on campuses whom law enforcement authorities have identified as outside agitators have taken part in the protests from Columbia University in New York City to UCLA. Police escorted graduates’ families past a few dozen pro-Palestinian protesters who tried to block access to Sunday



Smoke rises following an Israeli bombardment in the Gaza Strip as seen from southern Israel, Monday. AP/PTI

evening’s commencement for Southern California’s Pomona College. After demonstrators set up an encampment last week on the campus’ ceremony stage, the small liberal arts school moved

the event 30 miles (48 kilometres) from Claremont to the Shrine Auditorium in downtown Los Angeles. Tickets were required to attend the event, which the school said would include additional security mea-

sures. In April, police wearing riot gear arrested 19 protesters who had occupied the president’s office at the college with about 1,700 undergraduates. Demonstrator Anwar Mohamed, a 21-year-old Pomona senior, said the school has repeatedly ignored calls to consider divesting its endowment funds from corporations tied to Israel in the war in Gaza. “We’ve been time and time again ignored by the institution,” Mohamed said outside the Shrine on Sunday. “So today we have to say, it’s not business as usual.” At the University of California, Berkeley, on Saturday, a small group of pro-Palestinian demonstrators waved flags and chanted during commencement and were escorted to the back of the stadium, according to the San Francisco Chronicle. There were no major counterprotests, but some attendees voiced frustra-

“I feel like they’re ruining it for those of us who paid for tickets and came to show our pride for our graduates,” said Annie Ramos, whose daughter is a student. “There’s a time and a place, and this is not it.” This weekend’s commencement events remained largely peaceful. At Emerson College in Boston, some students took off their graduation robes and left them on stage. Others emblazoned “free Palestine” on their mortarboards. One woman, staring at a camera broadcasting a livestream to the public, unzipped her robe to show a kaffiyeh, the black and white checkered scarf commonly worn by Palestinians, and flashed a watermelon painted on her hand. Both are symbols of solidarity with those living in the occupied territories. Others displayed messages for a camera situated on stage, but the livestream quickly shifted to a

different view, preventing them from being seen for long. Chants during some of the speeches were difficult to decipher. Protests at Columbia University, where student uprisings inspired others at campuses across the country, led the school to cancel its main graduation ceremony in favour of smaller gatherings. The University of Southern California told its valedictorian, who publicly backed Palestinians, that she could not deliver her keynote speech at its graduation ceremony because of security concerns. It later cancelled its main graduation ceremony. At DePaul University in Chicago, graduation is more than a month away. But as the academic year closes, school leaders said they had reached an “impasse” with the school’s pro-Palestinian protesters, leaving the future of their encampment on the Chicago campus unclear.

3 charged under UK’s National Security Act

London (PTI): Three men in the UK have been charged under the National Security Act with assisting the Hong Kong intelligence service and foreign interference. All three will appear in custody at Westminster Magistrates’ Court later, the BBC reported on Monday. The Metropolitan Police said the Hong Kong investigation was not related to a separate case involving Russia. As part of the investigation, 11 people were detained under Section 27 of the National Security Act. The three men charged are Chi Leung (Peter) Wai, 38, of Staines-upon-Thames; Matthew Trickett, 37, of Maidenhead; and Chung Biu Yuen, 63, of Hackney. Commander Dominic Murphy, head of the Met’s Counter Terrorism Command, said, “I want to reassure the public that we do not believe there to be any wider threat to them.”

Trump’s hush money trial arrives at pivotal moment

AP ■ NEW YORK

The star prosecution witness in Donald Trump’s hush money trial, Michael Cohen, took the stand on Monday, and his testimony could help shape the outcome of the first criminal case against an American president. Cohen, Trump’s former lawyer and personal fixer, is by far the Manhattan district attorney’s most important witness in the case, and his appearance signals that the trial is entering its final stretch. Prosecutors say they may wrap up their presentation of evidence by the end of the week. Cohen is expected to testify about his role in arranging hush money payments on Trump’s behalf during his first presidential campaign, including to porn actor Stormy Daniels, who told jurors last week that the USD 130,000 that she received in 2016 was meant to prevent her from going public about a sexual encounter she says she had with Trump in a hotel suite a decade earlier. It also matters because the reimbursements he received form the basis of the charges — 34 felony counts of falsifying



business records — against Trump. Prosecutors say the reimbursements were logged as legal expenses to conceal the payments’ true purpose. Defence lawyers have teed up a bruising cross-examination of Cohen, telling jurors during opening statements that the fixer-turned-foe is an “admitted liar” with an “obsession to get President Trump.” The testimony of a witness with such intimate knowledge of Trump’s activities could heighten the legal exposure of the presumptive Republican presidential nominee if jurors deem him sufficiently credible. But politically, prosecutors’ reliance on

a witness with such a checkered past — Cohen pleaded guilty to federal charges related to the payments and to lying to Congress — could be a boon for Trump as he fundraises off his legal woes and paints the case as the product of a tainted criminal justice system. Either way, his role as star prosecution witness further cements the disintegration of a mutually beneficial relationship that was once so close that Cohen famously said he’d “take a bullet for Trump.” After Cohen’s home and office were raided by the FBI in 2018, Trump showered him with affection on social media,

praising him as a “fine person with a wonderful family” and predicting — incorrectly — that Cohen would not “flip.” Months later, Cohen did exactly that, pleading guilty to August to federal campaign-finance charges in which he implicated Trump. By that point, the relationship was irrevocably broken, with Trump posting on the social media platform then known as Twitter: “If anyone is looking for a good lawyer, I would strongly suggest that you don’t retain the services of Michael Cohen!” Cohen later admitted lying to Congress about a Moscow real estate project that he had pursued on Trump’s behalf during the heat of the 2016 Republican campaign. He said he lied to be consistent with Trump’s “political messaging.” Prosecutors are expected to elicit detailed testimony from Cohen about his past crimes in hopes of blunting the impact of defence lawyers’ questioning and showing that they’re not trying to hide his misdeeds. But it’s unclear how effective that will be, given that defence lawyers will be prepared to exploit all the challenges that

accompany a witness like Cohen. Besides painting Cohen as untrustworthy, they’re also expected to cast him as vindictive, vengeful and agenda-driven. Since their fallout, Cohen has emerged as a relentless and sometimes crude critic of Trump, appearing as recently as last week in a live TikTok wearing a shirt featuring a figure resembling Trump with his hands cuffed, behind bars. The judge on Friday urged prosecutors to tell him to refrain from making any more statements about the case or Trump. “He has talked extensively about his desire to see President Trump go to prison,” Trump attorney Todd Blanche said during opening statements. “He has talked extensively about his desire to see President Trump’s family go to prison. He has talked extensively about President Trump getting convicted in this case.” No matter how his testimony unfolds, Cohen is indisputably central to the case, as evidenced by the fact that his name was mentioned in the jury’s presence during opening statements more than 130 times — more than any other

person. Other witnesses, including former National Enquirer publisher David Pecker and former Trump adviser Hope Hicks, have testified at length about the role Cohen played in arranging to stifle stories that were feared to be harmful to Trump’s 2016 candidacy. And jurors heard an audio recording of Trump and Cohen discussing a plan to purchase the rights to a story of a Playboy model, Karen McDougal, who has said she had an affair with Trump. During a massive rally on Saturday in the southern New Jersey resort town of Wildwood, Trump revived his criticism of the case, wrongly blaming President Joe Biden for orchestrating the New York charges, calling the case a “Biden show trial.” That argument ignores the reality that the hush money case was filed by local prosecutors in Manhattan who do not work for the Justice Department or any other White House office. The Justice Department has said the White House has had no involvement in the two criminal cases against Trump brought by special counsel Jack Smith.

False narratives being created about India in West: Barai

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

Misinformation and false narratives are being created about Indian democracy in the West in the middle of an election cycle in India, a prominent Indian-American oncologist has said, observing that some people in the West continue to have a colonial mentality. Chicago-based Dr Baharat Barai, in an interview on Sunday, hit out at Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau for not taking action against Sikh separatists who are “openly planning and supporting violence inside India and Indian leaders.” “The Khalistan problem is only in Canada, maybe a little bit in the US. If the US government wants to give them a piece of land, let them be happy. After all, they’re foreign citizens. They’re either citizens of the US or citizens of Canada. What right do they have to interfere in what is happening in India?” Dr Barai told PTI in an interview here. “If they want a separate land for them, let (Canadian Prime Minister Justin) Trudeau give it to them. If the US thinks that that’s a good idea (let them do



so)...we are standing right in front of Abraham Lincoln (memorial in Washington DC). What did he do when the South (US) wanted to secede? We had a civil war. In Washington DC, he is being celebrated as the father of the nation,” he said. “This (Khalistan) is not a problem of India. Indian Sikhs don’t want to have anything to do with it. It is the foreign-born or foreign-living Sikhs and only a very tiny fraction of them,” Dr Barai said. Referring to the number of news articles and commentaries appearing in the Western press, including that of the US, raising questions about democracy, freedom of expression, and human rights in India,

More bodies found after flash floods kill dozens in Indonesia

AP ■ PADANG

Rescuers recovered more bodies Monday after monsoon rains triggered flash floods on Indonesia’s Sumatra Island, bringing down torrents of cold lava and mud, leaving 43 people dead and another 15 missing. The heavy rains, along with a landslide of mud and cold lava from Mount Marapi, caused a river to breach its banks. The deluge tore through mountain-side villages along four districts in West Sumatra province just before midnight Saturday. The floods swept away people and submerged hundreds of houses and buildings, while forcing more than 3,100 people to flee to temporary government shelters in Agam and Tanah Datar districts, said National Disaster Management Agency spokesperson Abdul Muhari. Cold lava, also known as lahar, is a mixture of volcanic mate-



rial and pebbles that flows down a volcano’s slopes in the rain. Rescuers on Monday recovered more bodies, mostly from villages that were worst hit in Agam and Tanah Datar districts, bringing the death toll to 43, Muhari said in a statement. At least 19 people were injured in the flash floods and rescuers were searching for 15 villagers reported missing, he said. Television reports showed relatives wailing as they

watched rescuers pull a muck-caked body from a devastated hamlet. It was placed in an orange and black bag and taken away for burial. Authorities struggled to get tractors and other heavy equipment to the area over washed-out roads after flash floods brought mud and rocks onto the hilly hamlets, said Abdul Malik, who heads the search and rescue office in Padang, the provincial capital.

Judge lifts ban on video of church stabbing

Melbourne (AP): An Australian judge Monday lifted a ban on the social media platform X showing Australians a video of a bishop being stabbed in a Sydney church. The temporary ban was put in place April 22, but the judge rejected the application from Australia’s eSafety Commission to extend the court order that would have expired Monday. Australian Federal Court Justice Geoffrey Kennett said he would publish his reasons for imposing and lifting the order later. The decision was a win for the company rebranded by billionaire Elon Musk when he bought Twitter last year. X was alone among social media platforms in refusing to remove video of Bishop Mar Mari Emmanuel being stabbed. Musk has argued that he is standing up for a freedom of speech principle. Australian lawmakers have accused him of arrogance and of lacking a sense of social responsibility.

“Not trying to win anything. I just don’t think we should be suppressing Australian’s rights to free speech,” Musk posted on X after the ruling. X is also taking a separate court action against eSafety Commissioner Julie Inman Grant, a former Twitter employee, that challenges the validity of her notice requiring the platform to remove video of the April 15 attack in an Assyrian Orthodox church. The judge is expected to consider setting a hearing date Wednesday. Assistant Treasurer Stephen Jones said the government might consider changing Australian law after reading Kennett’s reasons for removing his order that required X to hide the video from users. “There’s a fundamental principle at stake and that is, if you’re a company or anybody operating in Australia, then you’ve got to abide by Australian laws,” Jones said.

‘Fires used as weapon of war in Sudan destroyed 72 villages’

AP ■ CAIRO

Fires resulting from the fighting in Sudan destroyed or damaged 72 villages and settlements last month, a UK-based rights group said Monday, highlighting the use of fire as a weapon of war in the conflict in the African country. Investigators from Sudan Witness, an open-source project run by the non-profit Center for Information Resilience, say that more blazes than in any other month since the war started in mid-April 2023. The number also brings to 201 the total number of fires in Sudan since fighting broke out between Sudan’s military and the rival paramilitary force. The analysis didn’t provide any casualty figures from the fires. In the war in Sudan, the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces have often used fire, setting

entire villages ablaze, especially in Sudan’s western Darfur region. The war has wrecked the country and pushed its population to the brink of famine. More than 14,000 people have been killed and thousands have been wounded. Hundreds of thousands have been displaced. The Center for Information Resilience said the number of fires surged particularly in the north and west of el-Fasher, the capital city of North Darfur state that faces an imminent attack. El-Fasher saw intense fighting on Friday between the Sudanese military and the paramilitary RSF and their allies. At least 27 people were killed and dozens injured, said the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, or OCHA. More than 800 were displaced. Sudan’s military launched an

airstrike the next day that hit close to a pediatric hospital in el-Fasher, killing two children and a caregiver, according to Doctors Without Borders. In its analysis, the Center for Information Resilience estimated that 31 settlements — villages and towns — were affected by fires in April, with an over 50 per cent destruction rate. “We’ve documented the patterns of numerous fires and the continuing devastation to settlements around western Sudan, large and small,” Anouk Theunissen, Sudan Witness project director, said in a news release. “When we see reports of fighting or airstrikes coinciding with clusters of fires it indicates that fire is being used indiscriminately as a weapon of war. The trend is worsening and continues to lead to the mass displacement of Sudanese people,” Theunissen said.

Amazon’s self-driving robotaxi under investigation

Detroit (AP): Amazon’s self-driving robotaxi unit is being investigated by the US government’s highway safety agency after two of its vehicles braked suddenly and were rear-ended by motorcyclists. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration said in documents posted on its website Monday it will evaluate the automated driving system developed by Zoox. Both crashes happened during the daytime hours and the motorcyclists suffered minor injuries. In both cases, the agency confirmed that each of the Amazon vehicles was operating in autonomous mode leading up to the crashes.

Thousands protest in Georgia

AP ■ TBILISI

Georgia’s parliament green-lit a final vote on a proposed law that critics see as a threat to media freedom and the country’s aspirations to join the European Union on Monday, a day after police dispersed the latest protests against it. The bill would require media and non-governmental organisations and other non-profits to register as “pursuing the interests of a foreign power” if they receive more than 20 per cent of their funding from abroad. The opposition denounces the bill as “the Russian law” because Moscow uses similar legislation to crack down on independent news media, non-profits and activists critical of the Kremlin. The bill is nearly identical to one that the governing Georgian Dream party was pressured to



withdraw last year after street protests. Renewed demonstrations have rocked Georgia for weeks, with demonstrators scuffling with police, who used tear gas and water cannons to disperse the crowds. The government says the bill is necessary to stem what it deems as harmful foreign influence over the country’s politics and to prevent unspecified foreign actors from trying to destabilise it.

Huge crowds marched through Europe Square in the capital, Tbilisi, on Saturday, with demonstrators wrapped in Georgian and European Union flags and chanting “Georgia!” On Sunday, the protesters gathered in front of parliament for an overnight rally and tried to block entrances into the building, where a committee of lawmakers were expected to discuss the bill once again on Monday.

Cellphones of Indian crew on board seized as part of probe: Non-profit organisation

PTI ■ NEW YORK

The FBI has seized the cellphones of the mostly Indian crew on board a crippled cargo ship in Baltimore as part of the investigation into the deadly bridge accident in the US city, a non-profit organisation in touch with the personnel said. The 2.6-km-long, four-lane Francis Scott Key Bridge over the Patapsco River came crashing down on March 26 after the 984-foot ship ‘Dali’ collided against it. The crew on board Dali included 20 Indians and one Sri Lankan. The crew has been on the ship since the accident and has been cooperating with the investigation. Executive Director of the Baltimore International

Seafarers’ Centre The Rev. Joshua Messick told PTI that he is working with all of the relevant organisations to make sure the crew has what they need and that their rights are being upheld. “They are well cared for with the sole exception that their cellphones were seized as part of the FBI’s investigation and have not been returned,” he said. Messick said he is in “contact with the crew to purchase some SIM cards for them and to plan trips ashore when they are able to have shore leave”. The Baltimore International Seafarers’ Centre is a non-profit organisation serving seafarers that call on the Port of Baltimore from all over the world. The mission of the organisation is to “facilitate the well-being of crew

members by offering transportation ashore,” according to information on its website. Last month, US authorities opened a criminal investigation into the Baltimore bridge collapse incident that killed six construction crew workers, who were repairing potholes on the bridge when the collision occurred. The Washington Post had said that the FBI opened the criminal investigation “focusing on the massive container ship that brought down the Francis Scott Key Bridge in Baltimore last month — a probe that will look at least in part at whether the crew left the port knowing the vessel had serious systems problems”. The Key Bridge Response Unified Command is sched-

uled to use precision cuts made with small charges to remove a large section of the Francis Scott Key Bridge wreckage from on top of the Dali. For safety reasons, the controlled demolition to remove the bridge section resting on the deck of the Dali has tentatively been scheduled for Monday. Due to weather conditions producing lightning within 10 miles of the M/V Dali, remaining daylight, and rising tide, Unified Command has moved the demolition to Monday. The Key Bridge Response Unified Command said in a statement that the safest and swiftest method to remove the bridge piece from on top of the Dali is by “precision cuts made with small charges.”

Situation remains tense in PoK as strike enters fourth day

Pak PM allocates Rs 23-bn grant to quell protests

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

The situation remained tense in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir as the total strike against high prices of wheat flour and inflated electricity bills and taxes entered its fourth day on Monday, forcing the Pakistan government to allocate Rs 23 billion for immediate release to the region to quell a simmering unrest.

The disputed region witnessed clashes on Saturday between the police and activists of a rights movement, leaving at least one police officer dead and injuring over 100 people, mostly policemen. A complete strike has also been observed in the territory since Friday, bringing life to a halt.

Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, who said he was "deeply concerned" about the situation, on Monday approved Rs 23 billion for immediate release to the region after the negotiations between the protesters and the regional government ended in a deadlock. Ruffled by the unexpected protest and its sensitivity, Prime Minister Sharif chaired a special meeting here on Monday which was attended by PoK "prime minister" Chaudhry Anwarul Haq, local ministers, and top political leadership, the PM's Office (PMO) said in a statement.

Prime Minister Sharif approved the immediate provision of Rs23 billion to solve the problems of the people of PoK, it said. Federal ministers and leaders of the coalition parties also took part in the meeting, where a detailed review of the situation was taken, it added. Kashmir leaders and all participants appreciated Shehbaz for his decision, the PMO said.

The protest is led by the Jammu Kashmir Joint Awami Action Committee (JAAC), which has traders at the forefront in most parts of the region, who have been seeking the provision of electricity as per hydropower generation cost in the region, subsidised wheat flour and an end to the privileges of the elite class.

A long march led by the JAAC



The situation remained tense as strike in PoK entered fourth day

left for Muzaffarabad, the capital of Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, on Monday as the wheel-jam strike entered its fourth day.

The movement announced its march on Muzaffarabad after the talks between the JAAC core committee and Chief Secretary of the region Dawood Bareach ended in a stalemate. A protest leader from Rawalakot accused the government of resorting to evasive tactics.

Protestors have already staged sit-ins, closing Kohala-Muzaffarabad Road at several locations, the Dawn newspaper reported. The road stretches 40 kilometres and links Kohala town with Muzaffarabad in PoK. Heavy contingents of police have been posted at roundabouts and sensitive locations. Markets, trade centres and educational institutes remain closed, while transport is suspended, reports said. The so-called government called in the Rangers after clashes between the police and protesters erupted in Mirpur during demonstrations on Saturday.

Expressing deep concern over

the violent clashes between the police and the protesters, Prime Minister Sharif on Sunday said that there should be "absolutely no tolerance for taking the law into one's own hands."

"I urge all parties to resort to a peaceful course of action for resolution of their demands. Despite the best efforts of detractors, the matter will hopefully be settled soon," he said. As part of his efforts to calm down tensions, President Asif Ali Zardari urged all the stakeholders to exercise restraint and resolve the issues through dialogue and mutual consultation.

He stressed that the political parties, state institutions and the people of the region should act responsibly so that hostile elements do not exploit the situation to their benefit. The president highlighted that the demands of the people in the region should be addressed as per law, adding that he would take up their grievances with Prime Minister Sharif to find a way out of the current situation. The president regretted the current situation and offered condolences over the unfortu-

nate death of the police officer and prayed for the swift recovery of all those who were injured in recent clashes.

On Saturday, the violent protesters damaged multiple vehicles, including a magistrate's car on the Poonch-Kotli road. Moreover, markets, trade centres, offices, schools, and restaurants remained closed across the region.

Police also launched a crackdown against the protesters after the violence, arresting dozens of individuals in Muzaffarabad.

A day earlier, the government also suspended mobile phone and internet services in different parts of the region. According to a report by Dawn, on May 9 and 10, around 70 activists were arrested by police in a bid to prevent a long march - announced by the JAAC to press the government to comply with an agreement reached between the two in February this year - triggering serious clashes in Dadyal and a "shut-down strike" call.

In light of the protests, government offices and educational institutions remained closed on Monday.

Dar set to meet top Chinese leaders in Beijing

Beijing (PTI): Pakistan's newly-appointed Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar on Monday reached here for a four-day official visit during which he will meet top Chinese leaders and co-chair a bilateral strategic dialogue between the two all-weather friends. Dar, who is also the foreign minister, was received by Director General Ambassador Wang Fu Kang and Pakistan's Ambassador to China Khalid Hashmi, state-run Associated Press of Pakistan reported. Dar will meet top Chinese leaders and comprehensively review bilateral relations, including the upgradation of the multi-billion dollar China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project, Pakistan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said in a statement before his visit. He will co-chair the 5th Pakistan-China Foreign Ministers' Strategic Dialogue with his Chinese counterpart, Wang Yi, it said. The two foreign ministers are expected to discuss the possibility of Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's visit to Beijing.

Shehbaz quits as PML-N chief; Nawaz set to assume post

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Monday resigned as the President of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), paving the way for his elder brother and former premier Nawaz Sharif to retake the helm of the ruling party amid internal strife.

In his resignation letter addressed to the PML-N secretary general, Shehbaz cited the tumultuous events of 2017, which resulted in the "unjust" disqualification of Nawaz from the Prime Minister's Office and the presidency of the party, and said he was entrusted with the responsibility of assuming the presidency of the party. Shehbaz said that his brother had entrusted him with the responsibility of assuming the party presidency in the face of adversity and added that it was a duty he had "upheld with utmost dedication and sincerity".

"However, I am cognisant that this role has always been viewed as a trust ... bestowed upon me by our revered leader," the 72-year-old said. Nawaz, 74, returned to Pakistan in October last year, ending nearly four years of self-imposed exile in London.

"I am heartened by recent developments that have exonerated our leader with dignity, affirming his unblemished integrity and commitment to the service of our nation," he said, referring to the Islamabad High Court ruling on November 29 that acquitted Nawaz in the Avenfield reference. The next month, on December 12, the PML-N supreme was acquitted in the Al-Azizia reference by the high court.

"In light of these developments and the steadfast guidance of our beloved leader, I believe the time has come for Mohammad Nawaz Sharif to resume his rightful place as the president of the PML-N,"

Shehbaz said. "It is with a deep sense of duty and reverence for our party's principles that I tender my resignation as the president," he said.

In 2017, the Supreme Court disqualified Nawaz as premier and party president for his alleged corruption in cases related to the Panama Papers revelations about his illegal wealth stashed abroad.

He relinquished his position within the party following his disqualification, which also led to his departure from the prime minister's office. Nawaz was all set to become prime minister for the fourth time but his party failed to get a clear majority in the National Assembly on its own in the February 8 general elections. In a surprise move, he allowed his younger brother and the incumbent party president Shehbaz — who is considered the favourite of the military establishment — to lead a six-party coalition government at the Centre.

India extend USD 50 million budgetary support to Maldives as goodwill gesture

PTI ■ MALE

In a goodwill gesture, India has decided to extend vital budgetary support to the Maldives with the rollover of a USD 50 million Treasury Bill for another year at the Maldivian government's special request, it was announced on Monday.

The State Bank of India has subscribed for one more year to the USD 50 million Government Treasury Bill, issued by the Ministry of Finance of Maldives, upon maturity of the previous subscription, the High Commission of India said in a brief statement on Monday.

The Indian government took this decision despite the bilateral ties experiencing turbulence since Maldives President Mohamed Muizzu, a pro-China leader, assumed office six months back. These Government Treasury Bills are subscribed by SBI under government-to-government, a

unique arrangement at zero cost (interest-free) to the Government of Maldives. The continuation of subscription has been made at the special request of the Government of Maldives to secure budgetary support from the Government of India, the statement said.

Under the terms of special government-to-government arrangement, SBI has been subscribing to these government treasury bills at zero cost to the Maldives government. This means the Maldives incurs no interest expense on the borrowed amount, the Edition.my news portal reported.

The first treasury bill, valued at USD 50 million, matured in January 2024, which the Maldives had repaid. The second treasury bill, also valued at USD 50 million, is set to mature in May 2024. In response to a special request from the Maldives, SBI has opted to extend its subscription for another year.

The third treasury bill is due to

mature in September, the report said. The Maldivian government on Monday thanked India for its support. "I thank EAM @DrSJaishankar and the Government of India for extending vital budgetary support to the Maldives with the rollover of USD 50 million Treasury Bill. This is a true gesture of goodwill which signifies the longstanding friendship between #Maldives and #India," Foreign Minister Moosa Zameer tweeted.

The Government of India has provided budget support of USD 50 million to the Maldives. The support was in the form of a rollover of USD 50 million Treasury Bill, for an additional year, through the State Bank of India, Male', from May 13, 2024, the Maldivian Foreign Ministry said in a statement. "Government of India's decision to rollover the T-Bill came following a request to that effect made by Foreign Minister Moosa Zameer to India's External Affairs Minister

Dr S Jaishankar, during the official bilateral visit to India from May 8-10, the statement said. The Government of Maldives is highly appreciative of the generous support that the Government of India has been providing to the Maldives in the form of budgetary support. A large number of infrastructural developmental projects and High Impact Community Developmental projects are underway with assistance from the Government of India, which consists of a notable part as grant assistance, the statement said. The Government of Maldives looks forward to continuing this collaborative partnership for the mutual benefit and prosperity of their people, it said. Zameer after coming back from the visit said that significant strides have been made in expediting India-assisted projects in the Maldives, as he underscored the government's commitment to prioritising the resumption and completion of these projects.

Putin replaces Sergei Shoigu as defence minister

AP ■ MOSCOW

Russian President Vladimir Putin on Sunday replaced Sergei Shoigu as defence minister in a Cabinet shakeup that comes as he begins his fifth term in office.

In line with Russian law, the entire Russian Cabinet resigned Tuesday following Putin's glittering inauguration in the Kremlin, and most members have been widely expected to keep their jobs, while Shoigu's fate had appeared uncertain.

Putin signed a decree on Sunday appointing Shoigu as secretary of Russia's Security Council, the Kremlin said. The appointment was announced shortly after Putin proposed Andrei Belousov to become the country's defence minister in place of Shoigu.

The announcement of Shoigu's new role came as 13 people were reported dead and 20 more wounded in Russia's border city of Belgorod, where a 10-story apartment building partially collapsed after what Russian officials said was Ukrainian shelling. Ukraine hasn't commented on the incident.

Belousov's candidacy will need to be approved by Russia's upper house in parliament, the Federation Council. It reported Sunday that Putin introduced proposals for other Cabinet positions as well but Shoigu is the only minister on that list who is being replaced. Several other new candidates for federal ministers were proposed Saturday by Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin, reappointed by Putin on Friday.

Shoigu's deputy, Timur Ivanov, was arrested last month on bribery charges and was ordered to remain in custody pending an official investigation. The arrest of Ivanov was widely interpreted as an attack on Shoigu and a possible precursor of his dismissal, despite his close personal ties with Putin.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Sunday that Putin had decided to give the defence minister role to a civilian because the ministry should be "open to innovation and cutting-edge ideas." He also said the increasing defence budget "must fit into the country's wider economy," and Belousov, who until recently served as the first

deputy prime minister, is the right fit for the job. Belousov, 65, held leading positions in the finances and economic department of the prime minister's office and the Ministry of Economic Development. In 2013, he was appointed an adviser to Putin and seven years later, in January 2020, he became first deputy prime minister.

Peskov assured that the reshuffle will not affect "the military aspect," which "has always been the prerogative of the Chief of General Staff," and Gen Valery Gerasimov, who currently serves in this position, will continue his work.

Tatiana Stanovaya, a senior fellow at the Carnegie Russia Eurasia Center, said in an online commentary that Shoigu's new appointment to Russia's Security Council showed that the Russian leader viewed the institution as "a reservoir" for his "former" key figures — people who he can't in any way let go, but doesn't have a place for." Figures such as former Russian President Dmitry Medvedev have also been appointed to the security coun-

cil. Medvedev has served as the body's deputy chairman since 2020.

Shoigu was appointed to the Security Council instead of Nikolai Patrushev, Putin's long-term ally. Peskov said Sunday that Patrushev is taking on another role, and promised to reveal details in the coming days. Shoigu has been widely seen as a key figure in Putin's decision to send Russian troops into Ukraine. Russia had expected the operation to quickly overwhelm Ukraine's much smaller and less-equipped army and for Ukrainians to broadly welcome Russian troops.

Instead, the conflict galvanized Ukraine to mount an intense defence, dealing the Russian army humiliating blows, including the retreat from an attempt to take the capital, Kyiv, and a counteroffensive that drove Moscow's forces out of the Kharkiv region. Before he was named defence minister in 2012, Shoigu spent more than 20 years directing markedly different work: In 1991, he was appointed head of the Russian Rescue Corps disaster-response

agency, which eventually became the Ministry of Emergency Situations. He became highly visible in the post. The job also allowed him to be named a general even though he had no military service behind him as the rescue corps absorbed the militarised Civil Defence Troops.

Shoigu does not wield the same kind of power as Patrushev, who has long been the country's top security official. But the position he will take — the same position that Patrushev worked to transform from a minor bureaucratic role to a place of sizable influence — will still carry some authority, according to Mark Galeotti, head of the Mayak Intelligence consultancy. High-level security materials intended for the president's eyes will still pass through the Security Council Secretariat, even with changes at the top. "You can't just institutionally turn around a bureaucracy and how it works overnight," he said. Thousands of civilians have fled Russia's renewed ground offensive in Ukraine's northeast that has targeted towns and villages with a

barrage of artillery and mortar shelling, officials said Sunday. The intense battles have forced at least one Ukrainian unit to withdraw in the Kharkiv region, capitalising more land to Russian forces across less defended settlements in the so-called contested gray zone along the Russian border.

By Sunday afternoon, the town of Vovchansk, among the largest in the northeast with a prewar population of 17,000, emerged as a focal point in the battle. Volodymyr Tymoshko, the head of the Kharkiv regional police, said that Russian forces were on the outskirts of the town and approaching from three directions. An Associated Press team, positioned in a nearby village, saw plumes of smoke rising from the town as Russian forces hurled shells. Evacuation teams worked non-stop throughout the day to take residents, most of whom were older, out of harm's way. At least 4,000 civilians have fled the Kharkiv region since Friday, when Moscow's forces launched the operation, Governor Oleh Syniehubov said in a social media statement.

Ukraine army locked in 'fierce' border battles amid Russian assault

AP ■ KYIV

Ukrainian troops are locked in intense battles with the advancing Russian army in two border areas, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said, while the death toll from a Russian apartment building collapse blamed on Ukrainian shelling rose to 15.

Zelenskyy said "fierce battles" are taking place near the border in eastern and northeastern Ukraine as outgunned and outnumbered Ukrainian soldiers try to push back a significant Russian ground offensive. "Defensive battles are ongoing, fierce battles, on a large part of our border area," Zelenskyy said in his nightly video address on Sunday.

The Kremlin's forces are aiming to exploit Ukrainian weaknesses before a big batch of new military aid for Kyiv from the US and European partners arrives on the battlefield in the coming weeks and months, analysts say.

That makes this period a window of opportunity for Moscow and one of the most dangerous for Kyiv in the two-year war, they say.

The new Russian push in the northeastern Kharkiv region, along with the ongoing drive into the eastern Donetsk region, come after months when the about 1,000-kilometer (620-mile) front line barely budged. In the meantime, both sides have used long-range strikes in what largely became a war of attrition.

The Kharkiv incursion may be

an attempt to create a "buffer zone" to protect Belgorod, an adjacent Russian border region battered by Ukrainian attacks. Russian emergency services on Monday finished clearing the rubble in the region's capital city of Belgorod, where a section of a residential building collapsed following what authorities said was Ukrainian shelling. Fifteen bodies were pulled from the rubble, Belgorod regional Gov. Vyacheslav Gladkov said, and 27 other people were wounded. Another three people in the city of Belgorod were killed by shelling late Sunday, he said.

Russian President Vladimir Putin on Sunday replaced Sergei Shoigu as defence minister in a Cabinet shakeup. Shoigu was widely seen as a key figure in Putin's decision to send Russian troops into Ukraine in February 2022. Russia had expected the operation to quickly overwhelm Ukraine's army and for Ukrainians to broadly welcome Russian troops.

Zelenskyy said fighting in the Donetsk area is "no less intense" than in Kharkiv. He said the Kremlin aimed to "spread our forces thin" by opening a second active front in Kharkiv. He described the area around Pokrovsk region, just inside the Ukrainian border in Donetsk, as "the most difficult". Pokrovsk was a town of around 60,000 people before the war and was until recently a two-hour drive from the front line. Now it is less than half that.

Pillai named state minister in Singapore PM Wong cabinet

PTI ■ SINGAPORE

Indian-origin Member of Parliament Murali Pillai will be appointed the Minister of State for Law and Transport in the new incoming cabinet of Singapore's new Prime Minister Lawrence Wong, it was announced on Monday.

Pillai, 56, will be appointed and sworn in on July 1, according to a report by The Straits Times newspaper while others will be sworn in on May 15. Pillai, a member of the ruling People's Action Party, is a lawyer.

Among other Indian-origin politicians, Dr Vivian Balakrishnan will remain as Foreign Affairs Minister, K Shanmugam will continue as

Minister of Home Affairs and Law, and Indraneel Rajah as the Minister in the Prime Minister's Office.

The new cabinet line-up was announced by the Singapore Prime Minister's Office on Monday.

It will be led by Wong, who will be sworn into the highest executive office on Wednesday after incumbent Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, 72, announced that he will step down on Wednesday after leading the country for 20 years.

Gan Kim Yong, 65, will be promoted to Deputy Prime Minister as part of a cabinet reshuffle and will remain as Trade and Industry Minister. He will be the acting prime minister in the absence of the

prime minister. He will also take over as the chairman of the Monetary Authority of Singapore, the de facto central bank, and assume responsibility for the strategy group within the Prime Minister's Office. Currently, Deputy Prime Minister Heng Swee Keat, 63, will continue in his role.

Heng was first named to succeed Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong but he has declined to take up the position.

Wong, 51, also announced other promotions and appointments on Monday, but there were no major changes to the ministers helming each ministry in this reshuffle.

For example, Wong will remain at the helm of the Finance Ministry.

Nepal DyPM quits in setback to Prachanda-led govt

PTI ■ KATHMANDU

Nepal's Deputy Prime Minister and senior Madhesi leader Upendra Yadav on Monday tendered his resignation and his party pulled out of the government, a setback to Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal Prachanda-led coalition government.

Yadav, also the Minister for Health and Population, submitted his resignation to Prime Minister "Prachanda" on Monday morning, according to sources close to the Madhesi leader. Along with Yadav, Minister of State for Forest and Environment Dipak Karki, from the same party, has also submitted his resignation.

The resignation by Yadav, the

Chairman of Janata Samajwadi Party Nepal (JSP-Nepal), comes a week after his party split into two groups with senior leader Ashok Rai forming a new party named Janata Samajwadi Party. The new party has been recognised by the Election Commission. "This morning, I submitted my resignation to Prime Minister Dahal. Given the current political situation, I find it untenable to continue my cooperation with the government," Yadav said.

The JSP-Nepal had altogether 12 lawmakers in the House of Representatives (HoR). Now the party's strength has been reduced to 5 in the HoR as Rai and six other lawmakers and 30 central committee members joined the new party.

The ruling coalition led by Prime Minister Prachanda still holds a majority with 77 seats of the CPN-UML, 32 of the Maoist Centre, 21 of the Rastriya Swatantra Party, seven of the newly formed Janata Samajwadi Party and 10 seats of the CPN-Unified Socialist (CPN-US). The coalition requires at least 138 seats in the 275-member House of Representatives to prove a majority.

"The party's pull out from the government will not have an immediate impact on the Prachanda-led coalition government," said Sunil Manandhar, former environment minister and central committee member of the ruling CPN-Maoist Centre.

BABA FARID UNIVERSITY OF HEALTH SCIENCES, FARIDKOT

(Admission Branch)

Admission Notice for BPT, BMLT & B.Sc Medical (APB) Courses, session 2024

Online applications through University website alongwith requisite registration fee are invited w.e.f. 14.05.2024 to 26.05.2024 from eligible candidates for admission to Bachelor of Physiotherapy, Bachelor in Medical Laboratory Technology & B.Sc Medical (Anatomy, Physiology & Biochemistry) Courses, session 2024. The Last date for submission of Online Fee through payment gateway is 27.05.2024. For Eligibility/Prospectus/Schedule / Details/Updates visit the University website i.e. www.bfuh.ac.in.

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Stock markets rebound on last hour buying

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Benchmark Sensex and Nifty staged a dramatic rebound on Monday to settle higher following buying in HDFC Bank, ICICI Bank and Tata Consultancy Services. Helped by buying at the fag-end, the 30-share BSE Sensex closed higher by 111.66 points or 0.15 per cent at 72,776.13. The index opened lower and plummeted further 798.46 points or 1.09 per cent to hit a low of 71,866.01 in day trade. The NSE Nifty rose by 48.85 points or 0.22 per cent to 22,104.05. The 50-issue rebounded around 310 points from the day's low of 21,821.05 and hit a high of 22,131.65. From the Sensex basket, Asian Paints, Sun Pharma, HDFC Bank, Tata Consultancy Services, Axis Bank, Tata Steel, JSW Steel,



Larsen & Toubro, ICICI Bank and Power Grid were the major gainers. Tata Motors dropped over 8 per cent despite reporting over three-fold jump in consolidated net profit at Rs 17,528.59 crore for the fourth quarter ended March 31, 2024. NTPC, Bharti Airtel, Titan, State Bank of India and Nestle were the other major laggards. Vinod Nair, Head of

Research, Geojit Financial Services said, "Though the market reversed from the day's low and ended up with a marginal gain, investors remain concerned over the progressing general election and high valuation." An absence of major positive triggers and the flight of FIIs from the domestic market will keep the short-term trend weak, Nair added. "The week kicked off with market volatility, but by the

end, it managed to eke out marginal gains. Initially bearish sentiments gave way to a recovery, particularly among key heavyweights, which not only erased losses but also propelled the index to close near the day's peak," said Ajit Mishra — SVP, Research, Religare Broking Ltd. Experts said that market volatility was high amid the ongoing Lok Sabha polls. As many as 96 seats went to polls in the fourth phase of elections on Monday. "VIX's rise from record lows to above 20 now, has unfolded in just a fortnight's time. So, while recent history points to more room for upside in VIX and thereby volatility, the abruptness in the rate of change of VIX, may lead to a cool off, perhaps even before the electoral results," Anand James, Chief Market Strategist, Geojit Financial Services said.

Rupee falls 1 paisa to close at 83.52 against US dollar

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The rupee consolidated in a narrow range and settled for the day lower by 1 paisa at 83.52 (provisional) against US dollar on Monday, as the support from positive domestic equities was negated by strong American currency. Forex traders said with foreign investors buying US dollars and the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) selling the greenback, the USD/INR pair is expected to remain range-bound with a bit of a weakness bias. At the interbank foreign exchange market, the local unit traded in a narrow range. It opened at 83.51, and touched an intraday low of 83.53 during the day. The domestic unit finally settled for the day at 83.52 (provisional), down 1 paisa from its previous close. On Friday, the rupee closed at 83.51 against the American currency. "We expect the rupee to trade with a slight negative bias on the strong US dollar and



weakness in the domestic markets. Continued selling by FIIs may further pressure the rupee. However, any bond-related dollar inflows may support the rupee at lower levels," said Anuj Choudhary Research Analyst, Sharekhan by BNP Paribas. Traders may take cues from India's inflation data. Investors may remain cautious ahead of inflation data from the US this week. USD/INR spot price is expected to trade in a range of

Rs 83.30-83.80, Choudhary added. Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was at 105.27, marginally lower by 0.02 per cent. Brent crude futures, the global oil benchmark, rose 0.12 per cent to USD 82.89 per barrel. On the domestic equity market, the 30-share BSE Sensex advanced 111.66 points, or 0.15 per cent, to close at 72,776.13 points. The broader NSE Nifty settled 48.85 points, or 0.22 per cent higher, at 22,104.05. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) were net sellers in the capital markets on Friday, as they offloaded shares worth Rs 2,117.50 crore, according to exchange data. Meanwhile, after three consecutive weeks of drop, India's forex reserves increased USD 3.668 billion to USD 641.59 billion for the week ended May 3, the RBI said on Friday.

Google Cloud to offer cloud solutions to Airtel customers

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Google Cloud and Bharti Airtel have collaborated to deliver cloud solutions to the latter's customers, according to a joint statement issued on Monday. The long-term partnership will offer cloud solutions from Google Cloud to fast-track cloud adoption and modernisation for Airtel's customers, the statement said. "The two companies will bring together their unique strengths of connectivity and AI technology to develop industry-leading AI/ML solutions that Airtel will train on its large data set," it said. The two entities will work together on a "joint go-to-market", combining Airtel's connectivity and distribution channels with Google Cloud's AI technologies. Airtel will provide cloud-managed services to its customers, which include both large enterprises and emerging businesses. These solutions will include geospatial analytics solutions with advanced location intelligence, voice analytics solutions, and marketing technology solutions to forecast consumer behaviour, perform tailored audience segmentations, and streamline content creation with high-precision contextual ads at reduced costs. "As India accelerates its digital transformation, cutting-edge cloud and AI solutions will be at the heart and centre of this change. "We are happy to partner with Google Cloud and jointly address this market opportunity with secure and scalable Cloud solutions for government, enterprises, and emerging businesses," Bharti Airtel Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer Gopal Vittal said.

Banks' risk appetite through higher loan growth to be key in determining creditworthiness: Fitch

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Fitch Ratings on Monday said Indian banks' risk appetite through higher loan growth will remain a key consideration for their creditworthiness despite improved financial performance. It said asset quality pressures from the previous credit cycle are subsiding, creating a favourable business environment. This has bolstered banks' potential and appetite for growth. Bank loans grew by 16 per cent in the financial year ended March 2024, similar to

FY23, exceeding the 8 per cent CAGR (compound annual growth rate) over FY15-FY22. Retail loans constitute around 10 per cent of system loans, and grew at a 20 per cent CAGR since FY21, fuelled by a shift towards unsecured credit to expand margins, the US-based rating firm said. Large private banks gained significant market share in the last credit cycle and continue to grow rapidly; state banks also returned to brisk growth but lagged large private banks, Fitch said in a report titled "Risk profile weighs on Indian banks'

viability ratings despite improved performance." Fitch said India's household debt is among the lowest in the world, despite rising to around 40 per cent of GDP from 38 per cent in FY23. "Nonetheless, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has expressed concerns regarding the fall in the household savings rate, early delinquencies, higher loans per borrower (43 per cent of consumption loan borrowers had three live loans), and surge in consumption loans, even though secured loans dominate banks' loan books," Fitch said.

Zomato posts Q4 consolidated net profit at ₹175 crore

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Online food delivery firm Zomato Ltd on Monday reported a consolidated net profit of Rs 175 crore in the March quarter on the back of higher revenue. The company had posted a consolidated net loss of Rs 188 crore in the same quarter last fiscal, Zomato Ltd said in a regulatory filing. Consolidated revenue from operations stood at Rs 3,562 crore. It was Rs 2,056 crore in the year-ago period, it added. Total expenses were at Rs 3,636 crore. The company posted its total expenses at Rs 2,431 crore in the corresponding period a year ago, it said.

For the fiscal ended on March 31, 2024, the consolidated net profit was Rs 351 crore. It had posted a consolidated net loss of Rs 971 crore in the previous fiscal ended on March 31, 2023, the filing said. In FY24, consolidated revenue from operations stood at Rs 12,114 crore. It was at Rs 7,079 crore. The results for the year ended March 31, 2024, are not comparable with the year ended March 31, 2023, due to the acquisition of Blink Commerce Pvt Ltd (formerly known as Grofers India Pvt Ltd) in June 2022, the filing said. Zomato said its margin expansion continues in both

food delivery and quick commerce. The quick commerce business, Blinkit, reached an adjusted EBITDA break-even mark for the month of March 2024. The company said a rapid store expansion is underway in the quick commerce business and it is aiming for 1,000 stores by March 2025. In a letter to shareholders, Zomato Managing Director & CEO Deepinder Goyal said the food delivery GOV (gross order value) growth continues to be strong at 28 per cent year-on-year despite the softness in the overall restaurant industry due to the "convenience and predictability layer" that Zomato has built on top of the

services offered by restaurants. "We believe that we can continue to grow faster than the overall restaurant industry (and therefore power a significant part of the growth of the restaurant industry) if we continue to innovate using our customer-first principles, while creating value for all our other stakeholders our restaurant partners, and our delivery partners," he added. On Blinkit, which has become a larger shareholder value driver than the food delivery business in less than two years after the acquisition, Goyal said, "...The bet that we took on Blinkit worked out just fine..."

Share of North East in total MF assets more than doubles in four years

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The share of North East in overall mutual fund assets in the country more than doubled in the last 4 years to Rs 40,324 crore in March 2024, spurred by increased awareness and growing interest among retail investors to invest in equities, a report by ICRA Analytics said. Also, this signals a growing appetite among investors from smaller towns and cities to invest in mutual funds. The combined share of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura rose to 0.73 per cent of the total average asset under management (AUM) of the mutual fund industry, which stood at Rs 55,011 lakh crore in March 2024. The share was around 0.67 per cent in March 2020, when the industry's AUM was at Rs 24,711 lakh crore. Data for Sikkim was not provided. In March 2020, these states had an asset base of Rs 16,446 crore as compared to Rs



40,324 crore in March this year. "Though the contribution of these states to the total AAUM of the industry is still small in percentage terms, there has been a steady and consistent growth in mutual fund inflows in these states backed by increasing awareness among people and the growing interest among retail investors for investing in equities through the mutual fund route," Ashwini Kumar, Senior Vice President and Head Market Data, ICRA Analytics, said. With an AAUM of Rs 29,268

crore, Assam was the leading contributor among Northeastern states, accounting for nearly 73 per cent of the total AAUM of Rs 40,324 crore of these states in March 2024. AAUM of Assam grew nearly 159 per cent from Rs 11,298 crore in March 2020. Meghalaya accounted for 9 per cent of the total AAUM at Rs 3,623 crore in March 2024 as compared to Rs 1,714 crore in March 2020. Tripura accounted for 5 per cent of the total asset base at Rs 2,174 crore in March this year, up from Rs 1,155 crore in March

2020. Further, Nagaland contributed 4 per cent of the total asset base at Rs 1,668 crore, way higher than Rs 965 crore in March 2020. Arunachal Pradesh contributed 3.8 per cent at Rs 1,532 crore in the period under review, up from Rs 525 crore in March 2020. Manipur's share was 2.9 per cent at Rs 1,152 crore, an increase from Rs 403 crore in March 2020 and Mizoram accounted for 2.25 per cent at Rs 907 crore, up from Rs 386 crore in March 2020, it added. "There has been a steady increase in awareness about the various investment options among people, primarily from smaller towns and cities. This, coupled with growing financial literacy and the surge in interest among retail investors for investing in equities through the mutual fund route, all contribute to a good growth in AAUM in towns and cities beyond the top 30. "The investor awareness campaigns conducted by AMC's (asset management

companies) in the northeastern region have also helped build awareness among people," Kumar said. However, he pointed out that mutual fund penetration still continues to be low in the country and there is a lot of scope for growth. The burgeoning middle class and a rising financial literacy is likely to prompt more and more people to resort to financial planning so as to accrue savings and this is expected to shore up mutual fund investments in northeastern states moving forward. Overall, the Indian mutual fund industry continues on its growth momentum with an increase in inflows across both debt and equity-oriented schemes in April 2024. The net AUM of the industry, which posted 35 per cent growth in 2023-24, continued to register a stellar performance in April 2024 as it surged by nearly 38 per cent year-on-year to Rs 57.26 lakh crore as compared with Rs 41.62 lakh crore in April 2023.

Exim Bank FY24 profit jumps 62 per cent to ₹2,518 crore

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Export-Import Bank of India on Monday reported 62 per cent jump in FY24 net profit at Rs 2,518 crore, primarily helped by a sharp improvement in the asset quality. In FY23, profit stood at Rs 1,556 crore. Amid souring of ties with the Maldives, Exim Bank said it has disbursed USD 450 million to the island nation, and the entire exposure is performing well, a senior official said. The bank's overall loan book grew 17 per cent during the fiscal year and it is aiming for at least 10-12 per cent growth in FY25, managing director Harsha Bangari told reporters here. When asked for the reasons for the lower growth aim for FY25, she said the bank had a similar target for FY24 as well but the asset growth came in higher than expectations.

The bank does not feel the need to go for any equity raising in FY25, she said, adding that it will be borrowing up to USD 3.5 billion in foreign currency and around Rs 35,000 crore from rupee-denominated borrowings. The bank has a commitment to repay USD 1.2 billion coming up in FY25, she said. The commercial book grew at 49 per cent, much faster than the policy business in FY24, which helped deliver the higher loan growth. The overall contribution of commercials in the overall book has reached 56 per cent business now. Net interest margin declined sharply to 2.06 per cent in FY24 as against 2.29 per cent a year ago, which was attributed to the composition of assets wherein over 88 per cent are from the low-yielding investment grade and also hardening of rates across the world.

Bangari said a NIM of over 1.75 per cent is good for the bank as a bulk 93 per cent of the expenses for it revolve around interest repayments. Gross non-performing assets ratio improved to 1.93 per cent as on March 31, 2024, from 4 per cent in the year-ago period, primarily because the slippages went down. As a result of that, the overall provisions went down to Rs 2,600 crore from Rs 4,700 crore in FY23. Bangari said the governments of Ghana and Zambia paid USD 200 million of dues which also helped reduce provisions. When asked about the Maldivian experience, a senior bank official said the bank has a commitment of USD 1.3 billion through a line of credit arrangement of which USD 450 million has been disbursed. Bangari stressed that all the exposure to the Maldives is performing well.

Assam: Mid segment businesses hit hard by high tax, inflation, absence of schemes

PTI ■ GUWAHATI

Businessmen, traders and contractors in Assam are keeping their fingers crossed as they hope that crucial issues such as high taxes, exclusion from financial schemes and inflationary pressure that are affecting the mid-segment businesses will be resolved by the new dispensation at the Centre after the ongoing Lok Sabha elections. They felt that there would be an adverse impact on the economy if the mid-segment businesses continued to reel under pressure, despite being one of the biggest employment-generating sectors after the railways. While interacting with PTI, businessmen and traders, who are from Marwari and Bengali communities in the state, also alleged that the government has "totally neglected" the medium segment of businesses across sectors. "In the present scenario, the government is focussing on industrialisation. But the

medium size businesses are not progressing. The government has not rolled out any scheme targeting the medium scale units," Sivasagar-based garment trader Rupchand Karnani said. The government claims that many schemes are launched, but when traders go to banks and financial institutions to avail of these facilities, too many documents are sought and finally, they become a failure, he said. Karnani, also the Sivasagar District Secretary of All India Marwari Federation, claimed that the sales of every trader were down, as compared to the previous years, during the recent Rongali Bihu, which is the main festival of Assam. "The government also imposed a lot of taxes on us and every year, the rates are increasing. Municipality tax, property tax, licence fee — all are rising. Rents are also skyrocketing. Staff wages are rising along with the prices of goods. Where from will we pay for these?" he asked.



With voting for Lok Sabha elections in Assam coming to an end, the mid-segment business community is optimistic that a new government at the Centre will look into their problems for long-lasting solutions. Stating that the outgoing government was "only concerned about the rich and small businesses", Karnani hoped that the new government at the "Centre

would encourage all sections of businessmen and only then India progress." "You have to look after the middle-class citizens as well as the business community. The highest sale is in this middle segment. All people do not go to high-end malls for shopping," he said, adding that online businesses have also impacted the traders to a large extent. Telecom contractor Suresh

Kumar Berlia seconded him and claimed that the mid-segment businesses are "deprived" of a beneficiary scheme. "When we go for a loan, they (financial institutions) ask for more collateral than the borrowing amount. If they give us a Rs 50 lakh loan, collateral or mortgage worth Rs 1 crore is needed, he claimed. Expressing disappointment over the current situation, Berlia alleged that the government waived loans amounting to crores of rupees for big industrialists, but "loan accounts of mid-segment businesses are termed as non-performing assets (NPA) even if a single instalment is misused." "Trading by the mid-segment businesses is the biggest industry after the railways as per my estimation. If the segment gets weakened, everything surrounding these businesses will suffer. Unfortunately, we have never got the due recognition and respect for our service," he added.

However, Berlia does not have much expectation from the new dispensation at the Centre as "all governments go for populist schemes and ignore the mid-segment business community". Gopal Ghosh, who runs a sweet-meat shop at Borjuri in Golaghat district of Assam, lamented that he has applied to several state-sponsored schemes to expand his eatery but has not received any positive response. "High inflation is affecting my business. With prices of all raw materials rising regularly in the last few years, the rates of tea and sweets have also increased accordingly. Sales are also affected," he said. Guwahati-based hardware trader Sandeep Sharma said online businesses are creating hurdles, which, in a way, are weakening the trade prospect as his shop does not sell products through digital platforms. "Taxation is a big issue here. The government says everything should be sold with GST, but customers don't

want to pay the indirect tax due to increasing rates," he said. Prices of construction materials have increased manifold in the last few years, but consumers want cheaper rates and are not keen on paying the GST component, the trader said. "However, we bought the goods from dealers by paying GST. So, it's a tricky situation for us. Customers want to buy the goods without paying GST, and it's a loss to us," he added. Sharma hoped that the new government, after the Lok Sabha elections, would try to rationalise the Goods and Services Tax (GST) along with the enhancement of individual income tax slabs which will provide more purchasing power to the people. He, however, lamented that the government has never looked after the mid-segment business class, and it did not receive any support even during the COVID-19 pandemic. Vivek Sharma, who looks after

his father's restaurant at Titabar in Jorhat district, said carrying out developmental work is a basic duty of any elected government and it should continue irrespective of the party in power. "The government should work more in controlling the prices. In recent times, increasing prices of medicines and all other commodities are hurting all sections of people, and it is affecting the purchasing power," he said. Sharma hoped that inflation would be brought down to a minimum so that poor and middle-class families could survive, and also help them spend for different goods. The young businessman also pointed out that labour problems are a challenge and his business faces scarcity of workers sometimes. The voting of 14 Lok Sabha seats in Assam took place in three phases — April 19, 26 and May 7. The counting of votes will be on June 4 after completion of the entire seven-phase elections across the country.

NEERAJ CHOPRA, KISHORE JENA TO COMPETE DIRECTLY IN FED CUP FINALS

PTI ■ BHUBANESWAR

Star Indian javelin throwers Neeraj Chopra and Kishore Jena have been given direct entry into the Federation Cup finals here on May 15, having already bettered the minimum qualification mark of 75m multiple times in their careers. Olympic and world champion Chopra is coming off a fairly good outing at the Doha Diamond League last week where he finished second with a throw of 88.38m. Asian Games silver-winner Jena's Diamond League debut, however, ended in disappointment as he was eliminated after three rounds with 76.31m being his best. DP Manu, who finished sixth in the 2023 World Championships and who is looking to qualify for the upcoming Paris Olympics by breaching the 85.50m mark, will also compete directly in the finals. "All those who have crossed 75m will not compete in the qualifying round on Tuesday. There are nine of them from among those who had made entries, including Neeraj and Jena. They will directly compete in the final on Wednesday," Indian athletics head coach Radhakrishnan Nair said, quoting the Athletics Federation of India's qualification rules. "The remaining who have below 75m mark will compete in the qualifying round and the top three will join the nine above-75m throwers in the final." The AFI is quite looking forward to 26-year-old Chopra's first home competitive outing in three years. "The AFI is not at all surprised at Neeraj taking part in the Federation Cup. His participation in domestic event is no doubt a very good thing for Indian athletics," a top official of the AFI told PTI. It is learnt that the AFI wanted Chopra to compete in a domestic event after he won gold in Tokyo Olympics and before the Paris Games. He did not take part in any



domestic event in 2022 and 2023 as he was training or competing abroad. His last domestic event was the Federation Cup in March 2021. It is learnt that Chopra has reached India from Doha but will land here only on Tuesday. Asian Games medalist Jena is arriving here later on Monday. Nair played down the injury to men's 4x400m relay squad member Rajesh Ramesh who pulled out midway during the second leg of the first round qualifying heat in Bahamas earlier this month. Ramesh was replaced by Arokia Rajiv, who was also not fully fit, in the second round of the Olympic qualifying heat and the Indian team booked a Paris ticket. "Ramesh's injury is not a hamstring pull, it's related to tendon in thigh. So, it is not a major injury. He is expected to start training in 10-15 days. Rajiv will also be alright soon," Nair said. "There should not be any problem in Olympics preparation." A total of 19 track and field athletes have qualified for Paris and Nair said the team will train in Spala in Poland for four weeks before travelling to Paris for the Olympics. Track and field events starting on August 1. "The team will train in Spala before Olympics and we will reach Paris three or four days before the competition starts," he said. Indian athletes have trained in Spala many times in the past. Nair also said the AFI is still hopeful of the mixed 4x400m relay team's Paris qualification despite its failure in Bahamas during the World Relays. Only two slots remain up for grabs. "Our mixed 4x400m team will take part in the Asian Relays (May 20-21 in Bangkok) and we can qualify for Paris if we run below 3 minutes 14 seconds and we feel can do that." Meanwhile, it is learnt that the AFI will shortly come out with a strategic plan with the target of winning multiple medals in the 2036 Olympics. The target is irrespective of India winning the right to host the Games.



Shyaamnikhil ends 12 years wait, becomes India's 85th GM

PTI ■ DUBAI

Shyaamnikhil became India's 85th Grandmaster by completing his third and final GM norm in the just-concluded Dubai Police Masters chess tournament, ending a 12-year-wait for the player who took to the sport as an eight-year-old. Shyaamnikhil needed just one win and eight draws to complete the long-overdue GM title which he achieved in the tournament. The 31-year-old conjured the requisite 2500 ELO rating points, the minimum requirement to be a GM, way back in 2012 with two Grandmaster norms but for the third one, he had to wait for 12 years. "I started playing at the age of eight, my parents taught me but I could not play any tournament for three years. Winning the under-13 State championship opened up opportunities for me as I could play Asian and age group world championship," recalled Shyaamnikhil. Hailing from Nagarcoil in Tamil Nadu this was not an easy ride for the player, who was known as one of the finest talents of his time. "He shifted his base to Chennai to pursue chess despite coming from a modest background and stayed with me," said his former coach K Visweswaran. Making his first GM norm in

Whoa Nelly! Rose Zhang wins Founders Cup to end Korda's record tying LPGA Tour winning streak

AP ■ CLIFTON (US)

Great things have been expected from Rose Zhang from the moment the two-time NCAA champion won in her professional debut last year and joined the LPGA Tour the following week. The 20-year-old finally delivered again Sunday, birdieing four of the final five holes to win the Cognizant Founders Cup. She beat Madelene Sagstrom by two strokes while putting an official end to Nelly Korda's record-tying LPGA Tour winning streak. "I was able to grow so much throughout the journey in this past year," Zhang said. "I don't know, it's crazy to come out here. Didn't have any expectation of having to win because I realize that it's all just noise and I really just have to be able to work at it myself and try my best to put myself in positions like this. "But no matter what happened this week, I would've been very satisfied and it reignited my passion for the game once again," she added after winning on Mother's Day. Zhang, who was talking to her mom coming into the media room, actually had a funny start to her round. The Stanford product almost fell on her rear end taking a shot from an awkward stance on the first hole. The shot could have gone anywhere. It hit the pin and she made par. "I just thought to myself, wow, I mean, today is probably going to be a lucky day," said Zhang, who played with Sagstrom in a stroke-play duel with the rest of the field far back. "Maybe I can get something



going. Would not have imagined myself being who are now, especially after 12. Sagstrom birdied that hole to take a three-shot lead and things did not look good for Zhang. It got better in the event that honors the 13 founding members of the tour. Zhang, who shot a 6-under 66, birdied Nos. 14, 15, 17 and 18 at Upper Montclair Country Club, while Sagstrom bogeyed the 16th in finished two back. Korda, who struggled the final two days after playing magnificently in winning the five straight events she entered, began the day 11 strokes back and shot her second straight 73 to tie for seventh at 7 under. She had no regrets. She hopes someone will join her and Hall of Famers Nancy Lopez and Annika Sorenstam in winning five straight or even more. "But just to do that with all the competition out here is super, super

rewarding with how much work that I've put in," the 25-year-old Korda said. "So I think to get a streak like that in any sport in general is amazing with the amount of talent that I feel like every athlete has in their sport. Just an amazing feeling and hopefully one day it'll sink in." It was a heart-breaking end for Sagstrom, the 31-year-old Swede who started the day with a one-shot lead and was looking for her first victory since 2020 and second overall on tour. "I struck it so nicely this week. I've worked really hard for a long time," Sagstrom said. "I putted incredibly. It's really high up there. That's probably why it hurts more. Nothing against Rose. She played incredible. I kind of wish I gave myself a few more chances at the end there. Didn't want it to end that way. This is probably the best golf I played in years." Sagstrom led by three after 13, but Zhang curled in a birdie putt at 14 and made an 8-footer on the next to draw within one. They were tied after 16, with Sagstrom missing a 10-foot par putt after a bad chip from the back fringe. After Sagstrom saved par at the par-3 17th with a fast, downhill 25-footer, Zhang took the lead with a short birdie putt and she closed things out on the final hole with Sagstrom waiting to make a birdie attempt. Zhang, who won last year at nearby Liberty National in her pro debut, finished at 24 under 264. Rookie Gabriela Ruffels of Australia was third at 9 under, her best finish. She shot 71. Peiyun Chien of Taiwan and Ruoning Yin and Xiyu Lin of China tied at 8 under.



Wanted to be a doctor but opted for athletics due to father passion: Olympic bound Jyothika

PTI ■ BHUBANESWAR

Her mother is a home-maker and she has an elder sister who got married recently. "My father was a bodybuilder when he was young but stopped as there was no support from family. Now he is a businessman. He is very much interested in sports and he pushed me a lot and he wants me to be in the Olympics. "Because of him, I did not have to struggle much. He takes care of everything. So, now I want to fulfil his dream of seeing me do well in the Olympics," said Jyothika who has a personal best of 52.73 seconds in individual 400m. It all started after Jyothika won races in school meets and that was when her father realised the talent of his daughter. "I used to finish first in annual school sports competitions in 200m and 400m and even in some races organised by clubs. "He took me to the school PET teacher when I was in seventh class (around 12 years of age). I ran on the mud tracks at a college ground in my place. I started taking part in district and state meets when I was in ninth class in 2014." Between 2014 and 2021, Jyothika trained under Sports Authority of India coach Vinayak Prasad in Vijaywada. In 2021, she trained under Ramesh Nagpuri, current national junior team head coach, in Hyderabad for one year during which she ran her then personal best of 53.05 seconds after which she was called for the national camp. "I got national medals, I went to World School Games and Asian Youth Championships but interest in sports, I did not have. Till 2017, I did not have interest in sports. An academically-inclined child is a dream realised in most Indian households and that's why Olympic-bound runner Jyothika Sri Dandi aspired to be a doctor before she realised that her father would be happier seeing her excel in sports. The 23-year-old from Tanuku town in West Godavari district of Andhra Pradesh, secured 97 per cent in Class X while studying at the Montessori School at her home town. But, her father Srinivasa Rao, a body-builder in his younger days, nudged her into taking interest in sports as he wanted to see her in the Olympics some day. That dream is going to be a reality in less than three months' time. Jyothika was part of the Indian women's 4x400m relay team that qualified for the Paris Olympics during the World Relays in Bahamas earlier this month. "I got 97 per cent in class X and when I was in school I actually wanted to be a doctor. But, once I started doing sports, I could not go back and think about becoming a doctor," Jyothika, who is taking part in the Federation Cup here, told PTI in an interview. "My father felt I have the talent to do well in athletics and bring laurels for the country in the Olympics. Seeing his sacrifice and passion to mould me into a successful athlete, I decided to follow his dreams. "I did not tell him that I wanted to be a doctor because I want to make him happy. Till 2017, I did not have interest in sports but around 2020 I began taking interest."

Wonder goal for Ella Toone as Manchester United wins Women FA Cup with 4-0 rout of Tottenham

AP ■ LONDON

Manchester United won its first major trophy by routing Tottenham 4-0 in the Women's FA Cup final at Wembley. Ella Toone's stunning long-range strike in first-half stoppage time set up victory for Marc Skinner's team. United cruised to victory after the break through two goals from Lucia Garcia and another from Rachel Williams. United quickly made up for defeat to Chelsea in last year's final by lifting the trophy 12 months on. Toone's wonder goal broke Tottenham's resistance when she curled the ball into the top corner from around 20 yards (meters) in the third minute of time added on in the first half.



Williams doubled United's lead with a powerful header nine minutes after the break. United effectively sealed victory three minutes later, this time through Garcia, who was named player of the match. Seizing on a weak clearance from Spurs goalkeeper Becky Spencer, Garcia pounced to score from close range. She added her second and United's fourth in the 74th minute by lifting a shot into the top corner from inside the

box. It is the first time since Birmingham's victory in 2012 that the cup hasn't been won by one of Arsenal, Chelsea or Manchester City. Victory eases the pressure on Skinner, who guided the club to second place in the Women's Super League last season but has endured a difficult campaign this time round with United set to finish fifth. Skinner's contract is set to expire this summer. Asked if he expected to carry on next season, the 41-year-old Skinner said: "I hope so ... But we've created history and I have got to live in that moment. "I believe in myself fully and I am still only a baby in terms of my career."

Djokovic follows Nadal to early exit at Italian Open in first match after being hit by water bottle

AP ■ ROME

Novak Djokovic's performance was so poor that even the 24-time Grand Slam champion admitted it was "concerning." Djokovic put on one of his worst displays at one of his favorite tournaments as he was upset by 29th-seeded Alejandro Tabilo in the third round of the Italian Open. It was Djokovic's first match since accidentally getting knocked on the head by a water bottle while signing autographs after his opening win on Friday. "I managed to sleep okay. I had headaches. The next day or yesterday was pretty fine, so I thought it's okay. Maybe it is okay. Maybe it's not," Djokovic

said. "I mean, the way I felt on the court today was just completely like a different player entered into my shoes. Just no rhythm, no tempo, no balance whatsoever on any shot. It's a bit concerning." Djokovic started off with a double-fault and it didn't get much better for the six-time Rome champion. The top-ranked Djokovic lost his first two service games and went on to lose the match 6-2, 6-3 in just 68 minutes, handing Tabilo the victory when he double-faulted - his fifth of the match - amid boos at the Foro Italico. "I'm trying to soak it all in and wake up right now," Tabilo said after the biggest win of his career. "I was just trying to keep my nerves in and keep



swinging. Towards the end my arms were getting tired but I was trying not to think about it. "It's crazy, I just can't believe what's happened. I can't believe it right now. I don't think anyone can believe it." The third-round loss marked Djokovic's worst performance at the Italian Open. He had lost only once before to an opponent outside the top 10 in Rome, where he had never gone out before the quarterfinals. Djokovic followed Rafael Nadal to an early exit after the record 10-time Rome champion lost his third-round match to Hubert Hurkacz 6-1, 6-3 on Saturday. While Djokovic had said he was "fine" after the water

zero break point chances. He was broken four times in the match, including in the final game, and Djokovic could only shake his head when another unforced error handed Tabilo match point. Djokovic is still without a title this year - the first time he's reached May without a trophy since 2018, when he was returning from a right elbow injury. Tabilo next faces 16th-seeded Karen Khachanov, who beat Francisco Cerundolo 6-2, 6-4. Third-seeded Alexander Zverev advanced after the 2017 Rome champion beat Luciano Darderi of Italy 7-6 (3), 6-2. Grigor Dimitrov and Thiago Monteiro also advanced, while Taylor Fritz beat American compatriot Sebastian Korda 6-3, 6-4. Another American, Ben Shelton, lost to Zhang Zhizhen. In the women's tournament, second-seeded Aryna Sabalenka eased through to the fourth round with a 6-4, 6-2 win over Dayana Yastremska. American Sofia Kenin, who won the Australian Open in 2020 and also reached the final at Roland Garros the same year, was upset by Slovakian qualifier Rebecca Sramkova 6-4, 4-6, 6-4. American Danielle Collins is safely through after beating Caroline Garcia 6-3, 6-3. Also advancing in third-round matches were Maria Sakkari, Irina-Camelia Begu, Jelena Ostapenko, Victoria Azarenka and Elina Svitolina.



Focus on KL Rahul as LSG face DC in playoff battle

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
Focus will be on skipper KL Rahul as a struggling Lucknow Super Giants look to keep their slim IPL playoff chances alive when they face an equally desperate Delhi Capitals in a must-win game here on Tuesday. There has been a lot of speculations about Rahul's future as LSG skipper after his "public reprimand" by team owner Sanjiv Goenka following their 10-wicket hammering by Sunrisers Hyderabad last Wednesday. Speculations are rife that Rahul may step down as captain or perhaps he will do his duties for the remaining two games before leaving LSG. In either case, the India batter would look to answer with his bat and end things on a high. Rahul hasn't been in the best of form and it's not only cost him a place in India's T20 squad but also left LSG at the seventh spot with 12 points with RCB

and DC, who are fifth and sixth respectively. Five days is a lot of time to introspect and Rahul and Co. Will look to come out all guns blazing when they face DC, who are also on 12 points and are coming into the match after a loss against RCB on Sunday night. Besides Rahul, Quinton De Kock's poor form this season has left LSG struggling in the powerplay, putting pressure on the likes of Marcus Stoinis and Nicholas Pooran, who haven't got the freedom to unleash their big shots. Although Pooran and Ayush Badoni managed to rescue the team in the last match, the bowlers failed miserably against the formidable SRH pair of Travis Head and Abhishek Sharma, who racked up 167 in 9.4 overs, a T20 record by any team. The loss of tearaway pacer Mayank Yadav to injury has left a big hole which Yash Thakur and Naveen-ul-Haq haven't been able to fill. Also



Mohsin Khan picked up an injury and didn't play last match. The spin duo of Krunal Pandya and Ravi Bishnoi too have been to do a lot of soul

searching after being punished by SRH. Delhi Capitals, on the other hand, will hope the return of skipper Rishabh Pant after a one-match suspension due to slow overrate against

Rajasthan Royals will help them to end things on a high. Delhi sans Pant paid the price for their fielding lapses as those drop catches and misfields came back to haunt them

against RCB on Sunday night. While the bowlers let RCB off the hook after a good start, the batting once again came unstuck as they lost four wickets inside 4 overs to be bowled out for their lowest innings score this IPL. But this is the same team which scored four 200 plus totals this season and they will have to find their mark in their last game to salvage any slim hopes of a top four. Jack Fraser-McGurk, with 330 runs from seven matches at an impressive strike-rate of 237.41, has been their most impactful batter. While Abhishek Porel (269, 156.39), Pant (413, 156.43) and Tristan Stubbs (321, 185.54) too have been among runs this season. In the bowling department, the spin duo of Kuldeep Yadav (15) and Axar Patel (10) have shared 25 wickets, while pacers Khaleel Ahmed (16 wickets) and Mukesh Kumar (16) too have got them the breakthroughs.



Going forward, players will be selected in playing XI on basis of impact and not averages: Miller

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

For someone who has the ability to deliver maximum impact, South African batter David Miller reckons averages in T20 cricket will gradually lose relevance and strike rate will be the only barometer of success. Over the past couple of years, Miller has performed the finisher's role with distinction both for Gujarat Titans and his national team. With seven scores in excess of 250 plus this IPL season, the batters have taken the power game to the next level, fuelling the strike rate debate. "We've seen some high scores this year. And it's been incredible batting by a few teams and few individual players in this IPL. And look, I always see everyone judges a batter on the average," Miller told PTI Videos. "But in T20 cricket, it can be difficult to judge someone purely on that. The top three batters, definitely you can because of the number of overs they get to bat. When it comes to the middle order, it has always been the strike rates and what kind of impact the batter has had in the game. "I suppose as we move forward, it becomes more and more about impact. How impactful are you in the game? Depending on the situation. If we're needing 15 an over, can you do it? And that's, I think, what guys are going to have to select teams on their match-winning ability," said the 34-year-old. Talking about the T20 World Cup next month, Miller is looking forward to intense battles with likes of Jasprit Bumrah. "There are so many good Indian players. But me being a

batter facing the bowlers, Bumrah is bowling well at the moment. And he has been a world-class bowler for many years. He's a threat to me, as well as every other batter in the World Cup," said the southpaw. He also showered praise on fellow Titans' batter Sai Sudharsan, who is in the middle of his most productive season in the IPL. "He's an incredibly talented player. Still got a long career ahead of him. I've enjoyed watching him play. I love the way that he preps. And just the build-up to games and how he goes about it. He's a very level-headed young boy that's got a lot of talent," said Miller. "The World Cup in the Americas will provide Miller and South African opportunity to get their hands on an elusive global trophy. The hard-hitting batter is excited about the challenge. "This team that we have at the moment has played a lot of cricket together the last couple of years and has a lot of confidence and a lot of success. "We've got a lot of experience, guys that have been under pressure before and come through successfully. So, putting all the individuals together in a T20 World Cup, I have no doubt that we most certainly going to give it our best shot. We have the players to do it, the skill to do it." On his own performances in ICC events, Miller added: "I love World Cups, I must be honest. I feel like I've done well at World Cups, personally. And I just want to continue the momentum. "For you to say, finally, Killer Miller coming to life, I think I've done pretty well at previous World Cups."

RCB have demonstrated ability to deliver when it counts: Moody

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Royal Challengers Bengaluru have shown the ability to perform when it matters most, said former Australian all-rounder Tom Moody after their fifth straight win in the IPL. Languishing at the bottom of the points table 10 days ago, Virat Kohli and Co have found their mojo back. Their winning streak has given them a fighting chance to make the knockout stage. "Once again, RCB has demonstrated their ability to deliver when it counts, setting the stage for what promises to be a thrilling encounter between the two teams," Moody said on Star Sports. They will take on MS Dhoni's Chennai Super Kings, who are also in contention for a playoff berth, in their final league game at the M. Chinnaswamy Stadium on Saturday. "It's iconic for the entire IPL, truly. You've got two colossal names in cricket here in India and in world cricket-Dhoni



and Kohli. "They're both dominant figures, leaving a huge legacy wherever they've been. And the interesting thing is anything can still happen on that table. Barring Kolkata Knight Riders, who have already qualified, as many as seven teams are still in contention for a playoffs berth. "After the weekend, I was assuming that a couple of results will sort of fall the way they should fall and then we'll have a clear idea who's going to end up in that top four. "Yet, it's still anyone's game. Any team could clinch a spot

in that coveted top four," Moody said. After a sedate start to the season, RCB batter Rajat Patidar has found his groove, scoring five fifties in the last seven innings at a quick pace. "Patidar, in particular, has been a revelation in the past five or six games, notching up several quick-fire half-centuries. "His aggressive approach has consistently put pressure on the opposition's bowling attack, making it incredibly challenging for them to get back into the contest," Moody added.

PBKS' Livingstone returns to England to address knee niggle ahead of T20 WC

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Punjab Kings' all-rounder Liam Livingstone on Monday returned to England from the ongoing IPL to undergo a knee recuperation ahead of the next month's T20 World Cup. The Kings are already eliminated from this IPL after managing just four wins from 12 matches and they are currently at the bottom of the table with eight points. "IPL done for another year, had to get my knee sorted for the upcoming World Cup," Livingstone wrote on his Instagram wall. "Thanks once again to the Punjab Kings fans for all their love and support. Disappointing season as a team and personally, but as always, I loved every minute of playing in the IPL," he added. Hence, Livingstone will not be available for PBKS' last two matches of the tournament against Rajasthan Royals (May 15) and Sunrisers Hyderabad (May 19).



The injury is not of serious nature but the England management, as per ESPNcricinfo, decided to give him more time to get it treated prior to their home T20I series against Pakistan, beginning on May 22. After that series, the defending champions will travel to the West Indies for their T20 World Cup engagements, starting on June 4 against Scotland in Bridgetown,

Barbados. Livingstone had a lean IPL this season, scoring 111 runs from seven matches and took just three wickets. Meanwhile, other England players in the IPL who are part of their World Cup squad - Moeen Ali (CSK), Sam Curran, Jonny Bairstow (PBKS), Jos Buttler (RR), Will Jacks, Reece Topley (RCB) and Phil Salt (KKR) - will be home-bound the coming weekend.

We have switched on the attacking mode: RCB pacer Dayal

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Pace bowler Yash Dayal attributed the renaissance of Royal Challengers Bengaluru in the second half of the IPL to them "switching on the attacking mode." After six consecutive defeats, Royal Challengers won five matches on the bounce to remain in contention for a playoff berth. In the last game, RCB defeated Delhi Capitals by 47 runs here on Sunday to leap to fifth spot on the table with 12 points from 13 matches. "Our performances have markedly improved in the last few matches. I think we have switched on that attacking mode in the last few matches. It has been a big positive for us," said Dayal, who took three for 20 against DC, during the post-

match press meet. The left-arm quick said even while RCB were going through a losing streak, the dressing room remained a thickly-knit unit. "When you lose matches continuously, like it happened with us, morale will come down a bit. But we took it in our stride and bounced back well. "But even when we were losing, fingers were not pointed at anyone. We have remained positive throughout the season," he added. The resurgence of RCB is directly linked with the improved performance of their bowling unit, which was all over the place in the first half of the season. Dayal credited team bowling coach Adam Griffith for that turnaround. "The credit goes to our bowling coach. He engages us in specific drills,



visualising particular opposition batsmen and we discuss this a lot. "When I go out to bowl, I just think about how to get the batter out or save some runs. All of us think the same way," he added. "GAVE TOO MANY RUNS": James Hopes, the DC bowling coach, said dropped catches allowed RCB to add a few more runs and reach an over-par total. Rajat Patidar, who made a quick fifty, and Will Jacks, who scored a fluent 41, were dropped multiple times on Sunday. "They got one too many and we dropped four catches and had we taken them we could have probably restricted them to 160-165. "But that's fine and if you are not going to put it together with the bat you are not going to win too many games in this

tournament," said Hopes. The Delhi side now has 12 points from 13 matches and it now needs a massive win over Lucknow Super Giants on Tuesday to keep their playoff hopes alive. The former Australian all-rounder was confident of achieving it in their home ground. "We have to win big now. But fortunately, we are going back to Delhi where big scores have been the norm for the season. "So, we are going to ask them to put a big score on the board and keep them a fair way below us to have any chance to advance in this tournament," he said. However, Hopes rued the missed opportunity against RCB. "But today was our chance to really get into the mix for playing finals, and now we've left it up to fight, which you don't really want to do in this tournament."

OTHER SPORTS

Satwik, Chirag look to regain competitive edge as Thailand Open begins

PTI ■ BANGKOK

Star shuttlers Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty will look to regain their competitive edge as they spearhead the Indian challenge at the Thailand Open Super 500 tournament, beginning here on Tuesday. The top seeded Indian pair, who are one of the favourites to win a gold at the Paris Olympics, found it a tad difficult to negotiate the variety of serves dished out by the Indonesians and Chinese at the Thomas Cup. Both shuttlers will look to address the slight drop in their

level this week when they begin their campaign against Malaysia's Nur Mohd Azriyn Ayub Azriyn and Tan Wee Kieng. With the Olympic-bound shuttlers looking to fine-tune their skills ahead of the Paris Games, the BWF world tour events will offer the perfect platform for them to test those new strokes or tweaks that they make to their games. India's top player in singles, HS Prannoy, a world championships and Asian Games bronze medalist, too will have to find his best footing after being troubled by health issues this season.



His win over Indonesia's Anthony Ginting was a confidence booster but the loss

against China's Shi Yuqi will trouble him as he needs to close out such narrow games to

get into the best mental shape ahead of the Olympics. Kiran George and Sathish Kumar Karunakaran are also in fray, while Lakshya Sen and PV Sindhu had pulled out before the draw was announced last week. While Kiran will face China's Australia Open winner Weng Hong Yang, Sathish, who had claimed the Odisha Masters title last December, takes on a qualifier in their respective opening matches. In Sindhu's absence, Ashmita Chaliha, Malvika Bansod and Aakarshi Kashyap will look to keep India's flag fluttering with a solid show in women's singles.

Atletico Madrid moves closer to securing Champions League spot after beating Celta Vigo

AP ■ MADRID

Atletico Madrid moved closer to securing the fourth and final Champions League spot with a 1-0 win over Celta Vigo in the Spanish league. Rodrigo De Paul scored an 84th-minute winner for Atletico, which opened an eight-point gap to fifth-place Athletic Bilbao with three rounds remaining. Athletic was held at home to a 2-2 draw with Osasuna on Saturday. "You know me, we have to keep improving until the end," Atletico Madrid coach Diego Simeone said. "We have to keep fighting no matter what." It was the third win in a row for Atletico, which is three points behind third-place Barcelona. The Catalan club hosts seventh-place Real



Sociedad on Monday. Celta, which has lost three of its last five games, dropped to 17th place and five points above the relegation zone. Rayo Vallecano moved to 16th, also five points from danger, after a 0-0 draw at eighth-place Valencia. **BETIS WINS:** Real Betis beat last-place Almeria 3-2 at home to move to sixth place and strengthen its hold on the European qualifying spots. Pablo Fornals, Isco and Ayoze Pérez scored for Betis, which has won four of its last five matches. Almeria was coming off only its second win of the season in the league, at Rayo Vallecano. **CADIZ HOPEFUL:** Cadiz, sitting in 18th place, kept alive its hopes of escaping demotion with a 1-0 win against midtable Getafe.