

**OPINION 6**  
BUDDHIST INFLUENCE ON  
TAGORE'S WORK

**WORLD 8**  
EU-ISRAEL RELATIONS  
TAKE NOSEDIVE

**MONEY 10**  
NSE REDUCES TICK SIZE FOR SELECT  
STOCKS TO BOOST LIQUIDITY

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SHREYAS IYER'S  
JOURNEY TO IPL  
VICTORY  
12 SPORTS

## IMD forecasts Fry-days, relief only after June 1

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

With temperatures soaring as high as 47 degrees Celsius in some areas of the national Capital, Delhi, and in North West States like Rajasthan, Punjab, Chandigarh, and Haryana, as well as in Central parts of the country, people are grappling with intense heatwaves that have made outdoor activities nearly impossible. This challenging situation is expected to persist for at least the next three days, with the weather department issuing a red alert for heatwaves in several northern Indian cities, including Rajasthan. The Union Health Ministry has already advised employers to take essential heat safety measures at the workplace. "From providing hydration stations to scheduling outdoor tasks during cooler hours, let's ensure our workers stay cool, healthy, and productive," the Ministry said in a post on social media platform X. It also advised employers to train workers to recognise symptoms of heat-related illness. Relief from the blistering weather is anticipated from June 1, thanks to a fresh western disturbance, according to forecasts by the



Tourists at the Taj Mahal on a hot summer day in Agra PTI

Meteorological Department (IMD). The oppressive heat has driven residents indoors, resulting in public spaces being virtually deserted, particularly during the afternoon hours. In response to the ongoing intense hot weather in the national Capital, the Haryana Government has announced the advancement of summer vacations in both State-run and private schools to begin on Tuesday. Additionally, Delhi Health Minister Saurabh Bhardwaj announced on Monday that 26 State Government-run hospitals will reserve two beds each for heatstroke patients, with an additional five beds reserved at the LNJP Hospital. The Centre Government operated RML Hospital has already set up a heat stroke unit to tackle the likely heat-illness related cases. As large parts of North West and Central India experienced a punishing heatwave straining power grids, States are ready for disaster preparedness, like situation on Sunday. **Continued on Page 2**

## Two die, life and property hit as Remal pounds Bengal

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

At least two persons were killed and several others injured as severe cyclonic storm Remal hit Bengal coasts on Sunday night, sources at State secretariat Nabanna said, adding the NDRF and SDRF teams were working overtime to restore normalcy in affected areas most of which lie in the vicinity of Sunderbans. Though the speed of the storm reduced to a great degree by Monday morning, incessant rains continued to lash eight districts of South Bengal nearly throwing life out of gear. The first death occurred after a wall collapsed under the impact of the rains at Bibir Bagan near Park Circus and Entally area of Kolkata, police said. Another person died when a tree collapsed under the impact of driving rains and gusting winds at 135 kmph at Mousuni Islands at the mouth of Bay of Bengal off Sunderbans. At least eight other persons were injured at various places in Kolkata and Kakkdwip, sources said. Severe cyclone Remal made landfall between Sagar Islands in Bengal and Khepupara in neighbouring Bangladesh, sources said on Monday. Rivers surrounding most of the riverine islands — like Jharkhali, Geokhali,



Villagers at a flooded area following the landfall of Cyclone Remal in South 24 Parganas district on Monday PTI

Kumirmari, Sandeshkhali Block I, Godkhali, Bakkhali, Gosaba — of the Sunderbans areas in two 24 Parganas districts were almost brimming and threatening to breach or overflow their mud embankments — under the impact of high tide and gushing rains — sources said, adding in many villages the embankments had been breached and salty water had entered the agricultural fields. "This flooding of the fields could have a deep impact on the local economy as there would be no agriculture for several years now," said former Minister from Sunderbans Kanti Ganguli who was actively involved in rescue work. By Monday evening the storm had nearly stopped but rains were still continuing. "Severe Cyclonic Storm Remal over Coastal Bangladesh and adjoining Coastal West Bengal weakened into a cyclonic storm about 70km northeast of Canning and 30km west-southwest of Mongla on May 27. The system is likely to gradually weaken further," said India Meteorological Department post. "We have deployed appropriate number of teams all over Kolkata and adjoining areas to clear the uprooted trees and reach relief to people affected by the cyclone," Kolkata Mayor and Bengal Minister Firhad Hakim said, adding 14 teams of NDRF were working at various locations with modern equipment, cranes to hasten relief work. **Continued on Page 2**



## 'Depressed, in shock' Revanna promises to meet SIT on May 31

PNS ■ NEW DELHI/BENGALURU

Hassan MP Prajwal Revanna, who is facing charges of sexually abusing several women, has said he will appear before the Special Investigation Team (SIT), probing the cases against him, on May 31. Terming the cases against him as "false" and part of a "political conspiracy," he said he had gone into depression. "I will personally come before the SIT on May 31 at 10 am and cooperate with the investigation and also respond to it (charges). I have faith in the judiciary and I am confident that I will come out of false cases, through court," Pajwal said in a video statement. There was no independent confirmation from the JD(S) or the family of the suspended party MP immediately over the matter. **Continued on Page 2**



## 'Unwell' Kejriwal seeks weeklong reprieve from SC

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, currently out on interim bail in connection with the excise policy case, has approached the Supreme Court seeking an extension of the same by seven more days to undergo a host of medical tests, including a PET-CT scan in view of his "sudden and unexplained weight loss, coupled with high ketone levels", which are indicative of kidney, serious cardiac ailments and even cancer. Kejriwal, in his plea filed on May 26, stated that he will get all these tests done in the working week from 3.06.2024 (Monday) to 7.6.2024 (Friday) and then surrender on the weekend, i.e. 9.06.2024. Senior AAP leader and Delhi Minister Atishi also on Monday said Kejriwal has sought a one-week extension of his interim bail as he needs to undergo tests due to his recent weight loss and rise in ketone level which could be symptoms of some kidney problem or even cancer. Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva called this move a "drama" by the Chief Minister to avoid going back to jail after his interim bail in a money laundering case ends on June 1. The interim bail granted to Kejriwal has stirred controversy, with BJP leaders alleging preferential treatment by the Supreme Court. The PET-CT scan shows detailed pictures of organs and tissues. These tests are to be done in a particular sequence and would require about five-seven days, it said, adding "sudden and unexplained weight loss, coupled with high ketone levels could be indicative of kidney damage, serious cardiac ailments and even cancer". Early detection of these ailments is essential for preventing further progress of the disease and associated life risk and Kejriwal needed to undergo these tests, otherwise his life is at "high risk", it said. The fresh plea, which is likely to be taken up in the coming days by a vacation bench, said during the incarceration from March 21 to May 10, the Chief Minister suffered a lot of health-related complications which are also "partly attributable to the negligent and callous behaviour of the jail authorities". **Continued on Page 2**

## Valley's thumbs-up to poll engagement

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

In the first major electoral exercise after Article 370 abrogation and the bifurcation of Jammu & Kashmir into two Union Territories, the Valley has recorded the combined poll percentage of 58.46 per cent for the five Parliamentary seats, which is the record highest voter turnout in last 35 years, witnessing a "massive" 30 points jump in poll participation compared to 2019. Data shared by the Election Commission (EC) shows that the voter turnout of 50.86 per cent from the three Parliamentary constituencies in the Kashmir Valley echoes the faith of the people in the democratic process. The poll participation percentage witnessed 30 points jump from the last Lok Sabha polls in 2019 when it was 19.16 per cent. The three seats in the Valley — Srinagar,



Baramulla and Anantnag-Rajouri — recorded turnout of 38.49 per cent, 59.1 per cent and 54.84 per cent respectively, the highest in last three decades. The other two seats in the UT — Udhampur and Jammu — recorded 68.27 per cent and 72.22 per cent voter turnout respectively. According to data, as against 58 per cent voting reported in five LS seats in J&K this year, 44.07 per cent polling was reported in 2019, 49.58 per cent in 2014, 39.04 per cent in 2009, 34.07 per cent in 2004, 30.89 per cent in 1999, 43.35 per cent in 1998,

47.99 per cent in 1996 and 29.93 per cent voter turnout in 1989. Notably, Baramulla had witnessed 5.48 per cent polling in 1989; 46.65 per cent in 1996; 41.94 per cent in 1998 and 34.6 per cent in 2019. Anantnag witnessed voting at 8.98 per cent in 2019 and around 5 per cent in 1989. According to EC, more young people have asserted their faith and embraced democracy in a big way. Another interesting perspective is the electors in the age group of 18-59 years form the major part of electors in the UT, it underlined. As per data, Baramulla witnessed voter turnout (between age group of 18 and 39) at 56.02 per cent voting. Srinagar at 48.57 per cent; Anantnag Rajouri at 54.41 per cent; Udhampur 53.57 per cent and Jammu at 47.66 per cent. **Continued on Page 2**



Two doctors of the Sassoon General Hospital being taken into police custody after their arrest for alleged manipulation of blood samples and destruction of evidence in the case of a car accident involving a 17-year-old boy in Pune PTI

## Pune doctors manipulated teen's blood sample, 3 held

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

In a major development in the Porsche car crash case, two senior doctors and an employee from the State-run Sassoon Hospital have been arrested for allegedly "tampering" with the blood samples of the minor accused in the case. The arrests of the two doctors — Dr Ajay Taware, Head of the Forensics Department, Dr Shrihari Halnor the Chief Medical Officer of the hospital and Atul Ghatkamble, an employee who works under Dr Taware — came after the police established that the blood samples tested at the Sassoon Hospital did not match with that of the accused Porsche car crash. The three arrested persons — including two doctors — were on Monday produced before Pune's Judicial Magistrate First Class (Small Causes) AA Pande, who remanded them in police custody till May 30. Dr Taware, Dr Halnor and Atul have been charged with

the alleged "manipulation" of blood samples and destruction of evidence in the case. While seeking police custody of the three persons, the police told the court that some financial transactions had taken place to "tamper" with the blood samples and they needed to search the homes of the 17-year-old accused in connection with it. The police told the court that the juvenile's blood samples were thrown into a dustbin and replaced with the blood samples of another person on the instructions of Dr Taware. It may be recalled that in the small hours of May 19, the 17-year-old boy — after partying with his friends at a Pune bar — who had driven off in his Porsche car in his inebriated state at a speed of some 200 kmph and rammed into a motorcycle killing killing Ashwini Koshta and Aneesh Awadhiya (both aged 24 years) who were returning home after a reunion with friends. **Continued on Page 2**

## INDIA Bloc strategy meet on June 1, minus TMC

DEEPAK KUMAR JHA ■ NEW DELHI

Riding high on speculations that the Opposition parties led by Congress under the INDIA Bloc may tally better than incumbent BJP-led NDA in this year's general elections, top leaders of the Bloc are likely to meet on June 1 to assess their performance in the Lok Sabha elections and chalk out strategy ahead of the results. Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge has convened the meeting in Delhi when the last phase of polling will be underway. Sources said Opposition leaders will discuss their strategy ahead of the June 4 results and assess their performance in the seven-phase elections. The ruling alliance led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi has also



Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav and CPI(M) Liberation general secretary Dipankar Bhattacharya being garlanded during a public meeting in favour of INDIA Bloc (Congress) candidate Anshul Avijit for Lok Sabha polls, at Khusrupur, in Patna, on Monday PTI

claimed that it would form the Government at the Centre for the third successive time. Among those invited for the meeting is Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal who is also convener of the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), and is currently on interim bail by the Supreme Court in the Delhi excise policy case. He has to surrender on June 2. Others invited are Sharad Pawar of NCP, Uddhav Thackeray of Shiv Sena, Tejashwi Yadav of RJD, Akhilesh Yadav from Samajwadi Party, Kalpana Soren (Hemant's Soren's wife) from JMM, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister and DMK chief MK Stalin who have contested the ensuing Lok Sabha polls under an alliance with the Congress in several States. **Continued on Page 2**

## Once burned, Govt orders fire audit of all hospitals

SAUMYA SHUKLA ■ NEW DELHI

In the aftermath of the deadly fire at a neonatal hospital that charred seven newborns and injured five others in the national Capital on Saturday night, the Delhi Government on Monday sprung into action directing all hospitals to complete a fire audit by June 8. Police investigations revealed severe lapses including the hospital operating on expired licence and no clearance from the fire department. On Monday, the Delhi Health Minister Saurabh Bhardwaj convened a meeting of the Health Department officials to

discuss the incident in east Delhi's Vivek Vihar area. Following the high-level meeting, Bhardwaj said the Delhi Government will issue directions to all private and State-run hospitals to complete a fire audit by June 8 and submit a compliance report. "On April 24, we had issued directions to all hospitals for fire preparedness. On May 8, we had asked them to conduct a fire audit. We will ask all private and Delhi Government-run hospitals to complete a fire audit by June 8 and submit a compliance report to the health department," Bhardwaj said.



He declared that no culprit will be spared, irrespective of their status and announced stringent new safety regulations for nursing homes over nine metres tall, mandating water sprinklers

and smoke detectors, and directed all CDMOs to conduct random inspections. "The owner of this hospital also runs another similar hospital in Paschim Puri. Cases have been registered against him twice in different incidents. These cases are going on against him in Karkardooma Court and Tis Hazari Court. A surprise inspection was done in which deficiencies were found, so a case was registered against him. Once he was found running the hospital without registration, a case was registered against him. It is expected that soon the court will give its verdict against the

owner of this nursing home in these cases and he will be given a severe punishment," he added. Bhardwaj, while pointing out a very shocking thing regarding the incident, said there is a suspicion that the work of refilling oxygen was going on on the lowest floor of the nursing home. "We are also investigating this, if any such work was going on there, then does the hospital administration have its license and if not, then on what basis was this work going on in the hospital and by whom was this work being done, this is being investigated. **Continued on Page 2**





## Game zone fire: Have no faith in State machinery, says Gujarat court

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

The Gujarat High Court on Monday came down heavily on the Rajkot civic body over the game zone fire which left 27 persons dead, and said it does not have faith in the state machinery which gets into action only after innocent lives are lost.

The court pulled up the Rajkot Municipal Corporation and asked whether it had turned a blind eye to such a big structure coming up in its vicinity, after the RMC's lawyer submitted that the TRP game zone had not asked for requisite permissions. A special bench of Justices Biren Vaishnav and Devan Desai was hearing a suo motu PIL on the game zone fire incident.

The court also observed that all the Rajkot municipal commissioners, from the time the TRP game zone was set up in 2021 till the time of this incident (on May 25) "should be held accountable for the tragedy that occurred," and directed them to furnish separate affidavits. The fire at the TRP game zone in the Nana-Mava locality of Rajkot on Saturday evening killed 27 persons, including children.

The game zone was operated



without the fire NOC (no objection certificate), as per officials. The HC on Sunday took suo motu cognisance of the fire tragedy, terming it a prima facie "man-made disaster".

On Monday, a counsel pointed out that the unfortunate incident required immediate preventive and corrective measures, and the state government will have to come forward to hold a person accountable, and this calls for drastic steps. The court then said, "Who will take such drastic steps? Honestly speaking, we do not have faith in the state machinery now. Four years after orders of this court, directing them, after their assurance, this is the sixth incident that has hap-

pened. They only want lives to be lost and then trigger the machinery," the court observed. To the RMC counsel's submission that the game zone had not applied to the authorities for requisite permissions, the court asked whether the civic body was blind to such a big structure having come up under its jurisdiction. "You were blind to that, that this big structure existed, you were not aware of it? What is the corporation's explanation that the whole zone existed for the last two-and-a-half years? What fire safety did they apply for? When ticketing was done, were you aware of entertainment tax? So we take it that you are completely turning a blind

eye to the whole issue?" the court said. The HC also wanted to know when the corporation first recognised the existence of the game zone. "Till then you were completely ignorant of such a structure in the vicinity? Were you not aware of the orders of this court for fire safety (passed) in a PIL? What were you doing then? There are media reports that your municipal commissioner went there at the time of inauguration. We can't take judicial notice of that fact? For 18 months, what did the corporation do? Sat over it?" the bench asked. The court also observed that all the municipal commissioners, right from the time the TRP

game zone was set up in 2021 till the time of this incident "should be held accountable for the tragedy that occurred," and directed them to furnish separate affidavits. "We refrain at this stage from passing any orders, though we would certainly desire to, to suggest that the officers in question be suspended for dereliction of duty and non-compliance of the direction of this court. We do not do so with the hope to give them a chance," the bench further said. It directed the incumbent RMC commissioner and officers who held the municipal commissioner's post from July 2021 till the date of the incident to file affidavits before the court, explaining various issues regarding certificates on the structural stability of such constructions, etc. The HC also directed chief fire officers of the Ahmedabad, Vadodara, Surat and Rajkot municipal corporations to file affidavits on the fire safety measures (in areas of their jurisdiction), such as installation of fire hydrants, checking of fire safety equipment, whether licences (to operate) were obtained from the respective collectorates or mamlatdars.

## BJP councillors cover up dirt of Kerala CPM

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

Kerala's Capital Thiruvananthapuram witnessed a hitherto unseen and unheard of agitation on Monday as the BJP councillors of the city municipal corporation staged a unique kind of protest against the callousness of the State Government and the CPI (M) which is ruling the local body.

All the 35 councillors belonging to the BJP took to the street on Monday morning and started repairing the ring roads and thoroughfares which have been dug by the municipal corporation and remained unattended to since 2017. "Our priority was to fill the potholes in the roads that lead to the three major Government schools in the city as these roads have been flooded in the pre-Monsoon rains. Children commuting in these stretches are sure to fall in this water filled potholes and it is their parents who stand to lose," said veteran councillor P Ashok Kumar, who led the repairing works. Though by noon, the councillors succeeded in filling the potholes and made them motorable, the police arrested all the councillors for causing public nuisance and took them all to the Armed Police Reserve Camp in the city.



Roads in Thiruvananthapuram, one of the oldest municipal corporations in Kerala (formed in 1942), are in a pathetic state and are crying for renovation and maintenance. The corporation, which boasts of the youngest Mayor in the country, has not done anything to repair or renovate the roads. Arya Rajendran, the Mayor, has courted controversies after controversies and right now she is busy fighting a legal battle with the driver of a KSRTC bus whom she alleges that he shown obscene signal with his fingers. "The State Government as well as the rulers of the corporation are least bothered about the state of roads under their jurisdiction. The CPI (M) is busy appointing party cadres as staff of various departments in the

corporation while the city is crying for attention," said a lady councillor belonging to the BJP. Ashok Kumar, a teacher by profession, said that he and others like him consider politics as a means for the welfare of the people irrespective of political differences. "But we alone cannot make things happen unless the ruling dispensation take the leadership," he said. "Passing the buck" is the easy way out for the four-time member of Parliament Shashi Tharoor. "These are all the responsibilities of the local self-Government and State administration. The MP is busy with national and global affairs," said an associate of Tharoor. The MLAs representing the corporation limits too sounded equally indifferent to the plight of the people.

## BJP Government will take oath in Odisha on June 10: Himanta

PTI ■ PATKURA/KAKATPUR (ODISHA)

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Monday claimed that a BJP government will take oath in Odisha on June 10.

Lok Sabha and Assembly elections are being held simultaneously in Odisha. "As per my prediction, we (BJP) have got almost a majority in the first three phases of assembly election in Odisha. Only very few seats are left to form a government and that will be filled up on June 1," he said while addressing election rallies at Patkura and Kakatpur. Three phases of polling for the Assembly and Lok Sabha elections in the state is over. The fourth and final phase will be held on June 1 for six Lok Sabha constituencies and 42 Assembly segments.



"I would like to say one thing the BJP government will take oath on June 10. We have to send Pandian (BJD leader V K Pandian) back to Tamil Nadu on June 11," he said. If the state gets a good government then Odisha can become the number one state in the country. "Today, the youth of Odisha are migrating to other states due to unemployment. On the other hand, one lakh government posts are lying vacant in the state and the Odia youth are not being employed in local industries," Sarma said.

## INDIA Bloc strategy...

From Page 1

PDP chief Mehbooba Mufti and National Conference leader Omar Abdullah are also part of the meeting scheduled for which the coordination command has been tasked to top Congress leaders Bhupesh Baghel and Ashok Gehlot, sources said. Twenty-eight Opposition parties came together to form the INDIA Bloc then initiated by JD(U) supreme and Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar followed by West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee last June. Later in Nitish, and subsequently Jayant Chaudhary-led RLD switched over to the NDA and Sharad Pawar-led NCP too broke away. Mamata, who too walked out of the INDIA Bloc days before the elections, has already sent feelers that her party would be supporting the Congress Bloc post the poll results in case the coalition is in position to form the Government.

## Pune docs manipulated...

From Page 1

Earlier, talking to media persons after the arrest of the two doctors, Pune Commissioner of Police Amitesh Kumar said on Monday: "The blood samples analysed at the Sassoon Hospital did not match that of the minor accused in the mishap case. The blood samples belong to a 'third person'. We are investigating the matter". "We had taken a second blood sample of the minor accused which we had given to another hospital for analysis with the intention

of carrying out a DNA test later. Now, we have come to know that the Sassoon Hospital blood forensic report was of some other person," Kumar said. The arrest of two senior doctors should be seen in the context of the fact that the blood report of the accused minor boy, son of Pune's prominent builder Vishal S Agarwal had given a clean chit to the accused boy prompting Pune's Juvenile Justice Board (JJB) to grant him a bail on May 20, a day after the ghastly mishap.

## 'Depressed, in shock' Revanna promises to...

From Page 1

"Let the blessings of God, people and my family be on me. I will surely appear before SIT on May 31. After coming, I will try to put an end to all this. Keep faith in me," he said in his video statement in Kannada. Apologising to his parents, grandfather and former Prime Minister HD Deve Gowda, uncle H D Kumaraswamy, people of the State, and party workers, Prajwal said, "I have come before you to share information, as I had not disclosed as to where I'm in foreign (country)".

Noting that he had sought a week to respond to the SIT notice through his social media account and his lawyers, Prajwal said, "Despite seeking time, the very next day Congress senior leaders including Rahul Gandhi started discussing things (about me), at public meetings. Alleging that a political conspiracy was hatched against him in his constituency of Hassan too by some forces, the MP said, "As I was growing politically, to diminish me, they all got together. Looking at all these things, I was shocked, so I was

a bit away. So, no one should mistake (me) for it." Prajwal (33), the grandson of JD(S) patriarch HD Deve Gowda and the NDA candidate from Hassan Lok Sabha segment, is facing charges of sexually abusing women. He reportedly left for Germany on April 27, a day after Hassan went to polls, and is still at large. A 'Blue Corner Notice' seeking information on his whereabouts has already been issued by Interpol, following a request by the SIT via the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI).

## Two die, life and property hit...

From Page 1

Disaster management teams of Kolkata Police and Kolkata Municipal Corporation which had cancelled all the leaves of its staff were working overtime to bring things to normal. Properties and infrastructure were damaged due to storm and rains, vehicles were shattered under fallen trees which had been uprooted at various places in Kolkata KMC sources said, adding scores of full-grown trees had uprooted blocking roads at Golpark, Jadavpur, Southern Avenue, Ballygunge Road, Alipore, DL Khan Road, Sarat Bose Road, Dufferin Road, Hatibagan, College Street, Jagat Mukherjee Park, Behala and elsewhere. Meanwhile, candidates of all political parties rose up to the occasion visiting interior areas by taking time out of

electoral campaigns amid complaints of deficient service, BJP leaders said, "Cyclones like Remal showed what sin the TMC has committed by eating away the funds meant for Prime Minister housing scheme." This even as hundreds of kuccha houses were either flooded with water or had collapsed. CPI(M)'s Pratikur Rehman said even TMC's Jaynagar candidate Pratima Mandal was seen running from area to area to listen to the complaints of the people. "The problem is we cannot reach relief now as the model code of conduct is in vogue but still we have requested the administration to take adequate steps," she said. Elsewhere in Kolkata as the ferocity of storms reduced flights and ferry service, as also train services resumed from Monday morning, sources said.

## Once burned, Govt orders...

From Page 1

Because fire spreads very quickly due to oxygen, therefore the work of refilling oxygen cannot be done everywhere, there are some provisions for this, permission has to be taken from the government for this." Bodies of five of the seven newborns killed in the hospital fire have been handed over to their families after post-mortem while the other two bodies will be handed over after autopsy. Additionally, a Delhi court allowed the Delhi Police's plea seeking three days of custodial interrogation of the owner Dr Naveen Khichi and on-duty doctor Dr Aakash of the hospital. Additionally, the District Magistrate of Shahdara, Rishita Gupta, has submitted a factual report to the divisional commissioner regarding the incident on Sunday. In the report it was revealed that out of the seven dead newborn babies, four were male and three female. Barring one 25 days old boy, the rest were 15 days old infants. A detailed

report in the matter is awaited. He also said two nurses and some locals rescued the babies without worrying about their lives. "We will recommend their names for bravery awards," he added. He also informed that the revenue department will be asked to expedite the process of compensation to the families of the babies killed and injured in the fire. The meeting at the Delhi secretariat, where health department officials including the Director General of Health Services (DGHS) and Special Secretary of Health were present, also discussed the ongoing heatwave conditions. "In view of the ongoing heatwave conditions, 26 Delhi Government-run hospitals will reserve two beds each for heatstroke patients while five beds will be reserved at the LNJP Hospital," the Health Minister said. The Delhi Government had ordered a magisterial inquiry into the fire tragedy. In an order issued on Sunday, Divisional Commissioner Ashwani

Kumar directed the district magistrate of the Shahdara district to inquire into the fire tragedy that occurred on Saturday night. "And whereas it is essential to cause a magisterial inquiry into the aforesaid incident. Now therefore, district magistrate (Shahdara)/ chairman, District Disaster Management Authority is hereby directed to inquire into the said fire tragedy so as to ascertain the circumstances that led to the fire tragedy, to fix the responsibility on the persons for the said incident, and to suggest measures to prevent recurrence of such incidents in future," it said. The order directed that the inquiry report be submitted "as expeditiously as possible". A case has been registered at Vivek Vihar police station under IPC sections 336 (act endangering life and personal safety of others) and 304A (causing death by negligence), 304 (punishment for culpable homicide not amounting to murder) and 308 (attempt to commit culpable homicide).

## IMD forecasts Fry-days...

From Page 1

In Maharashtra's Akola, authorities took proactive measures by imposing Section 144 until May 31, effectively banning public gatherings as a precautionary measure against the extreme weather conditions. At least eight places in Delhi recorded maximum temperatures above 46 degrees Celsius, with Mungeshpur and Najafgarh logging a sweltering 48.3 degrees Celsius and 48.1 degrees Celsius, respectively. Haryana's Narnaul simmered at 47 degrees Celsius and Punjab's Faridkot at 47.4 degrees Celsius. According to IMD chief Mrutyunjay Mohapatra, Rajasthan and Gujarat saw nine to 12 heatwave days, with temperatures reaching 45-50 degrees Celsius. Delhi, South Haryana, South West UP and Punjab recorded five-seven heatwave days, with maximum temperatures ranging from 44 degrees Celsius to 48 degrees Celsius, said the IMD chief. Assam

also experienced a heatwave with record breaking temperatures on May 25-26. The IMD attributed the heatwave in northwest India and some parts of the Central region in the second half of May to the lack of rainfall, stronger dry and warm winds and an anti-cyclonic circulation over southwest Rajasthan and adjoining Gujarat. Mohapatra said only two of the five western disturbances that affected north India were active. However, three days now, Northwestern and Central parts of the country are likely to get some relief from scorching heat after three days due to a fresh western disturbance, said the IMD. On their part, authorities in the heatwave affected regions are taking measures to address the health risks posed by heat related illness, including reserving beds for heatstroke patients in Government-run hospitals. With temperatures remaining high even at night, many

people are struggling to find relief, especially those without access to air conditioning or proper cooling facilities, said the officials. Doctors are urging people to take precautions to stay safe during this challenging period, emphasising the importance of staying hydrated and avoiding prolonged exposure to the sun. They warn that the situation could worsen if the heat wave persists. Some doctors said there has been a significant rise in urinary tract infections and kidney stones in adults due to sweltering heat conditions. Hence, one should drink water at regular intervals during hot weather, and urine colour should be like clear water. Yellow urine indicates dehydration, they said. Similarly, cases of patients suffering from heat-related illness such as dehydration, fever, nausea and abdominal pain too are being reported from some hospitals in Lucknow.

## Valley's thumbs-up...

From Page 1

Between 40 and 59 age groups, Baramulla, Srinagar, Anantnag - Rajouri, Udhampur and Jammu witnessed voters turnout at 30.85 per cent, 34.87 per cent, 31.59 per cent, 32.65 per cent and 35.28 per cent respectively. If it is combined (between 18 to 59 age group), Baramulla, Srinagar, Anantnag Rajouri, Udhampur and Jammu

recorded at 86.87 per cent, 83.44 per cent, 86.00 per cent, 86.22 per cent and 82.94 per cent respectively. The EC said 18-59 years age group constitutes over 80 per cent of the electorate in each of the five Lok Sabha seats of the Union Territory. The historic participation in the UT was realised by earnest efforts of the election and security officials who had worked tirelessly to empower the

people of J&K, especially the youth to participate in the elections. The high poll percentage in the 2024 Lok Sabha polls is reflective of their faith in democracy, which is a positive and heartening development, the EC stressed. The commission has also enabled Kashmiri migrant voters residing in Delhi, Jammu, and Udhampur to

also have the option of voting in person at designated special polling stations or using postal ballot. 21 Special Polling Stations were established at Jammu, 1 at Udhampur and 4 at Delhi. Ladakh, which was constituted as a separate Union Territory in 2019, also saw an enthusiastic response to the call of democracy as reflected in the voter turnout of 71.82 per cent. "This active participation is a huge positive for the Assembly elections to be held soon so that the

democratic process continues to thrive in the Union Territory," said Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar while responding to the turnout. Commission led by CEC Kumar along with ECs Gyanesh Kumar and Sukhbir Singh Sandhu thanked the polling personnel and security officials over the peaceful conduct of elections in the UT. "This achievement sits on a credible weave of 25 per cent increase in number of contesting candidates since

2019, C-vigil complaints showing enhanced citizen involvement and Suvidha Portal showing 2455 requests for rallies etc., reflecting the steady retaking of the election and campaign space away from hesitation and to fuller participation". "Compared this outcome of the layered depth of electoral mobilization and participation, as reminiscent of the fame and deft of the legendary Kashmiri artisanal weave. This active participation is a huge positive for Assembly

elections to be held soon so that the democratic process continues to thrive in the Union Territory", CEC Kumar said. On Saturday, CEC Kumar had hinted that encouraged by the voter turnout in J&K in the Lok Sabha polls, the Election Commission will "very soon" initiate the process of holding the assembly polls in the Union Territory. Whenever an assembly election is held in Jammu and Kashmir, it will be the first since the August 2019 abrogation of Article 370 of

the Constitution and the bifurcation of Jammu and Kashmir into two Union Territories with the other being Ladakh which has one Lok Sabha seat and no provision for a legislative assembly. Following a delimitation exercise, the number of Assembly seats in J&K has gone up from 83 to 90, excluding those allocated to P a k i s t a n o c c u p i e d Kashmir. In December, the Supreme Court directed the poll panel to hold Assembly elections in J&K by September 30



# Court dismisses Bibhav's bail plea

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A city court here on Monday dismissed the bail plea of Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's close aide Bibhav Kumar who is accused of assaulting AAP MP Swati Maliwal at the CM's residence. Additional Sessions Judge Sushil Anuj Tyagi of Tiz Hazari court rejected the bail plea of Kumar, a personal assistant of the CM, after hearing arguments from both sides.

During the proceedings, Rajya Sabha MP Maliwal told the court that there was a threat to her life and "grave danger" to her family if Kumar was released. According to AAP, Kumar will approach the High Court after a city court rejected his bail plea in Swati Maliwal assault case. "Kumar will move the High Court against the lower court's decision," the AAP said in a statement.

Delhi BJP President Shri Virendra Sachdeva welcomed the rejection of the bail application and said that the day is



not far when it will be clear why Kumar mercilessly beat up Maliwal. "From police inquiry so far it's clear that Bibhav Kumar had no personal reason to beat up Maliwal and obviously he has acted on CM's instruction. It's very obvious that both Arvind Kejriwal & his family were present in the house when Kumar beat up Maliwal but they both did not react as he was pressuring Maliwal to resign from her Rajya Sabha seat," he said. Earlier, during the hearing, Senior Advocate Hariharan

representing Kumar said that she came to CM's residence without invitation and trespassed into the property. "Who called her? Was she invited? Can anyone enter in this manner? This is the official residence of the CM. She barged in and trespassed in CM's residence," the court was told. The counsel questioned why Maliwal did not file a police complaint the same day and why she was not examined at any Delhi government hospital but AIIMS. "Everything was pre-planned

to suit the story." He added that there was a trespass and a report was also filed. He claimed that accusations by Maliwal are 'false' and that the FIR was lodged after three days.

He also stated, "How such an incident could take place at this place (CM's residence) where many people were present? There is no grievous injury on the vital part, so where is the question of culpable homicide not amounting to murder? Injuries can be self-inflicted." Kumar's counsel said that since the CCTV has already been recovered, there is no question of tampering. Maliwal, who countered these arguments, broke down in court and said, "They (AAP) have an army of trolls. The entire party machinery has been deployed. Continuous press conferences were held against me. This man (Bibhav Kumar) is not normal. He gets facilities that even Ministers don't do. If released, my life and my family's life is under grave danger," the Rajya Sabha MP said.

Additional Public Prosecutor Atul Srivastava, representing the police said that prior to this incident, Maliwal never asked to take prior appointment. He also said that since she was allowed to sit in the waiting room, it implied permission and the question of trespass doesn't arise. "All the people at the place of occurrence were reporting to Bibhav Kumar. It shows that he is influential. He can tamper with the evidence," he stated. Advocate Madhav Khurana, representing Maliwal, said that the victim has the right to be heard, referring to a judgement on whether he could address the court or not. He said that Maliwal is receiving rape and murder threats. "The accused was found at the place of occurrence. He was interrogated but was evasive in answering. The accused allegedly assaulted a public servant earlier. If the accused is innocent, then why format his phone, tamper with the CCTV, and file a complaint on May 17?" he said to the court.

# NCW directs police to obtain call records of CM in Maliwal assault case

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The National Commission for Women (NCW) has directed the Delhi Police to obtain the call records of all individuals, including Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, in the alleged assault of AAP leader and Rajya Sabha MP Swati Maliwal on Monday. The commission has claimed that Kejriwal's former PA Bibhav Kumar, who has been accused of abusing Maliwal, was called to the chief minister's residence after she reached there and sought details on whose direction he was called. In a press note issued on Monday, the NCW emphasised that this update follows its earlier communication dated May 13, 2024, where it took suo moto cognizance of a media post titled "DCW Chief Swati Maliwal accuses Arvind Kejriwal's personal secretary of assaulting her."

According to the report, Maliwal, the former DCW chief, alleged that she was



assaulted by Kumar. The NCW has revealed that during Maliwal's visit to the chief minister's residence, Kumar was summoned after her arrival. Further, to clarify the circumstances and directions under which Kumar was called, the NCW has called for an investigation into the Call Detail Records (CDR) of all involved individuals, including the chief minister. In a post on X (formerly Twitter), NCW stated, "It has come to our notice that Mr. Bibhav Kumar was reportedly called after the arrival of Swati Maliwal at CM's residence. A letter from Hon'ble

Chairperson @sharmarekha has been sent to Commissioner of Police Delhi to take CDRs of relevant individuals, including the CM, to ascertain on whose direction Bibhav Kumar was summoned." In a post on Sunday, Maliwal shared that she has been getting rape threats even since you-tuber Dhruv Rathee made a one-sided video against her and despite her trying to reach him, he has been avoiding him. Keeping this in mind, the NCW has insisted on stringent action against individuals, who have been issuing rape and death threats to Maliwal.

# BJP alleges suspicious role of Bharadwaj's OSD in illegally running children hospital

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi BJP on Monday alleged the "suspicious" role of Health Minister Saurabh Bharadwaj's OSD Dr RN Gupta in the "illegally running" children's hospital in Vivek Vihar where seven newborn babies died in a fire incident. Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva in a statement alleged that the health department during an inspection in 2021 found the children's hospital capable of admitting five newborns only but the officer on special duty (OSD) of the Health minister on an application of the hospital owner tried to approve the capacity to treat 10 babies.

Bharadwaj said that nobody will be spared if found guilty. He claimed that Sachdeva was lying and the hospital was given permission of five beds only. "The Health department had earlier also lodged cases against him that are pending in the courts," he said. Bharadwaj said that the hospital was inspected and registered in 2021 while he became the Health minister in 2023. Any attempt to link him with registration of the hospital will be dealt with legal action, he warned.

"In 2021, during an inspection, the health department found this child hospital capable of caring for only five children, but then Dr. R.N. Das, based on the hospital owner's application, tried to approve the capacity to treat 10 children and in fact allowed deposit of 10 bed fees," Sachdeva said. He accused the AAP led Delhi government of protecting the hospital running in an unauthorised manner. "Despite this, there were 12 children admitted to the hospital during the fire, indicating that the hospital was operating continuously in an unauthorised manner and was under the protection of the Delhi government, hence no action was taken even on the local Residential Welfare



Association's (RWA) complaints," he said. Further, Sachdeva claimed that Dr. R.N. Das has been very close to former Health Minister Satyendra Jain since 2021 and also to the current Health Minister Saurabh Bharadwaj. "The roles of Satyendra Jain and Saurabh Bharadwaj in this hospital case are also suspicious, and an investigation into their roles in running the hospital illegally is necessary," he alleged. Sachdeva also claimed that Bharadwaj's OSD, along with the hospital owners, are responsible for such an incident. "It is necessary to register a case of collusion and negligence against Dr. R.N. Das along with the hospital owner and to investigate and arrest him as well. An investigation into the Fire Department is also necessary in this entire matter because in the past few years, there have been several major fire accidents and every time cases of unauthorised factories, warehouses, etc., have come to fore in Delhi," he said. He claimed that during the tenure of Delhi's Fire Department Head Atul Garg many cases of corruption has come to light. "Since 2016, Atul Garg has been the head of the Fire Department in Delhi, and during this time, cases of corruption in the Fire Department have come to light, and even in the case of the children hospital, an illegal gas filling plant was operating due to the negligence of the Delhi Fire Department," he said.

# Fire took 55 lives, injured more than 300 people in city this year so far: DFS



STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Fire Services (DFS) on Monday revealed that fire has taken 55 lives and injured more than 300 people in the national capital so far this year. According to the data by DFS, 16 people were killed in fire in January, another 16 in February, 12 in March, four in April, and seven till May 26. Fire incidents led to 51 injuries in January, 42 in February, 62 in March, 78 in April, and 71 till May 26. From January 1 to May 26, the DFS received 8,912 fire-related calls. Delhi has reported 66 hospital fire incidents over the past two years, with 30 in 2022 and 36 in 2021. "The number of fire calls increased to 32.26 per cent this year. According to the data, the fire department received 8,201 calls up to May 20. In the same period

last year, the department received 5,970 calls. This year the number has gone up by more than 32 per cent with 8,912 fire related calls during the same period," an official of the Delhi Fire Services said. "Last year 36 people had lost their lives, this year total 55 people have so far lost their lives," the official added. On Sunday, six newborn died after a massive fire broke out at a private children's hospital in east Delhi's Vivek Vihar. The blaze broke out at the Baby Care New Born Hospital at around 11.30 pm on Saturday and soon spread to two other adjacent buildings. On February 15, 11 people died in an explosion and subsequent blaze in a paint factory at Dayalpur market in outer Delhi's Alipur. Four people were injured in the incident. The charred bodies of the 11 victims, one of them a woman, were recov-

ered from the factory, which doubled as a chemical godown. The fire, which was preceded by a blast, had spread to nearby buildings, including a drug rehabilitation centre and eight shops. In another incident in February, an 83-year-old woman died and her granddaughter sustained injuries after they jumped off the fourth floor of a residential building in southwest Delhi's Dwarka when a fire broke out in their apartment. Many hospitals in Delhi have inadequate arrangements, including the need for wider staircases. When hospitals apply for a non-objection certificate from the fire department, they are instructed to build staircases with a larger width to facilitate the easy evacuation of patients on stretchers during a rescue.

# Parents of newborns clueless as firefighters toiled to douse blaze

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

As firefighters toiled to douse a massive fire at a private neonatal hospital here on Saturday night, many parents whose newborns were admitted to the facility had no clue what was going on. Madhuraj Kumar, a painter, whose eight-day-old son was among the fortunate survivors, found out about the fire when he saw the charred hospital building on his way to work on Sunday morning. Similarly, no one from the hospital reached out to Deepak Gautam, whose six-day-old daughter was admitted there. His sister informed him about the fire after she saw it on the news. Families of Madhuraj Kumar, Gautam and others blame the hospital for negligence but are glad that their children survived. Seven newborns died and five were injured in a massive fire at Baby Care New Born Hospital in east Delhi's Vivek Vihar that was allegedly operating illegally with an "expired" licence and had no clearance from the fire department. Hospital owner Dr Naveen Khichi and Dr Aakash, who was on duty at the time of the incident, were arrested on Sunday. "My son was born eight days ago and was shifted to the baby care unit for observation since he was a premature child. He was doing fine and doctors had said he would be discharged on Sunday. "On Sunday morning, I was going to Karn Vihar in Karkardooma for work and



passed by the charred hospital building," said Madhuraj Kumar, a native of Banthala in Uttar Pradesh. The worried father then asked those at the spot about the whereabouts of the newborns admitted to the hospital and was told that they were shifted to another child care centre. "Initially, I was very worried about my child. But I was very happy when I found him alive," said Madhuraj Kumar. In the evening, some government officials came and referred the newborns to different hospitals, he said. He said his son has an infection but his condition is improving now. Madhuraj Kumar told his wife about the incident on Sunday evening. Gautam, a resident of Ram Nagar near Mandoli Road who works with a private firm, said he was informed about the fire by his sister and not the hospital authorities. "We did not receive any information from the hospital. My sister saw it on the news and informed me. "My daughter was born on May 22 at a hospital in Yamuna Vihar and was shifted to the child care unit the

same day as she was not crying and had a blood infection," he said. I have a son and this is my second child. When my daughter was born, I was happy that my family was now complete. The incident initially shook me but in the end, my prayers were answered and she was alive," he added. Gautam said he is yet to tell his wife about the incident. Rakesh Kumar, who works with a private firm, and Mithilesh Kumar, an online bike rider, said they were also not informed about the fire by the hospital authorities and saw it on the news. Rakesh Kumar's daughter, a premature baby, was injured in the incident. "The hospital was not very spacious. My daughter was on a ventilator. She received some burn injuries and her condition is still critical. She has been admitted to Chacha Nehru Hospital. Doctors are saying that she will be on a ventilator for another 15 days," Rakesh Kumar said. Mithilesh Kumar's son was admitted to the hospital with jaundice and breathing issues.

# Kejriwal's application to SC to extend interim bail melodrama, claims BJP

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva on Monday hit out at the Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, terming his application to extend interim bail by seven days to the Supreme Court, citing his deteriorating health as a reason, as a 'melodrama'.

He said that the reason cited by AAP supremo as 'excuse' to extend his interim bail. "During the entire election campaign, Arvind Kejriwal remained perfectly healthy, but when it's time to go to jail, his health has started deteriorating. Kejriwal only runs a shop of excuses and lies, so now he is creating new excuses to extend his interim bail," he claimed. Questioning the AAP convenor, Sachdeva said, "If he was so concerned about his health, then why did he campaign in Delhi for the INDIA alliance or Aam Aadmi Party candidates



and why did he go to Punjab for a 3-day election campaign. Kejriwal's health was fine for election campaigning in Delhi, but when it's time to go to jail, his health has deteriorated." He also said that after campaigning in Delhi, Kejriwal has now gone Punjab and took a jibe at him by saying that he can play any trick there and may also be admitted to any hospital in Punjab. "In the coming two-three days, it is possible that Kejriwal may

fall while speaking on a stage or in a roadshow vehicle in Punjab, and we will be told that his sugar has dropped a lot or his ketones have worsened. The people of the country have now understood Kejriwal's trickery very well, and the people will vote for the development of Punjab as well," he alleged. He said that when Kejriwal applied for extending his interim bail in the Supreme Court, he got a medical certificate from a pri-

private hospital, not from any government hospital of Delhi. "Kejriwal, who claims his government's healthcare system to be world-class, has never visited any government hospital in Delhi when he felt unwell, the public is now seeing all this. No matter how many excuses Kejriwal makes to extend interim bail, he will have to go to jail. He said that those who have been looting Delhi's treasury and Delhiites will not be spared now," he said.

# HC waives cost of ₹1 lakh on lawyer for PIL seeking arrangements for Kejriwal to run Government from jail

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Monday waived the cost of Rs 1 lakh imposed on a lawyer for his public interest litigation (PIL) seeking appropriate arrangements for Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal to run his Government from jail. The high court noted that the petitioner advocate has acknowledged his mistake and directed him to do community service in accordance with the directions of the Delhi State Legal Services Authority (DSLSA). The court, however, directed the petitioner that in case he files any petition in future, he should attach with it a copy of the costs order as well as the waiver order. The court passed the order on an application by the petitioner tendering his apology and urging the court to waive the costs on the ground that he was fresh in the litigation practice. He said he has realised his



mistake and vowed not to repeat it and that he was ready to do community service. A bench of Acting Chief Justice Manmohan and Justice Manmeet P S Arora said, "Since the petitioner acknowledges his mistake, the costs of Rs 1 lakh imposed on him is waived. He is directed to do community service in accordance with the directions of DSLSA." On May 8, the high court dis-

missed with Rs 1 lakh costs the PIL by the lawyer seeking appropriate arrangements for Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal to run the government from jail. The petitioner had also sought to restrain Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva from exerting any "undue pressure" for the resignation of Kejriwal. The high court had observed that since the AAP leader had already approached the

Supreme Court against his arrest, "no orders were called for" about providing him with any facilities while in judicial custody. The petitioner had argued that although it was "practically impossible" to run government from jail, the same could be made possible with the use of technology. In the PIL, he had prayed for arrangements for a video conferencing facility to Kejriwal in jail. He also sought that the media be stopped from running "sensational headlines" speculating on his resignation and imposition of President's Rule in Delhi. Kejriwal, who was arrested in connection with the money laundering case stemming out of the Delhi excise policy 'scam', is currently on interim bail till June 1 and has to surrender on June 2. He approached the Supreme Court on Monday seeking an extension of interim bail by 7 days for medical tests.



# Alternative to electoral bond scheme should be found: Shah

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Home Minister Amit Shah believes the influence of black money will increase during the ongoing Lok Sabha elections following the Supreme Court's decision to scrap the electoral bond scheme, and suggested all stakeholders will have to deliberate and decide on an alternative.

If the impact of black money rises, then an alternative should be found, he said, adding that it is for Parliament to debate and decide on any other mechanism for funding to political parties.

He told PTI in an interview on Saturday that the electoral bond scheme, which allowed donors to fund political parties anonymously by purchasing bonds from the SBI, was scrapped at a crucial time. The Supreme Court had struck down the scheme in February, a month before the Lok Sabha elections were announced.

Replying to a question on the issue, he said, "I believe and this is my guess that it will increase the influence of black money in elections and poli-



tics. When political parties submit their account for this fiscal year, then how much money is by cash donation and how much is through cheque will be known. The donation figure by cheques had reached 96 per cent at the time of the bond." He added, "Now you will know. If the impact of black money rises, then an alternative should be found. There should be a debate in Parliament."

all parties. The Supreme Court's view since their judgment has come is also very important. The Attorney General and Solicitor General will also have to be consulted. So we will have to deliberate collectively and decide on a new alternative."

The apex court had struck down the electoral bond scheme, saying it violated the right to information and the freedom of speech and expression under the Constitution. The court had also made public the names of all donors and their beneficiaries.

The central government, has, however, insisted that the scheme was aimed at curbing the influence of black money in politics and that donors were allowed to remain anonymous so that they were not targeted by one political party or another for funding their rival parties.

Opposition parties have alleged that the scheme was used by the BJP to "legitimise" bribery by business interests, a charge rejected by the ruling party as it claimed that its rivals received more funding relative to their electoral strength.

# Centre effects Secretary level reshuffle

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre on Monday extended the tenure of Defence Research and Development Organisation chief Samir V Kamat by one year while senior bureaucrat Pradip Kumar Tripathi appointed as the Lokpal Secretary as part of a secretary-level reshuffle effected on Monday.

Distinguished scientist Kamat was on August 25, 2022, appointed as secretary of the Department of Defence Research and Development (DDR&D) and the DRDO chairman, it said. The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet has approved an extension in service of Kamat as secretary, DDR&D and chairman, DRDO for one year from June 1, 2024, till May 31, 2025, or until further orders, it said. Tripathi, a 1987-batch Indian Administrative Service officer (IAS), is currently Secretary (Coordination) in the Cabinet Secretariat. He has been appointed as Secretary to the Lokpal till the date of his superannuation (June 30) and thereafter on contract basis for a period of two years beyond the date of his superannuation on usual terms and conditions applicable to re-employed central government officers, said an order issued by

the Personnel Ministry. Border Management Secretary Raj Kumar Goyal has been appointed as Secretary, Department of Justice under the Ministry of Law & Justice. Rajendra Kumar, Director General of Employees' State Insurance Corporation (ESIC), will be the Border Management Secretary in place of Goyal. New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC) chairperson Amit Yadav has been named as Officer on Special Duty in the Department of Social Justice & Empowerment. "The officer will take over as Secretary, Department of Social Justice and Empowerment vice Saurabh Garg, IAS (OR-91) upon his superannuation on 31.07.2024," the order said. Rakesh Ranjan, Special Secretary in the Department of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, has been appointed as Chairman of the Staff Selection Commission (SSC). West Bengal chief secretary Bhagwati Prasad Gopalika has been granted a three-month extension until August. Gopalika, a 1989-batch IAS officer, was originally scheduled to retire this Friday. However, with the approval from the Union Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT), he will now continue as the state's chief secretary until August 31.

# Plea in SC seeks exemption for lawyers from wearing black coats during summer



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

A plea has been filed in the Supreme Court seeking directions to exempt lawyers from wearing black coats and gowns in the apex court as well as the high courts across the country during summer. The petition filed by advocate Shaileendra Mani Tripathi also sought direction to the state bar councils to determine the "months of prevailing summer" for each state in order to exempt the wearing of the black coat and gown for those months. It has sought a direction to the state bar councils to amend their rules and decide the time period when the lawyers would be exempted from wearing black coats and gowns depending upon the summer peaks in the particular state. The plea has requested the top court to consider relaxing the traditional dress code for

the advocates across the states considering that the same may cause hardships and health issues in the extremity of the growing summer heat. Wearing coats during torrid summer makes it difficult for the lawyers to move from one court to another, it said. The top court in 2022 had refused to entertain a plea seeking exemption for lawyers from wearing black coats and gowns in the apex court as well as the high courts across the country during summer. The apex court had said it cannot entertain the plea under Article 32 and asked the petitioner to approach the Bar Council of India (BCI) with his grievance. The lawyers' dress code is governed by the BCI Rules under the Advocates Act, 1961, and they make it mandatory for an advocate to wear a black coat with a white shirt and a white neckband.

# Spiritual empowerment is real empowerment: President Murmu

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Asserting that spiritual empowerment is the real

empowerment, President Droupadi Murmu on Monday said when the followers of any religion or sect deviate from

the path of spirituality, they become victims of fanaticism and suffer from an unhealthy mentality. "Spiritual values



connect people of all religions to each other," she said, addressing the national launch of 'Spiritual Empowerment for a Clean and Healthy Society' organised by Brahma Kumaris. The president said the forces promoting fear, terror, and war are very active in many parts of the world. "In such an environment, Brahma Kumari Institution has provided an effective platform for the empowerment of humanity through many centres in more than 100 countries. This is an invaluable effort to strengthen universal brotherhood by promoting spiritual values," Murmu said. The president said the golden chapters of world history and the history of nations have always been based on spiritual values. "World history is witness to the fact that disregarding spiritual values and adopting only the path of material progress has ultimately proved disastrous. Holistic well-being is possible only on the basis of a healthy mentality," she said. Murmu said a truly healthy person meets all three dimensions -- physical, mental and spiritual. Such individuals create a healthy society, nation and world

community, she added. The president said spiritual empowerment is real empowerment. "When the followers of any religion or sect deviate from the path of spirituality, they become victims of fanaticism and suffer from unhealthy mentality," Murmu was quoted as having said in a statement issued by the Rashtrapati Bhavan. The president said working with the spirit of public welfare while rising above selfishness is a social expression of inner spirituality. "Doing charity for the public good is one of the most important spiritual values," she said. The president was happy to note that the Brahma Kumaris Institution is probably the world's largest spiritual institute run by women, the statement said. She said in this organisation, "Brahma Kumaris remain in the front and their associates Brahma Kumaris work in the background." "With such a unique harmony, this institution is continuously moving forward. By doing so, it has presented a unique example of spiritual progress and women empowerment to the world community," Murmu said.

# Modi leads nation in paying tribute to Nehru on death anniversary

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday led the nation to pay tributes to Jawaharlal Nehru on his death anniversary. India's first prime minister and a stalwart of the freedom movement, Nehru died in 1964 at the age of 74. Congress too paid rich tributes to India's first prime minister Nehru with party chief Mallikarjun Kharge saying the country's history is incomplete without the incomparable contribution of "the architect of modern India". Kharge and former Congress president Sonia Gandhi also paid floral tributes to the former prime minister at his memorial 'Shantivan' here. In a social media post Kharge said the history of India is incomplete without the incomparable contribution of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the architect of modern India, who took India forward in scientific, economic, industrial and various fields. Nehru was a dedicated guardian of democracy and our source of inspiration, he said. The Congress president quoted



Nehru as saying that the protection of the country, progress of the country, and unity of the country is the national religion of all of us. Former Congress president Rahul Gandhi also paid tributes to his great grandfather. "Respectful tributes to the architect of modern India and the first Prime Minister of the country, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru on his death anniversary. As a visionary, he dedicated his entire life to building India through the freedom movement, establishing democracy, secularism and laying the foundation of the Constitution. His values will always guide us," Rahul Gandhi said in a social media post.



# Experts stress need for separate registry for AYUSH hospitals

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Professor Bejon Kumar Misra, chairman of the Core Group of Experts for Insurance, Union Ministry of Ayush, on Monday stressed the need for a separate registry for Ayush hospitals even as he recommended promoting Ayush Healthcare Organisation (HCO) empanelment and adopting Ministry of Ayush-approved Standard Treatment Guidelines (STGs) and ICD-TM2 codes. He was sharing his views at the sensitisation programme at the All India Institute of Ayurveda (AIIA) in the national capital, aiming to integrate Ayush treatments into mainstream health insurance schemes effectively. The initiative was prompted by the recent directives from the Insurance Regulatory Development Authority (IRDAI) to include Ayush treatments under health insurance cover starting

from April 1, 2024. The aim was to foster a deeper understanding and collaboration between Ayush hospitals, healthcare providers, and insurance sector stakeholders, ultimately ensuring affordable and accessible Ayush healthcare for all citizens. However, intriguingly while the government and private insurers are being encouraged to integrate ayurveda in their plans, the Centre is yet to include Ayush interventions in its flagship Ayushman Bharat-Pradhan Mantri Jan Aarogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY). Sources said that efforts by the Ministry of Ayush and the National Health Authority (NHA) are still on. Deputy Director General (Ayush) Dr. A. Raghu emphasized the need for a flat rate design for Ayush treatments, considering longer stays and categorization based on disease and patient strength, as well as the establishment of three levels of medical management for each disease.

**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
**ICICI Bank** Branch Office: ICICI Bank Ltd, 3rd Floor, Plot No-23, New Rohtak Road, Karol Bagh, Delhi- 110005  
 The following borrower/s have defaulted in the repayment of principal and interest of the loans facility obtained by them from the Bank and the loans have been classified as Non-Performing Assets (NPA). A notice was issued to them under Section 13 (2) of Securitisation and Re-construction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act-2002 on their last known addresses, however it was not served and hence they are hereby notified by way of this public notice.

Sr. No.	Name of the Borrower/ Co-Borrower/ Guarantor/ (Loan Account Number) & Address	Property Address of Secured Asset/ Asset to be Enforced	Date of Notice Sent/ Outstanding as on Date of Notice	NPA Date
1.	Ambay Steel Traders, Harish Kumar Sharma AA Alias as Harish Sharma, Asha Sharma, Hemant Sharma, 344305500010, 344355000003 Represented By Proprietor Harish Sharma X-41, Loha Mandi, Naraina, Delhi Delhi- 110028	Property Bearing Plot No.16 In Block No. E, Pocket No.03, Sector-7, Rohini, Delhi	02-05-2024 Rs. 77,04,235.00/- Rs. 2,63,176.00/-	13/03/2024

The steps are being taken for substituted service of notice. The above borrower/s and/or their guarantors (as applicable) are advised to make the payments of outstanding within period of 60 days from the date of publication of this notice else further steps will be taken as per the provisions of Securitisation and Re-construction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002.  
 Date : May 28, 2024  
 Place : Delhi/Ncr  
 Authorized Officer  
 ICICI Bank Limited

**SYMBOLIC POSSESSION NOTICE**  
**ICICI Bank** Branch Office: ICICI Bank Limited Plot No-23, 3rd Floor, Shal Tower New Rohtak Road, Karol Bagh, New Delhi-110005  
 Whereas  
 The undersigned being the Authorized Officer of ICICI Bank Limited under the Securitisation, Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of the powers conferred under section 13 (12) read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) rules 2002, issued demand notices upon the borrowers mentioned below, to repay the amount mentioned in the notice within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice.  
 As the borrower failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the borrower and the public in general that the undersigned has taken Symbolic possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him/ her under Section 13(4) of the said Act read with Rule 8 of the said rules on the below-mentioned dates. The borrower in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of ICICI Bank Limited.

Sr. No.	Name of the Borrower/ Loan Account Number	Description of Property/ Date of Symbolic Possession	Date of Demand Notice/ Amount in Demand Notice (Rs.)	Name of Branch
1.	Dinesh Kapoor/ K & K Health Care Private Limited/ Saru Kapoor/ Assotech Electronics Private Limited/ LBNOD00001977583/ LBNOD00001978439	Property No. C-10, 2nd Floor (Upto Ceiling Level), Rear Side, Preet Vihar, Village Mandawali Fazalpur, Shahdara, Delhi- 110092/ May 22, 2024	December 12, 2023 Rs. 46,93,804/-	Delhi/ NCR
2.	Nishant Srivastava/ Sanika Nishant/ LBNOD00004403754	Flat No D-803, 8th Floor, Tower D, Officer City, Ghaziabad Uttar Pradesh/ May 22, 2024	March 31, 2022 Rs. 36,50,086/-	Delhi/ NCR

The above-mentioned borrower(s)/ guarantor(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 28, 2024  
 Place : Delhi/ NCR  
 Authorized Officer  
 ICICI Bank Limited

**ICICI Bank** Branch Office: ICICI Bank Limited, 3rd Floor Shal Tower, New Rohtak Road, Karol Bagh, Delhi-110005  
**PUBLIC NOTICE - TENDER CUM E-AUCTION FOR SALE OF SECURED ASSET**  
 [See proviso to rule 8 (6)]  
**Notice for sale of immovable assets**  
 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/charged to the Secured Creditor, the physical possession of which has been taken by the Authorized Officer of ICICI Bank Limited will be sold on "As is where is", "As is what is", and "Whatever there is" basis as per the brief particulars given hereunder;

Sr. No.	Name of Borrower(s)/ Co-Borrowers/ Guarantors/ Loan Account No.	Details of the Secured asset(s) with known encumbrances, if any	Amount Outstanding	Reserve Price Earnest Money Deposit	Date and Time of Property Inspection	Date & Time of E-Auction
(A)	(B)	(C)	(D)	(E)	(F)	(G)
1.	Konnection India Dotcom Pvt Ltd - (Borrower/ Mortgagee), Konnection India Dotcom Pvt Ltd, Nitin Kamboj, Aman Sahni (Guarantor) Lan No. 002105014346/ 002160000714/ 002160000752	Unit No. 524 5th Floor Silverton Tower Sector 50 Village Badshahpur Gurgaon-122001; Area: 725 Sq. Fts	Rs. 1,23,09,669/- as on May 02,2024	Rs. 36,45,000/- From Rs. 3,64,500/-	June 10, 2024 From 12:00 Noon to 02:00 PM	June 25, 2024 from 11:00 AM onwards

The online auction will take place on the website of e-auction agency C1 India Private Limited (URL Link- www.bankeauctions.com) The Mortgagors/ noticee are given a last chance to pay the total dues with further interest till June 24, 2024 before 05:00 P.M failing which, this/these secured asset/s will be sold as per schedule.  
 The Prospective Bidder(s) must submit the Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) Demand Draft (DD) (Refer Column E) at ICICI Bank Limited, 3rd Floor Shal Tower, New Rohtak Road, Karol Bagh, Delhi-110005 on or before June 24, 2024 before 05:00 P.M and thereafter they need to submit their offer through the above mentioned website only on or before June 24, 2024 before 05:00 P.M along with scan image of Bank acknowledged DD towards proof of payment of EMD. Kindly note, in case prospective bidder(s) are unable to submit their offer through the website then signed copy of tender documents may be submitted at ICICI Bank Limited, 3rd Floor Shal Tower, New Rohtak Road, Karol Bagh, Delhi-110005 on or before June 24, 2024 before 05:00 P.M. Earnest Money Deposit DD/PO should be from a Nationalised/ Scheduled Bank in favour of "ICICI Bank Limited" payable at Delhi  
 For any further clarifications with regards to inspection, terms and conditions of the e-auction or submission of tenders, kindly contact ICICI Bank Limited On 8126013708/8584874809  
 Please note that Marketing agencies 1.M/S NexXen Solutions Private Limited 2. Augeo Asset Management Pvt Ltd 3. Hecta Protech Pvt. Ltd. have also been engaged for facilitating the sale of this property.  
 The Authorized Officer reserves the right to reject any or all the bids without furnishing any further reasons.  
 For detailed terms and conditions of the sale, please visit www.icicibank.com/n4p4s  
 Date : May 28, 2024  
 Place : Gurgaon  
 Authorized Officer  
 ICICI Bank Limited

**KEY CORP LIMITED**  
 CIN No.:L65921UP1985PLC007547  
 Regd. Office:16/16-A, Civil Lines, Kanpur - 208001  
 Email: keycorppltd@gmail.com; Phone: 0512-3013416, 3010422, 2305416  
**EXTRACT OF AUDITED FINANCIAL RESULT FOR THE QUARTER AND YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH, 2024** (₹ in Lakhs)

Sl. No	Particulars	Quarter Ended		Year Ended		
		(31.03.2024) (Audited)	(31.12.2023) (Unaudited)	(31.03.2023) (Audited)	(31.03.2024) (Audited)	
1.	Total Income from Operations	3185.89	3015.38	1594.67	1618.02	3229.16
2.	Net Profit / (Loss) for the period (before Tax, Exceptional and/or Extraordinary items#)	3166.22	2981.78	1576.45	1536.16	3156.77
3.	Net Profit / (Loss) for the period before tax (after Exceptional and/or Extraordinary items#)	3166.22	2981.78	1576.45	1536.16	3156.77
4.	Net Profit / (Loss) for the period after tax (after Exceptional and/or Extraordinary items#)	3166.22	2981.78	1576.45	1536.36	3157.11
5.	Total Comprehensive Income for the period [Comprising Profit / (Loss) for the period (after tax) and Other Comprehensive Income (after tax)]	346.81	516.69	(206.03)	123.28	1622.62
6.	Equity Share Capital	600.00	600.00	600.00	600.00	600.00
7.	Reserves (excluding Revaluation Reserve) as shown in the Audited Balance Sheet of the previous year	-	-	-	4103.36	5725.98
8.	Earnings Per Share (of ₹ 10/- each) (for continuing and discontinued operations) - Basic & Diluted (in ₹)	5.78	8.61	(3.43)	2.05	27.04

Note: 1. The above is an extract of the detailed format of Quarter and year ended 31st March, 2024 Financial Results filed with the Stock Exchange under Regulation 33 & Regulation 52 of the SEBI (Listing and Other Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015 as amended. The full format of the Quarterly & Year ended 31st March, 2024 Financial Results are available on the website: https://www.bseindia.com/stock-share-price/key-corp-ltd/keycorp/507948/financials-results-special-of-the-stock-exchange.  
 2. The above results have been reviewed by the Audit committee and approved by the Board of Directors of the company at its meeting held on 27.05.2024.  
 By Order of the Board  
 (G.D. Maheshwari)  
 Whole Time Director  
 DIN 00235209  
 Place: Kanpur  
 Date: 27.05.2024





# Religion based reservation will not be allowed till Modi, BJP in power: Nadda

PTI ■ VARANASI (UP)

BJP president J P Nadda on Monday said there will be no reservation based on religion as long as Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the party are in power. Accusing the opposition of planning to give reservation based on religion, he said, "It is clearly written in the Constitution that there will be no religion-based reservation. "As long as PM Modi and BJP are in power, there will be no such reservation," he told reporters. He was in the city to campaign for Modi who is contesting the Lok Sabha election from Varanasi for the third time.



"We will not allow anyone to encroach on the reservation of our Dalit, tribal, backward and extremely backward classes. You will see what will happen to the opposition on June 4 (the vote counting day)," Nadda said while talking to reporters in Varanasi. Addressing an intellectuals' meeting here, he said, "For a long time politics meant 'divide and rule' but now the 'politics of development' is going on."

"What was the political situation 10 years ago," Nadda asked and said, India was being counted among the corrupt countries but the biggest problem was that the common man had become indifferent towards politics and his faith had been broken. "This becomes a threat to democracy but in the last 10 years, PM Modi created trust among the common man about the country's development," the BJP chief said.

Earlier, the opposition spreading casteism used

strikes, we will enter their territory and kill." The BJP President also talked about the benefits people are getting from various Central government schemes, including Ayushman Yojana, Ujjwala Yojana and Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana. Nadda reached Varanasi for PM Modi's election campaign and offered prayers at the Kaal Bhairav temple. "Whenever I come to Varanasi I pay obeisance to Kal Bhairav temple, Sankat Mochan and Kashi Vishwanath temple. As we all know Kashi is a religious city and the city which takes forward Sanatan Dharma, I get new energy from here," he said. Varanasi, where PM Modi is in the fray, will be going to the polls on June 1. Congress has fielded its state president Ajay Rai from the seat. "I have prayed for the well-being of the society, peace and happiness and to give strength to the development works initiated in the Narendra Modi government. Modi will become PM for the third time with '400 paar' seats," he added.

'divide and rule' policy to create divisions on the basis of religion and region, he said. "Prime Minister Modi has also given a jolt to this culture. Today, a politics of development is going on and in this, 'sabka saath sabka prayas aur sabke vishwas' (everyone's support, effort and trust) is the basis."

He said, "On June 1, when you all vote to the BJP, the foundation of development India will be laid." Be it BRICS, G-7 or G-20, no international forum is left where India was not represented. Now, we are special invitees in places where we were not members earlier," he said.

Within just nine months, two Covid vaccines were made in the country. During the pandemic, double dose of vaccine was given by the government and after that 140 crore people were protected

# Mukhtar's shadow looms over election discourse in Ghazipur

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ GHAZIPUR

In the run-up to the elections, Samajwadi Party candidate Afzal Ansari has been engaging with voters through nakkad (street corner) meetings, delivering speeches that resonate deeply with local issues and personal emotions. His campaign is markedly devoid of grandiosity, focusing instead on the everyday problems faced by the people. He consistently ends his speeches on an emotional note. "Have you heard the name of my younger brother Mukhtar Ansari?" he asks, drawing affirmative nods from the crowd. Accusing authorities of poisoning Mukhtar to fracture their family, Ansari leaves a poignant pause for his words to resonate deeply. Rasool Bhai, a tea shop owner, lends credence to Afzal's allegations, deeming Mukhtar's demise as "unnatural." He recalls Mukhtar's revelation to a court about being poisoned in jail just days before his death, raising questions about the lack of adequate medical care. This narrative of suspected

foul play has become central to the Ghazipur election discourse, with many rally attendees expressing skepticism towards the official version of events surrounding Mukhtar's demise. The Ansari camp is pinning its hopes on a wave of sympathy, aiming to overshadow Mukhtar's controversial reputation and rally support across diverse voter demographics. "You simply can't overlook Mukhtar in Eastern UP," remarks Ramesh K Singh, a seasoned journalist based in Varanasi. "His prominence reverberates widely, and his demise has only galvanized Muslim communities further." However, the electoral landscape in Ghazipur extends beyond Mukhtar's legacy. The formidable political clout of the Ansari family faces a significant challenge from the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), represented by Paras Nath Rai. Rai, known more for his association with the Rashtriya

Swayamsewak Sangh (RSS) than for grassroots politics, enjoys backing from Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha, a prominent BJP figure. Despite the BJP's emphasis on law and order, attributed to the governance of Yogi Adityanath, many locals acknowledge Sinha's contributions to local development. Ranjeet Singh, a resident, credits the end of the "mafia raj" to Adityanath's tenure, dismissing Mukhtar Ansari's influence as confined to the Muslim community. The Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), led by Umesh Singh, and the SP-Congress alliance are also vying for electoral supremacy. The BJP leverages its alliance with the Suheldev Bharatiya Samaj Party (SBSP), led by Om Prakash Rajbhar, to consolidate support among the OBC Rajbhar community. The election dynamics are further shaped by the "MY" (Muslim-Yadav) factor, historically advantageous for the SP. The alliance with Congress is poised to bolster

the minority vote bank, critical in a constituency where Muslims and Yadavs constitute approximately 15% of the electorate. Contentious issues such as the Agniphath recruitment scheme for the armed forces add complexity to the electoral landscape. Rajesh Kumar reports a significant decline in army recruitment applicants, attributing it to the scheme's implementation. As the campaign intensifies, divergent opinions among the youth in market areas highlight a split in support between Afzal Ansari and Paras Nath Rai. While development initiatives under Sinha remain uncontested, the pervasive sentiment in Ghazipur underscores Mukhtar Ansari's enduring influence on voter sentiment. "Hindu-Muslim discourse is not a factor here, but Mukhtar is," observes local resident Shailash Yadav, encapsulating the intricate interplay of personal legacy and political strategy in this pivotal election.

public notice

My clients Sh. Jai Prakash S/o Sh. Ram Singh and his wife Smt. Pushpa Rani Both R/O H. No. 54A/B, Prem Nagar-I, Kirti, Suleman Nagar, Delhi have disowned/debarred their son namely Anil Kumar and daughter-in-law Reena Sharma from their entire movable and immovable properties and other assets and have severed all family relations with them by all means/way due to their misconduct, unreasonable and disrespectfully behaviour towards my clients. If anybody deals with them, he/she will do so at their own risks, costs and consequences, my clients will not be held responsible for any of their acts and deeds, in any manner for the same.

**ANIL KUMAR (ADVOCATE) Ch. No. P-9-A, Post Office Lane, Tis Hazari Courts, Delhi-54.**

public notice

This is to inform you, the public at large, that my client Sh. Anil Mehta (Aadhar card no. 346443922079) S/o Late Sh. Suraj Prakash R/o G-56, Near Water Tanki, Mansarovar Garden, Ramesh Nagar, Delhi-110015, hereby disown his son namely Sh. Aman Mehta (Aadhar card no. 697171223235), forever from all his movable and immovable properties/assets including House no. G-56, Near Water Tanki, Mansarovar Garden, Ramesh Nagar, Delhi-110015 and he has no concern with any of his assets/liabilities whatsoever. Now onwards my client does not have any relation with his said son namely Sh. Aman Mehta and any person having any claim against Sh. Aman Mehta may contact him directly and my client shall not be responsible for his acts/deeds and further shall not entertain any query regarding him. It is further informed that said Sh. Aman Mehta is no more residing with my client at House No. G-56, Near Water Tanki, Mansarovar Garden, Ramesh Nagar, Delhi-110015 and none of his goods/house hold items are lying therein.

**RAHUL KADYAN ADVOCATE Chamber No. 278, Civil Wing Tis Hazari Court, Delhi-110054**

public notice

This is to inform the general public that Sh. Meenuddin is the sole owner of Plot No.41 area measuring 38.8 sq. yds. out of Kharsa No. B/6 situated in village Razapur Khurd Delhi colony known as Sankh Vinay Park-1 Vias Nagar Uttar Nagar New Delhi-110058. This ownership was legally acquired through a Relinquishment Deed dated 07/05/2024 as doc. No. 2024/25/12334 executed by Smt. Farina, Smt. Farjana Naina, Sh. Jayanidhi, Sh. Manjundhi, in favour of Sh. Meenuddin resident of plot. Sh. Meenuddin intends to transfer the ownership by way of Sale Deed of aforementioned plot to Sh. Maabool Alam Zahiri & Smt. Zeba Khatoun Subsequently, Sh. Maabool Alam Zahiri & Smt. Zeba Khatoun are in the process of mortgaging the said SMF India Home Finance Co. Ltd. (Formerly Fullerton India Home Finance Co. Ltd.). Any objections or concerns regarding this transaction should be raised within a period of 07 days from the date of this public notice. Any objections submitted after the completion of this 07-day period will not be considered binding with respect to the said property or the interest of our client.

If anyone wishes to raise an objection, please do so within the stipulated 07-day period by contacting Law Vertus: North (Advocates & Legal Consultants) at Office No. 11, 1st Floor, Building No. A-44A, Sector-16, Noida, Uttar Pradesh-201301; Landline(s): +91120-31011683; e-mail: accounts@north.in

public notice

My client Chandrawati Singh W/o Late Sh. Ram Manohar Singh R/o. 437/2, Laxmi Vihar, Burari, Delhi-110084 have debarred her son Rajat Kumar Singh & daughter-in-law Akanksha Singh from all her movable and immovable properties and severed her all relations with them, my client shall not be responsible for their any act in future.

**UMESH KR. PAL (ADVOCATE) Ch. No. F-202, 2nd Floor, Karkardooma Courts, Delhi-110032**

public notice

This is to inform you, the public at large, that my client Smt. Anjana Chakraborty W/o Sh. Jayanta Chakraborty R/o Flat No. B-105, Dena Apartment, Sector-13, Rohini, Delhi-110085 is the joint owner of Built-up house bearing no. 11728, Ward no. XVI, Kharsa no. 368/16732, measuring 75 Sq. Yards, in Block V, Gali no. 3 & 4, East Ringar, Sat Nagar, Kirti Vihar, New Delhi. (Permittee referred to as 'property') although her sister namely Ms. Suparna Banerjee W/o Sh. Anupam Banerjee (referred to as 'inheritor') has inherited from their parents viz. Late Sh. Shobha Nath Banerjee & Late Smt. Shobani Banerjee being their legal heirs. The said property is in the exclusive possession and control of my client and no other person has any legal right, title or interest of whatsoever nature in the same. The said property has neither ever been sold by the said late parents of my client nor has any agreement/other contract to transfer document referred to by them in favor of anyone during their lifetime. It has come to the knowledge of my client that some persons are illegally trying to sell the said property on the basis of some fictitious/forged ownership documents which they have no legal right to do so, therefore, the general public is hereby cautioned not to engage in any sort of sale purchase transaction with respect to the said property with any person and in case anybody wishes to purchase the said property from anyone other than my client and her sister, the said sale purchase transaction being totally illegal shall be deemed as null and void and my client shall not be responsible for the same.

**RAHUL KADYAN Advocate Chamber No.278, Civil Wing Tis Hazari Court, Delhi-110054**

**PUBLIC NOTICE**

To be known to all that We Chandra Prakash S/o Late Sh. Hansraj Anand and Smt. Sudha Anand W/o Sh. Chandan Prakash R/o 43, Pocket-28, Sector-24, Rohini, Delhi-110085 are joint allottees/purchaser of Plot No. 43, Pocket-28, Sector-24, Rohini, Delhi-110085. The original document i.e. Possession Letter of DA of the above Plot has been lost. An FIR to this effect has been lodged in Police Station. Any person(s) claiming any right, interest, having any objection or found in possession of original documents, may write contact with above named person at above Address/Phone no. 9662737322 within 15 days from the date of publication of this notice. The person claiming any right interest, objections with respect to this property can personally inform or write to Dy. Director (LAB) Residential, C-7 Block, 3rd Floor, Vikas Sadan, INA, New Delhi-110023 or Director (RL), A-Block, 1st Floor, Vikas Sadan, INA, New Delhi-110023

NORTHERN RAILWAY	
NOTICE INVITING TENDER	
Name of work and its location	30-ELECT-08-T-R1-24-25-E3 Electrical work in connection with replacement of defective AT Panels and Cabling arrangement with other associated work in the jurisdiction of SSE/PS/MTC.
Approx cost of the works in Rs.	Rs. 47.38 lacs
Address of the office	Sr. Divil Elect. Engineer/General, New Delhi.
Bid Security	Rs. 94800.00
Date & time of submission of tender	28.06.2024, 12.00 Hrs.
Opening of tender	28.06.2024, 12.00 Hrs.
Website & notice board	www.ireps.gov.in & Sr. Divil. Elect. Engineer/General, New Delhi.
<b>SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE</b> 1576/24	

public notice

My Father in law late Krishan Kumar Gupta booked a flat No. 1317 Tower A-3, in project called Superch Eco-Village-1, Plot. No. 08, SECTOR-1, Grater Noida. Now after his Demise I have requested to M/s Superch Limited to Remove his name the said flat. If anybody has an objection, in this regard he/she may contact to M/s Superch Limited office at Plot No. C-2, Sector 96, Noida, Uttar Pradesh 201303 within 15 days of the Published notice RASHMI GUPTA (Main Applicant)/W/O SH. SANJEEV KUMAR R/O H.NO.60B, SECTOR-31, FARIDABAD.

**DIWAKAR JHA (Advocate) M-9711299949**

Public Notice

I Nuzhat Reyaz D/o Zaheer Ahmad Lost all Property Docs ie Demand Letter, Possession Letter, Challans, Possession Slip, Conveyance Deed, GPA, ATS, Receipt etc of Flat 183C, Blk-QU, Pitampura Delhi, If found please contact- Puneet Chugh (Advocate) - 9310013613, Enrol ID/989-04

public notice

This is to inform you, the public at large, that my client Sh. Anil Mehta (Aadhar card no. 346443922079) S/o Late Sh. Suraj Prakash R/o G-56, Near Water Tanki, Mansarovar Garden, Ramesh Nagar, Delhi-110015, hereby disown his son namely Sh. Aman Mehta (Aadhar card no. 697171223235), forever from all his movable and immovable properties/assets including House no. G-56, Near Water Tanki, Mansarovar Garden, Ramesh Nagar, Delhi-110015 and he has no concern with any of his assets/liabilities whatsoever. Now onwards my client does not have any relation with his said son namely Sh. Aman Mehta and any person having any claim against Sh. Aman Mehta may contact him directly and my client shall not be responsible for his acts/deeds and further shall not entertain any query regarding him. It is further informed that said Sh. Aman Mehta is no more residing with my client at House No. G-56, Near Water Tanki, Mansarovar Garden, Ramesh Nagar, Delhi-110015 and none of his goods/house hold items are lying therein.

**RAHUL KADYAN ADVOCATE Chamber No. 278, Civil Wing Tis Hazari Court, Delhi-110054**

**THE PIONEER CLASSIFIEDS**

**CHANGE OF NAME**

I Dheeraj Kumar F/O hav Ankit Kumar Tyagi 4 Rajput army No.30111131- Residence of VanshGopalpur, J. P. Nagar (AMROHA), Uttar Pradesh .In my son's Army Service Record my name Deeraj Kumar Tyagi and my D.O.B is wrongly Mentioned as 05/07/1969 whereas in other Documents my name Dheeraj Kumar and my D.O.B 01/01/1966 which is True and Correct.

**PD(477)C**

**IN THE COURT OF SH. RAJ KUMAR TRIPATHI, L.D. DISTRICT JUDGE (COMMERCIAL COURT -08, SOUTH EAST DISTRICT, ROOM N.39, SAKET COURTS NEW DELHI**

PUNJAB NATIONAL BANK ..... PLAINTIFF

V/S

VIJAY SINGH SORAUT ..... DEFENDENT

**VIJAY SINGH SORAUT S/O LATE SH. SOHAN LAL AT H.NO. 1259, HOUSING BOARD COLONY, SECTOR-18, NEAR WATER TANK, OLD FARIDABAD, HARYANA 121002 ALSO AT FLAT NO. 4350, THIRD FLOOR, SECTOR-22D, YAMUNA EXPRESSWAY, GREATER NOIDA, UTTAR PRADESH**

WHEREAS you are intentionally evading service of summons it is hereby notified that if you shall not defend the case on the 03rd day of June 2024 the day fixed for the final disposal, it will be heard and determined ex-parte.

Given under my hand and the seal of the Court, this 20th day of May, 2024.

**DISTRICT JUDGE COMMERCIAL COURT -08 SAKET COURTS NEW DELHI-110017**

**UMMEED HOUSING FINANCE PRIVATE LIMITED**

Corp. Off: Unit No.809-815, 8th Floor, Tower-A, Emaar Digital Greens, Golf Course Extn. Road, Sector 61, Gurgaon-122102-Haryana. Call: 016629205794

**PUBLIC NOTICE**

This is to inform & notify the public about the relocation of Janakpuri, Delhi branch of Ummeed Housing Finance Pvt. Ltd. effective from 16.07.2024

**From Ummeed Housing Finance Pvt. Ltd.**

**1st Floor, WZ-250 Opposite Metro pillar no 663, Uttam Nagar, New Delhi-110059**

**To Ummeed Housing Finance Pvt. Ltd.**

**Plot No. B-3, First Floor, Rama Park, Near Metro Pillar No. 764, Uttam Nagar, New Delhi-110059**

For more details, Please Contact : Ummeed Housing Finance Pvt. Ltd. Toll Free : 1800 - 212 - 6127

**CORRIGENDUM**

Please refer to our earlier advertisement of **DECLARATION FORM IV (SEE RULE 8)** Published in the newspaper on 1st March 2024. The name of publisher has been inadvertently mentioned as Narendra Kumar instead of Ms. Shobori Ganguli. This Corrigendum should be read in Continuation of the said publication and all other contents shall remain same.

I, Shobori Ganguli hereby declare that the particulars given above are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

**Shobori Ganguli PUBLISHER THE PIONEER**

Place : New Delhi  
Dated : May 28, 2024

**PUBLIC NOTICE**

**ICICI Bank** Branch Office: ICICI BANK LTD Office No. 201-B, 2nd Floor, Road No. 1, Plot No. B3, Wifi IT Park, Wagle Industrial Estate, Thane (West)-400604.

The following borrower/s have defaulted in the repayment of principal and interest of the loans facility obtained by them from the Bank and the loans have been classified as Non-Performing Assets (NPA). A notice was issued to them under Section 13 (2) of Securitisation and Re-construction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act-2002 on their last known addresses, however it was not served and hence they are hereby notified by way of this public notice.

Sr. No.	Name of the Borrower/ Co-Borrower/ Guarantor/ (Loan Account Number) & Address	Property Address of Secured Asset/ Asset to be Enforced	Date of Notice Sent/ Outstanding as on Date of Notice	NPA Date
1.	Shobhana Sadh/ Bipin Kumar Sadh/ Naresh Kumar Sadh/ (LBSUR00004066527/ LBSUR00005333783) & House No. G-1, Radhe Puri, Near Lal Mandir Road, Krishna Nagar, East Delhi, Delhi- 110051	Office No. U.G-4, Ground Floor, Raghuvir Celeum Center, Opp Shyam Sangini Market, R.S. No. 54+55, 56/4, 149, Block No. 53, 55, 141/A, T.P.S. No. 35, O.P. No. 167 and 136/1, F.P. No. 167, Kumbhariya, Magob, Choryasi, Surat- 395007	April 29, 2024 Rs. 65,48,828/-	03-02-2024
2.	Shobhana Sadh/ Bipin Kumar Sadh/ (LBSUR00004913731) & House No. G-1, Radhe Puri, Near Lal Mandir Road, Krishna Nagar, East Delhi, Delhi- 110051	Office No. U.G-4, Ground Floor, Raghuvir Celeum Center, Opp Shyam Sangini Market, R.S. No. 54+55, 56/4, 149, Block No. 53, 55, 141/A, T.P.S. No. 35, O.P. No. 167 and 136/1, F.P. No. 167, Kumbhariya, Magob, Choryasi, Surat- 395007	April 29, 2024 Rs. 17,43,061/-	03-02-2024

The steps are being taken for substituted service of notice. The above borrower/s and/or their guarantors (as applicable) are advised to make the payments of outstanding within period of 60 days from the date of publication of this notice else further steps will be taken as per the provisions of Securitisation and Re-construction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002.

Date : May 28, 2024  
Place : Delhi

**Authorized Officer ICICI Bank Limited**

**IN THE COURT OF SH. RAJ KUMAR TRIPATHI, L.D. DISTRICT JUDGE (COMMERCIAL COURT -08, SOUTH EAST DISTRICT, ROOM N.39, SAKET COURTS NEW DELHI**

PUNJAB NATIONAL BANK ..... PLAINTIFF

V/S

VIJAY SINGH SORAUT ..... DEFENDENT

**VIJAY SINGH SORAUT S/O LATE SH. SOHAN LAL AT H.NO. 1259, HOUSING BOARD COLONY, SECTOR-18, NEAR WATER TANK, OLD FARIDABAD, HARYANA 121002 ALSO AT FLAT NO. 4350, THIRD FLOOR, SECTOR-22D, YAMUNA EXPRESSWAY, GREATER NOIDA, UTTAR PRADESH**

WHEREAS you are intentionally evading service of summons it is hereby notified that if you shall not defend the case on the 03rd day of June 2024 the day fixed for the final disposal, it will be heard and determined ex-parte.

Given under my hand and the seal of the Court, this 20th day of May, 2024.

**DISTRICT JUDGE COMMERCIAL COURT -08 SAKET COURTS NEW DELHI-110017**

**PROVISION OF RO/RUB AT LUMDING DIVISION**

**Tender Notice No. LMG/ENGG/78 of 2024.** E-tenders are invited by the undersigned for the following works: **Sl. No. 1. Name of work:** Feasibility study and detailed project report for elimination of 31 Nos. Level Crossings by provision of RO/RUB under the jurisdiction of DENV/Lumding Division. **Tender Money:** ₹1,30,60,484.14/- **Earnest Money:** ₹2,15,300/- **Date & time of Closing of tender:** 17-06-2024 at 15:00 hrs. **Date & time of Opening of tender:** 18-06-2024 at 15:00 hrs. The complete information with tender documents of above e-tender will be available up-to 15.00 hrs. of 17-06-2024 in website <http://www.ireps.gov.in>.

**DRM (Works), Lumding NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY**  
Serving Customers With A Smile

**STORES E-PROCUREMENT**

**TENDER NOTICE NO. S/IM/2024-25 Dated. 22/05/2024.** E-tenders are invited by the undersigned for the following works.

**Tender No. LD245096C**  
**Closing/Opening Date: 12-06-2024**

**SN.1. Brief Description:** Design, manufacture, supply, installation, testing and commissioning of passenger escalator (for vertical height of 6 mtr) complete with all associated accessories and safety device etc. as per RDSO specification no. RDSO/PE/SEPC/TL/0095 (REV-3) 2019 or latest. Make-Schindler/Kone/Otis/Johnson or similar. Qty: 02 Nos.

**Note:** For full details of tender notice and tender documents, tenderer may log on to the website ([www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in)). Prospective bidder who intend to participate in above tender are required to log on themselves with the above website and submit their offer electronically, if they are already registered with IREPS. In case they are not registered with IREPS, they are advised to obtain class-III Digital Signature Certificate from the certifying agencies under Govt. of India IT Act 2000 and participate in the above tenders.

**Sr. DMM/Lumding**  
Serving Customers With A Smile

**SPACE INCUBATRICS TECHNOLOGIES LIMITED**

**REGD. OFF. : PAWAN PURI, MURADNAGAR, DISTT. GHAZIABAD (U.P.) CIN : L17100UP2016PLC084473, Phone : 01232- 261288 Web : www.spaceincubtrics.com, Email: spaceincubtrics@gmail.com**

**STANDALONE & CONSOLIDATED AUDITED FINANCIAL RESULTS FOR THE QUARTER/YEAR ENDED 31.03.2024**

(₹ IN LAKH)

S. No.	Particulars	STANDALONE			CONSOLIDATED		
		3 months ended	Year ended	3 months ended	3 months ended	Year ended	3 months ended
		31.03.2024	31.03.2024	31.12.2023	31.03.2024	31.03.2024	31.12.2023
		Audited	Audited	Unaudited	Audited	Audited	Unaudited
1.	Total income from operations	5.44	45.07	12.72	5.44	45.07	12.72
2.	Net Profit / (Loss) for the period (before Exceptional items and tax)	-2.86	3.11	4.32	-2.86	3.11	4.32
3.	Net Profit / (Loss) for the period before tax (after Exceptional items)	-2.86	3.11	4.32	-2.86	3.11	4.32
4.	Net Profit / (Loss) for the period (after tax and Exceptional items)	-3.67	2.30	4.32	-3.09	2.88	4.32
5.	Total Comprehensive Income for the period (Comprising Profit / (Loss) for the period (after tax) and other Comprehensive income (after tax))	-3.67	2.30	4.32	-3.09	2.88	4.32
6.	Paid-up equity share capital (Face value of ₹ 10/-)	3460.92	3460.92	3460.92	3460.92	3460.92	3460.92
7.	Other Equity	-	-2560.73	-	-	-2560.73	-
8.	Earning Per Share (of ₹ 10/- each) (for continuing and discontinued operations)						
(a)	Basic	-0.01	0.01	0.01	-0.01	0.01	0.01
(b)	Diluted	-0.01	0.01	0.01	-0.01	0.01	0.01

**NOTES:**

- The above Audited Quarterly / Annually financial results as reviewed by the Audit Committee were approved by the Board of Directors in its meeting held on 27.05.2024. The above results have been audited by the Statutory Auditors of the Company and they have expressed an unqualified audit opinion thereon.
- The above is an extract of the detailed format of Quarterly Financial Results filed with the Stock Exchange under Regulation 33 of the SEBI (Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015. The full format of the quarterly financial results are available on the Stock Exchange website - [www.bseindia.com](http://www.bseindia.com) & Company's website - [www.spaceincubtrics.com](http://www.spaceincubtrics.com).
- The financial results for the quarter and year ended 31 March, 2024 are balancing figure between results in respect of the full financial year and the published year to date figure of the third quarter of the respective financial years.

**SPACE INCUBATRICS TECHNOLOGIES LTD.**  
Sd/-  
(Nishant Mittal)  
Managing Director  
DIN : 02766556

Place : Muradnagar  
Dated : 27.05.2024

**PUBLIC NOTICE**

We are investigating the title of Next Generation Project Private Limited, NA Buildwell (Mehta), (collectively referred to as the "Owners"), being the owners of the land in the manner more particularly described in the Schedule hereunder written ("Schedule Properties").

If any person having or claiming any form of right, title, claim, benefit, demand or interest in the Schedule Properties or any part thereof, by way of sale, transfer, exchange, assignment, will, release, relinquishment, decree or order of any Court of Law, encumbrance, mortgage, lease, lien, charge, maintenance, license, gift, inheritance, undivided share, possession, easement, trust, bequest, sub-lease, tenancy, sub-tenancy, leave and license, lis pendens, easement, options, right of first refusal or pre-emption or encumbrance of whatsoever nature or otherwise however, or under any agreement, deed, document or power of attorney or any objection(s) of any manner whatsoever is hereby required to inform the same in writing with notarized/certified true copies of documentary proof in support thereof, to the undersigned at their under mentioned address to the undersigned within 14 ("fourteen") days from the date of this notice, failing which it will be presumed that the title of the Owners to the Schedule Properties is clear, valid and marketable and no one has any right/ title/ interest/ claim/ demand whatsoever on the Schedule Properties. Any claims without supporting documents shall not be entertained.

**SCHEDULE PROPERTIES**

Land measuring 62 Kanal 8 Marla 15 Sarsal (7,8101 acres), situated in the revenue estate of Village Harsaru, Tehsil Harsaru, District Gurugram, Haryana. The details of the land are as follows:

Kharsa Numbers	Area (Karnal- Marla- Sarsal)	Area (acres)	Landowners
Rectangle No. 57 Killa No. 2/1 min (4-15-0), 2/2 (0-11-0), 3/1 (5-2-0), 3/2 (2-18-0), 4/1 (5-4-0), 7/12 (3-11-0), 7/2 (1-13-0), 8/1 (2-10-0), 8/2 (5-10-0), 9/2 min (0-13-3), 9/1/1 min (0-19-6), 9/1/2 min (3-13-0), 12/1 min (2-4-4), 12/2 min (3-1-5), 13/1 (3-7-0), 13/2 (4-13-0), 14/1 (2-3-0) and 14/2/1 (3-1-0)	55K - 10M	6.9375	Next Generation Project Private Limited
Rectangle No. 58 Killa No. 11/2 min (0-17-7), 12/1 min (0-15-5), 12/2 min (0-2-2), 13/1/1 min (0-7-5) and 13/2/1 min (0-0-8)	2K-4M	0.275	NA Buildwell Private Limited
Rectangle No. 57 Killa No. 7/1/1 min (1-5-7), 14/2/2 min (2-7-2) and 15 min (0-17-7)	4K-10M-7S	0.567	Priya Ahluwalia (Mehta)
Rectangle No. 57 Killa No. 4/2 min (0-4-8)	0K - 4M - 8S	0.0306	Naina Sachdev (Mehta)

Date : 28.05.2024

Sd/-  
Ashish Jain, Partner,  
Cyril Amarchand Mangaldas  
Level 1 & 2, Max Towers, Sector 16B,  
Noida, Uttar Pradesh, 201301  
ashish.jain@cyrilshroff.com

**PRAKASH WOOLLEN & SYNTHETIC MILLS LIMITED**

Regd. office. 18th KM Stone, Delhi Moradabad Road, NH24, Village-Amhera, Distt: J.P.NAGAR-244102, U.P. CIN-L17291UP1979PLC004804

PH: 9760091983, Email: [info@prakashwoollen.com](mailto:info@prakashwoollen.com), Website: [www.prakashwoollen.com](http://www.prakashwoollen.com)

**Extract of Audited Financial Results (Standalone) for the Quarter and Year Ended 31/03/2024**

Particulars	Quarter ended			Year Ended	
	31-Mar-24	31-Dec-23	31-Mar-23	31-Mar-24	31-Mar-23
Total income from operations (net)	1185.10	9029.26	1511.46	10214.36	10371.96
Net Profit / (Loss) for the period (before Tax, Exceptional and/or Extraordinary items)	15.04	3.47	20.77	18.51	(515.75)
Net Profit / (Loss) for the period before tax (after Exceptional and/or Extraordinary items)	15.04	3.47	20.77	18.51	(515.75)
Net Profit / (Loss) for the period after tax (after Exceptional and/or Extraordinary items)	82.09	13.88	21.77	95.97	









## FIRST COLUMN

## MITIGATING THE E-WASTE CRISIS

It can be tackled with innovations, regulations and corporate responsibility



SHAINY SHARMA

Today with the advancements in the field of science and technology, computers and other mobile devices have become such an integral part of everyone's work and personal lives that it is hard to imagine life without them. Not only that, but along with that the problem of e-waste continues to grow every year as consumers frequently upgrade their gadgets leading to the high turnover of electronic devices. E-waste or electronic waste refers to discarded electronic devices and appliances that have reached the end of their useful life or are no longer wanted by their owners. It is one of the significant problems due to its complex composition, rapid generation and the challenges it poses to human health and the environment. Due to the presence of various toxic substances such as lead, mercury and cadmium present in batteries and semiconductors can cause neurological damage and can even damage the kidneys and bones. Not only this the toxic chemicals released from such wastes can leach into soil, making it infertile and unsafe for agriculture.

Not only will the soil get contaminated but the other sources of the environment that is water and air will also be affected badly as improper disposition of e-wastes can contaminate the waterbodies thereby affecting the water supplies and aquatic life and; toxic fumes released for extracting valuable metals will contribute to respiratory problems. It is believed that airborne toxins can travel long distances, affecting air quality and human health. Quite often in many developing countries, informal e-waste recycling activity is a significant source of income. Such activities are often unregulated and the workers are exposed to high levels of toxic substances without adequate protection.



This exposure can lead to respiratory problems, skin disorders and other severe health issues. The improper disposal and recycling of e-waste contribute to greenhouse gas emissions thereby contributing to environmental degradation and increased carbon footprints. According to the Global E-waste Monitor 2020, the world generated 53.6 million metric tons of e-waste in 2019 and this figure is expected to grow to 74.7 million metric tons by 2030. Only a fraction of this waste is properly recycled, with much ending up in landfills posing significant environmental and health risks.

Proper recycling of such wastes is the only solution that can help recover valuable materials and reduce the need for new resource extraction and the same is possible only and only when the Government enacts and enforces stringent regulations for e-waste management, including proper collection, recycling and disposal practices such as e-waste collection drives and recycling centres to facilitate proper disposal. Manufacturers should also be held responsible for the entire lifecycle of their products, including take-back programs and recycling initiatives. Investing in advanced recycling technologies can help improve the efficiency and safety of extracting valuable materials from e-waste. Encouraging the manufacturers to design such products that are easier to recycle, repair and upgrade can reduce e-waste generation. Educating consumers at the same time about the importance of proper e-waste disposal and the available recycling options can reduce improper disposal practices. Establishing international standards for e-waste management can help ensure safe and efficient recycling practices worldwide. Strengthening international regulations to prevent the illegal export of e-waste to developing countries where it is often processed unsafely. Remember, from gadgets to green initiatives, every individual living on this planet should recycle their e-waste and pave the way for a cleaner greener tomorrow.

(The writer is an educator, views are personal)

## Raisi's legacy endures in Iran, despite West

Over three million mourners gather in Mashhad to honour the late President Raisi. The hold of hardliners in the country is much stronger than the West might think



NILANTHA LANGAMUWA

Over three million Iranians have gathered in Mashhad, Iran's second-largest city, to honour the late President Raisi, who tragically perished in a helicopter crash along with eight others. The massive turnout, which filled the streets to capacity, reflects the deep respect and admiration many citizens held for Raisi, contradicting assertions by Washington that he was widely despised. Raisi's interment at the holy shrine of Imam Reza, a significant and unprecedented honour for a political leader, accentuates his esteemed status in the country. This unprecedented event defies the distorted and often misunderstood sentiments of the Iranian populace towards their leaders. Often, those who are demarcating the enemies, forcing others to accept their version of the story as gospel truth, are met with a ground reality that tells us the exact opposite.

The circumstances of the incident, however, have fuelled a wave of conspiracy theories. Moments after the crash, US Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer declared there was no evidence of foul play, citing intelligence officials, despite Iran's rescue teams not yet having reached the crash site. Subsequently, some blame the secret organisation of Iran's arch-enemy State, Israel's Mossad. Others speculate that the death was the result of an inside job. However, this tragedy marked a significant event not only in Iranian politics but in the constantly growing West versus Rest dynamic, which is now more strongly questioning the partiality of international organisations while strengthening the established strong alternatives such as BRICS and the New Development Bank. Iran is playing a pivotal role in this.

Meanwhile, a segment of Western media recently published a series of stories about the helicopter crash suggesting that American sanctions have severely hindered Iran's ability to maintain its fleet of American-manufactured helicopters. It was suggested that a technical failure caused the crash, but so far there's no evidence to support this. The helicopter was one of three Bell 214 models; the other two returned safely, but President Raisi's did not. An Iranian defence firm, under the Iranian Aviation Industries Organisation (IAIO), specialises in maintaining and reverse-engineering US-model helicopters for Iran's military and the IRGC. Added to the US Department of the Treasury's SDN list in January 2018, its assets under US jurisdiction are frozen and transactions with US parties are prohibited under Executive Order 13382, targeting WMD proliferators. However, contrary to suggestions that Raisi's helicopter was overloaded and that this put undue strain on its engines, the aircraft was not operating beyond its capacity. The helicopter was carrying nine passengers and crew combined, well within its maximum capacity of 15 persons. The notion that the helicopter's age contributed significantly to the crash is also questionable. While the media has painted the Bell 214 as ancient, in reality, it was built in 1994 by Bell Helicopter Textron in Canada. With a global average age for commercial helicopters at around 23 years, Raisi's helicopter, though slightly older, was not exceptionally outdated. Moreover, helicopters used for presidential transport typically receive meticulous maintenance.

As Stephen D. Bryen, a leading expert on technology security who led the Pentagon's technology policy efforts during the Reagan



PRESIDENT RAISI WAS FOCUSED ON COOLING DOWN BORDER TENSIONS AND EXTENDING HIS DIPLOMATIC OUTREACH TO NEIGHBOURING ARAB COUNTRIES. HIS CHOSEN FOREIGN MINISTER, AMIR ABDOLLAHIAN, WHO ALSO PASSED AWAY WITH HIM, WAS INSTRUMENTAL IN REENGINEERING IRANIAN FOREIGN POLICY

administration, pointed out, the engines of Raisi's helicopter, Pratt and Whitney PT6Ts, are also Canadian-made and widely regarded for their reliability. The implication that the helicopter's maintenance was compromised due to sanctions lacks substantiation, especially considering the high-profile nature of the passengers. The critical question of whether Canada currently supplies spare parts to Iran remains unclear, adding another layer of complexity to the narrative. Nonetheless, the assertions of technical failure due to sanctions remain speculative without concrete evidence and the focus should be on a thorough and unbiased investigation into the actual causes of the crash.

President Raisi was focused on cooling down border tensions and extending his diplomatic outreach to neighbouring Arab countries. His chosen Foreign Minister, Amir-Abdollahian, who also passed away with him, was instrumental in reengineering Iranian foreign policy. A notable example of this effort was the steps taken to normalise Iran-Saudi Arabia diplomatic relations. This Chinese-backed diplomatic initiative is crucial for reshaping the West Asian diplomatic terrain. Similarly, the recent irrigation project constructed across the Aras River, which Raisi jointly inaugurated with his counterpart in Baku, is a demonstration of this new diplomatic approach.

The Aras River, spanning 1,072 km, originates in Eastern Turkey and flows along several borders: Turkey and Armenia, Turkey and Azerbaijan, Iran and Azerbaijan and through Azerbaijan into the Kura River. This region, a small riverine area in the Caucasus between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea, has witnessed numerous tragedies, including the often-overlooked Armenian Genocide, which claimed around 1.5 million lives. The 689 km Iran-Azerbaijan border, demarcated by the Aras River, highlights the geopolitical sensitivity and strategic importance of this area. After the Soviet Union's collapse in 1991, Azerbaijan gained independence and assumed control of part of the Iran-Soviet border, leading to

escalating disputes. The 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh War saw Azerbaijan seize full control of the western border with Iran, heightening tensions. Relations between Iran and Azerbaijan slightly improved under President Hassan Rouhani, but Baku never hesitated to provide Israel with a strategic opportunity. Israel strengthened its alliance with Azerbaijan, turning it into a significant market for advanced weaponry. The 2020 conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh resulted in approximately 5,700 deaths, with Israel supplying a significant portion of Azerbaijan's arms, highlighting the deepening strategic ties between the two nations. As a result, Azerbaijan was able to absorb the Artsakh Republic, also known as Nagorno-Karabakh, a self-proclaimed republic dissolved in January this year.

In exchange for Israeli weapons, Azerbaijan provided oil. Ilham Aliyev, president since 2003, was re-elected for a fifth term on February 7 with over 92 per cent of the vote. Aliyev, who succeeded his father, Heydar Aliyev, a former Soviet KGB officer, has strengthened Azerbaijan's ties with Israel. Aliyev amended the constitution in 2009 to permit unlimited presidential terms and, in 2016, extended the presidential term from five to seven years. Azerbaijan can be seen as a family-run State prioritising clan interests, yet Aliyev has skillfully navigated relations with Eastern and Western powers to serve his political aims. It is not hyperbole to say Aliyev is a skilled Machiavellian politician in contemporary politics. An investigation by Israeli media outlet Haaretz published recently detailed the strategic relationship between Israel and Azerbaijan, through which Tel Aviv has supplied Baku with billions of dollars worth of weapons in exchange for "oil and access to Iran."

This extensive military cooperation underscores the depth of the strategic alliance between the two nations. Azerbaijan has reportedly permitted Israel's Mossad intelligence agency to establish a presence in the country to monitor Iran, its southern neighbour. Additionally,

Azerbaijan has facilitated the setup of an airfield for Israel to potentially strike Iranian nuclear facilities from its territory. In exchange, Azerbaijan receives the most advanced weapons, including ballistic missiles, air defence systems and kamikaze drones. However, as Yossi Melman, a noted Israeli writer and journalist who is an expert on intelligence and strategic affairs, affirmed, it is unlikely for Israel, particularly Mossad, to be involved in such an assassination as it never targets such individuals. But one should not forget that it was under President Raisi that Iran launched its first-ever direct attack on Israel, the single largest drone attack ever carried out by any country.

President Raisi and his top diplomat left a legacy far greater than what they achieved while in power. Their deaths are more impactful than the assassination of President Mohammad Ali Rajaei and Prime Minister Mohammad Javad Bahonar, who were cut short in an explosion set by the Mojahedin-e Khalq Organisation, in August 1981. Despite expectations of seclusion and controversy, Raisi navigated international relations adeptly, maintaining uranium enrichment and escalating tensions with the West, but also restoring ties with Saudi Arabia, which advanced peace talks in Yemen and prevented military escalation.

This diplomatic success, seen as strategic pragmatism, opened dialogue with other regional powers and reduced tensions. Raisi revived the Chabahar port deal with India, defying US sanctions and facilitated a major prisoner exchange with the US, demonstrating diplomatic flexibility. Though Iran was blamed for supporting Hamas in the October 2023 attacks on Israel, no concrete evidence linked Iran directly, yet its backing of such groups has increased its regional influence and garnered support for Palestinians from other Arab countries. Iran lost two great politicians, but it is hard to assume it will change the Iranian political structure rather it will be strengthened.

(The writer is a Sri Lankan journalist and author. Views are personal)

## The crisis in Kerala's State-run hospitals runs deep

The alarming frequency of medical mishaps in Kerala's Government hospitals paints a dire picture of the State's healthcare system

The day is not far off when all the Government-run hospitals in Kerala will spot the hoarding "Patients, enter at your own risk". This is not an exaggerated Statement as botched-up surgeries and wrong diagnoses have become the hallmarks of State-run hospitals.

Recently, a four-year-old girl was admitted to Government Medical College Hospital in Kozhikode for the removal of her sixth finger. However, the doctor who performed the surgery operated on her tongue while leaving the finger untouched. Though her parents alerted the hospital authorities, the initial reaction was denial of the faux pas by the latter. Remember, the Kozhikode Medical College



KUMAR CHELLAPPAN

and Hospital is a most sought-after institution by prospective medical students! The police have filed a FIR against Bejohn Johnson, the doctor who performed the surgery and has slapped charges on him under IPC Sections 336 (endangering the life or personal safety of others) and 337 (causing hurt by an act endangering the life or personal safety of others). In all probability, the general public

would forget this incident as more and more cases like this come up daily from the Government hospitals.

Controversies are not new to the GMCH Kozhikode. In 2023 July, it was reported that a woman who underwent a caesarian in the hospital in 2017 developed severe pain in her abdomen. It was found that a pair of forceps was accidentally left in her stomach after the 2017 surgery and she was living with the same till acute pain made her approach the hospital in 2023. The hospital authorities found to their surprise that Harshinia, the patient, had a pair of mosquito to artery forceps in her stomach post the caesarian which was caused by medical negligence. The police as well as the investigating doctors con-

firmed the finding and sent their reports to the minister for health Veena George. The minister, a former newsreader in a private TV channel who made a lateral entry into the CPI(M) is yet to take any action on the incident while Harshinia is staging a sit-in in front of the medical college hospital demanding solatium. The standard reply given by the Department of Health is that it was an isolated incident that is being blown out of proportion by vested interests.

In yet another shocking incident, a patient admitted to the ICU post-surgery was raped and molested by a hospital employee who is a trade union leader affiliated with the CPI(M). The nursing officer who reported the matter to the

higher authorities was shunted out to a far-off hospital while the rapist is walking free in search of his next victim. Even doctors and nurses are not free from attacks by patients and their relations. In May 2023, Vandana Das, a 22-year-old doctor working as an intern in Kottarakkara Government Hospital was stabbed to death by a drug addict suffering from withdrawal paranoia while the police and her colleagues remained mute spectators. Even as this article is written, here comes a report from GMCH Kozhikode about a complaint from a patient. The implant meant for another patient was wrongly inserted into the complainant's hand. These events are sufficient to prove the CPI(M)'s claim that

Kerala is the State with the best healthcare facilities is a blatant lie. Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan exhorts people from other States and countries to visit Kerala for world-class health care.

The authenticity of the Kerala Model of Development and Health Care has come down like a pack of cards. According to senior doctors who have been in Government service for more than three decades, the ruling CPI(M) itself is behind the collapse of Kerala's health sector. "The CPI(M) owns super speciality hospitals across the State named after its late leaders. Since the State-run hospitals have collapsed, the party can make a giant kill by forcing the patients to these party-run hospitals which are no different from corporate

hospitals. The CPI(M) is the leader of the hospital mafia in Kerala," said a veteran doctor. There are not enough specialist doctors to meet the requirements of patients. The trust deficit between doctors and the Government has reached a point of no return.

Kerala is one of the States that saw maximum casualties during the COVID-19 pandemic though the Government managed to cover up the details with its carrot-and-stick policy. The claims by both the ministers K K Shylaja (2016-2021) and Veena George (2021-till date) were found to be stranger than fiction as nearly one lakh deaths have been reported from the State since the pandemic was detected for the first time in 2020. Though the Kerala

Government declared time and again that the State would develop its vaccine, K-Vaccine, the announcement remains on paper. The State of health in Kerala is such that whenever he is afflicted with a common cold, Pinarayi Vijayan takes the first available flight to the USA where Mayo Clinic is his favourite destination. The same is the case with ministers as well as CPI(M) leaders who have an inherent weakness for anything associated with the imperialists. While the chief minister himself asks people from other countries to come to Kerala for medical treatment, he is not sure about the quality of treatment in the State-run hospitals.

(The writer is a special correspondent with the Pioneer, views are personal)



# 'Israeli airstrikes kill 35 in Rafah'

**AP ■ DEIR-AL-BALAH**  
Palestinian health workers said Israeli airstrikes have killed at least 35 people and hit tents for displaced people in the southern Gaza city of Rafah, and "numerous" others were trapped in flaming debris. Gaza's Health Ministry said women and children made up most of the dead and dozens of wounded. The attacks came on Sunday, two days after the International Court of Justice ordered Israel to end its military offensive in Rafah, where more than half of Gaza's population had sought shelter before Israel's incursion earlier this month. Tens of thousands of people remain in the area while many others have fled. Footage from the scene of the largest airstrike showed heavy destruction. Israel's army confirmed the strike and said it hit a Hamas installation and killed two senior Hamas militants. It said it was investigating reports that civilians were harmed. Defence Minister Yoav Gallant was in Rafah on Sunday and was briefed on the "deepening of operations" there, his office said. A spokesperson with the Palestinian Red Crescent Society said the death toll was likely to rise as search and rescue efforts continued in Rafah's Tal al-Sultan neighbourhood about two kilometres northwest of the city centre. The society asserted that the location had been designated by Israel as a "humanitarian area". The neighbourhood is not included in areas that Israel's military ordered evacuated earlier this month. The airstrike was reported hours after Hamas fired a barrage of rockets from Gaza that set off air raid sirens as far away as Tel Aviv for the first time in months in a show of resilience more than seven months into Israel's massive air, sea and ground offensive. There were no reports of casualties in what appeared to be the first long-range rocket attack from Gaza since January. Hamas' military wing claimed

responsibility. Israel's military said eight projectiles crossed into Israel after being launched from Rafah and "a number" were intercepted, and the launcher was destroyed. Earlier Sunday, dozens of aid trucks entered Gaza from southern Israel under a new agreement to bypass the Rafah crossing with Egypt after Israeli forces seized the Palestinian side of it earlier this month. Israel's military said 126 aid trucks entered via the nearby Kerem Shalom crossing. But it was not immediately clear if humanitarian groups could access the aid — including medical supplies — because of fighting. The crossing has been largely inaccessible because of Israel's offensive in Rafah. United Nations agencies say it is usually too dangerous to retrieve the aid. The World Health Organization last week said an expanded Israeli incursion in Rafah would have "disastrous" impact. "With the humanitarian operation near collapse, the secretary-general emphasizes that the Israeli authorities must facilitate the safe pickup and delivery of humanitarian supplies from Egypt entering Kerem Shalom," the spokesperson for UN chief Antonio Guterres said in a statement. Egypt refuses to reopen its side of the Rafah crossing until control of the Gaza side is handed back to Palestinians. It agreed to temporarily divert traffic through Kerem Shalom, Gaza's main cargo terminal, after a call between US President Joe Biden and Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi. The war between Israel and Hamas has killed nearly 36,000 Palestinians, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, which does not distinguish between civilians and fighters in its count. Israel blames civilian deaths on Hamas because the militants operate in dense, residential areas. Around 80% of Gaza's 2.3 million people have fled their homes, severe hunger is widespread and U.N. officials say parts of the territory are experiencing famine.

# Israeli strike in Lebanon hurts several

**Bint Jbeil (Lebanon) (AP):** An Israeli strike targeting a motorcycle in southern Lebanon on Monday hit next to a hospital entrance, killing at least one person and wounding several civilians who were gathered outside, local health officials said. The strike killed the motorcycle driver in the town of Bint Jbeil. It was not immediately clear who the driver was. The Israeli army did not immediately give a statement on the strike but said it had targeted other areas of southern Lebanon in response to "terrorist launches." The Lebanese militant group Hezbollah has been exchanging strikes with Israeli forces in the border area almost daily since Oct 8, a day after the Israel-Hamas war in Gaza began. Mohammed Suleiman, director of the Salah Ghandour Hospital in Bint Jbeil, said they had received one person killed and nine wounded in the strike, most of whom were "civilians who were in front of the hospital, where family members and people accompanying the patients usually gather". Two of the wounded were in "highly sensitive" condition, he said. The strike also caused minor damage to the hospital, an Associated Press photographer at the scene said. Israeli strikes have killed more than 400 people in Lebanon since the war in Gaza began, most of them militants with Hezbollah and allied groups but also including more than 70 civilians and non-combatants. On the Israeli side, strikes from Lebanon have killed 15 soldiers and 10 civilians. The clashes have displaced tens of thousands on each side of the border. Western countries, in particular the US and France, have come forward with a series of proposals for a cessation of hostilities on the Lebanon-Israel border. Hezbollah has refused to enter into an agreement until a ceasefire is implemented in Gaza. Initially, the proposals stipulated that Hezbollah would move its forces several kilometers away from the border, but a French diplomatic official said the latest proposal has abandoned this idea as Hezbollah would not agree to it unless Israel also halted its overflights in Lebanese airspace.

# EU-Israel relations take nosedive

**AP ■ BRUSSELS**  
Relations between the European Union and Israel took a nosedive on the eve of the diplomatic recognition of a Palestinian state by EU members Ireland and Spain, with Madrid suggesting sanctions should be considered against Israel for its continued attacks in the southern Gaza city of Rafah. Israeli Foreign Minister Katz told Spain that its consulate in Jerusalem will not be allowed to help Palestinians. At the same time, the EU's foreign policy chief Josep Borrell, a Spaniard, threw his full weight to support the International Criminal Court, whose prosecutor is seeking an arrest warrant against

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and others, including the leaders of Hamas. "The prosecutor of the court has been strongly intimidated and accused of antisemitism," Borrell said. "The word antisemitic, it's too heavy. It's too important." Angry words abounded Monday, with Katz accusing Spain of "rewarding terror" by recognising a Palestinian state, and saying that "the days of the Inquisition are over." He referred to the infamous Spanish institution started in the 15th century to maintain Roman Catholic orthodoxy that forced Jews and Muslims to flee, convert to Catholicism or, in some instances, face death. "No

one will force us to convert our religion or threaten our existence - those who harm us, we will harm in return," said Katz. Even though the EU and its member nations have been steadfast in condemning the Oct 7 Hamas-led attack in which militants stormed across the Gaza border into Israel, killing 1,200 people and taking some 250 hostage, the bloc has been equally critical of Israel's ensuing offensive that has killed more than 35,000 Palestinians, according to Gaza's Health Ministry. The latest attacks have centred on Rafah, where Palestinian health workers said Israeli airstrikes killed at least 35 people Sunday, hit

tents for displaced people and left "numerous" others trapped in flaming debris. The UN's top court, the International Court of Justice, on Friday demanded that Israel immediately halt its offensive on Rafah, even if it stopped short of ordering a cease-fire for the Gaza enclave. "Israel has to stop its offensive in Rafah," Spanish Foreign Minister José Manuel Albares said. Spain, Ireland and non-EU member Norway plan to make official their recognition of a Palestinian state on Tuesday. Their joint announcement last week triggered an angry response from Israeli authorities, which summoned the countries'

ambassadors in Tel Aviv to the Israeli Foreign Ministry, where they were filmed while being shown videos of the Oct 7 Hamas attack and kidnapping. Albares criticised the treatment of the ambassadors. "We reject something that is not within diplomatic courtesy and the customs of the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations," he said. "But at the same time we have also agreed that we are not going to fall into any provocation that distances us from our goal," he added. "Our aim is to recognise the state of Palestine tomorrow, make all possible efforts to achieve a permanent ceasefire as soon as possible and also, in the end, to achieve that definitive peace."

# UK Labour leader Starmer woos voters with vow to safeguard national security

**AP ■ LONDON**  
British opposition leader Keir Starmer made his first major speech of the UK election campaign Monday, telling undecided voters that they can trust his Labour Party to safeguard the country's economy, borders and security. Starmer is the favourite to win the July 4 election, with polls giving Labour a double-digit lead over the governing Conservatives under Prime Minister Rishi Sunak. But many electors remain undecided, and Starmer sought to address a perception that the left-of-centre Labour Party is weaker on defence and security than the centre-right Conservatives. "The very foundation of any good government is economic security, border security, national security," Starmer said during a speech in the seaside town of Lancing on England's south coast. "This is the foundation, the bedrock that our manifesto and our first steps, will be built upon." Starmer accused the



Conservatives of presiding over "desperate chaos." Britain's first election since 2019 follows several turbulent years that saw a global pandemic and a cost-of-living crisis triggered by Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Those international crises were exacerbated by problems of the Conservatives' own making: a slew of ethics scandals that topped Prime Minister Boris Johnson in 2022, and the disastrous economic policies of his successor Liz Truss, who lasted only 49 days in office. Sunak had until December to call

an election and took most people — including those in his own party — by surprise when he announced last week that the vote would be held on July 4. Voters will elect lawmakers to fill all 650 seats in the House of Commons. The leader of the party that can command a Commons majority — either alone or in coalition — will become prime minister. The Conservatives, who have been in office for 14 years, are trying to overcome a widespread sense that voters want change, and Sunak's campaign got off to a faltering start. His announcement outside 10 Downing Street saw him drenched with rain and drowned out by protesters blasting a Labour campaign song. Sunak grabbed weekend headlines with an announcement that all 18-year-olds in Britain will have to perform a year of mandatory military or civilian national service if the Conservatives are reelected. The prime minister said the program would help "create a shared sense of purpose among our

young people and a renewed sense of pride in our country." The party faced questions about how the program would work and whether it could be made compulsory. Starmer said the announcement reflected the Conservatives' "desperation" to shore up its vote. Labour has lost four consecutive elections, in 2010, 2015, 2017 and 2019, and party leaders are wary of taking their poll lead for granted. Starmer, a lawyer and former chief prosecutor for England and Wales, remains an unknown quantity to many voters. In his speech he stressed his working-class roots as the son of a toolmaker and a nurse who was the first in his family to go to university. He said he had transformed Labour, moving it to the centre ground after taking over as leader in 2020 from staunch socialist Jeremy Corbyn. "Whatever the polls say, I know there are countless people who haven't decided how they'll vote in this election," Starmer said. "They're fed up with the failure,

# France to lift state of emergency

**Paris (AP):** French President Emmanuel Macron decided Monday to lift the state of emergency in the French Pacific territory of New Caledonia in a move meant to allow political dialogue following the unrest that left seven people dead and a trail of destruction, his office said. The president's office said in a statement the state of emergency won't be extended "for the moment" and will therefore end Monday at 8 pm in Paris, which is 5 am Tuesday in New Caledonia. The decision aims at "enabling meetings of the various components" of pro-independence movement FLNKS, the Kanak and Socialist National Liberation Front, and allow elected officials and other local leaders "in a position to call" for lifting the barricades to go there and meet with protesters, the statement said. Macron repeatedly pushed for the removal of protesters' barricades with leaders on both sides of New Caledonia's bitter divide — Indigenous Kanaks, who want independence, and the pro-Paris leaders, who do not

# N Korea plans to launch rocket soon

**AP ■ SEOUL**  
North Korea announced plans to launch a rocket apparently carrying its second military spy satellite during an eight-day period starting Monday, drawing quick, strong rebukes from neighbours South Korea and Japan. The notification of the planned launch, banned under UN resolutions, came as South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol and Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida met Chinese Premier Li Qiang in Seoul for their first trilateral meeting in more than four years. Japan's coast guard said it was notified by North Korea about its planned launch of a "satellite rocket", with a warning of caution in the waters between the Korean Peninsula and China and east of the main Philippine island of Luzon beginning Monday through midnight June 3. North Korea provides Japan with its launch information because Japan's coast guard coordinates and distributes

maritime safety information in East Asia. North Korea's planned launch is thought to be an attempt to put its second military spy satellite into orbit. South Korea's military said Friday it detected signs of suspected preparations to launch a spy satellite at North Korea's main Tongchangri launch facility in the northwest. The UN bans North Korea from conducting any satellite launches, viewing them as covers for testing long-range missile technology. North Korea has steadfastly maintained it has the right to launch satellites and test missiles. It says spy satellites will allow it to better monitor the US and South Korea's moves and enhance the precision strike capability of its nuclear-capable missiles. "Any launch (by North Korea) using ballistic missile technology would directly violate UN Security Council resolutions and undermine peace and security of the region and the world," Yoon said at the start of the meeting with Kishida and Li. "If North

Korea presses ahead with its launch despite the international warning, I think the international community must sternly deal with it." Kishida said he strongly urges North Korea to cancel the launch. China is a North Korean ally, and Li didn't mention the North Korean satellite. In phone talks earlier Monday, senior diplomats from Japan, South Korea and the United States agreed to call on North Korea to abandon the launch. South Korea's Unification Ministry, which deals with North Korea, separately called a satellite launch by the North "a provocation that seriously threatens our and regional security." Later Monday, South Korea mobilised 20 fighter jets for a drill meant to demonstrate its resolve to punish North Korea in the event of provocation, according to South Korea's military. Japanese officials said their missile interceptors remain ready to shoot down any debris from a North Korean rocket if it falls on

Japanese territory. Last November, North Korea sent its first military reconnaissance satellite into orbit as part of efforts to build a space-based surveillance network to cope with what it calls increasing US-led military threats. North Korean leader Kim Jong Un later told a governing party meeting that the country would launch three additional military spy satellites in 2024. Whether the North Korean satellites can produce militarily meaningful imagery is widely doubted, but some civilian experts say operating several satellites could help North Korea continuously monitor big enemy targets. The latest launch notification to Japan identifies the same danger zones for potential rocket debris as those identified prior to North Korea's last launch. That suggests North Korea would use the same first and second rocket stages as before, said Chang Young-keun, a missile expert at the Seoul-based Korea Research Institute for National Strategy.

# Hungary's five-time PM Orbán facing new contender in upcoming EU polls

**AP ■ BUDAPEST**  
About three months ago, a scandal rocked five-time nationalist Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's Fidesz party which prides itself on upholding family values and Christian conservatism. As party leaders attempted damage control after close Orbán allies, President Katalin Novák and Justice Minister Judit Varga, were forced to resign over a presidential pardon for a man convicted of covering up a string of child sexual abuses, Péter Magyar saw a chance and broke ranks with the party in February. In a matter of weeks, Magyar — a 43-year-old lawyer — built a political movement, now poised to become Hungary's largest opposition force and challenge Orbán's party in the June 9 European Parliament and municipal elections.



Magyar said in a recent interview with The Associated Press that the upcoming vote was a "prelude" to his planned run in the 2026 Hungarian national elections. Whether he can score a win remains to be seen. Orbán has delivered his Fidesz party four straight wins in

Hungary's parliament since 2010 and secured more than half the vote in the last two elections for the European Parliament. Polls show his party is still expected to outperform opponents despite a dip in popularity and a deep economic slump that have cost the premier thousands of supporters. Still, Magyar seized on the growing disenchantment with the populist Orbán and breathed life into the existing but inactive Tisztelet és Szabadság, or Respect and Freedom, party. In a series of widely followed interviews and public rallies, he accused Orbán's government of overseeing deep corruption and a pervasive government-controlled propaganda network while presenting himself as a more moderate conservative alternative. "Our offer is very simple: We

must do something completely different in Hungary," he said in the interview, adding that Hungarians were "fed up with the fact that there is an economic, political, moral, legal, and subsistence crisis here in 2024." Polls in May showed that Magyar's party had the support of around a quarter of likely voters for the June elections. However, voters have been disappointed before. Two years ago, around 2 million Hungarians pinned their hopes for change on a coalition of six opposition parties that had put aside political differences to form a united front against Fidesz in national elections. But when Orbán's party once again won in a landslide, infighting followed, leading to the de facto dissolution of the coalition and a crisis of credibility for the opposition.

# Tornadoes rip through Texas, Oklahoma at least 15 dead

**PTI ■ HOUSTON**  
At least 15 people, including two kids, have died as powerful storms ravaged the states of Texas, Oklahoma and Arkansas in the central US, destroying homes and plunging thousands into darkness amid rising temperatures over the Memorial Day weekend. Seven fatalities were reported in Cooke County, Texas, near the Oklahoma border, where a tornado Saturday night ripped through a rural area near a mobile home park, officials said. Storms also caused damage in Oklahoma, where guests at an outdoor wedding were injured. "It's just a trail of debris left. The devastation is pretty severe," Cooke County Sheriff Ray Sappington said. The dead included two children, aged 2 and 5, and three members of a family, the sheriff said. A tornado tore apart houses and businesses, flipped

mobile homes and knocked down trees and power lines. Areas near the community of Valley View were especially hard-hit. Sappington said 60 to 80 people were injured at a truck stop called the AP Travel Center on Interstate 35. Many had rushed there to take shelter. Semitrailers were overturned further to the south in the neighbouring Denton County, closer to Dallas. Multiple people were taken to hospitals, some by helicopter, but the full extent of their injuries was not immediately known. More than 4,70,000 people were without power in states stretching from Texas to Kansas, Missouri, Arkansas, Tennessee and Kentucky, according to a power outage website. Hugo Parra, who lives in Farmers Branch, north of Dallas, said he rode out the storm with about 40 to 50 people in the bathroom of a gas station. "A firefighter came to

check on us and he said, 'You're very lucky,'" Mr Parra told the Associated Press. "The best way to describe this is the wind tried to rip us out of the bathrooms." At least five people were reported killed in Arkansas, including a 26-year-old woman who was found dead outside a destroyed home in Olvey, a small community in Boone County, according to Daniel Bolen of the county's emergency management office. Two people died in Oklahoma, Michael Dunham, deputy director of the Mayes County Emergency Management, confirmed to weather.com. Dunham said search and rescue efforts were continuing, with teams going house to house. Widespread damage was reported in Claremore, where 23 people were injured. Nineteen of those victims were transported to local hospitals, three with life-threatening injuries.

# Georgian parl rejects veto of 'foreign agents' law

**AP ■ TBILISI**  
A Georgian parliament committee on Monday rejected the president's veto of the "foreign agents" legislation that has sparked massive protests for weeks. The move by the parliament's judiciary committee sets up the possibility of a vote of the full legislature on Tuesday to override President Salome Zourabichvili's veto of the measure, which she and other critics say will restrict media freedom and obstruct Georgia's chances of joining the European Union. The law would require news media and non-governmental organisations that get more than 20 per cent of their budget from abroad to register as "carrying out the interests of a foreign power." Opponents denounce it as "the Russian law" because it resembles measures pushed through by the Kremlin. Zourabichvili vetoed the law on May 18 after it was passed in parliament by deputies from the governing Georgian Dream party and its allies. That bloc



has sufficient votes in parliament to override the veto. Large protests have repeatedly gripped the capital, Tbilisi, as the measure made its way through parliament. On Sunday, Zourabichvili and Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze decried each other

in speeches at a ceremony marking Georgia's Independence Day. "As the spectre of Russia looms over us, partnership and rapprochement with Europe are the true path to preserving and strengthening our independence and peace. Those who

sabotage and undermine this path trample upon and damage the peaceful and secure future of our country, hindering the path towards becoming a full member of the free and democratic world," Zourabichvili said. But Kobakhidze sharply criticised

Zourabichvili. "It was the unity and reasonable steps of the people and their elected government that gave us the opportunity to maintain peace in the country for the past two years despite existential threats and multiple betrayals, including the betrayal of the president of Georgia," he said. The European Union's foreign policy arm has said adoption of the law "negatively impacts Georgia's progress on the EU path". Critics say it may have been driven by Russia to thwart Georgia's chances of further integrating with the West. US Secretary of State Antony Blinken on Thursday announced that travel sanctions would be imposed on Georgian officials "who are responsible for or complicit in undermining democracy in Georgia." He added that "it remains our hope that Georgia's leaders will reconsider the draft law and take steps to move forward with their nation's democratic and Euro-Atlantic aspirations."



# Ukrainian President visits Spain

AP ■ MADRID

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy arrived in Madrid on Monday where he was expected to sign a bilateral security agreement with Spain that will help his country fight its more than two-year war with Russia amid a recent offensive by the Kremlin's forces.

Spain's King Felipe VI met Zelenskyy at the capital's Barajas airport. The Ukrainian leader was due to hold talks with Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez about what local media reported as a planned 1.1 billion euros (\$1.2 billion) agreement for Spain to supply Ukraine with more weapons. Zelenskyy had been due to visit Spain earlier this month but he postponed all his foreign trips after the Kremlin's forces launched a cross-border offensive in the northeastern Kharkiv region and left Ukrainian troops reeling.

That push has further strained Ukraine's already depleted army, which in recent months has been fighting Russia's intense drive deeper into the partially occupied eastern



Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, left, is welcomed by Spain's Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez at the Moncloa palace in Madrid on Monday. AP/PTI

Donetsk region. Zelenskyy said on Sunday that the Kremlin's army is mustering at another point in Russia, farther north but close to the approximately 1,000-km (600-mile) front line, presumably to try and

crack Ukrainian resistance in the area. A Western intelligence assessment suggested that Russia's Kharkiv offensive has subsided. "The northern Kharkiv front has likely stabilised with

Russian territorial control fragmented and not joined up," the UK defence ministry said Sunday. "Russia's gains in this axis will be limited in the coming week, as Russia's initial momentum has been con-

tained by Ukrainian resistance." That is in line with Zelenskyy's claim last Friday that Ukrainian forces have secured "combat control" of areas where Russian troops entered the Kharkiv region. The onslaught unfolding as the weather improves has brought Ukraine's biggest military test since Russia's full-scale invasion in February 2022. Slow deliveries of support by its Western partners, especially a lengthy delay in US military aid, have left Ukraine at the mercy of Russia's bigger army and air force. Spanish newspaper El Pais, citing unidentified sources familiar with the bilateral deal, said it would include another batch of US-made Patriot air defence systems that Ukraine has long pleaded for to help it fend off Russian missile attacks. Other items include more Leopard tanks for Ukraine and 155mm artillery shells that are the most used by Ukraine on the battlefield, El Pais said. Spain will also continue training Ukrainian troops and treating its wounded soldiers.

# Poland plans to fortify its borders with Russia, Belarus

AP ■ WARSAW

Defence officials in NATO member Poland on Monday presented a plan to strengthen anti-drone surveillance and on-ground military defence through a system of fortifications and barriers along about 700 kilometres (430 miles) of its eastern border with Russia and Russian ally Belarus. The government says Poland, which supports neighbouring Ukraine in its defence against Russia's aggression, is being targeted by hostile actions from Russia and Belarus. They include cyberattacks, attempted arson and migrants being pushed illegally across the border, which officials describe as intended to destabilise the European Union, of which Poland is a member. The government is also making preparations in the case of a military attack, while stressing the primary role of deterrence. The government of Prime Minister Donald Tusk has planned a range of security measures including in cyberspace, as

well as a more than USD 2.5 billion investment in strengthening surveillance, deterrence and defence along the eastern border, a system known as Shield-East that is to be completed in 2028. Work on it has started, officials said. "The goal of the shield is to protect the territory of Poland, hamper the mobility of our adversary's troops while making such mobility easier for our own troops and to protect civilians," Defence Minister Wladyslaw Kosiniak-Kamysz said at a news conference, adding that local communities understand the need for such steps. The shield will include "all kinds of fortifications, barriers, monitoring of the air space on every level and upgrading the existing systems," and will be integrated with the defence system across the country, Kosiniak-Kamysz said. He stressed it was the biggest program to strengthen NATO's eastern flank since 1945, when World War II ended. Chief of Staff Gen. Wieslaw Kukula said it will

include a network of state-of-the-art anti-drone monitoring and defence towers, anti-tank barriers and ditches, bunkers and shelters, as well as space for potential mine fields. He stressed their primary role is to deter any potential aggressor. The officials said the system will be part of a regional defence infrastructure built jointly with the Baltic states — Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia — that are also on NATO's eastern flank. The funding will come from the government, as Poland spends over 4 per cent of its GDP on defence, but help will also be sought from the EU because the system will also strengthen the eastern border of the 27-member bloc, they said. Some observers noted that the much-publicised presentation came two weeks ahead of elections to the European Parliament, where Poland, a nation of some 38 million, holds 52 seats, and could be partly seen as a campaign element for the government that took office in December.

# PML-N and PPP invite Imran Khan's party to 'meaningful' talks

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

At least 23 militants affiliated with the banned Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) were killed and seven Pakistani soldiers died in three separate clashes since Sunday in the troubled north-western province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the army said on Monday. According to a statement issued by the media wing of the Pakistan Army, the fighting took place on Sunday and Monday as the security forces increased pressure on the rebels affiliated with the TTP, which has been allegedly operating out of Afghanistan. "Twenty-three terrorists were sent to hell by the security forces in three separate operations in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province," the army said.

The army stated that an intelligence-based operation was conducted on Sunday in the Hassan Khel area near Peshawar in which six terrorists were successfully neutralised by the security forces and multiple hideouts were busted. However, an officer and a soldier were killed in the

# 23 militants, 7 soldiers killed in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa clashes

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD



clash, it said. In another operation conducted in the Tank district of the province on Monday, Pakistan troops effectively engaged the terrorists' location, as a result of which ten terrorists were killed. The third clash occurred in the Bagh area of Khyber district, wherein the security forces killed seven terrorists while two were injured. However, during the intense exchange of fire, five soldiers were killed. "A large quantity of weapons, ammunition and explosives was also recovered from the killed terrorists, who remained actively involved in numerous

terrorist activities against the security forces as well as the innocent civilians," according to the army. It said that sanitisation operations are being carried out to eliminate any other terrorists found in the area. The army said that the country's forces were determined to wipe out the menace of terrorism. Pakistan has been facing a resurgent TTP which allegedly has a strong presence in Afghanistan and uses its territory to hide and train and also launch cross-border attacks. Pakistan has been pushing Kabul to take action against them but so far it has been of no avail.

# China backs Pak probe into militant attacks on its workers; silent on Af Taliban involvement

PTI ■ BEIJING

China on Monday voiced its support for Pakistan's investigation into the recent suicide attack targeting Chinese personnel at a hydroelectric dam in that country but refrained from holding Afghanistan's Taliban interim government responsible for sheltering the militants, as alleged by Islamabad. Five Chinese engineers and their Pakistani driver were killed when an explosives-packed vehicle rammed into their bus in the troubled province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in March, in the second suicide attack on the personnel working on the China-backed hydropower project since 2021. The Chinese were working on the Dasu hydropower project, which is about 300 km to the north of Islamabad. The 4,320 MW project is being constructed by China Gezhouba with funding from the World Bank. "China attaches great importance to the important progress made by the Pakistani side on the investigation of the terrorist attack," Foreign Ministry spokesper-

son Mao Ning told a media briefing here. She was responding to a question about Pakistan's Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi press conference on Sunday during which he asked Afghanistan's Taliban government to hand over the banned Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) terrorists allegedly involved in the attack on Chinese workers. Naqvi alleged that the attack was planned in Afghanistan and executed with the help of handlers and facilitators based in Pakistan. "Whether Afghanistan tries the terrorists (in the court of law) or not, it should hand over the militants to Pakistan," he had said. Reacting to Naqvi's allegations, Mao said China supports Pakistan in continuing to get to the full bottom of what happened, and hunting down and bringing to justice all the perpetrators. "China will continue to work with Pakistan to strengthen security cooperation and ensure the safety and security of Chinese personnel, projects, and institutions in Pakistan," she said, adding that

terrorism is a common enemy of humanity and a scourge against regional development and stability. Without naming Afghanistan, Mao said, "China calls on countries in the region to strengthen counter-terrorism cooperation, root out all terrorist organisations, remove their breeding ground, and protect the common security and development interests of all countries." China is in a quandary about the allegations and counter allegations by Pakistan and Afghan Taliban, previously close allies, accusing each other of harbouring terrorists. Beijing also shares close ties with the Taliban government in Afghanistan and has extended diplomatic recognition to the regime. While Pakistan accuses the Taliban government of harbouring TTP militants, Kabul charged Islamabad of sheltering Daesh (IS) terrorists. The Taliban government has already rejected Pakistan's allegations. In a statement on May 8, the Afghan Defence Ministry rejected Pakistan's claim that the

plot to kill five Chinese engineers was hatched in Afghanistan. The Afghan defence ministry spokesperson Enayatullah Khwarazmi in a statement termed the claims "irresponsible and far from the reality". He said blaming Afghanistan for such incidents was a "failed attempt to divert attention from the truth", adding that the killing of Chinese citizens in an area which was "under tight security cover of the Pakistani army shows the weakness of the Pakistani security agencies". Khwarazmi had said the Taliban government has "assured China on this matter and the country has also understood the fact that Afghans are not involved in such issues". He alleged that members of the militant Islamic State group were "entering Afghanistan from Pakistan". "We have much evidence of Daesh (IS) who came to Afghanistan from the territory of Pakistan, and Pakistan's territory being used against us for which Pakistan should answer," Khwarazmi said.

# Offered hassle-free re-election for allowing airbase in B'desh: Hasina

PTI ■ DHAKA

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina said that she was offered a hassle-free re-election in the January 7 polls if she allowed a foreign country to build an airbase inside Bangladeshi territory. Hasina, 76, ruling the strategically located South Asian nation since 2009, secured a fifth overall term in the one-sided election in January, which was boycotted by the main opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) led by former prime minister Khalida Zia. "If I allowed a certain country to build an airbase in Bangladesh, then I would have had no problem," The Daily Star Bangladesh quoted Hasina as saying on Sunday. She, however, did not name the country that had made the offer to her but emphasised that the offer came from a White man. "The offer came from a White man," Hasina, the daughter of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the founding father and first presi-

dent of Bangladesh. "It may appear that it is aimed at only one country, but it is not. I know where else they intend to go," she said, adding that this is why her Awami League party-led government is always in trouble. "There will be more trouble. But don't worry about it," she said. When asked about her response to the "White man" who put forward the offer, the prime minister said she made the same reply as she did in 2001 when the US offered to sell the country's gas to India. "I've clearly said that I'm the daughter of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. . . we won our Liberation War, I don't want to come to power by renting part of the country or handing it over to some other country and I don't need power," she said. The premier said she would only come to power if the people wanted, and wouldn't if they did not want her to see as prime minister.

Leaders of South Korea, China and Japan were set to meet Monday for their first trilateral meeting in more than four years as they seek to improve long-complicated relations that are key to regional peace. No major breakthrough was expected during the gathering in Seoul. But experts said just restarting the countries' highest-level annual meeting was a positive sign for cooperation among the three Northeast Asian neighbours. On the eve of the meeting, South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol, Chinese Premier Li Qiang and Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida had rounds of bilateral meetings among themselves to discuss how to boost economic and other cooperation. But some thorny topics were also brought up, like North Korea, Taiwan and the South China Sea. After meeting with Li, Kishida told reporters that he expressed serious concerns about the

# Leaders of S Korea, China and Japan to resume trilateral meeting

AP ■ SEOUL



situations in the South China Sea, Hong Kong and China's northwestern Xinjiang region. He said Japan was closely monitoring developments on self-governed Taiwan as well. Kishida referred to China's military assertiveness in the South China Sea, clampdowns on pro-democracy movements

in Hong Kong and human rights abuses against minorities in Xinjiang. Last week, China also launched a large military exercise around Taiwan to show its anger over the inauguration of the island's new president who refuses to accept its insistence that Taiwan is part of China. When

Yoon met with Li separately Sunday, he spoke about North Korea's pursuit of nuclear weapons and its deepening military ties with Russia, and he asked China, as a permanent member of the UN Security Council, to contribute to promoting peace on the Korean Peninsula, according to Yoon's office. South Korea, Japan and the US have long urged China — North Korea's major ally and economic pipeline — to use its leverage to persuade the North to abandon its nuclear ambitions. But China is suspected of avoiding fully implementing UN sanctions on North Korea and sending clandestine aid shipments to its impoverished, socially neighbor. In a development that could further raise tensions on the Korean Peninsula, Japan's coast guard said Monday that North Korea informed it of a plan to launch a satellite by early next week, a likely reference to the North's push to place its second military spy satellite. North Korea has said it needs spy satellites to better monitor South Korea

and the United States and improve the precision-striking capabilities of its missiles. The sensitive China-involving topics aren't on the official agendas at Monday's meeting. Officials in South Korea, the host of the meeting, said a joint statement after Monday's trilateral meeting would cover the leaders' discussion on cooperation in areas like people-to-people exchanges, climate change, trade, health issues, technology and disaster responses. The three Asian nations together represent about 25 per cent of global gross domestic product, and they are closely linked to one another economically and culturally.

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# 7 die, 15 mn without power as cyclone Remal batters B'desh

PTI ■ DHAKA

At least seven people were killed and millions were left without power as Severe Cyclone 'Remal' lashed the coasts of Bangladesh with devastating winds of up to 120 kph and storm surges, inundating hundreds of villages. 'Remal' weakened into a cyclonic storm on Monday morning, sustaining wind speeds of 80-90 kilometres per hour, following landfall around midnight of Sunday, the Met Department said. The department said that the weather system, which lay 150 km northeast of Sagar Island at 5.30 am, brought torrential rain and moved northeastwards to weaken further into a cyclonic storm. Remal is the first cyclone in the Bay of Bengal ahead of this year's

monsoon season, which runs from June to September. The cyclone was named Remal (meaning sand in Arabic) by Oman, according to a system of naming cyclones in the Indian Ocean region. The cyclone has been accompanied by gusty winds and heavy rains, impacting areas including Barisal, Bhola, Patuakhali, Satkhira, and Chattogram. In Patuakhali, one person was washed away by a storm surge while returning home to bring his sister and aunt to a shelter. Another person died in Satkhira after falling as he ran for cover during the storm. Five people were killed in Barishal, Bhola and Chattogram, Dhaka-based Somoy TV reported.

In Mongla, a trawler sank, leaving two people, including a child, missing. The rural power authority has cut off electricity to 15 million people in coastal areas to minimise the damage from 'Remal', BD News reported. The power outages have lasted over 12 hours in some areas, but electricity workers are preparing to restore the connections once the storm subsides. Biswanath Sikder, chief engineer (planning and operation) of the Bangladesh Rural Electrification Board, said the storm was still ongoing as of 9:45 am in the coastal areas. He estimated that a total of about 15 million people in the affected areas were without power.

According to the Met Office, Cyclone Remal has moved northward, crossing the coast and is currently positioned near Koira in Khulna. The cyclone is expected to continue its northward trajectory, bringing increased rainfall and weakening to a lower intensity within the next 2-3 hours, the Met Department of Bangladesh said in a special bulletin at 3:30 am on Monday. 'Remal' sustained wind speeds of 80-90 kilometres per hour, following landfall around midnight of Sunday, the Indian Met Department said. Heavy to very heavy rainfall with wind gusts on Monday morning braced most of Bangladesh under the influence of the storm. Despite accurate forecasts and

increased public awareness, weak embankments failed to withstand the cyclone's force, inundating many villages. Coastal areas experienced waves as high as 5 to 6 feet, exacerbating the destruction, according to the Met Office. The storm on Sunday forced authorities to close the country's three seaports and the airport in the second-largest city Chattogram, BSS News reported. Maritime ports of Payra and Mongla have been advised to keep hoisted great danger signal no 10. As the cyclone progresses, the sea and coastal environments are predicted to gradually calm, although heavy rains and gusty winds persist in Dhaka and its surrounding areas. Fishing boats and trawlers oper-

ating in the North Bay of Bengal and the deep sea have been advised to remain in a safe harbour until further notice. Payra and Mongla ports have been instructed to hoist danger signal number 10, indicating severe conditions. The Meteorological Department has warned that due to the cyclone's intensity and the air pressure difference, coastal districts and their remote islands and chars could face wind-driven tides 8-12 feet above normal. Cyclone-prone Bangladesh designed most schools in coastal regions as cyclone shelters alongside dedicating structures to enable people to take refuge during surges and many of these multi-storey facilities have space for sheltering cattle as well.

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# Sensex scales 76,000 peak

## Nifty hits new high before closing lower; RIL, ITC biggest drag

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Sensex scaled the 76,000 level for the first time while Nifty hit a new lifetime peak before closing marginally down in highly volatile trade on Monday as investors booked profits in the last 30 minutes of trade. The 30-share BSE Sensex closed lower by 19.89 points or 0.03 per cent lower at 75,390.50. Intra-day, the barometer climbed 599.29 points or 0.79 per cent to an all-time peak of 76,009.68 following gains in select banking, financial and IT shares. However, investors preferred to book profits at record levels and the index declined around 835 points from the day's high to hit a low of 75,175.27. Broader Nifty of the NSE declined by 24.65 points or 0.11 per cent, to end at 22,932.45. The 50-issue barometer rose by 153.7 points or 0.66 per cent to hit a new lifetime high of 23,110.80 during the day. However, it tanked around 240 points at the fag-end due to selling in oil, energy and FMCG shares. Index heavyweight Reliance Industries declined nearly 1 per cent, dragging the benchmark indices into the negative. Selling in FMCG giant ITC also eroded gains. Equity benchmarks were on a record-breaking rally for the



third straight day ahead of the results of Lok Sabha polls and a rally in global markets. The results of the ongoing general elections will be declared on June 4. Sensex breached the historic 75,000-mark for the first time on April 9. It took 31 trading sessions for the benchmark to climb 1,000 points to reach the 76,000-mark on Monday. The BSE benchmark took 21 trading sessions to reach 75,000-mark on April 9 after hitting the 74,000-level on March 6. From the Sensex firms,

Wipro, NTPC, Sun Pharma, Mahindra & Mahindra, ITC and Reliance Industries were among the biggest laggards. IndusInd Bank, Axis Bank, Bajaj Finance, HDFC Bank, Larsen & Toubro and State Bank of India were among the major gainers. In Asian markets, Seoul, Tokyo, Shanghai and Hong Kong settled in the positive territory. European markets were also quoting in the green. Wall Street ended with gains on Friday. Global oil benchmark Brent

crude climbed 0.38 per cent to USD 82.44 a barrel. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 944.83 crore on Friday, according to exchange data. On Friday, the BSE benchmark dipped 7.65 points or 0.01 per cent to settle at 75,410.39. The Nifty breached the 23,000 mark for the first time on Friday. It, however, pared all the gains and ended with a marginal decline of 10.55 points or 0.05 per cent at 22,957.10.

# Record RBI dividend at 0.6 per cent of GDP may not be sustained: Fitch

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Fitch Ratings on Monday said the record-high dividend transfer by the RBI to the government is equivalent to 0.6 per cent of GDP, and such high level of dividends as a percentage of GDP is unlikely to be maintained. The board of India's central bank last week decided to transfer a record Rs 2.1 lakh crore dividend to the government out of the profits earned in fiscal 2023-24. This is more than double of Rs 1.02 lakh crore that was budgeted by the government. Fitch said an important driver of higher RBI profits appears to be higher interest revenue on foreign assets, though the central bank has not yet provided a detailed breakdown. "The RBI recently announced a record-high dividend transfer to the government equivalent to 0.6 per cent of GDP (Rs 2.1 trillion) from its operations in FY24. This is above the 0.3 per cent of GDP expected in the FY25 budget from February, so will aid the authorities in meeting near-term deficit reduction goals," the rating agency said in a statement. Fitch said transfers from the Reserve Bank of India to the government can be significant at the margin for fiscal performance but depend on various factors, including the size and performance of assets held on the central bank's balance sheet and India's exchange rate. Transfers may also be influenced by the RBI's views on what level of a buffer is appropriate to be maintained in balance sheet, it said. "The potential volatility of transfers means there is significant uncertainty about their medium-term path, and we do not anticipate that dividends as a share of GDP will be sustained at such a



high level," Fitch said. However, such windfall dividend transfer should help to ensure the 5.1 per cent of GDP deficit target for the fiscal year ending March 2025 (FY25) will be met and could be used to lower the deficit beyond the current target. The new government's budget, following the release of election results in June, is likely to be presented in July and will determine how the dividend will be used. The government has signalled it aims to narrow the deficit gradually to 4.5 per cent of GDP by FY26. Sustained deficit reduction, particularly if underpinned by durable revenue-raising reforms, would be positive for

India's sovereign rating fundamentals over the medium term, Fitch said. In its post-election budget, the new government will have two alternatives. First, the government could opt to keep the current deficit target for FY25, and the windfall could allow the authorities to further boost spending on infrastructure, or to offset upside spending surprises or lower-than-budgeted revenue, for example from divestment. Alternatively, all or part of the windfall could be saved, pushing the deficit to below 5.1 per cent of GDP. "The government's choice could give greater clarity around its medium-term fiscal priorities," Fitch said.

# Indya raises ₹50 crore from Sangita Jindal, others

PTI ■ MUMBAI

High Street Essentials, the makers of fashion brand Indya, on Monday announced a Rs 50-crore fundraise from JSW Group chairman Sajjan Jindal's wife Sangita Jindal and other investors. Three fourths of the funding is equity infusion for a minority stake, while the rest is debt, Indya's co-founder Shivani Poddar said. Other investors who have participated include family offices of SRF Group, Krishna Bodanapu of Cyient Technologies and Timmy Sarna from Pure Home + Living. Poddar said, while there are a lot of opportunities to benefit from the industrial or capital goods-focused JSW Group's businesses, the immediate driver is the synergies that are made possible courtesy the work done with village artisans by Sangita Jindal-headed JSW Foundation. Anurag Murali, also a co-founder of the company, said Indya can benefit from JSW's expertise in celebrity-led marketing and supply chain management in the future. It can be noted that a majority of big conglomerates have investments in fashion brands but nearly all such groups have retail ventures. The 2012-founded Indya, which delivered operational profit in April this year, will be utilising the newly raised



funds for business expansion, and plans to invest up to USD 3 million in FY25, which will include opening ten offline stores in the country, Murali said. At present, it has 12 exclusive brand outlets in eight cities, and 150 large-format retail outlets, including Lifestyle, Shoppers Stop, Centro and Ethnicity. Having been active in selling its wares online in the US, the brand is also aiming to open a physical presence either in the US or South Africa in FY25, he added. In a statement, Sangita Jindal said along with the global expansion, the investment will also help the brand widen its market share in the Indian wedding-wear opportunity. The company's core strength is in its unique designs, she said, appreciating the back-end capabilities created by the founders.

# NSE reduces tick size for select stocks to boost liquidity

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The National Stock Exchange (NSE) has decided to introduce one paisa tick size for all stocks priced below Rs 250 from June 10, in a bid to enhance liquidity and improve price discovery by allowing for more precise price adjustments. Presently, the tick size for these stocks is five paisa, which will

be reduced to one paisa. "All securities (excluding exchange-traded funds) available in EQ, BE, BZ, BO, RL and AF series with security price below Rs 250 will have a tick size of Rs 0.01 as against the current tick size Rs 0.05. The tick size determined for securities in T+1 settlement will also be applicable for T+0 settlement (series T0)," NSE said in a circular.

Tick size is the minimum price increment between consecutive bid (buy) and offer (sell) prices. A smaller tick size allows for finer price adjustments and potentially more precise price discovery. For instance, if a stock has a tick size of Rs 0.10 and the last traded price (LTP) was Rs 50, the next possible bid prices would be Rs 49.90, Rs 49.80, Rs 49.70 and so on. In this



case, bid prices like Rs 49.85 or Rs 49.92 are not allowed, as

they don't meet the Rs 0.10 tick size requirement. The exchange said that tick sizes will be subject to review and adjustments every month, based on the closing price of the last trading day of the month. In addition to changes in the Capital Market (CM) segment, the NSE has announced revisions in the Futures & Options (F&O) segment.

The exchange said that the stock futures will have the same tick size as applicable for securities in the cash market segment from July 8. Further, revisions in tick size will be applicable for all expiries — Near-Month, Middle Month and Far-Month. Last year, rival bourse BSE lowered the tick size for scrips trading below Rs 100 to 1 paisa from 5 paisa.

# Technology promises to enhance incomes of rice farmers

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A groundbreaking technology promises to enhance the incomes of millions of rice farmers using Direct Seeded Rice (DSR), while significantly reducing labor costs and greenhouse gas emissions by about 25 per cent. This innovation will also conserve water, promote sustainable agriculture, enhance yields, and support the Government of India's vision for Net Zero Emission and the National Food Security Mission. Ajai Rana, Chairman of the Federation of Seed Industry of India (FSII), emphasized the need for climate-smart agricultural practices due to the growing demand for rice and limited land and water resources. "By 2035, an extra 114 million tons of milled rice will be needed to ensure food security," Rana stated.

# Rupee falls 4 paise to close at 83.14 against US dollar

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The rupee pared its initial gains and settled for the day lower by 4 paise at 83.14 (provisional) against the US dollar on Monday, mirroring the benchmark indices that erased their gains and ended the day off their record-high levels. Forex traders said the rupee settled in a narrow range as the weakness of the American currency in the overseas market supported the rupee, while elevated crude oil prices in the international market restricted the upmove. At the interbank foreign exchange, the local unit opened at 83.08, then touched an intra-day high of 83.05 but soon pared the gains and settled for the day lower by 4 paise at 83.14 (provisional) against the American currency. On Friday, the rupee rallied for the fourth consecutive



trading session and settled with a sharp gain of 19 paise at 83.10 against the US dollar. Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading at 104.67, lower by 0.05 per cent. Brent crude futures, the global oil benchmark, advanced 0.47 per cent to USD 82.51 per barrel. "We expect the rupee to trade with a positive bias on positive domestic equities and

expectations of fresh foreign inflows. However, a strong US dollar and a recovery in crude oil prices may cap sharp upside," Anuj Choudhary — Research Analyst at Sharekhan by BNP Paribas said. US markets will remain closed on Monday on Memorial Day holiday. Investors may remain cautious ahead of core PCE price index data later this week. USD-INR spot price is expected to trade in a range of

Rs 82.80 to Rs 83.30, Choudhary added. On the domestic macroeconomic front, India's forex reserves jumped USD 4.549 billion to a new all-time high of USD 648.7 billion for the week ended May 17, the Reserve Bank said on Friday. This is the third consecutive week of increase in the overall kitty, which had increased by USD 2.561 billion to USD 644.151 billion in the previous reporting week ended May 17. On the domestic equity market, the 30-share BSE Sensex declined 19.89 points, or 0.03 per cent, to close at 75,390.50 points. The broader NSE Nifty settled 24.65 points or 0.11 per cent lower at 22,932.45 points. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) were net sellers in the capital markets on Friday, as they offloaded shares worth Rs 944.83 crore, according to exchange data.

# Gold, silver prices rebound on strong global cues

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Gold and silver prices rebounded sharply on Monday after falling for three straight sessions, with the precious metal jumping Rs 220 to Rs 72,820 per 10 grams in the national capital, tracking a strong trend in the overseas market due to escalating tensions in the Middle East. Gold had closed at Rs 72,600 per 10 grams in the previous session on Friday, according to HDFC Securities. Silver prices also bounced Rs 1,050 to Rs 92,850 per kg. In the previous session, it had finished at Rs 91,800 per kg. "Spot gold prices (24 carats) in the Delhi markets are trading at Rs 72,820 per 10 grams, up by Rs 220 against the previous close," Saumil Gandhi, Senior Analyst, Commodities at HDFC Securities, said.

# KAL Airways, Kalanithi Maran to seek ₹1,323 crore in damages from SpiceJet

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

KAL Airways and Kalanithi Maran on Monday said they will seek more than Rs 1,323 crore in damages from SpiceJet and its chief Ajay Singh as well as challenge the recent Delhi High Court order in the ongoing dispute between the two sides. On May 17, a division bench of the court set aside a single judge bench order that had upheld an arbitral award asking SpiceJet and its promoter Ajay Singh to refund Rs 579 crore plus interest to Maran. The bench allowed the appeals filed by Singh and SpiceJet challenging the single judge's order, passed on July 31, 2023, and remanded the matter back to

the court concerned to consider the petitions challenging the arbitral award afresh. Against this backdrop, Maran and his firm KAL Airways have decided to challenge the ruling after consultation with their legal counsel. The decree holders — KAL Airways and Maran — "believe that the aforesaid judgement is deeply flawed and warrants further scrutiny." "In parallel, they are also seeking damages in excess of Rs 1,323 crore, as determined by FTI Consulting LLP, United Kingdom, a globally renowned firm that specialises in estimation of losses arising out of breach of contractual commitments," KAL Airways said in a



statement on Monday. Further, it said the claim for damages had originally been presented by KAL Airways and Maran before the arbitral

tribunal and "has always remained an integral part of their quest for justice." By pursuing both the challenge to the Delhi High

Court judgement and the claim for damages, the decree holders hope to secure a just and equitable resolution to the contentious dispute, the statement said. The dispute arose due to a breach of trust by SpiceJet and has caused "enormous hardship to both KAL Airways and Kalanithi Maran for more than a decade," it added. According to the statement, they will pursue the execution of the arbitral award, seeking a refund of the pending dues amounting to Rs 353.50 crore. "This action is also in full compliance with, and supported by, the orders dated February 13, 2023, and July 7, 2023, passed by the Hon'ble Supreme Court directing that the award in favour of the decree holders is executed in its entirety," it

said. On May 22, SpiceJet said it will seek a refund of Rs 450 crore out of the total Rs 730 crore paid to the airline's former promoter Maran and KAL Airways following the Delhi High Court ruling. The case dates back to early 2015, when Singh, who owned the airline earlier, bought it back from Maran after it was grounded for months due to resource crunch. As part of the agreement, Maran and KAL Airways had claimed to have paid SpiceJet Rs 679 crore for issuing warrants and preference shares. However, Maran approached the Delhi High Court in 2017, alleging SpiceJet had not issued convertible warrants and preference shares nor returned the money.

# Hyundai sets up EV charging station in Chennai, plans 100 facilities across Tamil Nadu

PTI ■ CHENNAI

Automaker Hyundai Motor India Limited (HMIL) on Monday announced the inauguration of its fast electric-powered vehicles (EV) charging station here, and said this was first of the company's target of installing 100 such facilities across Tamil Nadu. The 180 kW DC fast charging station, comprising of 150 kW and 30 kW connectors, has been set at Spencer Plaza here, and would cater to compatible four-wheelers irrespective of brand and model, a company release said. "As we celebrate 28 years of

HMIL in India, we are delighted to inaugurate our first ever 180 kW fast public charging station in Chennai. In line with Hyundai's vision of 'Progress for Humanity', we aim to enhance convenience of all EV users, and hence our charging stations can be utilised by any four-wheeler EV user. HMIL envisages to install 100 charging stations across Tamil Nadu, to enhance the EV ecosystem and motivate more customers towards EV adoption across the state," Jae Wan Ryu, Executive Director — Corporate Planning, HMIL, was quoted as saying in the release.



# Harmanpreet's hat-trick guides India to 5-4 win over Argentina

PTI ■ ANTWERP (BELGIUM)

Captain Harmanpreet Singh led from the front with a sensational hat-trick as the Indian men's hockey team recorded a thrilling 5-4 win over Argentina in the FIH Hockey Pro League here.

Besides Harmanpreet (29', 50' and 52'), Arajjeet Singh Hundal (7') and Gurjant Singh (18') also scored for India, while Federico Monja (3'), Nicolas Keenan (24'), Tadeo Marucci (54') and Lucas Martinez (57') were on target for Argentina on Sunday.

India made a good start, keeping the ball for most of the first quarter and came up with accurate passes to make their way into the Argentina striking circle. However, Argentina drew first blood when Federico found the back of the net from a close range to give them a 1-0 lead.

In response, India equalized quickly as Arajjeet scored a brilliant field goal. India also earned a penalty corner but failed to capitalize on it as the first quarter ended 1-1.

India started the second quarter on a high note. The fast counter-attacking aggressive approach helped India extend their lead after Gurjant scored an excellent field goal.

India were slightly dodgy the next few minutes after scoring the goal as they gave up possession and were punished when Argentina broke into a quick counter, making their way through the left flank.

It was Nicolas Keenan who



drove into the Indian circle, beating the defenders to strike the ball into India's goal levelling the score at 2-2. However, India earned a PC with a minute remaining in the quarter and Harmanpreet made it 3-2 in India's favour.

The third quarter was entertaining with both teams displaying quick-fire hockey. India secured a penalty corner but couldn't convert it as Harmanpreet's shot was blocked well by the Argentina goalkeeper. With both teams

defence standing tall, the third quarter remained goalless. India came out in top gear in the fourth quarter as they pushed Argentina to make errors, leading to a PC being awarded with 10 minutes remaining. The decision was

changed to a penalty stroke and Harmanpreet's low powerful shot found the back of the net as India took a 4-2 lead. Two minutes later, India were awarded another penalty stroke, which was again successfully converted by

Harmanpreet. Argentina pulled two goals back in quick succession as Tadeo and Lucas found the back of the net to set up an exciting finish to the game. The match ended with India winning 5-4.



# Indian shuttlers eye productive outing at Singapore Open

PTI ■ SINGAPORE

Top Indian shuttlers, including PV Sindhu, HS Prannoy and Lakshya Sen, will look to hit top gear at the USD 850,000 Singapore Open, beginning here on Tuesday, with an additional objective of fine-tuning their preparations for the Paris Olympics.

The Summer Games are just two months away and the Olympic-bound shuttlers will have three more tournaments -- Australian Open super 500, Indonesia Super 1000, Canada Open super 500 -- to hone their skills and shake off any cobwebs ahead of the quadrennial mega event.

Lakshya and Prannoy will also hope for a deep run into the event to receive the ideal boost in the build-up to the Paris Games.

sailing through in Bangkok without dropping a game but the duo is likely to be tested this week.

The Indian pair have been in the form of their lives with four final appearances so far this season and they will look to continue the good run when they open against Denmark's Daniel Lundgaard and Mads Vestergaard in men's doubles competition.

In men's singles, Lakshya had sneaked into the Olympic qualification with two back-to-back semifinal finishes at French Open and All England Championships.

The youngster is coming off a break and will face the tall task of taming world no. 1 Viktor Axelsen, who won the Malaysia Masters on Sunday. Eighth seed Prannoy, who is recovering from a health issue, had a forgettable outing in his last tournament when he was ousted by compatriot Meiraba Luwang Maisnam in the opening round of Thailand Open.

Prannoy, a world champion and Asian Games bronze medallist, will have to find his best footing when he opens against Belgium's Julien Carraggi.

Among others in fray, Kidambi Srikanth will square off against Japan's fifth seed Kodai Naruoka, while Priyanshu Rajawat will meet Hong Kong's Lee Cheuk Yiu in men's singles.

In women's singles, Aakarshi Kashyap will face Thailand's Pornpicha Choeikewong in the opening round.

Olympic-bound Ashwini Ponnappa and Tanisha Crasto also will hope for a good outing as they take on Polina Buhrova and Yevhenia Kantemyr of Ukraine in their opener.

Treesa Jolly and Gayatri Gopichand will clash with Chinese Taipei's Cheng Yu-Pei and Sun Yu-Hsing.

# Xavi wins his last game as Barcelona coach in final round of Spanish league

AP ■ MADRID

Xavi Hernández ended his stint as Barcelona coach with a 2-1 win at Sevilla in the final round of the Spanish league.

Robert Lewandowski and Fermin López scored for Barcelona, which announced Friday it was parting ways with the former midfielder with a year left on his contract.

"We didn't want this to end, but these are decisions made by the club," Xavi said. "We didn't win titles but we were on the right track. But soccer is like this, the directors will make their decisions. The response by the players was wonderful."

Barcelona players bid farewell to Xavi after the match. "We will always wish Xavi the best," goalkeeper Marc-André ter Stegen said. "He's been a friend for many years and it's not easy to let him go ... He deserves the best."

Barcelona had already clinched second place and a spot in the

lucrative Spanish Super Cup in Saudi Arabia next season. It finished with four consecutive victories.

Youssef En-Nesyri scored for Sevilla, which ended 14th place after four straight losses.

En-Nesyri's goal came in the 31st minute, after Lewandowski had put Barcelona ahead in the 15th. López netted the winner for the Catalan club in the 59th.

Xavi's departure came a month after he had walked back a previous decision he made in January to leave the club this summer. In April, he said that he had changed his mind because the team was playing better and he believed it could bounce back from a trophy-less season.

Barcelona president Joan Laporta had publicly celebrated Xavi's commitment to stay at that time. But last week the president was reportedly unhappy when the head coach spoke openly about how the club's poor finances would impede it from competing with fierce rival Real



Madrid. "Those who made the decision need to explain it," said the 44-year-old Xavi, who plans to take a break from

coaching. There was little to be decided in the league's final round on Sunday. Champion Madrid, focused on the

upcoming Champions League final against Borussia Dortmund at Wembley, drew 0-0 with Real Betis on Saturday.

Barcelona, Girona and Atletico Madrid were the other three teams that qualified for the Champions League next season, while Basque Country rivals Athletic Bilbao and Real Sociedad will play in the Europa League. Betis earned the Conference League berth.

The three relegated clubs were Cadiz, Almeria and Granada. In other results Sunday, Mallorca won 2-1 at Getafe, Celta Vigo drew 2-2 with Valencia, and Alaves drew 1-1 at Las Palmas.

Girona striker Artem Dovbyk ended as the league's top scorer this season with 24 goals, one more than Villarreal's Alexander Sorloth. Lewandowski and Madrid's Jude Bellingham were third with 19 goals.

Madrid finished with the best attack with 87 goals scored, and the best defense with 26 goals conceded.

# Stan Wawrinka, who is 39, beats Andy Murray, who is 37, at French Open

AP ■ PARIS

After Stan Wawrinka ended Andy Murray's stay at the French Open yet again - and this time, it was perhaps Murray's last singles appearance at Roland Garros - the two long-time opponents, both in their late 30s, met at the net for a handshake, an embrace and a lengthy chat. Wawrinka, whose trademark one-handed backhand helped him put together a 6-4, 6-4, 6-2 victory in the first-round contest Sunday night, then joined fans in applauding for Murray as he headed toward the locker room.

"It was emotional, for sure. We're getting closer to the end," said Wawrinka, who has won 10 of their 23 meetings since the first in 2005. "We have a lot of respect for each other."

Wawrinka, at 39, is just the third man of at least that age to win a match at the clay-court Grand Slam tournament since 1980. Murray just turned 37, and this contest had the second-oldest combined age for two men in Paris since 2000.

"Obviously disappointed. ... He gave me very few opportunities," said Murray, who was broken early in each set while going 0 for 2 on his break chances. "Physically, tennis is not easy for me nowadays."

By the end, his movement was not what it usually is, even after having hip replacement surgery several years ago. Murray recently returned after tearing ankle ligaments at the Miami Open in March and is 1-3 since coming back. "My body isn't what it was 10 years ago. I'm fully aware of that," he said.



Theirs was by far the most eagerly anticipated match of Day 1 at the clay-court Grand Slam tournament, featuring a pair of guys who each own a trio of major trophies.

It was not quite on the level of the Day 2 showcase — Rafael Nadal vs. Alexander Zverev — but it earned the high-profile spot in the night session at Court Philippe Chatrier and drew a crowd that loudly cheered when they stepped out under the lights.

Before play began Sunday, tournament director Amélie Mauresmo said she was putting off a planned farewell ceremony for Nadal, for most everyone figured would be competing at the French Open for the final time but said this weekend he didn't want to close the door on a return.

Similarly, Mauresmo said there wouldn't be that sort of adieu to Murray, who has indicated he might retire after this summer. As it is, he is not done in Paris, because he and Dan Evans received a wild-card entry for doubles. This was his fourth

consecutive appearance at the French Open that included a match against Wawrinka, who is 6-1 head-to-head on clay. Wawrinka won their 2015 semifinal in Paris, Murray won a five-set semifinal the next year, and Wawrinka won their first-round contest in 2020.

Murray missed the event in 2021-23. Both men drew gasps with hard-hit groundstrokes and both tossed in a bit of guile, too, including an early serve-and-volley from Wawrinka and a half-dozen drop shots from Murray in the second set alone.

Wawrinka, who has dealt with his own series of health issues over the years, goes on to meet No. 32 Cam Norrie or Pavel Kotov in the second round.

Other major titles champions who won Sunday included Carlos Alcaraz, Naomi Osaka, Sofia Kenin and Jelena Ostapenko. But 2021 French Open champion Barbora Krejčíková lost 7-6 (3), 6-4 to Viktorija Golubic - making the 24th-seeded Krejčíková 0-3 in Paris since going 7-0 three years ago to take the title.

# Ancelotti has really difficult decision to make in goal for Madrid ahead of Champions League final

AP ■ MADRID

Real Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti knows he will have a tough decision to make in goal for the Champions League final against Borussia Dortmund on Saturday.

Will he pick Andriy Lunin, who has played in goal nearly the entire season, or Thibaut Courtois, the veteran who has won the Champions League before but has just returned from injury?

"It's really difficult," Ancelotti said Monday. "Of course it's really difficult, because both of them deserve to play this final. Lunin because he did a fantastic season, and Courtois because he is back from his injury and everyone knows the quality of Courtois. It's a difficult decision but I think I'm going to take into the game this decision, no doubt."

Lunin was nursing a fever and was the only Madrid player who didn't train on Monday as Madrid began its final week of preparations. But Ancelotti said the 25-year-old Ukrainian was expected to be



available for Saturday's final in London. The illness surely doesn't help Lunin's chances, though, and many had already expected Ancelotti to go with the more experienced Courtois despite his lack of minutes this season. Courtois ruptured a left-knee ligament in August, just two days before the start of the season. The 32-year-old Belgian then also ruptured the meniscus in his right knee in March, when he was close to making a comeback. He was sidelined until the beginning of this month, when he started in a 3-0 win

over Cadiz, a victory that secured Madrid's 36th Spanish league title.

Lunin was back in goal as Madrid beat Bayern Munich in the Champions League semifinals. He had saved two penalties in the decisive shootout win over Manchester City in the quarterfinals.

Lunin had earned the starting position over Kepa Arrizabalaga, the former Chelsea player who is Madrid's other reserve goalkeeper. Ancelotti said Lunin was the best goalkeeper in the world right now.

Courtois has proven experience in finals, though, having won the 2022 Champions League with Madrid, the FA Cup with Chelsea, the Europa League with Atletico Madrid, and two Copa del Rey titles (one for Madrid, one for Atletico), among several other titles.

"Both deserve to play for various reasons," Ancelotti said. Ancelotti joked that he will wait as long as possible to announce the starting goalkeeper because otherwise the debate would be over, and "I like the debate."

# Boxing World Qualifiers: Boro wins opening round bout, Loura loses

PTI ■ BANGKOK

Former world youth champion Ankushita Boro defeated Namun Monkhor of Mongolia in 60kg category but Abhimanyu Loura lost against Ireland's Kelyn Cassidy in 80kg division in the second Boxing World qualifiers for Paris Olympics here on Monday.

Boro started strongly against her young Mongolian opponent. She effectively blunted Monkhor's speedy movements by tactically shifting gears to carve out a 4-1 win after three keenly-

contested rounds. However, it was an opposite result for Loura. The National Championships bronze medallist came into the second-round clash high on confidence after beating Bulgaria's 10-time national champion Kristiyan Nikolov in a thrilling bout.

But Cassidy was well prepared for the long reach of his opponent and went on to win 0-5 despite Loura giving his all in the final round. On Tuesday, Sachin Siwach (57kg), Abhinash Jamwal (63.5kg) and Nishant Dev



(71kg) will look to continue their march towards securing an Olympic quota place. This tournament is the final chance for the boxers to book a Paris Games berth. Sachin will face Frederik Jensen of Denmark, Jamwal will take on Colombia's

Jose Manuel Viafara Fory and Nishant Dev will be up against Otgonbaatar Byamba-Erdene of Mongolia.

India have already secured three quotas for the Paris Games. Nikhat Zareen (women's 50kg), Preeti (54kg) and Tokyo Olympics bronze medallist Lovlina Borgohain (75kg) have confirmed their Paris berths by winning bronze medals at the Hangzhou Asian Games last year. India fielded seven men and three women boxers in the second World Qualifiers and five of them received opening round byes.

# India name squad for women friendly matches against Uzbekistan

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The All India Football Federation (AIFF) on Monday announced a 23-member senior women's squad for the two international friendly matches against Uzbekistan to be played in Tashkent on May 31 and June 4.

Starting off with 30 probables, the Blue Tigresses trained at Sreenidi Deccan FC's home ground in Hyderabad for two weeks, before head coach Langam Chaoba Devi pruned down the squad to 23.

The Indian squad will travel to the Uzbek capital on Wednesday. Earlier this year, India had finished runners-up in the Turkish Women's Cup, behind Kosovo, in a quadrangular tournament that also featured Estonia and Hong Kong.

**INDIA WOMEN'S SQUAD:**

**Goalkeepers:** Shreya Hooda, Maibam Linthoingambi Devi, Moirangthem Monalisha Devi.

**Defenders:** Loitongbam Ashalata Devi, Sanju, Hemam Shilky Devi, Juli Kishan, Astam Oraon, Aruna Bag, Sorokhaibam Ranjana Chanu, Wangkhem Linthoingambi Devi.

**Midfielders:** Karthika Angamuthu, Kaviya, Naorem Priyangka Devi, Neha, Sandhya Ranganathan, Sangita Basfore, Soumya Guguloth, Anju Tamang. **Forwards:** Kajol D'Souza, Karishma Shirvoikar, Pyari Xaxa, Serto Lynda Kom.



# FROM SETBACKS TO SUCCESS: SHREYAS IYER'S JOURNEY TO IPL VICTORY

PTI ■ KOLKATA

When Shreyas Iyer recreated Lionel Messi's famous World Cup celebration after lifting the IPL Trophy as Kolkata Knight Riders captain in Chennai, it was nothing short of an Argentine moment for the embattled Indian cricketer at an individual level. His central contract torn up a few weeks before the IPL besides a recurring back injury threatening to derail him, Iyer faced numerous challenges at the start of the year. He finally found a deep sense of triumph and vindication in this victory, much like Messi did after exorcising the ghosts of losing the 2014 final and winning the trophy for his country after a 36-year wait. For the two-time IPL champions, the wait lasted 10 years as Iyer sang a redemption song following a topsy-turvy start to the year. Little wonder then that he chose to imitate the man who knows all about rising from setbacks. So, Iyer, with the trophy in his hands, took a playful walk towards his teammates, quite

similar to what Messi did after the final against France in Doha, and handed the big prize to them.

"I am hearing a lot about Gautam Gambhir, who has created a magnificent culture in the KKR team. But this guy (Iyer), I don't think he is getting enough credit. Shreyas Iyer needs some credit," said the legendary Ian Bishop on Sunday as KKR defeated Sunrisers Hyderabad by eight wickets in a completely one-sided final to win their third IPL title.

KKR may have got most of their runs from openers Sunil Narine and Phil Salt, but they played as a team and managed to come out winners in a dominant season, topping the table with two rounds to spare, and enduring just three losses in between.

"It is hard to express how we are feeling right now. The wait was so long. We played like invincibles throughout the season. There is so much to cherish right now," said Iyer. It was a special feeling for his childhood and Mumbai coach Pravin Amre, who first tested his character by promoting Iyer to No.3 from No.7 in his



maiden Ranji season in 2014-15. Iyer returned with 153, his maiden first-class hundred in their match against Bengal at Eden Gardens in December 2014. "I challenged him in his entire

career (in Mumbai)...I knew how strong-willed he's and it was my job as a coach to challenge him. He always liked to take the challenge in a good stride. He is a good team man. In the last world cup, he scored 530 runs," Amre said.

"I always told him you just do whatever is in your hands, let the other people do their job, you just remain focus on what's in your hands," added Amre who first took him under his wings at the Shivaji Park Gymkhana.

By leading KKR into final, Iyer achieved the rare of feat of playing the summit clash as captain of two different franchises in the IPL. The KKR skipper missed the last season because of a back injury that required a surgery

in London last year. He made a comeback in the Asia Cup and went on to become India's third leading run-getter after Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma in the last year's ODI World Cup.

The year didn't start well for him though as he had a difficult outing in the home Test series against England and looked patchy scoring 140 runs in the first two matches before being left out for the final three Tests.

It was learnt that he developed the recurring back problem, even though he was cleared by the Board medical staff. Iyer then became the centre of a controversy when he missed the Ranji Trophy for his home state Mumbai and went on to attend KKR's pre-season camp.

Iyer, however, returned to play for Mumbai in the semifinal and final against Vidarbha where he scored a resolute 95 in the second innings of their 42nd Ranji triumph.

The Board omitted him from the Grade B contract and BCCI secretary Jay Shah issued a stern warning asking players not to prioritise IPL over domestic cricket.

Under intense scrutiny, Iyer looked rusty at the start of the IPL and got out for a two-ball duck in their opener against SRH.

He had some significant contributions later on but his efforts were all overshadowed by Narine and Salt's explosive batting.

**CAPTAIN COOL:** However, Iyer personified "Captain Cool" and held the team's cause ahead of his individual milestones. He went on to become the fourth leading run-getter for KKR this season with 351 runs and two fifties. His best came against the crucial first qualifier against SRH when he anchored their tricky chase of 160 with an unbeaten 58.

"The way he handled the team as a player is commendable. More than that, he is improving as a leader and the experts in the game are also appreciating his leadership qualities," Amre said.

"I personally believe success is not an accident he has worked hard for this, handling the team. Yes, he had a good team under him but bringing the best out of everyone is important," he added.

## Starc produced ball of the IPL, Narine best player for KKR: Hayden

PTI ■ CHENNAI

Former Australia batter Matthew Hayden has termed Mitchell Starc's outstanding away-swing to Abhishek Sharma in the IPL final as the "ball of the IPL" while describing Sunil Narine as the "best player" for triumphant Kolkata Knight Riders.

Shreyas Iyer's rampant KKR, who were unstoppable throughout the 17th edition of the IPL, crushed Sunrisers Hyderabad in the summit clash by eight wickets to add a third trophy to their cabinet on Sunday.

"The moment that ball bowled to Abhishek Sharma came out of Mitchell Starc's hands, it was game over. It was destined to be the best ball of the IPL - an absolute peach at a time when it was so important," Hayden told Star Sports Cricket Live.

Former England batter Kevin Pietersen said Starc's ability to get his wrist position right towards the end of IPL and cranking up extra pace along with Narine's all-round ability bolstered KKR.

"Mitchell Starc was averaging around 136-137 kmph during the majority of the season. But in the last two weeks he has gone above 140 kmph and that is his average. He is bowling fast," Pietersen said.

"We never saw him swing the ball for the first seven, (or) maybe even eight weeks of this tournament. (But) in the last few weeks, he has got his wrist in a good place and started to swing the ball back," he added. Pietersen was lavish in praise of Narine, saying that the KKR veteran gave his critics a perfect reply.

"I was one of the most vocal critics at the start of the tournament saying I didn't like Sunil Narine at the top of the order, due to his inconsistency. He would typically hit a six and then get out, disrupting the momentum," Pietersen said.

"However, this season he has been consistent. He has thought like a batter, batted like a batter and got the runs of a batter. He has averaged more than many batters and his strike rate has been phenomenal. He has played both sides of the wicket exceptionally well."

"We don't need to say much about his bowling - he is an out-and-out superstar. His ability to change his action and still produce such impressive numbers is quite something. He is the heart and soul of this outfit," Pietersen said. Former India batter Ambati



Rayudu, meanwhile, credited KKR captain Iyer, coaching staff as well as the team's domestic talent for coming together.

"Shreyas Iyer has been tremendous in terms of leading KKR, and we should give him a lot of credit. He was not in the best of forms with the bat, but still, the way he has used his resources, is commendable," Rayudu said. Rayudu said a huge tally of runs from an individual is not as crucial as the others contributing collectively.

"That is exactly how teams win the IPL. We have seen this over the years; it is not the orange cap that wins you the IPL, but it is the contributions from 4-5 batters with 300-400 runs each - that is what gets you to the finals," he added.

PTI ■ CHENNAI

After resisting the lure of lucrative private leagues for almost a decade because of his commitment towards the 'Baggy Green', Australian pacer Mitchell Starc has hinted that he might quit one format to make room for more franchise cricket in his schedule.

While the 34-year-old didn't specify the format he intends to give up, it is likely to be ODIs considering that the next 50-over World Cup is in 2027. Starc, who was bought for a record 24.75 crore by Kolkata Knight Riders, was magnificent in the business end of the tournament. He ended up with 17 wickets, including five in the two knock-out games, to engineer a dominant title triumph for the Shah Rukh Khan-owned team.

To a query from PTI as to how he would take it up from here after his best year in franchise cricket, Starc hinted that T20s could gain prominence in his roster.

"For the last nine years, I

## Starc hints at quitting one format to open doors for more franchise cricket

certainly prioritised Australian cricket. I have pulled out often to have a chance to give my body a break and spend some time away from cricket with my wife as well, so that's certainly been where my head has been for last nine years," Starc said after his match-winning 2/14 in the IPL final against Sunrisers Hyderabad.

"Moving forward, I am certainly close to the end of my career than the start. One format may be dropped off as there is long time till next World Cup and whether that format drops off or not, that will open doors for a lot of franchise cricket," the 'King of Swing' said.

He mentioned that this year's IPL will help him in preparing for the T20 World Cup in West Indies starting June 1.

"...That's the other side of



benefit of being here, some amazing players in an amazing tournament and great lead up to T20 and success has been fantastic. It is great that a lot of players are in good position heading into the World Cup," he said.

He is hopeful of turning up for KKR even next year.

"I don't know the schedule exactly but I have thoroughly

enjoyed and hope to be back next year and hopefully, seen in purple and gold again."

**PITCHES IN WINDIES WON'T RESEMBLE IPL TRACKS:** Starc, like many others, agreed that the Impact Player rule led to tall scores in the IPL and the World T20 won't witness insane totals like 270. He said he foresees more help for spinners from worn-

out tracks. "T20 is not as physically demanding as Test cricket and it's been warm, humid, so that plays a part but that's fine. It would be cooler there in the West Indies than here," he said when asked how his body is holding up after two months of IPL.

"There's the Impact Player Rule here and that's not the case in the World Cup and after that you have to put a team that's more balanced and you rely more on all-rounders. You can't have your batting all-rounder coming in at No. 9, like they do in IPL.

"I don't think the runs would be that much, I don't think 270 can be scored... Wickets may play a part as we have seen high-scoring matches here and wickets won't be same in West Indies.

## Australia facing player shortage for T20 World Cup Warm up games: Marsh

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Australia is facing shortage of players and might be forced to use support staff as substitute fielders in the warm-up games of next month's T20 World Cup due to the low turnaround time between the IPL and the global showpiece.

Australia are set to play two warm-up games against Namibia on Wednesday and the West Indies on Friday in Trinidad but they might have as few as eight players available for the two matches since most of them will take a break following their stint in the IPL playoffs.

"We're going to be undermanned. But it

is a practice game. The guys who need to play will play as much as they can and we'll figure it out from there," captain Mitchell Marsh, who himself is not certain to play against Namibia as he is recovering from a hamstring injury, told cricket.com.au.

The IPL finals between Kolkata Knight Riders and Sunrisers Hyderabad concluded on Sunday night and three players — Travis Head, Pat Cummins and player of the match Mitchell Starc — were part of the two teams.

Besides the trio, Cameron Green and Glenn Maxwell, who were part of the Royal Challengers Bengaluru, will only link up with the World Cup squad by the end of the week in Barbados, while



Marcus Stoinis, who played for Lucknow Super Giants, is expected to arrive in Trinidad only after the Namibia practice match. Travelling reserves Jake Fraser-McGurk and Matt Short too are set to join after

Australia's first match of the tournament proper which is against Oman on June 5.

"It's important to be flexible. Guys who have been at the IPL have been playing a lot of cricket. We prioritised giving them a couple of days at home to see their families, refresh, and play the long game for this tournament," Marsh said. "We will get our 15 (all together) eventually, but really important that we give them a break, even if it's just a couple of days at home, that's really important."

According to ICC rules, players taking to the field in the warm-up games must be from the country they are representing.

## Can cricket make inroads in baseball loving America?

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Cricket, a popular pastime in the United States in the mid 1800s, makes a big-ticket return to North American shores through the T20 World Cup but will it be able to leave an impression on the local audience that knows little to nothing about the gentleman's game?

Cricket globally is driven by India but the International Cricket Council sees huge potential in the American market and claims there are already 30 million fans that follow the game in the massive country.

The T20 showpiece is also seen as a major stepping stone to the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics, where cricket will make a comeback after 128 years when the big event kicks off on June 1.

A total of 16 games will be played across three venues — New York, Dallas and Lauderhill — with a majority of 55 matches scheduled in the Caribbean including the knock-outs.

Day three of the competition will have South Africa and Sri Lanka battling it out in New York, where the first ever international cricket game was held between USA and Canada back in 1844.

It was a phase when the sport was played widely across America before a much faster alternative in Baseball gained prominence during the Civil War in the 1860s. "... (T20) it's entertainment and that's what people look for. That's what Americans look for, you know, they want entertainment," says legendary West Indian Brian Lara, one of the most recognisable cricketers in the world but someone who admits that he could walk around Miami without getting a second look.

"You know, you speak to an American and I've done that many times and they'd say 'you play a game for five days and then you end up in a draw? What's that all about?' So it's, it is difficult," he explains the challenge of selling Test cricket to an American, who might just warm up to the shortest

format though. A couple of weeks of international cricket in an alien land will not be enough to evoke long-lasting interest from the local audience and to ensure the game grows beyond the South Asian and Caribbean expat community, the stakeholders will need more time. For a beginner, cricket can be rather complex to understand especially when one is introduced to "third man", "fine leg" or "deep mid-wicket", some of the terms used for the many field placements in the game.

The ICC is pulling out all stops to engage with the American audience, whether it is getting eight-time Olympic gold-winning sprinter Usain Bolt on board as the World Cup ambassador or promoting the event at the recent Formula 1 race in Miami.

To distract the average American household from the world of baseball, NFL and NBA, cricket will need to grow at the grassroots level. "I surely think the game can grow



in the USA. When you have presence in a country people start gravitating towards it and want to know more about," Bolt, who belongs to the cricket-loving Caribbean, told PTI in a recent interview. The Americans have surely one

reason to follow the event. Their team, mainly made up of players from South Asian and Caribbean heritage, will be making its World Cup debut. Venu Pisike, head of USA Cricket, reckons the ICC event will bring much-needed awareness around

the game but eventually, it is the lure of taking part in the 2028 Olympics that will draw masses to the sport.

"So far, cricket is predominantly an expats' game, but with the marketing and promotion activities during the World Cup, there is some momentum and the World Cup will definitely boost the opportunities to expand the game in the USA," said Pisike.

"Definitely, the World Cup is bringing a lot of awareness and then the opportunity for cricket to be in the Olympics, that will definitely attract the community because the US is a huge sports country.

"Olympics is the prime area where all the sports bodies are focusing on since cricket is going to Olympics, that will actually give more opportunities to expand the sport between the World Cup and the Olympics," added Pisike.

The USA squad picked for the tournament makes up for a bunch of semi-professionals who rely on

full-time jobs to run their families. That will have to change if the sport is to appeal to a broader audience in America, believes India-born USA squad member Nisarg Patel.

"Ultimately what needs to change in the USA is that an American kid in a high school needs to see a future in the game. There are so many sports in America, the country is built on Olympic medals.

"For cricket to succeed, we need to show them there is a career out of playing cricket," said the spinner, who works full-time with a medical research company in Los Angeles.

The start of Major League Cricket last year, the sport's first professional league in the country, was a big step in that direction. However, to capture the imagination of people in a country with an already crowded and developed sporting landscape, would be a gargantuan challenge for the ICC and other stakeholders.